IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG A
SELECT GROUP OF BLACK GRADUATE STUDENTS
AT VIRGINIA TECH
by
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(ABSTRACT)

This study concerned the nature and process of Black identity development as described by William Cross in a linear, stagewise model of Black identity development. Dr. Cross is a psychologist and Associate Professor in the Africana Studies and Research Center of Cornell University. He developed his model of Black identity development which he called the Negro to Black Conversion Experience in 1971. In 1991, modifications were made in the model by Cross which emphasized the diversity in African American identity. Cross’s model included the stages of Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment.

Twelve Black graduate students, six males and six females, were identified, and they agreed to be participants in this study. They were between the ages of 28 and 45. Through a qualitative research design using indepth interviews, participants were invited to tell their own story about their identity development. Three phases of
data collection were implemented where the participants responded to interview protocols which proceeded from a general open-ended format to a specific stimulus-response format.

Participants’ comments were analyzed via a comparative data analysis. Themes or categories characteristic of the Pre-encounter stage of Cross’s model emerged. In the language of the model, these characteristic and attitudes included Low Salience Attitudes, High Salience Attitudes, Assimilation/Integration, Eurocentric/Afrocentric world view, Spotlight/Race-Image Anxiety, Social Stigma Attitudes, Anti-Black Attitudes, Miseducation, Value Structure/Value Orientation, Black Identity, Parental Influence, Gender Difference, Career Aspiration, and Blackness/The Black Experience. While participants’ comments revealed they were at the Pre-encounter stage, it was determined from the depth and intensity of the stories told by the participants that they were more appropriately at a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage.

Pre-encounter Stabilization was different in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and values from Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. Participants at Pre-encounter Stabilization exhibited a strong, stable personal identity, ascribed identity, and reference group orientation. They perceived themselves as capable, valued, motivated persons who were in control of
their lives. Parental influence was strong. Career aspirations appeared to foster race-neutral perspectives. An integrated Eurocentric and Afrocentric world view was found. Pre-encounter Stabilization broadened the capability of Cross's model to describe Black identity development and the Black experience.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The nature and process of Black identity development is significant to the theory and practice of student development in higher education. Traditional student development theory and research have not emphasized Blacks in their research base and have generally assumed that the nature and process of identity development has been the same for Blacks and Whites. However, McEwen, Roper, Bryant and Langa (1990) have described gaps in current psychosocial theories of student development with respect to the developmental needs and concerns of Black students.

McEwen et al. (1990) described nine factors which relate to the developmental tasks of Black students which traditional theories of development do not address. These included developing cultural aesthetics and awareness, developing identity, developing independence, fulfilling affiliation needs, surviving intellectually, developing spiritually, and developing social responsibility.

While each of these nine dimensions of Black student development are important to understand with regard to the success or failure of Black students, this study concerns the nature and process of Black identity development and
what that may mean in terms of student development theory, research, and practice.

Black identity is difficult to operationalize in ways that are meaningful to the theory and practice of student development. Helms (1990) suggests that Black identity can be characterized by three distinct components: (a) personal identity; (b) reference group orientation; and (c) ascribed identity. Personal identity consists of one’s attitudes and feelings about oneself. The extent to which one uses a particular racial group to define one’s personal identity is characteristic of one’s reference group orientation. Ascribed identity is the individual’s deliberate affiliation or commitment to a particular racial group.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Whether racial identity is described as a combination of personal identity, reference group orientation, and ascribed identity, the nature and process of Black identity development affects positively or negatively the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning of Black students.

Black students’ academic success and persistence in college directly relates to their identity or sense of who they are with respect to the dominant cultural group. Black identity impacts upon the level of involvement which Black students have in their higher education experience. Astin
(1984) proposed that the more involved students are in their educational experience, the more likely they are to persist in college and have a satisfactory and successful experience. The nature and process of Black identity development will determine to what extent Black students will avail themselves of the educational and personal development opportunities on campus and will determine the nature and extent of their commitment to their education.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, current theory and research concerning Black identity development viewed Black Americans as a cultural group with unique traditions and characteristics that differ from generalized White norms and the traditions of other American ethnic groups. The historical and cultural development of Blacks has resulted in a unique Black experience.

Branch-Simpson’s (1984) research with Black students revealed that Blacks tend to have a different way of knowing and perceiving the world than Whites. Also, Branch-Simpson found a strong positive influence of the immediate family and extended family upon Black students. Black students’ ways of knowing, world views, and family relationships correspond to their sense of racial identity. Furthermore, the identity development of Blacks compound or diffuse attitudes and values that perpetuate racial problems evolving from personal prejudice, misinformation,
institutional racism, and other forms of systematic oppression. Theoretical models of Black identity describe different ways of knowing, world views, and family relationships for Black students which traditional theories of student development do not capture.

As the pool of minorities and other non-traditional students who are enrolling in higher education increases, several issues of academic and social integration emerge (Tinto, 1987). Black students are faced with many new situations which can affect them in positive or adverse ways. How students deal with these situations affects their persistence in college and may influence them well beyond their college years. Tinto suggested that in order to increase the likelihood of Blacks successfully completing college, these students must become integrated into the social and academic environments of the college. The nature and process of Black identity development is fundamental to the nature and process of social and academic integration.

Academic integration can be described generally as one’s ability to become a functioning member of the academic community. Social integration involves one’s ability to become part of the social environment of the college. The pro-White, anti-Black or pro-Black, anti-White attitudes and values described by the Black identity models facilitate or hinder the academic and social integration of Black students
at predominantly White institutions. Whether these values and attitudes are positive or negative will be situationally determined. Yet, descriptive explanations of what may or may not be occurring between Blacks and the dominant group and the nature of integration into social and academic environments are illuminated by the developmental process of Black identity formation.

Age, gender, socio-economic status (SES), and parental values, attitudes, and educational attainment interface with racial identity development to determine persistence and success in college. Research concerning the relationship among these factors has been conflicting (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, Cross (1990) suggested that the stagewise progression of Black identity development does not change with SES. Williams (1975) also revealed that the stages of Black consciousness are not adversely affected by whether Blacks described themselves as members of the upper, middle, or lower socio-economic strata. While SES is believed not to affect one’s racial identity, it has been repeatedly shown to impact upon college persistence and success.

Age has been a significant factor in Black identity development research and theory. In the Nigrescence models (defined as the process of becoming Black), most researchers have relied for the most part on traditional-aged college
student populations as subjects. Chickering (1969) proposed that identity development is a developmental task which is in ascendancy during late adolescence/early adulthood. However, Parham (1989) believes that resolution of one’s racial identity may not be completed during a single cycle through these stages. He proposed a theory of recycling through identity stages which may account for any changes in identity that might occur at later periods in a person’s life.

As a theoretical foundation for Parham’s recycling perspective, Erikson (1963) and Levinson (1978) proposed that identity formation continues throughout an individual’s entire life span. Thus, age and its relationship to racial identity development is an interesting factor to explore. As will be discussed in the Methodology section, this study will be examining the nature and process of identity development of Black graduate students between the ages of 30 and 45 when identity issues are not traditionally thought to be in ascendancy. These individuals may be recycling through identity stages as suggested by Parham.

Similar to age, gender tends to be a factor which stimulates complex identity development issues. College persistence and success occur differently for Black men and Black women (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, it is not clear from the Black identity models whether Black
identity development concerns are facilitated or hindered with respect to gender. One can surmise based upon the research of Gilligan (1982) that men and women would have a different experience in college as a result of different ways of resolving identity issues, especially racial identity issues. Gender issues will be explored in this study as the Black participants tell their own story about their identity development. Both the male and female perspectives will be ascertained.

Research has traditionally revealed that parental values, attitudes, and educational attainment have been positive factors affecting the success and persistence of Black students in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As an extension of that body of research, parental values and attitudes toward Blackness and the Black experience are assumed to have a positive or negative influence upon the identity development of Black students. Cross’s model of Black identity development, which forms the basis of this study, described a linear progression from negative anti-Black attitudes toward positive pro-Black and pro-White attitudes. Parental influence upon this progression of identity formation has not been investigated in the Black identity development research. The dynamics of this factor will be explored in this study.
Resolution of Black identity development issues will affect the affiliation needs described by Hughes (1987) as key concerns of Black students at predominantly White colleges and universities. The extent to which the nature and process of Black identity development proceeds in a positive direction will determine the impact of the social isolation Black students experience. For student affairs professionals, this circumstance demands a proactive programming practice which needs to include developing positive relationships with Blacks and the Black community external to the campus.

Black students express strong reference group needs to enhance who they are as Black individuals and members of a minority group. As discussed earlier, personal identity, reference group orientation, and ascribed identity are the basic dimensions of one’s racial identity. The nature and process of Black identity development are fundamental to Black students fulfilling affiliation needs. In addition, a functional understanding of Black identity development is crucial for student affairs practitioners and researchers to have in terms of facilitating the fulfillment of affiliation needs of Blacks.

Most theoretical models of Black identity development were developed at the height of the Black social-political movement and within the context of oppression of Blacks by
Whites. Even though these factors are more subtle today than in the past, their significance is still felt given the nature and process of Black identity development.

Racism and racially-motivated violence are matters of great concern on college campuses. How Black students feel about themselves and the nature of their involvement in campus life are fundamental to the success or failure of student affairs efforts to combat the harmful effects of racism and racially-motivated violence. Within the context of the Black identity development models, racism can be perceived as a real phenomenon adversely affecting Black students at predominantly White campuses.

Cross (1990) proposed that issues of identity formation correspond to the salience of Blackness and the Black experience. "Salience" is a term conveying the prominence and importance of Blackness and the Black experience to the individual under a variety of circumstances. The nature and process of Black identity development tend to characterize the effects of specific factors upon the Black students' college experience. Furthermore, the way Blacks feel about themselves tends to enable a more stable and welcoming social and academic college environment.

In addition, Cross argued that Blacks proceed along a continuum from a monocultural perspective toward a multicultural perspective. The development of
multiculturalism provides a major strategy for combating racism and reducing racially-motivated violence. For student affairs professionals, the identity stage at which Blacks are functioning generates insight into the potential effects of college interactions. Relationships among students, faculty, and staff can be strengthened in positive directions as a result of better understanding the affective, psychosocial, and cognitive functioning of Blacks.

While several models of Black identity development have been proposed as will be discussed in the next chapter, Cross’s theoretical model has formed the basis of most research concerning the nature and process of Black identity development. This study proposes to demonstrate the nature in which Cross’s model is significant for student development theory, research, and practice. The number of minority students, particularly Black students, continue to increase in higher education and to understand their affective, psychosocial, and cognitive development is extremely significant if they are to fully benefit from their college experiences.

While Blacks have had a different historical and cultural experience than Whites, it is imperative that student affairs professionals take the lead in not just promoting racial harmony but enhancing racial understanding.
Cultural diversity characterizes the nation’s colleges and universities. Cross’s model of racial identity formation could provide the foundation for creating a genuine appreciation for cultural diversity.

Cross (1991) discussed "the shades of Black" as highlighting the diversity in African American identity. As Blacks are different from Whites, so are they different from one another. The value of Cross’s model to student affairs professionals is found within this reality.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to examine the progression of a select group of Black graduate students along the dimensions of the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, Internalization-Commitment stages of the Cross model of Black identity development. Questions identified for this study evolve from the characteristics of Blacks at each stage of identity development as theorized by Cross.

The following research questions will be investigated:

1. Do Black graduate students at Virginia Tech progress along similar lines of identity development as proposed by Cross’s model of Black identity development?
2. What are the experiences of selected Black graduate students at Virginia Tech which result in their current identity development stage?

3. What experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of a select group of Black graduate students account for the variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience?

4. How has the identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students been influenced by parental attitudes and values concerning being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience?

5. How has the identity development process and identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students been influenced by gender?

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization stages of the Cross model of identity development have distinctive characteristics. Cross (1991) suggested that not much measurable difference is present between the Internalization and the Internalization-Commitment stages. Length and depth of commitment to Black causes, diversity issues, and memberships in Black organizations were identified as distinguishing Internalization-Commitment from Internalization.
The characteristics of each stage of Cross's model has implications for the theory, research, and practice of student development. This study is designed to examine the implications of Cross's model. The specific purposes of the study are:

1. To describe the progression of identity development of a select group of Black graduate students at Virginia Tech along the dimensions of the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment stages of Cross's model of Black identity development. Other dimensions of identity development may be discovered during this study; if so, these will be described.

2. To describe the identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students in terms of Cross's model of Black identity development.

3. To describe the variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience among selected Black graduate students at Virginia Tech.

4. To describe the influence of parental values, educational attainment, and attitudes toward Blackness and the Black experience upon the identity stage and identity formation process of a
select group of Black graduate students at Virginia Tech.

5. To describe the influence of gender upon the identity stage and the identity formation process of a select group of Black graduate students.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions of significant terms will apply within the context of this study:

1. **African American/Black.** The term "African American" is currently being used interchangably with the term "Black" and is increasingly being advanced as a self referent for Americans of African descent (Ghee, 1990). While these terms are used interchangably, the literature and research concerning Black identity development predominantly uses the term "Black." Thus for purposes of this study "Black" will be used to refer to Americans of African descent and will be used to describe their unique historical and cultural experience.

2. **Ascribed identity.** Pertains to the individual’s deliberate affiliation or commitment to a particular racial group (Helms, 1990).
3. **Ethnicity.** A social identification based upon perceived cultural differences of a group; a group classification of individuals who share a unique social and cultural heritage (customs, language, religion, etc.) passed on from generation to generation (Casas, 1984).

4. **Identity.** A sense of continuity about one's past, present, and future; coordinating feelings about the way one sees oneself and is seen by others (Erikson, 1968).

5. **Nigrescence.** The developmental process by which a person "becomes Black" where Black is defined in terms of one's manner of thinking about and evaluating oneself and one's reference group rather than in terms of skin color per se (Helms, 1990).

6. **Personal identity.** Concerns one's feelings and attitudes about oneself (Helms, 1990).

7. **Race.** Denotes a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as possessing certain distinctive and hereditary traits; a sub-group of peoples possessing a definite combination of physical characteristics, of genetic origin, the combination of which to
varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind (Casas, 1984).

8. **Racial identity.** Refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1990).

9. **Reference group orientation.** Refers to the extent to which one uses particular racial groups to guide one’s feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Helms, 1990).

10. **Salience.** Refers to the prominence or importance of Blackness, being Black, and the Black experience as perceived by the individual and by others (Cross, 1991).

**ASSUMPTIONS**

Several major assumptions provide the foundation for this study. These assumptions include the following:

1. Cross’s formulation of Black identity development is a viable description of the phenomenon.

2. The identity development of a selected group of Black graduate students at Virginia Tech proceeds along the same dimensions as that described by Cross’s model of Black identity development.
3. Indepth interviewing is an appropriate methodological technique to use for research purposes in this qualitative study.

4. The participants are capable of articulating their identity stage and identity development process and will be truthful in responding to structured interview questions.

5. The researcher will adhere to the highest standards with regard to data collection and analysis in an effort to reduce researcher effects and bias.

**ORGANIZATION OF STUDY**

This study will be organized around five chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction, research questions, purposes of the study, definition of terms, and assumptions. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature pertinent to the study. Chapter Three focuses upon the methodology used to conduct the study. In Chapter Three, the design of the study, the participants, the interview protocol and process, and the data analysis procedures are described. The results of the study based upon data analysis will be summarized in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the results, present conclusions, and provide suggestions for
future research of Black identity development in terms of student development theory and practice.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychosocial theorists (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Keniston, 1971; Levinson, 1978; Marcia, 1966, 1980) postulated that individuals proceed through several stages of development in moving from adolescence to late adulthood. These theorists argued that issues of personal identity and the process by which they are resolved are universal to all people. Likewise, theories of college student change and development (Chickering, 1969; Heath, 1968; Sanford, 1962) tended to assume that the nature and processes of identity development among Blacks and other non-White students were essentially the same as those for Whites. However in recent years, Black social scientists have suggested that African Americans undergo a different type of experience regarding identity resolution by virtue of occupying a minority status in American society.

Helms (1990) identified two theoretical strands concerning racial identity which were found in the literature to be relevant to the variety of potential racial identity resolutions. The first could be described as taxonomic models which sought to classify individuals according to their characteristic racial beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Included in this category were

Helms labeled the second theoretical strand as the "Nigrescence or racial identity development (NRID)" perspective. These models have attempted to explain the process by which racial identity issues occurred and were resolved. Nigrescence could be described as the developmental process by which a person "becomes Black" where Black was defined in terms of one’s manner of thinking and feeling about him/herself and one’s reference group rather than in terms of skin color *per se*. The NRID models attempted to separate those aspects of Black identity development that occurred primarily in response to racial oppression from those that occurred as a normal part of human development. Included in this category were models developed by Asante (1988), Baldwin (1981, 1984), Banks (1981), Cross (1971, 1978, 1991), Gay (1984), Jackson (1975), Milliones (1980), Thomas (1971), and Toldson and Pasteur (1975).

The following discussion of non-process typology and process models of Black identity development will present a general overview of the components of each model with particular emphasis placed upon Cross’s Model of Black Identity Development.
TAXONOMIC MODELS

Akbar’s (1979) model of racial identity has three components. First was Alien-Self Disorders where the person was preoccupied with material values, and deny race, racism, and oppression in identifying with European culture. Second was Anti-Self Disorders in which the individual identified with European culture and expressed overt and covert hostility toward anything African. The third component was Self-Destructive Disorders where the person identified with neither cultural group and believed in survival at any cost.

The typology proposed by Dizzard (1970) included three aspects to Black psychological functioning. First was the Assimilated type where except for White prejudice, the individual moved comfortably and easily into White culture. Second was the Pathological type where the person exhibited pathology as the predominant response to life’s hardships. The final type was labeled Traditional where the person attempted to preserve a group identity and a sense of dignity.

Gibbs’ (1974) model involved several ways of interacting with the predominant culture. First was the Withdrawal Mode in which feelings of apathy, depression, depersonalization led the person to withdraw from conflictual racial situations. Second was the Separation Mode where the person experienced feelings of anger,
hostility, and conflicts in relationships expressed as rejection of Whites and White culture. **Assimilation Mode** was the third manner by which Blacks interacted with the predominant culture. The Assimilation mode occurred when the social anxiety and desire for acceptance led the person to avoid Blacks and/or conceal racial group membership. Finally, the **Affirmation Mode** was described as occurring when the person accepted self, had a positive racial identity, high achievement motivation, and engaged in autonomous self-actualizing behavior.

The model proposed by Vontress (1971) included three types of African American personality styles. First were **Coloreds** who were people of African descent who perceived and evaluated themselves according to White standards. Second were **Negroes** who were ambiguous and uncertain about how they felt about themselves, Blacks, or Whites. The third category was **Blacks** which included persons who were no longer ashamed of African racial characteristics; they resisted affronts to human dignity as a way of interacting with the world.

These typology models of Black identity proposed to identify different types of Blacks with associated feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. However, the taxonomic models have not received much research attention. Heims (1990) suggested that Black identity development was conceived as a
consequence of societal pressures and their linking of clients' other-directed negative reactions and behaviors to Black rather than assimilated identities or personality types. The typology models of Black identity recognized that Black identity came in many forms. In addition, they challenged the assumption that cultural assimilation was necessarily the most healthy form of adjustment for the Black person.

**NIGRESENCE OR BLACK RACIAL IDENTITY MODELS**

Cross (1971, 1978, 1991) developed a model of racial identity development which he described as the "Negro-to-Black Conversion experience." Cross’s model has received considerable attention and is often cited in the literature concerning racial identity. Before discussing Cross’s model, a brief review of the other process-oriented models of racial identity development will be presented.

Thomas (1971), in reviewing the social-psychological effects of the rise in Black consciousness during the 1960s, stated that "the identity change in Afro-Americans, with the advent of becoming Black, has the therapeutic gain of fostering a resynthesized experience in people, who, in many ways, were mentally ill. The removal of race as a constraining force allows for an existential restructuring of values to promote a more viable self-concept" (p. 103).
He further described a stagewise process by which Afro-Americans experienced a change in racial identity. Thomas asserted that most Blacks at some point or another have been characterized by what he calls "negromachy."

Negromachy was marked by confusion of self-worth where the Black person depended upon White society for definition of self. It was characterized by one’s fixation upon the uniqueness of self, needful of White approval, guilt feelings, perceived threats against one’s survival, and of hateful constraints by others. At this stage, the individual was compliant and subservient.

The first step, according to Thomas, in extracting oneself from a state of Negromachy was Withdrawal. The person must withdraw into him/herself to begin to reassess his/her belief system about his/her own self-worth and definition. Stage one involved Rappin’ on Whitey where anger was directed toward Whites. Stage two involved testifying to the pains endured while denying one’s humanness, and to the anxieties one has about becoming Black. In stage three, the individual immersed him/herself in Black and/or African culture where there was Information Processing about the Black cultural heritage. Stage four involved the individual participating in group activities of a social, political, and creative nature whereby Black identity emerged by way of social action. In the final
stage, the individual transcended race, age, sex, social class, and accepted him/herself as part of humanity in all of its many manifestations. The person no longer used individual cultural standards to judge others.

Jackson (1975) identified a four stage process as the Black identity development model. In stage one - Passive Acceptance - the Black person accepted and conformed to White social, cultural, and institutional standards. In stage two - Active Resistance - the Black person rejected all that was White and attempted to remove all White influences upon his/her life. In stage three - Redirection - the Black individual no longer admired or despised what was White, but rather considered it irrelevant to Black culture. Finally in stage four - Internalization - the Black person acknowledged and appreciated the uniqueness of Black culture, and came to accept and reject various aspects of American culture based on their own merits.

During the same time period that Jackson developed his theory of Black identity development, Toldson and Pasteur (1975) proposed six developmental stages of Black self-discovery. They suggested that the negative Black self-concept existed in the White person’s self-protective interpretation of the Black person’s psyche. Blacks saw a zero image of themselves. If the self-concept of Blacks was
to improve, then Blacks surfaced as victors in the battle for control of Black image-making.

The first developmental stage of Black self-discovery was Separation From Nature where one objectively viewed Black people’s misery as a people without roots, without achievements, and without ancestral heroes. Blacks at this stage were viewed as people without a sense of their past. Stage two involved Submission into Personal Misery where the person understood that racism was responsible for his/her miserable existence in the world. The person felt anger and hostility stemming from racism-based misery. Stage three was labeled Identification with Oppressed People where the Black person felt a sympathetic link with all oppressed people. At this point, there was identification with Blacks all over the world. Stage four was called Extension of Self into the Past where the person recalled not only the inhumaness with which Blacks have been treated, but the glory of past African cultures and the African way of life. Discovering and reconnecting with the past was a significant phase in the rediscovery of one’s true self. Careful Self Analysis was stage five where the Black definition of self which heretofore has been based on a White reference point was abandoned. One realized that he/she was Black and beautiful by a new set of criteria. During stage six, the final stage - Affirmation of Blackness - the person
developed realistic plans for affirming self. A conversion experience occurred where the person’s ego underwent rebirth. The newly discovered self understood that work must be done to create correct Black images to counteract and shape incorrect Black behavior. The reborn ego became the Black image maker.

Milliones’ (1980) stagewise Black identity model began with a Preconscious stage which described individuals who were not engaged in and were antagonistic to conversion to Blackness. Stage two was labeled Confrontation where the person had begun converting to Black. He/she expressed strong anti-White feelings and attitudes. At Stage three which was called Internalization, there was positive acceptance of Blackness rather than denigration of Whiteness. Integration occurred during stage four where the person internalized positive Black consciousness and acted to eradicate oppression of other people.

In 1981, Banks described six stages of ethnicity which had implications for the educational, social, cultural and personal experiences of racial-ethnic minorities. His model reflected the socio-political influence of Blacks occupying minority status in American society.

Stage one has been identified as Ethnic Psychological Captivity where the individual internalized the negative ideologies and beliefs about his/her ethnic group that were
institutionalized within society. Because of self-rejection and low self-esteem, the individual was ashamed of his/her ethnic group and identity. Stage two - Ethnic Encapsulation - was characterized by ethnic encapsulation and ethnic exclusiveness. The individual participated within his or her own ethnic group and believed that his/her ethnic group was superior. Ethnic Identity Clarification occurred during stage three where the individual was able to clarify attitudes and ethnic identity, to reduce intrapsychic conflict. The person learned to accept him/herself and was able to respond positively to outside ethnic groups. Stage four has been labeled Biethnicity. During this stage, the person had a healthy sense of ethnic identity and the psychological characteristics and skills needed to participate in one’s own ethnic culture as well as in another ethnic culture. Banks identified Stage five as Multiethnicity and Reflective Nationalism. The stage five individual had clarified, reflective, and positive, personal, ethnic, and national identifications. The person was self-actualized and could function authentically within many cultures. During stage six - Globalism and Global Competency - the individual had clarified, reflective, and positive ethnic, national, and global identifications and was able to successfully function within other cultures.
Banks (1981) suggested that in designing multi-ethnic experiences, educational practitioners needed to take into consideration the psychological needs and characteristics of ethnic group members and their changing ethnic identities.

Baldwin (1981) proposed a theory of Black personality which took as its conceptual framework the African reality structure. The African reality structure (history, philosophy, culture, and so forth) was referred to as the African Cosmology. Race was conceptualized as the base of cosmology. Cosmology reflected and facilitated the survival thrust of the racial-ethnic group to which it was naturally identified.

Baldwin proposed the existence of **African Cosmology** and **European Cosmology** as well as African culture and European culture. Each defined and reflected their respective survival thrusts. **African Self-Extension Orientation** and **African Self Consciousness** were identified by Baldwin as the two components of Black Personality.

Baldwin (1984) discussed the concept of African Self-Consciousness as central to normal healthy Black personality functioning. African self-consciousness involved (a) the recognition of oneself as "African" and what being "African means," (b) the recognition of African survival and proactive development as one’s first priority value, (c) respect for and active perpetuation of all things
African, and (d) having a standard of conduct toward all things "non-African" and "anti-Black." Baldwin, Duncan and Bell’s (1987) research concluded that African Self-Consciousness appeared to be a significant factor in explaining differences in psychological functioning and behavior among Black students in different socio-cultural settings. Also, they found that Black socio-cultural settings and pro-Black experiences were probably facilitative of healthy Black personality functioning.

Writing from a perspective different from other Black identity theorists, Asante (1988) proposed that the only way to understand African-Americans is through an Afrocentric philosophy. One must understand not only the cultures and values of Africa, but also the philosophies about the nature of human beings and how one should attempt to live.

Asante described a five-stage process of developing Afrocentric perspective which he referred to as the levels of transformation. Level one - **Skin Recognition** - wherein the African American accepted that his or her skin and cultural heritage were Black. Level two - **Environmental Recognition** - occurred when one saw the environment indicting Blackness through discrimination and abuse. Level three - **Personality Awareness** - wherein one began to accept and view African American cultural values and traditions as positive. Level four - **Interest Concerns** - occurred when one accepted all
the principles of the first three levels and demonstrated concern and interest in the problems of African Americans. Level five - *Afrocentric Awareness* - wherein one moved to a conscious level of involvement in the struggle for his or her own mind liberation. It was only at this level that the person was aware of the collective conscious will and had the strength to try to eradicate every trace of powerlessness.

Gay’s (1985) study of ethnic identity development was based upon the models proposed by Cross (1971, 1978), Thomas (1971), and Banks (1981). Thomas, Cross, and Banks, each in their own way, suggested an ideological metamorphosis of ethnic identity and perceived this transformation as a dialectical process. Also, they assumed that the transformation was a liberating process which symbolized a psychologically healthier state of being. The models presented by Thomas, Cross, and Banks utilized the idea of developmental stages to account for movement of the individual from negativism to positivism in his/her self ethnic identity.

Gay restructured Cross’ five stage model into a three stage paradigm. During the first stage *Pre-Encounter*, a person’s ethnic identity was subconscious and subliminal, and was dominated by Euro-American values and conceptions of ethnicity. Gay suggested two dimensions of Pre-Encounter
ethnicity. The first dimension was the time in one’s life when knowledge of ethnicity was not systematically incorporated into an individual’s reasoning, valuing, and feeling structures. It was a pre-conscious, pre-cognitive, and pre-conceptual ethnic identification. The second dimension was far more devastating than the first. It was what Thomas called "Negromachy" and Banks described as "Psychological Captivity." During this time, the person thought of the world as being anti-Black. It was a form of psychological illness characterized by self-ethnic denigration and denial.

Encounter, the second stage of Gay’s process of ethnic identity transformation, involved two aspects: An event or set of events and reactions to these occurrences. The encounter itself was an experience or event that shattered a person’s current feelings about him/herself and his/her ethnic group. Destruction of one’s mental set about ethnicity caused individuals to go in search of new bases upon which to reconstruct their ethnic identities. Cross described the responding behaviors as a continuum of "immersion and emersion." Thomas saw them as including "withdrawal, testifying, and information processing." Banks called them "ethnic encapsulation."

The Post-Encounter stage occurred when the person experienced inner security, self-confidence, and pride in one’s ethnicity. Various conflicts between old and new
world views were resolved. The transformed identity was incorporated into one’s entire persona, and the individual embraced pluralistic and universal perspectives.

Gay (1985) believed that these stages of ethnic identity development provided a useful framework for educators to better understand the variety of attitudes and behaviors of African Americans and other ethnic minority youth.

**CROSS’S MODEL OF BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Cross (1971, 1978, 1991) formulated and tested a five stage developmental process which he called the Negro-to-Black conversion. He hypothesized that a series of stages existed through which Black Americans passed when they encounter Blackness in themselves. Cross suggested that this stagewise transformation occurred without regard to socio-economic status, educational level, and regardless of whether the African American is light-skinned or of ebony hue. The five stages proposed by Cross were labeled as follows: (a) Pre-Encounter, (b) Encounter, (c) Immersion-Emersion, (d) Internalization, and (e) Internalization-Commitment.

In the Pre-Encounter stage, a person tended to identify with White culture and rejected or denied Black culture. The individual thought of the world as being non-Black,
anti-Black, or the opposite of Black. The thoughts and behaviors of the Black person toward self and other Blacks are dictated by the logic, values, and evaluation of White society.

Persons in the Pre-Encounter stage held attitudes toward race that ranged from low salience to race neutrality to anti-Black. Persons who held low salience views did not deny being Black, but this physical fact was thought to play an insignificant role in their everyday lives. The Pre-Encounter person attached some significance to race, not as a proactive force or cultural issue, but as a social stigma that must be negotiated from time to time. Anti-Blackness was the extreme racial pattern to be found in Pre-Encounter Blacks. Black anti-Blacks often viewed Black people from a perspective similar to that of White racists. Blacks who were at the Pre-Encounter stage were adversely affected by miseducation, an Eurocentric cultural frame of reference, race-image anxiety, a race-conflict resolution model that stressed assimilation-integration objectives, and a value system that gave preference to other than Afrocentric priorities (Cross, 1991).

Pre-Encounter Blacks distrusted Black-controlled businesses or organizations. Along with the self-hatred, Blacks at this stage suffer from a depressed affect. They preferred to be called "Negro," "Civilized," "Colored,"
"Human being," or "American citizen." In becoming a good American, the Black person had to become anti-Black and anti-African.

The **Encounter** stage was signaled by a significant event which forced the pre-encounter Black to question his/her current feelings about him/herself. The encounter must shatter the relevance of the person’s current identity and world view, and at the same time provide some hint of the direction in which to point the person undergoing change.

**Encounter** entails two steps: First, experiencing the encounter, and Second, personalizing the encounter where the person reinterpreted the world as a consequence of the encounter. Cross suggested that just about every Black person was exposed to information or some sort of encounter, but unless the person personalized the encounter, his or her current world view or attitude about race may go unchanged.

The person in the **Encounter** stage rejected previous identification with White culture and sought identification with Black culture. The individual accepted certain factors about the Black experience and dropped others. Guilt and anxiety were experienced by the Black person who began a frantic, obsessive, an extremely motivated search for Black identity.

According to Cross (1991), the **Immersion-Emersion** stage of **Negrescence** addressed the most sensational aspect of Black
identity development; it represented the "vortex of psychological nigresence" (p. 201). Immersion-Emersion was a period of transition and the individual began to demolish the old perspective and searched for a new understanding of self as Black. The immersion in the world of Blackness involved a turning inward and the view that everything of value must be Black.

The Immersion-Emersion person completely identified with Black culture and denigrated White culture. The immersion was a strong dominating sensation constantly being energized by Black rage, guilt, and a developing sense of Black pride. Black was beautiful as the person accepted his/her physical characteristics. Along with a turning inward and turning away from the White world and White perspective, a need to "confront the man" developed. Confrontation, bluntness, and an either/or mentality were the primary basis for communicating with other people, Black or White. The Black person engaged in activities designed to prove his/her Blackness.

Individuals might stagnate at the immersion stage. They were described as persons having a "pseudo" Black identity, because it was based upon the hatred and negation of White people rather than on the affirmation of a pro-Black perspective. In addition to possibly stagnating at the Immersion stage, the person could regress to Pre-
encounter attitudes if the drive for change in a more positive direction was not strong enough. Fixation could occur where the individual was overwhelmed with hate for White people.

Another response to the Immersion-Emersion experience was "dropping out" of any involvement with Black issues. Two kinds of dropouts were apparent. One type was the person who seemed exhausted by it all, perhaps seeing the "race problem" as insurmountable and without solution. The second kind of dropout included psychologically healthy persons who dropped out because they have achieved a "feel good" attitude about their personal, private, internal sense of Blackness and moved on to what they perceived as more important issues in life.

From the immersion into Blackness, the individual emerged from the dead-end, either/or, simplistic, racist aspects of the immersion experience. The person begins to "level off" and control his/her experiences. This emergence was the second part of the Immersion-Emersion stage.

**Internalization** was the fourth stage in the Cross model. Internalization marked the point of dissonance resolution and a reconstitution of one’s steady-state personality and cognitive style. The person perceived himself or herself to be totally changed, with a new world view and a revitalized personality. The individual
internalized Black culture and transcended racism; the person focused on things other than him/herself and his/her own racial group. Internalization occurred as the person worked through the challenges and problems of the transitional period of Immersion-Emersion.

While advanced Black identity development resulted in one’s giving high salience to issues of race and culture, not every person in the internalization stage showed the same degree of salience for Blackness. Some Blacks reaching the internalization stage developed a bicultural or multicultural reference group orientation. Cross (1991) emphasized that arriving at internalization did not result in ideological unity (p. 213). Internalization became a balancing and synthesizing of Blackness with other demands of personhood, such as one’s sexual identity, occupational identity, religious or spiritual identity, and various role identities, aspects of which might be very race sensitive or race neutral.

Blacks at the internalization stage might engage in bridging which was an identity function where the person makes connections with other groups, organizations, and individuals who constituted the larger non-Black world. Cross suggested that bridging might be viewed as a metaphor for future change in Black identity. The internalized Black identity functioned to fulfill the self-protection, social
anchorage, and bridging needs of the individual African American.

The fifth and final stage of Cross's model has been labeled Internalization-Commitment. The attitudes, behaviors, values, and personality functioning of Blacks in stage four Internalization and stage five Internalization-Commitment were quite similar. Characteristic of this stage were those Blacks who devoted an extended period of time or a life time to finding ways to translate their personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment.

Cross (1971) proposed that movement through each stage of Black identity development was triggered by anxiety created by inadequate identity resolution or conflicting world views of who one was as a Black person. The individual might question his/her identity and sense of Blackness evolving from the Black experience. Upon adequate resolution of the person's identity crisis presented by each stage of identity development, the individual might become fixed at a particular stage or he/she might recycle through one or more stages of Black identity development as described by Cross.
HELMS' DISCUSSION OF THE DYNAMICS OF CROSS’S MODEL

Helms (1986) proposed that Cross’s model was such that each stage could be considered as a distinct "world view," by which she meant cognitive templates that people use to organize information, especially racial information, about themselves, other people, and institutions. Furthermore, Helms (1989) argued that it might be useful to think of each stage as bimodal, that is, as having two potentially distinguishable forms of expression.

Mode I could be described as an active behavioral function of each stage in the Cross model. Mode II represented a passive behavioral function of each stage. Describing the characteristic stage as active or passive resulted in the determination of whether the individual was demonstrating a healthy personal identity. Helms examined the Pre-encounter stage to illustrate this bimodal conceptualization.

Active Pre-encounter was originally described by Cross (1971, 1978). In this form of Pre-encounter, Helms (1989) suggested that the person deliberately idealized Whiteness and White culture and denigrated Blacks and Black culture through behaviors as well as attitudes. Passive Pre-encounter persons were hard to recognize because their world views so clearly mirrored that which was dominant in White society. This type of passive Pre-encounter person believed
that personal effort guaranteed passage into White culture. Such persons were highly motivated to be accepted by Whites and led their lives in ways that they thought would earn them such acceptance.

The four or five stages of racial identity described by Cross differed in emotional, behavioral, and cognitive expression. Within each stage, personal identity, reference group orientation, and ascribed identity tended to vary. Theoretically, each Black person could potentially progress from the least developed stage to the most developed. In each case, the behavioral, cognitive and emotional expression of the particular stage was bimodal with the active or passive expression having significance for the individual's world view, interaction with others, and self concept.

PARHAM’S RECYCLING THEORY

A complete Nigrescence cycle involved traversing all four or five stages of the Cross model. Nigrescence, the process of becoming Black, was originally conceived as a one-time event in the life of a person. However, Parham (1989) has theorized a recycling process occurring over the lifespan of the individual. Parham has noted that having completed their original Nigrescence cycle at an earlier point in the lifespan (for example in adolescence or early
adulthood), some people might find that the challenges unique to another lifespan phase (middle age or late adulthood) might lead to a recycling through some of the Nigrescence stages.

In recycling, a person searched for new answers and continued growth in his/her thinking about what it means to be Black. Depending on the nature and intensity of the new encounter, recycling might vary from a mild refocusing experience to passage completely through Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization stages.

IMPLICATIONS OF MODELS OF BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Models of Black identity development, especially the Cross model, dealt with the affective, psychosocial, and cognitive functioning of Black people. Cross’s model had conceptualized Black identity development in such a way that it tended to fill the gaps in traditional psychosocial theories with respect to racial-ethnic development. The limitations of student development theories in describing change and development of Black students were addressed through the various models of Black identity development. Cross’s model had special significance for practitioners, theorists, and researchers of higher education.

Student development theories have been criticized for assuming that minority student development occurred in the
same manner and with the same significance as that of White students (Barr, & Upcraft, 1990). The development of African Americans had not been fully explained in a manner that would enable practitioners to design learning experiences and growth enhancing environments for these students. Wright (1987) suggests that the overwhelming evidence indicated that being raised in a minority culture in a majority society created different developmental outcomes for youth of that minority culture.

Cross’s model of Black identity development and personality functioning provided guidance concerning the parameters of the types of educational experiences which would be enabling for Blacks. He described the characteristics of Blacks at each stage of development from a behavioral perspective. The nature and process of Black identity formation as described by Cross’s model might be beneficial as a way of conceptualizing characteristics of Black individuals and the nature of the college or university environment necessary for facilitating the persistence and successful performance of African American students.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology and procedure of this study. Topics which will be discussed in this chapter include the following: (a) the research method; (b) the participants; (c) the setting; (d) data collection procedures; (e) coding and analysis of data; and (f) limitations of the study.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature and process of Black identity development among a select group of Black graduate students at Virginia Tech. Analysis of the stages and dimensions of Black identity development as proposed by Cross (1991) was performed through a qualitative research methodology. While the stages and dimensions of Cross’s model were not well defined and operationalized, the method of inquiry proposed here served to explore more fully Cross’s stages and dimensions of Black identity development.

Due to the nature of the phenomenon being studied, i.e. Black identity development, the qualitative indepth interview method was considered the most appropriate form of data collection. Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested that the ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilizing their value and belief
frameworks, was virtually impossible without face-to-face and verbal interaction with them. Thus, indepth interviewing allowed the researcher to understand how a person thinks, feels, and reasons about a life event. Participants in this study were asked via three phases of open-ended interviews to tell their own story about the nature and process of Black identity development. The self-reported data collected through qualitative interviewing may or may not be consistent with Cross’s propositions.

Patton (1980) considered indepth interviewing an appropriate method of qualitative inquiry because the purpose of interviewing was to find out what was on someone’s mind. Participants were interviewed to find out from them things we could not directly observe. The nature and process of Black identity development could not be directly observed, thereby making indepth interviewing necessary in order to understand Cross’s conceptualization of the phenomenon.

In addition, Patton believed that we could not observe everything; we could not observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. Patton argued that we have to ask questions about these things. He suggested that the purpose of interviewing was to allow the researcher to enter into the other person’s perspective. Indepth interviews organized in
three phases allowed for as much freedom of expression as was possible for the participants in terms of describing their individual experiences of identity development.

Lythcott and Duschl (1990) provided a rationale for qualitative research evolving from research questions well-suited to investigation by way of interviews. They suggested that through this method the value of data, with respect to the appropriate research question, was directly linked to having participants talk freely and at length, using their own words and their own meanings. It was from data of this nature that conclusions about the participants’ conceptions could be drawn.

The three phases of interviewing provided a conceptual framework through which Black identity could be examined. Miles and Huberman (1984) proposed that a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied—the key factors or variables—and the presumed relationship among them. Through an exploratory design of qualitative inquiry, this study proposed a descriptive framework to be presented in narrative form by specifying what aspects of Black identity development would be investigated.

Distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative methods may not be beneficial as both methods could be integrated depending upon the nature of the phenomenon being
studied. However, Berg (1989) differentiated between qualitative and quantitative approaches by suggesting that qualitative research referred to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things while quantitative research referred to counts and measures of things. "How much" and "how many" did not represent useful forms of data when examining the nature and process of Black identity development.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

For purposes of this study, twelve Black graduate students with an equal number of males and females were selected to be participants. Participants were identified through the University Affirmative Action Office.

The graduate students were between the ages of 30 and 45 as a means of adding to the richness of the data. In addition, the selected participants in this age category may be recycling through identity stages as proposed by Parham (1989). Such a circumstance might enhance the descriptive process employed to examine Black identity development along the dimensions of Cross's model.

While educational level and major field of study might be assumed to be a distinguishing variable in terms of one's identity development, no distinction was made in these variables for the purposes of this study. Being graduate
students without specific reference to educational level or major field of study may enhance the capability of participants to articulate their experience as Black individuals and engage in insightful discussion of their identity development.

Each participant was asked to sign a contract of participation in the study (See Appendix A). The participation agreement explained the nature of the study, and how data were collected and used. Also, confidentiality concerns were addressed in the participation agreement.

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, commonly referred to as Virginia Tech, is a predominantly White, comprehensive land grant institution with a student enrollment of over 23,000. Virginia Tech is situated in Blacksburg, Virginia. Blacksburg is the largest incorporated town in Virginia with a population of approximately 35,000. Among the overall student population, 1,100 students are Black with 160 being Black graduate students.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to describe the development of identity among a select group of Black
graduate students along the dimensions of Cross's model of Black identity development. Also, examination of variation in salience of being Black, the impact of parental values and attitudes, and gender differences were explored.

Indepth interviews (McCracken, 1988) were conducted with the participants whereby they were prompted to tell their own story regarding the nature and process of Black identity development. Three structured, open-ended interviews (Patton, 1990) were used to gather data.

The purpose of interviewing was to allow the researcher to enter into the participants' perspective. Basic to this research technique was the assumption that the perspective of participants was meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit.

In the study, each indepth, open-ended interview consisted of a series of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with the same words. Even though this process reduced flexibility and spontaneity, it reduced the possibility of researcher effects and bias which could arise through having different questions asked of respondents.

The systematic, structured format of interview questions facilitated data analysis by reducing the need for
interviewer judgement in evaluating the data. Data
collection in this format was systematic and categorical.

Interview protocols used in this study were developed
from the values, attitudes, and behaviors found within and
between the stages of Black identity development described
by Cross. All interview questions were designed by the
researcher to facilitate data collection and analysis
concerning the phenomenon of Black identity development.

Participant interviews occurred in three phases. Each
interview lasted about one hour to one and a half hours in
length. Audio tapes were made of each conversation. The
audio tapes were transcribed by the researcher which allowed
data analysis to occur throughout the entire interview
process.

Data collected during each phase of interviews allowed
the researcher to make whatever modifications to the
structured interview format deemed necessary. A coding
process was used in data analysis. Codes were developed in
accordance with the five purposes of this study and were
used to identify various themes which emerged during data
analysis.

**Phase I Data Collection**

During the initial phase of data collection, each
participant was asked to complete a Personal Data Form
(Appendix B). The Personal Data Form enabled the collection of demographic information in a systematic manner.

During Phase I, participants were initially asked to respond to the general question "Who are you?" by giving twenty responses in their own words. Upon completion of this initial exercise, participants were asked one question concerning Black identity development. This general question was asked in the most non-directive and unobtrusive manner possible (McCracken, 1988). Appendix C contains the overall general question concerning the participants' experience with Black identity development.

Qualitative interviewing in this manner allowed respondents to tell their own story in their own words. The most fundamental question underlying this study was what accounted for the participants’ feelings about who they were as Black Americans.

**Phase II Data Collection**

Data analysis and coding occurred at the outset of data collection. Analysis of data during Phase One was used to modify the interview protocol used during Phase II of data collection. A standardized, open-ended interview protocol can be found in Appendix D. As a result of ongoing data analysis, a revised Phase II Interview Protocol was developed. This revised protocol can be found in Appendix
E. The questions were constructed reflecting the values, attitudes, and behaviors characteristic of the stages of the Black identity development model proposed by Cross. Each participant was asked to respond to the same series of questions. Such a format limited researcher effects and bias. Also, this systematic format facilitated data analysis.

Phase III Data Collection

Phase III data collection involved a standardized, open-ended indepth interview which relied upon quotes from Black authors concerning various aspects of being Black and the Black experience. Quotes from selected Black authors can be found in Appendix F. Each quote reflected various attitudes, values, and behaviors characteristic within and between Cross’s stages of Black identity development. Participants were asked to respond to whatever these quotes imply about their sense of who they were and their feelings as Black individuals. The quotes were displayed on 5 x 7 index cards and presented separately to the respondents.

The quotes by selected Black authors functioned as a stimulus for open discussion concerning being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience. In addition, exploration of Black literature provided a major aspect of inquiry relied upon by Cross (1971) in the development of
his model of Black identity development which he initially described as the Negro-to-Black Conversion experience.

By way of these three phases of interviewing, data were generated which examined the five research questions guiding this study. The interview data were collected and analyzed simultaneously from the beginning of the study. Upon completion of each interview which was conducted at two week-week intervals, the audio tapes were transcribed and analyzed in relation to any field notes and memoing regarding the data.

CODING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Specific systematic procedures were used to analyze data. The data were coded by the researcher for as many categories as possible. Joint collection, coding, and analysis of data were basic to qualitative methods of inquiry. Glaser (1978) described the general analytical procedure as being one where the researcher will elicit codes from raw data from the start of data collection through constant comparative analysis as the data pour in. Then to use the codes to direct further data collection, from which the codes are further theoretically developed with respect to their various properties and their connections with other codes until saturated. Theoretical sampling on any code ceases when it is saturated, elaborated and integrated into emerging theory. (p. 36)
Coding of data began at the first day of data gathering. After each interview, the researcher transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed field notes for purposes of identifying emerging themes and categories.

Data from interviews and field notes were initially coded into as many categories, incidents, and items discussed as possible. Through the process of open coding, core variables and dimensions of Black identity development emerged.

Data analysis methods described in Glaser and Strauss (1967) were used to code and sort the data in relation to the research questions posed in this study. For example, Cross suggested a negative to positive progression in Black identity development. Data relating to the five stages of Cross's model were coded with negative and positive weights depending on the qualities, behaviors, and values describing each stage. Data describing any new stages or categories were coded and weighted accordingly.

As categories of data analysis evolved, the basic rule of the constant comparative method was applied. The constant comparative method suggested that while coding an incident for a category, the researcher should compare it with the previous incidents in the same or different groups which have been coded in the same category (Glaser &
Strauss, 1967). Such a process resulted in a reduction of data whereby major themes and categories evolved.

Data related to salience of Blackness and the Black experience were categorized as low, moderate, or high salience. This information was cross-referenced with each stage of Cross’s model.

In terms of parental influence regarding identity development, words, phrases, and activities were identified and discussed with regard to their impact upon the nature and process of Black identity development. Themes relating to parental influences were coded and categorized according to significance of impact as perceived by participants.

Finally, data relating to female or male perspectives were described and integrated into a description of the identity development process. Through constant comparison of the responses of participants during each phase of data collection, the researcher was able to examine the phenomenon of Black identity development in terms of a full range of categories and themes emerging from the data.

Throughout coding and analysis, the qualitative data concerning Black identity development became rich, full, earthy, holistic, and real. The basic process of data analysis involved identification of primary issues and themes. As a result of data reduction procedures, there was a strong need to establish meaning in a systematic way.
Data reduction was a form of analysis which refined, iterated, and revised frameworks, suggested new leads for further data collection, and made data more available for final analysis. Data analysis and data collection became intertwined at the initial design and implementation of this study.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations impinge upon this study. The primary limitations of this study were focused upon the indepth interview method used in data collection. Limitations associated with indepth, standarized interviews reflected on the interviewer, the interviewees, and the instruments employed in the process. This method was susceptible to interviewer bias.

Researcher effects and bias may influence the outcomes of the data generated. The quality of the interview relied upon the ability and willingness of the respondents to articulate perceptions and to share accounts of experiences which were personal and confidential.

The quality of the conversation and interaction between the researcher and participants was contingent upon the rapport established and maintained by the interviewer. Standardized, open-ended questions imposed several restrictions upon the conversation between the interviewer
and the respondents. This format of indepth interviewing was sequenced from general to specific inquiry which became more reactive as the process continued with participants disclosing the nature and process of their identity development.

In addition to limitations imposed by the qualitative research method and indepth interviewing technique, several other limitations impinged upon this study. These include the following:

1. The target population for this study was twelve Black graduate students enrolled at Virginia Tech who were between the ages of 30 and 45. Due to the nature of this study and the small number of participants, the results cannot be generalized beyond the sample and setting of this study.

2. This study required participants to provide self-reported data concerning their identity development in response to structured interview protocols.

3. Information regarding Black identity development was gathered using three interview protocols, administered at two-week intervals throughout the study.

4. Interview protocols were constructed in accordance with the characteristics of the Pre-Encounter,
Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment stages of Cross’s model of Black identity development.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF STUDY

This chapter will present a summary of the findings in this study. Also, discussion includes the modifications in research design, analytical format and process, description of participants, Nigrescence stage of participants, and Pre-encounter Stabilization. Finally, the following dimensions of Black identity development will be discussed: (1) Low salience attitudes, (2) High salience attitudes, (3) Assimilation/Integration, (4) Eurocentric/Afrocentric world view, (5) Spotlight/Race-Image Anxiety, (6) Social stigma attitudes, (7) Anti-Black attitudes, (8) Miseducation, (9) Value structure/Value orientation, (10) Black identity, (11) Parental influence, (12) Gender differences, (13) Career aspirations, and (14) Blackness/The Black experience. The five research questions guiding this study will be specifically addressed in the summary of the findings.

MODIFICATION TO RESEARCH DESIGN AS OUTLINED IN CHAPTER III

This study originally proposed to interview 12 Black graduate students between the ages of 30 to 45. However, as the study progressed, the researcher reduced the lower age limit to age 28 in order to have the sufficient number of participants. At the outset of the study, several graduate students declined to participate because the interviews were
going to be audio taped, and because they did not feel they could give the necessary time to this study. Many Black graduate students were ineligible due to the age stipulation. Changing the age requirements allowed the researcher to have the desired level of participation.

During the process of data collection, significant responses to the Phase I General Interview Protocol resulted in modification in the Phase II Interview Protocol. Several questions were deleted and other more appropriate questions were added. See Appendix D for the original Phase II Interview Protocol. See Appendix E for the Revised Phase II Protocol. Changes in the questions asked were made as a way to insure that all participants would be asked the same questions and to insure consistency in the data collected.

**ANALYSIS FORMAT**

The stories of the Black graduate students interviewed for this study provided the means to analyze the various themes involved with the identity development process as proposed by Cross (1991). As a result of a comparative data analysis, several themes emerged which were consistent with the variables discussed in the Cross model. Data analysis included identifying the qualities and characteristics of the various stages of Cross's model. Participants' comments and stories told were assessed and evaluated in terms of
whether they were similar or consistent with Cross’s model. Interview transcripts and analysis of one participant’s comments during the three interviews can be found in Appendices G, H, and I, respectively. The same analytical format was used to evaluate the comments of all the participants.

To fully understand the story told by these graduate students, it was necessary to know about their childhoods, their professional goals, and how it was that they came to Virginia Tech. A brief biographical description of each of the 12 Black graduate students who shared their very personal thoughts and feelings for the purpose of this study will be presented in the following section. Participants in the journey into Black identity and the Black experience were given first-name pseudonyms.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Jeremy. Jeremy was a 32-year old doctoral student majoring in electrical engineering. He shared during the first interview that he was engaged to a White woman whom he feels does not negatively impact upon his feelings about himself as a Black man. Both of Jeremy’s parents were high school graduates and had a tremendous influence upon his identity and that of his sister, his only sibling. Jeremy was taught to believe in a strong work ethic by his parents.
He repeatedly described himself as a hard working individual who takes nothing for granted. He completed his undergraduate studies at an historically Black college or university (HBCU) where he was encouraged to perform consistently well. His career goal was to become a university professor at a major research university. Jeremy grew up in the Baptist church and characterized his childhood as being very religious. During the interviews he repeatedly shared that he was not a joiner and was not very active in Black causes. He believed in the American dream and had a great deal of confidence that he would accomplish his goals.

Karen. Karen described herself as being a Black woman. She has worked as a program administrator at a predominantly White university (PWU) for 11 years. Her career goal was to become a senior administrator where she would serve as the director of an educational program. Karen was 37 years old and an only child. Her parents were high school graduates. While her family was mostly Protestant, Karen was Catholic and was very active in the Catholic church.

Karen was proud of her family and felt she had many successful role models. Her parents were very instrumental in her success and in her feelings about herself as a Black woman. Karen was single and had no children. In her spare time, she was active with the church planning committee, the
local transit authority and the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. Karen attended the same PWU for her B.S. and Masters degrees. She was currently enrolled part-time in the Industrial Systems Engineering program at Virginia Tech.

Barbara. Barbara was the only participant in this study who was widowed. She was a single mother of a three year old little boy. Barbara was enrolled in the College of Education’s Curriculum and Instruction program of study. Her career goal was to become a college professor. She has worked as an elementary school teacher for one year.

Both of Barbara’s parents had Masters degrees and were retired principals. They were a tremendous inspiration to Barbara. Barbara felt the answer to many problems in the Black community was education. She was very active in the community through an after-school youth program. Barbara grew up in the church and was extremely involved in the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World Abundant Grace Outreach Ministries.

Gloria. Gloria was very soft spoken and introverted during the interviews. She described herself as an African American who was undergoing several major transitions in her life. She was a newlywed and had not made any kind of decision to have children.

As a first year doctoral student in business, her career goal was to own her own business some day. Gloria’s
parents are both college graduates. Her mother was a registered nurse while her father was a postal worker who had previously retired from the Navy.

Gloria is 32 years old and a member of the International Visual Literacy Association and the Association of Educational Communication and Technology. She was a Baptist and grew up in the church. Motivating young Black children to excel in school was one of her strong beliefs about how to improve adverse conditions in the Black community. Gloria received her B.S. and Masters degrees from PWUs.

Timothy. Timothy was a 31-year old man who described himself as an African American. He further described himself as a hard working individual who cared about other people. Timothy was in his third year of doctoral study in mechanical engineering. He was single and had no children.

Timothy had two brothers and one sister who have all attended college. His father had a Ph.D. in engineering. His mother was a high school graduate. Timothy’s career goals included conducting industrial research and teaching at the college level. Prior to coming to Virginia Tech, Timothy spent four years working as a consulting engineer for the Factory Mutual Engineering Association. He received his B.S. and M.S. from the same PWU.
Timothy had a special interest in encouraging young Blacks to do well in mathematics and science. His parents were very significant players in his life. He admired his dad and desired to be just like him. Timothy grew up in the church and admitted that now he was a Christian searching for a church home.

**Angela.** Angela was a divorced single mother of a 12-year old son. She was 35 years old and a doctoral student in Educational Research. Her career goal was to become a senior administrator in higher education. Angela received her B.S. and M.S. degrees from the same PWU.

Both her parents were very influential in her success. They were high school graduates who emphasized the significance of education. Her mother was a dental technician and her father was a maintenance worker.

In addition to her parents, Angela was very motivated by her participation in the Upward Bound Program for Disadvantaged Students. Because of her son, she was involved with his school’s Athletic Boosters. Professionally, Angela was a member of the National Educational Research Association. Her religious affiliation was Pentecostal, but she was not currently active in any church.

**Valerie.** Valerie was a 42-year old Masters student with a ten year old son. She was married and described
herself first as a Christian and secondly as a Black American. She was very active in her church. Her career goal is to be a professional Christian counselor in a college setting.

Valerie’s mother graduated high school and attended college for a while. She was a retired secretary. Her father was also a high school graduate and was a retired factory worker. Valerie took pride in who she was as a Black woman. Her parents encouraged her to excel in school so that she could grow up to be anything she wanted. Valerie completed her undergraduate study at a PWU.

Valerie was just beginning to become active in professional organizations concerned with counseling and education. She was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Michael. As one of the youngest participants in this study, Michael described himself as a Black American. He was 28 years old and married with no children. Michael was a doctoral student in Electrical Engineering. His career aspirations included becoming a university professor and becoming a mentor for undergraduate engineering students. For his B.S. degree, Michael attended an HBCU. For his M.S. degree, he went to an ivy league PWU which had the reputation of being one of the best engineering universities in the country.
Michael’s mother had a high school education and worked as an office clerk. His father had an elementary education and was a truck driver. They both inspired him to excel and gave him a lot of confidence. Michael was very verbal during each interview. He was a student leader at Virginia Tech. He was a member of several professional organizations related to engineering. While Michael grew up in the Baptist church, he confessed that he had not taken the time to get involved with any church since he has been at Virginia Tech.

Roger. Roger was a 30-year old doctoral student studying Public Administration. He described himself as a strong Black male. Roger was single with no children. He inherited a strong work ethic from his parents who gave him a great deal of encouragement while growing up. Roger’s mother completed the tenth grade and worked in retail sales. His father completed the eleventh grade and worked as a production worker. He shared in the initial interview that education was very important to his parents.

Prior to coming to Virginia Tech, Roger attended two HBCUs for his B.S. and M.S. degrees. He described his experience at both HBCUs as having a profound affect upon how he feels as a Black professional. Roger’s career aspirations included becoming a city manager or mayor and teaching at the college level. He was very active in the
graduate chapter of the historically Black Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He grew up in the Baptist church. Religion was very important to him even though he was not currently active in any church.

Charles. Charles was a 28-year old doctoral student in Family Studies. He described himself as Black. He was single and had no children. Charles attended PWUs for his B.S. and M.S. degrees. This experience really prepared him for graduate study at Virginia Tech. He felt he knew what to expect.

Charles’ career goal was to become a college professor and to conduct research. He believed the most important factor in his success was his parents. They encouraged him and supported his dreams. His mother was a high school graduate and worked as a secretary. His father graduated high school and was a production worker. They emphasized the importance of working hard and doing well in school.

Charles was a member of several professional organizations. He was not really involved in Black causes in the community. He grew up in the Methodist church and felt that a belief in God was important for Blacks to have in order to be successful.

Janet. Janet was a very attractive, well dressed divorcee’. She was the mother of two children, a son and a daughter. She was a 35-year old doctoral student in Higher
Education Administration. Janet described herself as a Black American. She taught school in a middle school and her career goal was to be superintendent of an urban school system.

Both of Janet’s parents completed high school. Her mother was a homemaker and her father worked in the post office. They were very supportive and encouraging in terms of her education and career interests.

Janet said she was a natural-born teacher. She believed being in the public schools was the best place to be to have a positive influence on Black children. She was very active in the Virginia Teachers Association, Literacy Volunteers of America, and the graduate chapter of historically Black Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

Janet grew up in the church and believed that participating in church activities had a lot to do with who she was as a Black woman. She felt she was a good parent but was concerned that her children did not have a strong male role model. Janet attended an HBCU for her B.S. degree and a PWU for her M.S. Both degrees were in Education. She was a Christian and talked about her walk with Christ a great deal during the interviews.

Samuel. Samuel was a 30-year old single male with no children. He was a doctoral student studying Molecular
Biology. His career goal was to become a research scientist. He described himself as Black.

Samuel’s parents were instrumental in his positive attitude toward himself. He described his parents as strong people who sacrificed a lot so that their children could have the best. They taught him a strong work ethic. Samuel works hard all the time. His mother completed high school and was a seamstress. His father completed the eighth grade and was a manual laborer.

Samuel attended Virginia Tech as an undergraduate student majoring in Biology. He was contemplating leaving Virginia Tech because his major advisor has moved to Korea.

Samuel participated in the local Big Brother/Big Sister Program. He had done so since he was an undergraduate. He spends a lot of time with his little brother. Samuel grew up in the Baptist church and that was a central part of his childhood.

**ANALYTICAL PROCESS**

The constant comparative method of data collection and analysis, as described by Glaser and Straus (1967), was employed in this study. Data collection was conducted during three phases of indepth interviews. The process of drawing conclusions began early in the study. Formal analysis of the data began with the first interview and
continued until the end of data collection. Major themes or categories of data relevant to Black identity development as conceptualized by Cross emerged from the comments of the participants. The voices of the Black graduate students captured the nature and process of Black identity development.

Conclusions drawn from the themes actually evolved from the stories told by the Black graduate students. They spoke clearly and unequivocally about their personal experiences with the identity development process. The researcher examined a majority of comments, not all, which related to the characteristics of Black identity development as described in Cross’s model.

From the summary of comments about each theme or category, the researcher was able to verify whether the specific theme or category was characteristic of Cross’s model. Through the voices of the graduate students, the researcher could describe the intensity and frequency of each theme or category. The presence and scope of each theme was emphasized in the analysis of data. No attempt was made by the researcher to indicate an order of importance of each theme or category. Thus, no one theme was more important than any other.

Brief biographical descriptions of the participants were presented earlier in this chapter. Next, data analysis
will proceed with the categorization of participants in a particular stage of Cross's model. The final procedure of analysis will be to analyze Black identity development using the comments made by the students to describe the nature and process of their identity development.

**NIGRESENCE STAGE OF PARTICIPANTS**

In accordance with Cross's model, participants in this study demonstrated characteristics of the Pre-encounter stage. Pre-encounter attitudes and characteristics such as self-referents, low-salience attitudes, social stigma, anti-Black attitudes, Miseducation and Eurocentric world view were shared through their voices discussing their Blackness and the Black experience. As Helms (1990) distinguished between Active and Passive Pre-encounter, these participants were more Passive than Active in their Pre-encounter attitudes, characteristics, and behaviors.

Cross proposed that Nigrescence was a resocializing experience; it sought to transform a preexisting non-Africentric identity into one that was Afrocentric. The focus of the Pre-encounter stage was the preexisting identity, the identity to be changed. Several comments to the question of who are you illustrated a low salience of Blackness. Participants responded, "I am (Karen) ____ , a Black woman, single, professional, spiritual, motivated."
Valerie responded, "I see myself as a Christian first. ... Also I realize that I am a Black female ... As a Black female I grew up in the sixties and experienced the trauma of that time."

"Black American" was the most common description used by participants to describe themselves.

For Samuel, it was more important to be called by his name. He said, "There is a large desire in this country to categorize people or groups whether we should be called Black, or Negro-American, or African-American. It doesn’t really matter to me. But again if I had a preference, African-American would be it." One other interesting response was from Jeremy.

"I prefer to be called (Jeremy). There’s nothing wrong with African-American or Black. I think of myself as Jeremy and being Black or being African-American is not an issue with me. My parents taught me to have pride in my life. Being Black doesn’t make any difference in getting things done. I was taught to work hard not because I am Black but because hard work is what it takes for anyone to make it in this world."

Michael discussed his identity in such a way that he was trying to integrate being Black and American. He said

"I think my identity is Black American ... I’m not a descendent of Africa because I don’t know what part of Africa I’m from. I don’t know any other culture. I know a lot about America. This is where I was raised so I guess I see myself as an American and I see myself as being Black and the two go hand-in-hand."
Characteristics of Pre-encounter beyond the self-referent factor included an attitude that hard work and determination would enable the Black person to gain entry into the dominant culture, and would facilitate acceptance by White society. There tended to be a definite perception on the part of Pre-encounter Blacks that education and assimilation into the majority society would make a difference to the success of Blacks. Roger suggested that

"Education is a way (Blacks) can develop pride in ourselves as individuals and pride in ourselves as a group of people. I have always liked who I am. I am Black and everyday I look in the mirror and know that I am a Black man. I don't feel any limitations but I recognize that I have to work hard, harder than most White people, if I am to become successful ... To be successful does not depend on a person's race."

Roger went on to say ...

"It's tough being Black and being an American. ... The American dream was not intended for Blacks. White people have determined by some unjust standard that I am not entitled to the American dream. But I feel that I am entitled to the fruits of my labor. I know that I can be anything that I want to be depending on how hard I am willing to work."

While participants related an overall low salience toward Blackness, Cross suggested that as long as their Pre-encounter attitudes brought them a sense of fulfillment, a meaningful existence, and an internal sense of stability, order, and harmony, such persons would probably not need any identity change, let alone a movement toward Afrocentricity.
Helms’ notion of passive Pre-encounter was apparent with the participants. However, Cross’s suggestion that Nigrescence might not be necessary was only a part of his description of the Pre-encounter stage. Participants in this study demonstrated more intense attitudes and behaviors of Pre-encounter which indicated an additional stage of identity development. As a result of the intensity of feelings and attitudes in terms of personal identity, ascribed identity, and reference group orientation, the additional stage might appropriately be called Pre-encounter Stabilization.

**PRE-ENCOUNTER STABILIZATION**

Pre-encounter Stabilization was a stage discovered between Pre-encounter and Encounter. Participants demonstrated a strong positive sense of who they were as Black individuals and as members of a minority group. Their voices told stories that indicated that their Nigrescence stage was more than Pre-encounter, but less than Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization.

Most participants shared experiences similar to that identified by Cross’s model. However, participants indicated that they had not had or could not think of a particular event or experience which altered their sense of who they were or their world view as Blacks. Pre-encounter characteristics were mediated by deeply felt race-neutral
attitudes and feelings characteristic of positive human development. One participant, Karen, suggested that specific racial encounters were not necessary in her human development because she was surrounded by positive role models, strong and successful Black women, when she was growing up. Barbara stated that

"Black or African-American (as an ethnic description) is fine. And one of the reasons why is because I think we spend too much time trying to determine what we should be called as opposed to trying to cure some of the ills that exist for society. ... My ethnicity, my heritage, is important to me but at the same time, I have spent so much time in a structured environment until I'm secure concerning who I am."

Other participants described themselves with less emphasis on Blackness and more emphasis upon their personal qualities which make them unique individuals who have high self-esteem, positive personalities, and many characteristics of well-adjusted human beings. Timothy shared that

"I am a self-starter. I pretty much just trudge on. I am used to working on my own and just finding a way to do things ... However, I know there are others who aren't quite like that, and I like to try to help them out or at least offer my services. ... I am a strong Black man who enjoys challenges and enjoys helping others pursue their endeavors whatever they may be."

Other comments indicative of Pre-encounter Stabilization included some which went beyond race issues, some which illustrated linkages to people that went beyond race, and some which indicated a depth of understanding of
the person and his/her relationship to living life personally and professionally. The nature of those comments voiced by the participants support Pre-encounter Stabilization as a different stage than Pre-encounter in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics.

Consider the following comments.

"I am (Samuel), born in ________, Virginia. Son of Mr. and Mrs. ________. Member of the Disciple of Christ church. Only child. Male. Easy going. Curious. Thoughtful. I like to think I’m my own person. I’m a pretty nice guy. I consider myself an American. The south is the region I grew up in. I’m community conscious."

"No other minority group has had to go through the things that Blacks have gone through. But what is important is that we are strong people .... We find our strengths in all of the terrible things that White society has put us through. You have to be strong and work hard if you want to have a good life in this society. If Blacks have unreconciled identities, they should spend some time trying to work through things so that they can move forward and accomplish all the things they want to accomplish." -- Jeremy

"My name is (Barbara). I am a widow. I am a mother. I am a very devoted daughter to my parents, and I am a devoted sister to my brothers and sisters. I am highly devoted to Jesus Christ, my church affiliation ... I'm concerned about the homeless. I'm concerned about those who hurt, and I am someone who is always trying to improve myself." -- Barbara

"Blacks have a false sense of security because racism has become more refined. We still need to fight against it but we can march on and be successful along the way...." -- Karen

"Our parents gave us particular messages. Work hard to get in school and put yourself in a position so you can take advantage of every
opportunity and doors will open for you ..." -- Angela

"... I’ve always felt as though I could accomplish anything that I want to accomplish. I consider myself very fortunate, working on the Ph.D. Racism can’t stop me from getting a Ph.D. Racism can’t stop me from being a professor. Maybe some school might not hire me because of racism, I don’t know. Maybe. But that doesn’t stop me from getting a job at another university. It won’t stop me from becoming a professor..." -- Michael

"Black is beautiful. We have a rich culture and heritage. There are things that take place in our communities, our homes, our churches that won’t happen anywhere else. As a Black person, I am given strength by the nature of our history in American society. I know in my heart and mind that I can be anything I want to be. There is a special bond between brothers and sisters; we share a common experience. I like who I am, and I don’t look outside of myself for affirmation of who I am." -- Roger

The above comments shared by these participants characterize a group of people who have a strong personal identity, a strong, clear ascribed identity and a strong reference group orientation. Further these individuals are active (from Helms’ perspective) regarding their identity and their understanding of the Black experience.

Pre-encounter Stabilization could possibly be a stage of identity development from which these individuals may not emerge. However, Parham (1989) would argue that there may be a recycling through Nigrescence as these persons continue to go through their lifespan. Thus far in the lives of the participants, no positive or negative encounter has been
personalized which would send them in search of their identity as Blacks or an Afrocentric world view.

Pre-encounter Stabilization in terms of Black identity is that point in the person’s identity development in which identity anxiety has long since been resolved. The person’s characteristics are similar to someone at the Internalization stage. As Cross (1991) stated, "One is Black, thus one is free to ponder matters beyond the parameters of a personal sense of Blackness (e.g., organization development, community development, problem solving, conflict resolution, institution building)." (pp. 210-211)

These participants demonstrated well developed personalities with high self-esteem, strong commitment to career aspirations, and confidence in their ability to interact with others who may display a different, possibly conflicting, world view. Pre-encounter Stabilization was a stage in young adulthood that occurred in identity development after the traditional identity crisis resolution of adolescence, commitment to occupational goals and an internalization of one’s capabilities to interact with and relate positively with others.

Participants in this study supported notions that Black graduate students at Virginia Tech go through similar experiences as other Blacks in accordance with Cross’s model
of Black identity development. Cross (1991) discussed various attitudes and characteristics of Blacks at the Pre-encounter stage. Because of the presence of a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage, the attitudes and characteristics of this stage will be examined in the following sections. Student voices through three phases of data collection characterize the qualities and dynamics of Pre-encounter Stabilization.

DIMENSIONS OF BLACK IDENTITY

The attitudes and characteristics of Pre-encounter Stabilization include the following:

- Low salience attitudes
- High salience attitudes
- Assimilation/Integration
- Eurocentric/Afrocentric world view
- Spotlight/Race-Image Anxiety
- Social stigma attitudes
- Anti-Black attitudes
- Miseducation
- Value structure/Value orientation
- Black identity
- Parental influence
- Gender differences
- Career aspirations
LOW SALIENCE ATTITUDES

Cross proposed that at Pre-encounter there are low salience attitudes toward Blackness. Activities and attitudes become race-neutral where race is not important or not a factor. Pre-encounter Stabilization suggested that participants have transcended race factors and moved in directions of positive self-images without negating Blackness or without internalizing the values and attitudes of White society. Samuel shared that (he) was made to feel that (he) was a person of worth. ... "I go beyond seeing myself as a Black man. I see myself as a man, first and foremost." Samuel went on further to say, "When I breathe, I don’t breathe as a Black man, I breathe as a man. So I mean it is natural for me to breathe and to live and to exist as a man, not necessarily as a Black man."

Other comments illuminating low salience attitudes include the following:

"Being Black is the only thing I’ve known. I am a Black man and proud of that. Just because I do not make a big deal about being Black, that does not mean that I am not proud of being Black. Being Black has never gotten in the way of anything that I’ve wanted to do ...." -- Jeremy

"I acknowledge that in many ways I would like for someone to see me as (Angela), then I want to be seen as being Black, then to be seen as a Black woman. But then it irks me though when I become
an acquaintance of someone White and they say I don’t see you as Black, and I’m saying, don’t tell me you don’t see me as Black. It is all over my body." -- Angela

"My success is related to the blessings bestowed upon me and my efforts and that’s pretty much it. I resent any notion that I’m where I am solely because I’m Black. I know that doors have been opened because of the Black people who have gone before me and I’m very grateful for that, but that allowed me to come through the door, but to make it once you pass the threshold is on you. You have to have some ability." -- Samuel

"I mean some people may make a big stink about race and affirmative action and say that they made it on their merits and that kind of thing. I realize that it’s not true; it doesn’t make me think that my abilities are any less. Because I know I’m confident in my abilities. I know that I can hit a jump shot and hit a jump shot and hit a jump shot so I don’t worry much about the perception of [others]. I find that the less attention you pay to race, as far as personal and professional development, the better off you are. There will be racial things, but you can maneuver around them and keep going forward." -- Michael

"First of all, I don’t think of myself as a Black person. I am a Christian and as a Christian, I know no color. My parents encouraged me to excel and to just always do my best... I teach my children to love all people. Christ makes me proud of my race, and I know that I can accomplish most things I want. Yes, I have been called darkie and a nigger. I just prayed for the person that did that. I think Whites need a lot of prayer because the society we live in is very racist and oppressive." -- Janet

The above comments from participants illustrated that they were cognizant of race being a factor involved with personal and professional development. They demonstrated a perspective which captures a great deal of confidence in
their capabilities and a desire to move themselves and others beyond racial issues.

HIGH SALIENCE ATTITUDES

Participants discussed times in their lives when being Black and Blackness was a predominant theme. These times occurred during their formative years. Apparently there was not a mellowing of Blackness issues, but a concerted effort, with parental support, to gain a positive perspective on race issues. To be Black is to be Black -- it matters. However, recognition of one's Blackness was a motivational factor.

"There have been times when Whites, mostly counselors and teachers in high school, have tried to impose limitations upon me. But, it didn’t work because I had parents and a family that constantly told me I could be anything that I wanted to be. ... I just realized early on when I was growing up that I was different and that I could become an influential person that would hold the respect of both Whites and Blacks." -- Roger

"I am a Black woman who is very committed to the terms of quality education. I try to spend a lot of time with my children -- just letting them know that they are very special and can do great things. I tend to get along well with most people. ... My parents are the one’s who taught me how to get along with people, regardless of the color of their skin or their religion. My parents nurtured me to be Black and proud." -- Janet

High salience attitudes, the importance of being Black and Blackness, occurred within the personal realm of each participant. No anxiety about being Black was apparent.
This personal identity developmental issue was resolved during the upbringing of the participants. Characteristic of Pre-encounter Stabilization was a positive Black identity and a strong sense of self as being capable, valued, and in control.

ASSIMILATION/INTEGRATION

Helms (1990) suggested that Pre-encounter Blacks tended to adopt an assimilation/integrationist perspective and generally believed hard work and determination would enable them to gain full entry into the majority society. Participants frequently referred to working hard in order to accomplish their goals.

"Being Black in American society is difficult because I know the American dream was not meant for Blacks. Whites don’t want us to have anything ... but with hard work you can have the things you want. Blacks have the attitude that we don’t let Whites deny us the American dream." -- Jeremy

"I don’t think integration is the answer to all the problems between the races. You have to make sure that you don’t lose your culture and heritage. Black culture is just as important as White culture. Basically we’re the same because I want nice things. As long as I don’t hurt anyone or take anything from anyone, I’m entitled to those things, the fruits of my labor." -- Karen

"Assimilation or acculturation can be helpful, because we have serious problems in this society and we all have to join hands to the benefit of all." -- Angela
Comments concerning assimilation/integration had the flavor of transcending racial issues in such a way that the human condition was predominant. Assimilation/integration was a dominant characteristic of Pre-encounter Stabilization from notions of not being too Black in negotiating systems to adhering to Black culture within the dominant culture in such a way that the Black experience was not sacrificed. Pre-encounter Stabilization attitudes were fundamental to the participants’ personal identity, ascribed identity and reference group orientation.

EUROCENTRIC/AFROCENTRIC WORLD VIEW

An Eurocentric world view was associated with the Pre-encounter stage. It was a hallmark of the identity to be changed through the Nigrescence process. During Pre-encounter Stabilization, participants acknowledged they had both an Eurocentric and Afrocentric world view. They tended to accept whatever was best from both perspectives in terms of culture, interacting with others, and interpreting various experiences.

While most participants discussed being both Eurocentric and Afrocentric, one participant, Jeremy, confessed to having an Eurocentric world view. He said

"I think I have an Eurocentric world view. I interact with most people from an Eurocentric perspective. As a result of traveling to Europe,
I think of myself as being very international as opposed to being American in and of itself. Through my education and my socialization, I tend to be Eurocentric as opposed to being Afrocentric. I have a very broad perspective and it works for me, and I don't worry about whether I am Black enough or whether I am always thinking in Black terms. I stick with what works for me." -- Jeremy

Like Jeremy, Karen believed she had an Eurocentric world view because she is very materialistic and works hard so that she can have nice things. As a Catholic, she became very aware of the Anglo-Saxon value orientation. She is most familiar with that even though she admits to knowing "a nice amount of Black history."

Specific comments from participants illustrated how both Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives characterize Pre-encounter Stabilization. Comments included the following:

"I am a Black American. Having lived in the U.S. all of my life, I think I have both an Afrocentric and Eurocentric world view. My Afrocentric world view enables me to put a Black perspective upon things because of the culture and heritage of Black people in American society. In terms of an Eurocentric perspective, I tend to take what is good about Anglo-Saxon culture and incorporate that into Black culture." -- Roger

"Being a Black American, I have both an Afrocentric and Eurocentric world view. I am very conscious of my Black heritage and culture, and I appreciate many things about White people's heritage and culture. When things happen which are injustices to Blacks, my Afrocentric perspective kicks in to help me understand and interpret what has happened. ... Blacks have to fight for our heritage and culture; we have to fight with the media, the lawmakers, the
educational system, etc. That is why to have and to understand our Afrocentric world view is very important. To be Black in this society is to have both an Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspective. You can’t help but have both." -- Charles

"My perspective is bi-cultural. I really like most people. I guess I could have a multicultural perspective if given the opportunity to interact with a lot of foreigners. In terms of Blacks and Whites, I am both Afrocentric and Eurocentric." -- Janet

From the above comments, one found a blending of perspectives overall. Participants felt to be Black in America was to have both an Eurocentric and Afrocentric world view. This attitude was characteristic of Pre-encounter Stabilization which distinguished this stage of Black identity development from the Pre-encounter stage as conceptualized by Cross.

**SPOTLIGHT/RACE-IMAGE ANXIETY**

Spotlight/race-image anxiety was a specific feature of Pre-encounter Blacks where concern was expressed regarding Blacks being too Black in certain situations. For Pre-encounter Stabilization, spotlight/race-image anxiety was apparent with most of the participants. Michael shared the story that when he was working for a large communications company, concern was expressed when "too many" Blacks were in one department.

"... A black manager gets a little nervous because he might have too many Blacks in his department.
Because if you have too many Blacks in your department you're not looked on favorably. One time a White co-worker asked me what are ya'll doing in there, are you planning to take over the company." -- Michael

Participants shared stories which indicated a general concern for Spotlight/race-image anxiety. The primary attitude was that it was best not to act too Black. They frowned upon Blacks who acted too Black in predominantly White situations. Janet reported

"When I am with a large crowd, I try to blend in, and I don't do anything that makes me stand out. Sometimes other Blacks are loud, eat too much food, dance all wild, and I think that is embarrassing because I think White people think that we don't know how to act. It's like saying, 'you can dress 'em up, but you can't take 'em anywhere.' When these things happen, I just try to ignore it and try not to let it reflect upon me." -- Janet

Most participants felt that they would not confront another Black who was acting inappropriately. They agreed that we live in a free society and people can act anyway they want. Janet went further to say that

"I have had the feeling that I am being judged inferior by White standards when I am the only Black with a lot of White people. When other Blacks are with me, I worry sometimes that they are being too Black or they are doing things that support the White people's view of Blacks."

Participants were passive when dealing with spotlight/race-image anxiety. Their concern was to always put forward the best image of Blacks. Participants' anxiety was held inside and hopes of more positive interactions with
Whites and other Blacks was the general manner of handling spotlight/race-image issues.

SOCIAL STIGMA ATTITUDES

Cross explained social stigma attitudes as those where Pre-encounter Blacks perceived their Blackness as a stigma which they had to deal with from time to time. At Pre-encounter Stabilization, participants shared social stigma attitudes. However, they tended to present a perspective which indicated that most social stigma attitudes were positively managed. Note the following comments:

"You are one thing because of the color of your skin or the way you look. That’s their problem. All I can do is try to make sure that on a professional level that we can do business. I adhere to the philosophy that it makes no difference if people like you as long as they get the job done." -- Karen

"You should educate Whites and Blacks of what it means to be Black. What it means to be Black in this country and institutions are people that are going to dislike you or stand in your way. The key is not to let that get in your way but just move on." -- Samuel

"Being Black is negative when it is used as an excuse for poor performance or failure. Of course I understand that Whites have negative expectations or feelings toward Blacks; I know that Whites question our value as human beings.... However, these attitudes can be overcome with a positive attitude and hard work on the part of the Black person." -- Jeremy

While various people, events, or experiences could give rise to negative feelings about being Black, Pre-encounter
Stabilization Blacks combated the negativity with beliefs that if a person had a strong sense of who he/she was, they could overcome any negative affects of being Black. Social stigma attitudes included ways Blacks have been made to feel about ourselves, but they could overcome. Other relevant comments were made:

"I am successful and Black, and that is very positive. I recognize that most White people will take one look at me and say there is a Black guy. I cannot escape being Black. But I work hard and a lot of good things have happened to me because I am a human being." -- Jeremy

"I was walking down the hall in Burruss and a man and a little girl was coming toward me. The girl said 'Look Daddy, here comes a Black face.' The man did not correct the child. I was very angry. Children are taught racism. There is a negative experience with being Black just by the fact of walking in the door and the color of your skin, by itself, without you having to do anything, makes a difference to some people." -- Angela

"Blacks are just like all other people. We compare ourselves to others as a way of measuring our success. Blacks judge other Blacks. ... Discrimination occurs with both Black and White. ... Sometimes I have been made to feel embarrassed about being Black. I hate myself for feeling that way." -- Charles

Social stigma attitudes, as suggested by Cross, occurred where by default some significance is attributed to race, not as a proactive force or cultural issue, but as a social stigma that must be negotiated from time to time. Participants developed effective strategies for positively
dealing with racial issues and concerns. Emphasis was placed up positive attitudes and hard work.

ANTI-BLACK ATTITUDES

Anti-Black attitudes were apparent with Pre-encounter Blacks where Blacks disliked anything Black and adhered to White standards. Cross described Black anti-Blacks as being similar to White racists. Participants at Pre-encounter Stabilization did not display strong anti-Black attitudes. However, they understood the dynamics of Black anti-Black attitudes. They maintained a perspective which enabled them to recognize that anti-Black was the way the dominant society has made Blacks feel about themselves. Descriptive comments included:

"Lighter-skinned Blacks are sometimes viewed as being better. Black men don’t want large Black women with short hair, but I think all this is just the way Whites have made us feel about ourselves." -- Charles

"I usually would only date light-skinned women with White features. I don’t like dark-skinned women because I don’t think they are attractive. ... Its human nature for people to compare themselves to other people. In the Black community, you have your ‘haves’ and ‘have nots.’ People just think they are better than other people." -- Jeremy

"I can remember growing up, probably fifth grade until about ninth grade, feeling a little, wishing that I was a little darker. More because people called you high-yellow, and half-White and that didn’t feel very good. My parents and grandparents are mixed; they could pass for White."
They don’t ever talk about it. I don’t think they’re embarrassed about their White heritage; they just don’t ever talk about it." -- Angela

"When Blacks use the term ‘nigger’, they are doing that because they really don’t know who they are. Nigger is not a term of endearment. You know the old saying, ‘Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.’ I don’t agree with that. I think names are going to hurt you more than sticks and stones will. Names can have a very detrimental effect, and I think we have used the term ‘nigger’ too long." -- Valerie

Black anti-Black attitudes were a part of the Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks’ experience. Yet, a positive perspective lodged within the context of high self-esteem, successful professional experiences, and a strong sense of self as Black people was used to interpret anti-Black attitudes. A major difference from Pre-encounter Blacks and anti-Black attitudes was that participants at Pre-encounter Stabilization placed these attitudes within a larger context of the human experience. Thus, they were more in control of the impact of Black anti-Black attitudes.

MISEDUCATION

Miseducation was described by Cross as a characteristic of Pre-encounter. It involved being formally educated to embrace a Western culture-historical perspective. Pre-encounter Blacks cannot help but experience varying degrees of miseducation about the significance of the Black experience. Pre-encounter Stabilization participants were
cognizant of the significance of education in enhancing positive Black images and positive race relations. Most participants admitted to taking a Black studies course in college because of a felt need to increase their knowledge of the Black experience. They also shared how they were victims of miseducation.

"It seemed like the way African-American people, events and contributions to society were presented, at least by the media, you didn’t get a full picture. It gave a one-sided picture, and I would always hear the other side in discussions at home." -- Timothy

"I think education is capable of providing some solutions to several of the problems in the Black community. I think if you have a discussion about the origins of civilization, you can’t start and end in Greece and Rome. You talk about the evolution of science, you can’t start and end in Europe or Greece and Rome. You talk about philosophy, you can’t always start with Socrates and Plato. If you talk about the contributions to the development of the U.S., you can’t always start and end with George Washington. There are other people, both Black and White, who have contributed. So, if you are going to tell the story, tell the whole story." -- Samuel

"There’s definitely a lack of information that is given to our children through school on the history of Blacks in this country. So it means that I’ve got to do a little more on my end." -- Angela

"I think that part of our difficulty that we have again our culture, in our American culture, is Black people have not been given a good description of their history, a clear honest, true account of who they are, and if you do know from whence you come, you can pick from that positive experience, and it will put a wide-open lane from which you can embark on any endeavor and accomplish anything that you desire." -- Valerie
Participants shared stories about the miseducation they encountered along the way. They generally placed their hope in appropriate education along with legislation to curb injustices. Positive feelings about themselves were nurtured in their homes by their parents and grandparents and not through the educational system. Pre-encounter Stabilization participants felt miseducation could be negated, if not stopped, if Blacks became proactive and assumed full responsibility for educating their children.

"I think appropriate education will go a long way to solving a lot of the problems in the Black community and how we feel about ourselves. It would help build better relations between Whites and Blacks. I say we have to have appropriate education because there has been so much miseducation, the kind of education that distorts Black people and the kind of education that fuel myths about both White and Black people. I, myself, was a victim of miseducation. It was not until I went to a Black college that I became aware of the tremendous contributions Blacks have made to science, education, business, etc. Miseducation is a crime, and it’s immoral, but it happens everyday in our schools and in the media."
-- Roger

VALUE STRUCTURE/VALUE ORIENTATION

Cross proposed that Pre-encounter Blacks do not necessarily have a radically different value structure and value orientation than Blacks in advanced stages of Black identity development. This proposition was found to be true with Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks. Participants expressed a strong kinship with other Blacks as a result of
their common experience. Values and attitudes tended to be race-neutral. Participants tended to have affiliations with secular, political and religious organizations, and demonstrated commitment to issues, beliefs, and causes that go beyond merely "thinking about one’s self."

Participants’ value orientation was a direct result of childhood experiences and parental involvement. Furthermore, value structure and orientation evolved from a commitment to career goals and from past successes in the personal and professional arenas.

"Most of us have to work very hard for what we get. Sure, persistence, practice, and patience always pay off, but you have to keep focused. You can’t let things like racism bother you." -- Samuel

"Blacks have made a wonderful contribution to this society; and we have to keep doing it. We, as human beings, have to remember that we are more alike than we are different. I believe if we knock down the barriers everyone will be better off." -- Jeremy

"I think role models are better when they are coming from common people doing everyday things but doing it well. My best contribution to Blacks is to be successful in whatever I do. Whether I want to or not, I am a role model for other Blacks, and I do take this responsibility very seriously." -- Karen

"You grew up in a neighborhood where there was no color. Your parents didn’t make a distinction between that, anybody and everybody was welcome, you accepted these people, you ate meals with them. ... There is something to that breaking of bread together, there is something to that eating a meal together that brings a closeness of sharing." -- Valerie
"I am an American and if I wear my native colors then I would have to wear red, white, and blue. If I went back to Africa I probably would be ostracized as a minority. Here, red, white, and blue may connotate racism to some Blacks. They struggle to say the Pledge of Allegiance. But the way I see it, my daddy fought under those colors. My brother would have gone to Viet Nam under those colors. There were Blacks who fought in the Civil War. There were Black men that fought in every war." -- Valerie

"My family was together. I could see growing up my father and mother going to work. I wasn’t looking for any handouts. That attitude of looking for handouts or an easy way has almost crippled the Black community. To seek opportunity, to have visions of yourself being a doctor, lawyer, engineer, professor, or what have you is what the Black children need. The family is critical to motivating Black children and encouraging them to establish goals." -- Roger

Values such as getting along with other people, a positive self-image, hard work, and an opportunistic life style were instilled by the families of the participants. Race was not the central factor with participants internalizing these values. Strong, well-connected families had the primary influence.

Value structure was important at Pre-encounter and Pre-encounter Stabilization in terms of self-concept, interacting with others, and interpreting experiences. Participants operated from a strong value structure. Most participants discussed having a positive world view where everyone was valued, hard work resulting in their being successful, and being secure in who they were by knowing
their capabilities. These values were not perceived as Western values, but as values which ought to dominate one’s human experience.

BLACK IDENTITY

Black identity was the topic of this research. Cross explained that Black identity at Pre-encounter was the identity to be changed through the Nigrescence process. Even though Cross admitted that some Blacks at Pre-encounter were not in need of identity change, those Blacks, exemplified by the participants in this study, could be described as being in a Pre-encounter stage where there is a stable personal identity, ascribed identity and reference group orientation which brings a great deal of fulfillment to the individual.

Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks have a strong, stable identity which was developed and was understood within the reality of America as an oppressive society. Several relevant comments included:

"The media wants to present (Blacks) as vagabonds, as freeloaders, as idiots, people who sit around just waiting for the next crime to happen, well, to cause it. But we are people .... It bothers me that people still fail to realize that when I’m cut I bleed just like they do. I am human. It bothers me that the expectations of society concerning me are low. To say I did good for a Black person is to insult me, is to diminish what I have accomplished." -- Barbara
"I never felt like I am an oppressed person. I realize there are people out there who would oppress me, if I allowed them. I think if you started thinking of yourself as an oppressed person, you would start to lose hope. You always have to fight. You have to realize that there are certain factions out there that will dislike you for whatever reason. The thing is you have to come to grips with that; you have to realize it, and you persevere. Its just that simple." -- Samuel

"I have enough sense of who I am as a Black man to hate the word 'nigger.' Nigger is a negative perspective of Blacks and no one has the right to negate the existence and significance of another human being." -- Jeremy

"When society looks at me, society does not see capable Barbara, or the society does not see me as a woman. They see a Black woman and associate a lot of negativism. Society looks at me and sees a welfare recipient. Society looks at me and sees a problem to society. They see me as being incapable of being anyone in this world. But I don't look outside myself to determine who I am and who I can be." -- Barbara

"I wanted to be a lawyer and this teacher said no. When I asked why she said just because. It took me awhile to figure things out. On the last day of school, I told my sister that I had one last thing to do. I went to the room, found the teacher, and punched her in the face as hard as I could. I said that's for telling me I couldn't be nobody." -- Angela

"I think Black identity is a person's sense of who they are within the context of Black culture and heritage. I may like myself but I have to understand what it means to be Black in America. This sense of Black history and culture is significant to who we are as Black people and how we feel about ourselves." -- Roger

"I am very proud and have a proud family. I wouldn't want to change to be something else. People who try to deny their racial heritage are usually unhappy people and they are usually not
successful. I take pride in being Black and I face the struggle head on." -- Charles

Participant comments supported the notion that Black identity had very little to do with identity per se but had more to do with being Black in America. Black identity was defined as one’s sense of self and feelings toward oneself within the context of Black history and Black culture. Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks discussed having a strong Black identity as a result of their childhood and as a result of experiencing consistent personal and professional success.

**PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

Parental influence was a factor described quite often by participants which impacted upon their identity, sense of well-being and career success. Cross did not directly discuss parental influence even though he admitted that it is possible for a Black person to be socialized from early childhood through adolescence to have a Black identity. At adulthood, such a person is not likely to be in need of Nigrescence. When asked what people, event or experiences account for who you are as a Black person living in the United States, participants frequently responded "parents and family."

"Just the fact that I had parents who told me that I could be pretty much what I wanted to be as long
as I went to school and worked hard. That’s their ethics. Work hard. There’s no easy way to it." -- Karen

"First off, I’d say my parents definitely helped plant the seed for who I’ve become today. I think they were the best of both worlds, seeing that my mother was the most friendly, giving person. She could get along with everybody and she saw good in everybody. She helped me learn not to be judgmental of people." -- Timothy

"Because I grew up with parents who were advocates for me, I knew that I could come home and I knew that somebody would be there and they would say it is okay. And a lot of people called our family the 'Leave it to Beaver' family because we didn’t have -- I mean we had our share of problems -- it was just the way my parents handled the problems." -- Gloria

"Family is very, very important. Extended family is very important to me. That’s who I am. You ask me who I am, I’m a mosaic of my father, my mother, my grandparents, both sides, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins. These are the people I grew up with. By the time I reached 12 or 13 years old, I was pretty much who I was going to be." -- Samuel

"My parents are great. My father is a hard worker and provides for his family. He is strong; he is the decision-maker, he was very much the head of our family when I was growing up. I respect him and really look up to him. My folks told me about the times they couldn’t go into restaurants and eat, the times they could not use the bathroom. They told me when they had to go to all Black schools. They told me that it doesn’t have to be that way for me. I had to work hard and take advantage of every opportunity." -- Jeremy

"My parents don’t have much formal education, but they have been very successful in providing a good home life for me, my brothers and sisters. All of us kids have gone to college and we are successful in our careers. My parents and grandparents did not say much about being Black specifically. They often told me to work hard and to keep pushing
forward toward my goal. They opened doors for me and sometimes they had to kick my butt and push me toward opportunities. My parents believed in me and that helps me to believe in myself." -- Roger

Traditional identity development theory proposed that adolescents and young adults should be separating from their parents in establishing their independence. However, research conducted by Branch-Simpson (1984) suggested that Black adolescents and young adults maintain strong connectedness to parents and extended family. Parents and extended family were discovered to be critical factors in the positive, successful development of Black adolescents and young adults.

Participants believed to be at Pre-encounter Stabilization identified their parents as having the most influence upon who they were, how they felt about themselves and their consistent personal and professional success. Janet shared these comments:

"My parents were super parents. They gave me a lot of hope and confidence. They are the kind of parents that I am trying to be to my children. With all the love I received from my parents, I was able to reach out and accept any challenge."

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Cross did not discuss gender as a factor in his model of Black identity development. It could be presumed that Cross perceived the identity development process to be the same for males and females. The majority of participants in
this study perceived the identity formation process to be different for men and women. However one participant, Jeremy, felt the process was the same because "being Black was the controlling factor, not gender."

Participants associated the difference in identity development between males and females to the historical-cultural evolution of Black men and Black women. Comments included the following:

"Black men were forced into slavery; they were taken from their homes and sold because of their size. An animal mentality set in. It was a worthless mentality that set in and was passed from generation to generation. But with Black women, it was a little bit different because they were educated along with the children. Women became teachers. We were a prized possession and have always had a certain degree of opportunity." -- Barbara

"If we have limitations imposed upon us, it won't matter whether we are men or women. Granted I think Black men have a tough time of it, but so do women. Identity is about how you feel about yourself. If you feel lousy because you are Black, it doesn’t matter whether you are male or female." -- Jeremy

"With my brothers and sisters, my parents imposed a different set of expectations for boys and girls. Boys were expected to go to work when they were out of school. Girls were encouraged to go to college and prepare for a career. I think there were low expectations for males which affected their self-concept and self-esteem." -- Angela

"Black men during slavery were emasculated. They were treated like animals and expected to function like animals. Today there is less expectation for Black men to excel. On the other hand, Black women have always been the anchor holding the
Black family together. They are the ones who went to school or was educated while working in the master’s homes with the master’s children. Black women have a different kind of expectation imposed upon them by our society. Because of our history and because of the differences in expectations, the identity formation, how one feels about himself or herself, is different." -- Roger

"Black men are in crisis with the number of Black men in prison, on drugs, or out of work. Women have to carry the ball once again like they did during slavery times. To be a Black woman is to be bold, strong, and beautiful. To be a Black man is to be unsure, burdened, and held captive by a society that has no positive expectation of Black men." -- Charles

While participants assumed there was a difference in the identity development process for men and women, it may not be the case. This was a factor that will need to be examined in future research. Gilligan (1982) proposed that men and women go through a different psychosocial developmental process. Participants suggested that Black men and Black women go through a different psychosocial developmental process which results in different life experience within the context of American society. However, these results were inconclusive given the purpose and design of this study.

Cross suggested that at advanced stages of Nigrescence, Internalization and Internalization-Commitment Blacks were involved in balancing and synthesizing Blackness with other demands of personhood such as one’s sexual identity. Participants were involved with describing themselves as
Black men or Black women. Emphasis was placed upon being Black and not upon gender. Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks may have presented a distorted perspective concerning gender.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

In his conceptualization of his identity development model, Cross did not discuss occupational roles until the Internalization stage. He suggested that career aspirations and occupational identity may be very race-sensitive or, in other instances, race-neutral. Participants at Pre-encounter Stabilization shared career aspirations which were race-neutral. They did not attribute their professional success to race. Career success was a result of hard work and having a functional understanding of one’s capabilities and limitations.

Career aspirations for participants ranged from Christian counselor to mayor of a large city. Participants were greatly influenced by their parents and teachers who were encouraging early on in their formal education.

"My father has his Ph.D. in engineering. He did it for the challenge. He told me often how I needed to work hard to achieve my goals. I want to teach at the college level and I want to be involved in research and development with a company where I can provide a mechanism for support of other Black engineers." -- Timothy
"I am a very ambitious individual. I set goals real far and I enjoy trying to pursue them. The journey is what is important as opposed to the destination." -- Michael

"Careerwise, I try to be as confident as I can as a molecular biologist. Like anyone else, I want certain career recognition and respect from my peers. I want to contribute as much as I possibly can to this field of biological research. I guess I see myself as a trail blazer because there aren’t very many Black scientists out there." -- Samuel

"My career goal is to be an engineering professor at a major university. This is not related to race at all; it is related to my capabilities. Either I’m good enough to teach and do research or I am not. Being Black has nothing to do with it." -- Jeremy

"Professionally, I have to work hard for respect and equal opportunity to contribute like my White counterparts. I suspect that I will always have to struggle professionally; that just seems to be a part of being Black." -- Roger

Along with desires for career success, participants shared desires of being influential in their communities and to open as many doors as possible for other Blacks. Concern was expressed that in 1994 there are still "firsts." There should be no more "firsts" for Blacks in our society. Consistent with all participants was the experience of success early on in their lives. They had a successful foundation to build from even though they acknowledged the role of affirmative action in opening doors so that they could take advantage of various opportunities.
Characteristic of Pre-encounter Stabilization is the individual finding fulfillment in their lives. Connections with family and linkages with other Blacks who will follow provided a context leading to a stable and fulfilling life for participants.

BLACKNESS/THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

One’s understanding of the Black experience is fundamental to Nigrescence, the process of becoming Black. Cross (1991) proposed that Nigrescence is a process of identity development which considers the fact that Blacks are a minority in an oppressive society. Being Black and Blackness were complex and should give rise to a unique Black experience.

Pre-encounter Blacks have appeared to be held captive by the Black experience. Feelings, attitudes, and behaviors were provoked which result in deracinated feelings, anti-Black attitudes, and low salience feelings. On the other hand, Pre-encounter Stabilization participants found strength and motivation in their understanding of the Black experience. In terms of family, personal and professional development, participants never lost sight of the Black experience.

"(One time in school), we had a lesson on reconstruction era after the Civil War, and there were pictures in the book of Black people with big
lips, bulging eyes, and extra long arms laying in a drunken stupor over the state office in the South, and these people had the beer bottles and alcohol bottles with the three X’s on what they had been drinking. It was like this is what they did after they were given a chance to be free. I wanted to hide and the people were all looking at me. The teacher said nothing to correct that. " -- Valerie

"I was out at Wal-Mart, and I was inquiring about Black hair products. ... I didn’t know that there was a section for the Black hair products, and so I went up to her and I said are there any hair products for Black hair and she said, ‘Oh, you mean for the Negro’ and I said okay. Lord, help me; you know that bothered me." -- Barbara

"I think had I not been Black, I may have been more higher up with or without the doctorate, because I’ve seen White women on this campus who don’t have doctorates continue to be promoted. I think that may be a consequence of color. But proving it is a different matter." -- Karen

"The invisible man eloquently describes the frustration that a lot of Black males and Black women feel because their contributions are often made to seem insignificant. You have people, for instance, that say this rap music is nonsense. But yet, Wall Street and Madison Avenue use it to advertise their products. But Blacks don’t get any credit." -- Samuel

Participants discussed their Blackness and the Black experience in terms of the Black struggle. While their attitudes and behaviors were passive, their understanding of the Black experience with regard to their personal and professional experiences was proactive. Pre-encounter Stabilization Blacks have transcended race issues but have never lost sight of their Blackness.
"Sure there is the Black struggle. We have to work harder than most, because we are so far behind Whites. We have to compete very aggressively with Whites. Blacks have to work hard; we have to fight for everything because the odds are against us, but I believe we can beat the odds." -- Jeremy

"There's a Black struggle from forces, exterior forces and interior forces, to constantly have to prove yourself or have to demonstrate your ability, your competence. There's been a struggle to prove yourself worthy." -- Samuel

"I think it provides motivation every day to keep on striving, keep on striving so that someday my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren on down the road might find a better way. And that is what it means to me to be able to learn from the things that I encounter, being able to be stronger." -- Angela

"The striving being a Black person makes it more difficult on top of such striving as an American, period. Not to say that opportunities aren't there, but people don't always make them very easy to have access to them. So I think it is different in terms of thinking about being an American as well as being a Black person." -- Angela

"The Black struggle is just that -- a struggle. We, as Black people, always have to be on guard where White people are concerned. America is an oppressive society; people try to negate everything that you do. This holds true for Indians, Asians, Hispanics as well as Blacks. Black people have to be diligent in our efforts to be successful, to be significant and to not let Whites take anything away from me." -- Michael

Cross (1971) developed his model of identity development out of the Black experience. Each stage has presented the dynamics of how the Black individual experiences and interprets his/her Blackness. Pre-encounter
Stabilization Blacks tended to experience their Blackness and the Black experience from a stable perspective where value, strength, and motivation are predominant. Without the Black experience, as it has evolved in American society, there probably would not be viable models of Black identity development, such as that proposed by Cross.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Assumptions underlying this study established the parameters of researcher expectations surrounding the findings. At the beginning of the study, it was assumed that Cross’s model of Black identity development was a viable description of the Black identity development process. This assumption was not fully substantiated by the data. The data supported the pressure of stage one Pre-encounter. Little evidence of the other, more advanced stages of the model was found. Also, there was little evidence of an identity development process. Based upon these findings, Cross’s model did not present a sufficient description of identity formation as a developmental process. A possible explanation of this shortcomings is that the participants were a homogeneous subgroup of Blacks which did not exhibit the necessary diversity across stages.

The Black graduate students who participated in this study represented a subset of Blacks. Because they were
representative of those Blacks who attended graduate school at a PWU, the findings cannot be generalized beyond this population. In addition, the findings in this study may have been different if working-class Blacks, college drop outs, or very prominent Blacks comprised the sample.

That participants in this study progressed along similar lines as proposed by Cross was another assumption guiding this study. Data revealed that all participants were clustered at the first stage of the model. Again, this finding may have resulted from the homogeneity of the population. Also, it may have resulted from the inability of Cross’s model to adequately describe their identity experience. Addition of a Pre-encounter Stabilization enhances the capability of Cross’s model to describe the identity experiences of the participants. From the data, the researcher concluded that Cross’s model appears to classify the participants in an identity stage rather than present a developmental process of identity formation.

Cross’s model was developed to explain identity formation and the diversity in African American identity. As found in this study, the utility of the model was limited as a medium for describing a process of identity formation. As a classification tool, the model adequately explained the experiences of the graduate students as being characteristic of Pre-encounter.
Cross's model was developed as a cultural explanation of Black identity development. The results of this study tended to reflect an economic influence more than a cultural influence. Cross suggested that the identity development process was not affected by SES. However, research reported by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) indicated that SES has had both a positive and negative effect upon the persistence and success of Black students in college. This research suggested that SES may be a more discriminating factor with regard to identity development. More research needs to be conducted which explores the impact of SES as a factor impinging upon Black identity development.

Researcher expectations at the beginning of this study was centered around the perspective that Cross's model would not be found to be descriptive of the experiences of the Black graduate students at Virginia Tech. However as the study progressed, Cross's conceptualization of identity development was found to be characteristic of the participants' experiences. At least the early stage of Cross's model, Pre-encounter, was pervasively found in the stories of the participants. Little evidence was presented of the advanced stages of the model and of the identity formation process being a developmental process. Thus, researcher expectations were generally not supported because
of the limited descriptive nature of Cross's model in terms of explaining or interpreting participants' comments.

Cross's model may not be the best or most appropriate way to explain the phenomenon of Black identity development. The researcher does not purport to offer an alternative explanation of Black identity development. Cross's model tends to show a hierarchial movement of individuals through the stages. However with the participants in this study, there was clustering at the first stage of the model. Movement or progression toward advanced stages was not found. This finding further limits the capability of Cross's model in describing and explaining Black identity development.

Cross's model was a framework to help understand how various factors of identity formation interacted with one another so that they could be used to interpret each participant's story. Data revealed that participants could possibly progress along similar lines of identity development as theorized by Cross. However, the graduate students' experiences were indicative of the Pre-encounter stage. They displayed only a few characteristics of the other, more advanced stages of the model.

Characteristic of Encounter was an event or occurrence which was personalized by the individual whereby their sense of self as a Black individual and their world view was
questioned. While the graduate students revealed that they had experienced several encounters, they did not tend to personalize them. Thus, the participants did not fit neatly into the Encounter stage.

Likewise they did not exemplify the qualities of Immersion-Emersion. Characteristic of this stage was an either/or mentality and a great deal of anxiety concerning being Black. Participants tended to be race-neutral about most things and had achieved a comfort-level with their identity.

With regard to the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages, participants revealed some qualities of these stages but they were not pervasive. Characteristic of Internalization and Internalization-Commitment was a pro-Black and pro-White perspective and a long-term commitment to activities supportive of Black causes. Participants generally held pro-Black attitudes but did not necessarily adopt a pro-White perspective. Furthermore, long term commitment to Black causes and to eradicate oppression was not revealed by the data. Consistent with the data gathered, participants were placed at a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage which included some of the qualities of the other stages. Interpretation of the data revealed that the graduate students exhibited more Pre-encounter qualities. However with the intensity and pervasiveness of
the qualities found in their stories, Pre-encounter Stabilization was more descriptive of their identity stage.

The results showed that the experiences of participants could be interpreted through Cross’s model. The first stage of Cross’s model was Pre-encounter. In accordance with Cross’s model, Pre-encounter is the identity to be changed. All participants displayed characteristics of the Pre-encounter stage. However, Cross suggested that if the individual has a meaningful existence, a sense of fulfillment and an internal sense of stability, order, and harmony, the person will probably not need any identity change. While all participants were at the Pre-encounter stage and not in need of identity change in accordance with Cross’s model, Pre-encounter itself did not capture the full nature and intensity of the identity development experience of the participants. Thus, participants in this study were designated as being at a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage which was described as being more than Pre-encounter but less than Encounter, Immersion-Emersion and Internalization.

Graduate students in this study had not undergone a full Nigrescence cycle. They were generally socialized from childhood to have a stable Black identity. While a few qualities of the other stages were revealed by the participants, they were not pervasive enough to place the participants at advanced stages. Pre-encounter
Stabilization enhanced the descriptive capability of Cross’s model.

Pre-encounter Stabilization was used to describe participants because they were not only stable and fulfilled in their lives, but also perceived themselves as capable, valued, motivated individuals who were in control of their lives. Race-neutral concerns about career goals, both high salience and low salience race attitudes, personal development as part of human development, strong parental influences upon sense of self and success were predominant features of the stories the participants told. In making a financial and emotional commitment to graduate school and their careers, the participants seemed to have transcended racial concerns.

At Pre-encounter, Cross discussed various factors characteristic of Blacks at this stage. These factors included Low Salience of Blackness, Miseducation, Eurocentric World View, Spotlight/Race-Image Anxiety, Anti-Black Attitudes, Social-Stigma Attitudes, Western Value Orientation, and Assimilation-Integration. Pre-encounter Stabilization participants were cognizant of these factors and tended to integrate these concerns into a functional understanding of the Black experiences. Participants described the Black experience as a struggle where they had to work hard and persevere to accomplish their goals.
Cross conceptualized Black identity development within the context of American society being an oppressive, racist society. Participants voiced that reality which further supported the notion that the identity formation process is a different psychosocial experience for Blacks than Whites. This was a significant finding which will have major implications for student development practice and theory.

The results of this study indicated that these Black graduate students had similar experiences as other Blacks to whom Cross’s model has been applied. Possibly, one exception was that the participants had several encounters which were not personalized and did not alter their world view or attitude toward themselves. The mediating factor were the parents of participants who helped them put the incidents in perspective and, thereby, reducing their impact.

Salience concerned the prominence of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience to the participants. Variability of salience occurred as a result of parental influence, commitment to career goals, commitment to graduate education, and religious affiliation. Also, participants tended not to personalize experiences which could have made them question themselves as Black individuals. Variability in salience reflected what Cross described as diversity in African American identity. The
graduate students shared different stories of their life experience. Thus, salience was sometimes high and sometimes low. Again, the major mediating factor was parental influence.

All participants credited who they were and their success to their parents and families. In all cases, parental influence was positive. This factor might prove useful and instructive for educators and student development specialists when conducting research and designing programs for Black students. Parental influence was a characteristic feature of Pre-encounter Stabilization.

Gender was perceived in the study as a variable which would affect the identity development of Black men and women. However, questions concerning gender were not explicitly resolved. Based upon the research of Gilligan (1982) which indicated a different psychosocial developmental process between men and women, it was assumed that the identity process would be different. The perception of participants was that the process was different. However, these impressions of participants appeared to be based upon mis-information. Most participants believed there was a difference in the identity formation process among men and women. Future research will have to more fully investigate this factor.
A study of this nature has significance at both the theoretical and practical levels. Information has been obtained that will contribute to the knowledge base of Black identity development. Results of this study can only be applied to Black graduate students at Virginia Tech and cannot be generalized beyond this setting. This study indicated a different kind of experience for Black graduate students which could serve as a foundation for a different approach to student development theory and practice. Also, this study revealed several factors enhancing the success of the Black graduate students such as parental influence, religious affiliation, and prior personal and professional success. These factors enhanced the success and capability of Black graduate students. Black students lacking these factors should be the focus of student development interventions. More research should be conducted to investigate the relationship between Black identity development and Black student persistence and success in college.
Chapter V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study and implications for the future. An overview of the study with emphasis upon purpose, research questions, and methodology are also included. Finally, an overview of the data and conclusions will be presented.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study concerned the nature and process of Black identity development. A model of Black identity development which was developed by Cross (1991) provided the framework for conducting this study. Twelve Black graduate students, six males and six females, were participants in the study. The graduate students were between the ages of 28 and 45. The Virginia Tech Affirmative Action Office assisted in the identification of the students.

Questions identified for this study evolved from characteristics of Blacks at each stage of identity development as theorized by Cross. The following research questions were investigated:

1. Do Black graduate students at Virginia Tech progress along similar lines of identity development as proposed by Cross’s model of Black identity development?
2. What are the experiences of selected Black graduate students at Virginia Tech which result in their current identity development stage?

3. What experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of a select group of Black graduate students account for the variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience?

4. How has the identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students been influenced by parental attitudes and values concerning being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience?

5. How has the identity development process and identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students been influenced by gender?

These research questions were designed to examine the dynamics of Cross’s model. Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization stages of the Cross model of identity development have distinctive characteristics.

The characteristics of each stage of Cross’s model have implications for the theory, research, and practice of student development. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the implications of Cross’s model. Other purposes included:
1. To describe the progression of identity development of a select group of Black graduate students along the dimensions of the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages of Cross's model. Other dimensions of Cross's model were discovered during this study.

2. To describe the identity stage of a select group of Black graduate students in terms of Cross's model.

3. To describe the variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience among selected Black graduate students.

4. To describe the influence of parental values, educational attainment, and attitudes toward Blackness and the Black experience upon identity stage and identity formation process of a select group of Black graduate students.

5. To describe the influence of gender upon the identity stage and identity formation process of a select group of Black graduate students.

The research design and method were developed within the parameters of Cross's model. Participants were interviewed through three phases of data collection where indepth interviews were the primary method of data
collection. Each interview was completed at two week intervals and lasted from one hour to one hour and a half. The audio taped interviews were transcribed for data analysis. Each interview protocol was developed in accordance with stagewise qualities of Cross’s model of Black identity development. Interviews proceeded from a general, open-ended format to a more specific, stimulus-response structure.

The nature and process of Black identity development among a select group of Black graduate students was the underlying purpose of this study. Analysis of the stages and dimensions of Black identity development as proposed by Cross was examined through a qualitative research methodology. The method of inquiry (indepth interviews) served to explore more fully Cross’s stages and dimensions of Black identity development.

Cross’s model described the identity stage of the participants. Since the participants were clustered at the Pre-encounter stage, it was not clear whether the Black graduate students at Virginia Tech progressed along the lines of identity development as proposed by Cross’s model. The model, as applied in this study, failed to present a developmental process as assumed. It predominantly served to classify participants and was lacking in its explanation of an identity process which was developmental.
Cross's model of Black identity development evolved from viewing American society as a racist, oppressive society. A hierarchial structure was proposed by Cross where Blacks moved from the first stage of identity toward more, advanced stages. Participants in this study were clustered at the early stage of Pre-encounter. To move forward, they will have to experience and personalize an encounter. Application of Cross's model to the experiences of the participants show little movement across the stages of the model. This fact may be the result of a lack of diversity in the population of this study. However, characteristics of Pre-encounter as described by Cross were able to explain some aspects of the experiences of the participants. Several factors emerged during data analysis which explained the participants' identity stage and their interpretation of their experiences.

Factors such as high self-esteem, strong parental influence, strong religious affiliation, and personal and professional success were presented as explanations for their identity stage. Variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience proved to be explained by the previously identified factors. Participants discussed their being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience in terms of the Black struggle where they had to always work hard and be on guard of Whites.
All participants credited their parents as having had a tremendous positive impact upon how they felt about themselves and their career goals. Participants were closely connected to their parents and families.

One research question guiding this study concerned the role of gender with respect to identity development. Most participants perceived a difference in identity formation between males and females. Cross’s model did not address this issue. Based upon the comments of the participants, the results were not clear whether there is actually a difference between Black males and Black females. Participants’ comments appeared to be based upon incorrect information. Future research will have to investigate more specifically gender issues. The design of this study was not adequate for exploring the role of gender in identity development.

Cross’s first stage was Pre-encounter which presented the identity to be changed through Nigrescence. However, Cross admitted that some Pre-encounter Blacks were not in need of Nigrescence. All of the participants in this study exhibited Pre-encounter qualities. However, the depth of understanding and the intensity of positive feelings toward self and others suggested that participants should be placed at a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage.
Pre-encounter Stabilization appeared different from Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization in terms of attitudes, values, and behaviors. Participants had (a) high self-esteem, (b) had developed a positive functional understanding of being Black, Blackness and the Black experience, (c) perceived their personal and professional development as part of human development, (d) their world view was an integration of Afrocentric and Eurocentric, and (e) career aspirations and organizational affiliations were race neutral. At this stage, participants were proactive with respect to who they were as Blacks in American society. Pre-encounter Stabilization seemed to capture the positive qualities of the other stages, but there were no encounters which were personalized which could have thrust participants into Negrescence. Participants were strongly connected to parents who generally helped participants place a perspective upon encounters so that they did not impede their accomplishing their goals.

Participants at Pre-encounter Stabilization were not in need of identity change because they exhibited a stable, fulfilling life whereby they had a sense of order and harmony, and meaningfulness of life. As a result of the stories told by participants, their voices gave rise to Pre-encounter Stabilization as an appropriate addition to
Cross’s model in explaining the nature and process of Black identity development.

**SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

The results of this study indicated that Cross’s model was appropriate for describing and interpreting the identity stage of participants. Examination of the model revealed that participants had experiences characteristic of the early stage of Cross’s model.

Cross’s model was used to identify the identity stage of participants. Even though participants exhibited qualities of the Pre-encounter stage, they were determined to be at a Pre-encounter Stabilization stage. Pre-encounter Stabilization was a major finding of this study which served to strengthen the descriptiveness of Cross’s model. The depth and intensity of participants’ response during the interviews were indicative of Pre-encounter Stabilization.

Variability in salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience was found in the data and was explained by several factors. First, participants’ perception of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience reflected individuals who were stable, valued, motivated, and in control of their lives. Secondly, participants related that they grew up in the church. Religious affiliation resulted in race-neutral tenets of loving your neighbor, we are all
brothers and sisters, and we are equal in the eyes of God. Third, parents contributed to variability of salience of being Black, Blackness, and the Black experience. With the aid of parents, participants were able to place events and experiences which challenged their Blackness and questioned their significance as individuals into perspective in such a way that these events and experiences did not interfere with their personal and professional success. Finally, participants’ commitment to graduate education and career goals tended to take priority over race issues. Participants generally perceived their psychosocial experience to be more of a human development process, not a Black developmental process.

One factor of inquiry in this study was the influence of gender upon the identity development of Black graduate students. The results were inconclusive. Participants perceived gender as a significant variable in identity development between men and women. However, it was difficult because of the design of this study to determine whether identity development was different for men and women. Most participants perceived a difference as a result of the historical evolution of Blacks since slavery, as a result of different family and societal expectations, and as a result of the scope of opportunity women were perceived to have as opposed to men’s opportunities. As a factor in
Black identity development, gender will have to be examined in future research.

Parental influence was a significant finding in this study. Parents played a major role in the participants' feeling that they were capable, valued, motivated, and in control of their lives. Whenever events or experiences would occur that were racially-motivated, parents helped their children or young adults put the occurrence in perspective so that it would not interfere with their success. Parents also instilled a strong work ethic where participants were encouraged to work hard so that they could take advantage of every opportunity.

Participants spoke of the Black experience as a struggle where they always would have to be on guard with Whites and where they would have to continually work hard and just persevere. These attitudes support the finding that Blacks have a different psychosocial experience than Whites because Blacks are a minority in American society. The culture and heritage of Blacks account for the difference in experience. Thus for educational researchers and student development specialists, the assumption that Blacks and Whites undergo the same identity development process or the same psychosocial development was not supported in this study.
CONCLUSIONS

From the findings in this study, several major conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions were based upon the comments of the participants. Results of the study cannot be generalized beyond Virginia Tech and the Black graduate students who participated. Conclusions may have been different if the research focus was some other Black subgroup or if the study was conducted in a different setting. Participants’ comments were interpreted within the context of Cross’s model of Black identity development.

Fundamental to conducting research on Black students and developing programs for Black students was the realization that Blacks have a different type of psychosocial development experience than Whites. Participants discussed the uniqueness of the Black experience compared to other minorities and to Whites. They described Black identity as one’s feelings toward oneself within the context of Black culture and heritage.

Cross’s model of Black identity development identified specific attitudes and behaviors on the part of Blacks at various stages. Helms (1991) went further to suggest that progression from Pre-encounter to Internalization was a movement from an unhealthy, negative state to a healthy, positive state. Even though Cross did not describe the dynamics of his model as Helms did, he did concede that such
a description of stagewise progression was reasonable. Cross proposed that his model of Black identity development was a developmental model. However within the parameters of this study, Cross’s model tended to classify the participants as Pre-encounter. The participants were clustered at the early stage of the model. Functionally, Cross’s model may be less developmental than proposed by Helms (1991). As a descriptor, the model was very effective in describing the identity stage of the participants. Future research which investigates the developmental nature of the model would have to be conducted with different sample populations and possibly a different research design than what was used in this study.

Cross’s model was theoretically consistent with traditional identity theories such as those proposed by Chickering (1969), Erikson (1963, 1968), and Marcia (1966, 1980). Cross proposed that progression through the various identity stages occurred as a result of conflict or anxiety resolution. However, Cross’s model may be lacking as an explanation of a developmental process of Black identity formation as was assumed at the outset of this study.

Because Cross’s model served more to classify participants in a particular identity stage rather than to describe a developmental process of identity formation, the assumption that Cross’s model adequately described the
process of identity development did not hold up. However, Cross’s model was effective in describing and interpreting the experiences of the participants.

With respect to the findings in this study, Cross’s model did not explain all aspects of the findings. The findings in this study may have been more a result of the qualities of the participants as opposed to the characteristics of Cross’s model. Cross’s model served more of a purpose of describing where the participants were in their identity development. With the addition of Pre-encounter Stabilization, the descriptive power of Cross’s model was increased. However, it is unclear how the participants would progress to the advanced stages of the model. Cross tended to not address this question when he argued that individuals such as these participants may not need to go through Nigrescence, because they have a stable identity and a meaningful life.

Cross’s model appeared valid in describing the identity stage of the participants. However, it may not have much utility as a developmental model which describes the qualities and progression of the Black identity development process. That the identity stages exist, at least Pre-encounter and Pre-encounter Stabilization, was found in this study. The participants had some qualities of the advanced stages, but their qualities were more pervasively Pre-
encounter and Pre-encounter Stabilization. Possibly a determining factor was that the participants were not primarily dealing with identity issues. Also, participants experienced strong parental influence, religious affiliations, and career aspirations which were generally race-neutral. A larger, more heterogeneous population could be more affirming of Cross’s model from Pre-encounter through Internalization. Different, more diverse populations would generate better conclusions regarding the efficacy of Cross’s model.

Several characteristics of an identity stage were observed in this study. A process of identity development as proposed by Cross was not directly observed. This conclusion may have been the result of the participants who were interviewed for this study. In addition, Cross’s model may serve a taxonomic purpose more appropriately as opposed to being a process oriented model as proposed by Helms (1991).

Interventions designed by educators and student development practitioners would have to evolve from the Black experience. Issues to be addressed would have to include those identified by McEwen, Roper, Bryant, and Langa (1990). McEwen et al. described nine factors which relate to the developmental tasks of Black students which traditional theories of development do not address. These
included developing cultural aesthetics and awareness, developing identity, developing interdependence, fulfilling affiliation needs, surviving intellectually, developing spiritually, and developing social responsibility. Each of these nine dimensions of Black student development was important to understand with regard to the success or failure of Black students.

Parental and family involvement in the participants’ personal and professional success was a major conclusion drawn from this research. Participants repeatedly referred to their parents as individuals who motivated and encouraged them to be whatever they wanted to be. As a result of parents and other family members, participants felt valued and in control of their lives. While most young adults were separating from parents and establishing their independence, Black graduate students maintained close connections with their parents. Once again, participants demonstrated another manner in which their experience was different from traditional psychosocial theory.

Career aspirations played a major role in the presence of low salience of Black concerns. Career aspirations were afforded a high level of commitment which was race-neutral. Participants believed that hard work and perseverance would result in their ultimate success. Several participants related it was not good to be too Black. They believed that
being Black would not hinder the accomplishment of their goals.

Even though Pre-encounter Stabilization participants were not entrenched with racial issues and concerns, Cross suggested that it was at Internalization that one's understanding of other life roles would be predominant. Participants were more concerned with career roles as opposed to their roles as Black individuals. As participants continued to experience other life roles over their life span, they might recycle through Nigrescence as proposed by Parham.

To summarize, conclusions drawn as a result of this research were determined to be significant because of the Black experience and how the participants interpreted that experience. While participants were very verbal and insightful about being Black, the nature and process of Black identity development as described by the participants were consistent with the early stage of Cross's model.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study concerned the nature and process of Black identity development through applying Cross's model of Black identity development. Major conclusions suggested that Cross's model was not completely sufficient for examining the nature and process of Black identity development.
Virginia Tech was a predominantly White university (PWU). Investigation of Black identity would benefit from a comparative study between students from a historically Black college or university (HBCU) and students from a PWU.

Participants who attended an HBCU for undergraduate studies responded that the experience was significant to their having confidence in their capabilities and having a positive sense of self. Without a doubt more indepth research needs to be done. Students at HBCUs might exhibit a stronger, more stable identity which might be at the advanced stages of Internalization and Internalization-Commitment. HBCU students may experience more affirming attitudes and behaviors than Black students at PWUs. Several participants in this study supported this proposition as they discussed the significance of having attended a HBCU upon their personal and professional success. Future research focusing upon the potential difference in effect upon identity formation as a result of attending a HBCU or a PWU would provide valuable information and insight into the Black identity development process.

The qualitative design of this study proved useful in examining Black identity development. However, the participants were a small group of graduate students from Virginia Tech. Therefore, results cannot be generalized beyond the population and setting. Participants were
between the ages of 28 and 45 which has been described as a time of life when identity concerns are traditionally not predominant. It would be insightful to apply this research design with traditionally-aged undergraduates who are theoretically believed to be resolving identity issues. A study which had a greater population and which could include the voices of students from various types of institutions of higher education might provide a richer description of the identity development process.

The impact of gender in identity development was examined briefly in this study. Much more needs to be done to investigate the identity development process between Black males and Black females. Thus, gender should be a major variable in future research.

Cross's model was a helpful framework for exploring individual experiences in the development of Black identity. Fundamental to Black identity was the participants' perception and interpretation of the Black experience in American society. This study substantiated the uniqueness of the Black experience, which should be a primary assumption when developing theory, conducting research, and designing programs for Black students.

Parental influence and commitment to career aspirations were found to be of great significance to the participants. Inquiry into these two factors might reveal that these two
factors might provide avenues for interventions which could enable Black students to progress through Nigrescence toward the advanced stages of Internalization and Internalization-Commitment.

Religion was a factor that was revealed in the stories told by participants which was not investigated in this study. All participants revealed that they grew up in the church. A few participants described themselves as Christian. Future research should examine the implication of this variable upon Black students' identity development and their interpretation of the Black experience.

Creating a warm, welcoming environment on college campuses is a major concern in higher education. Also, reducing racially-motivated violence and enhancing diversity are significant issues for educators and student development specialists. Thus, Black identity development merits continuous examination. Findings in this study do not constitute a final perspective concerning the nature and process of Black identity development. More research is needed with a wider population and within differing institutional environments.
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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT/CONSENT FORM

A STUDY OF BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG BLACK GRADUATE STUDENTS AT VIRGINIA TECH
PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT/CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in a research study conducted by Marlene Brown at the Graduate School of Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, College of Education. I understand the purpose and nature of this study is to examine the identity development of Black graduate students. I am participating in this study voluntarily. This study involves eleven participants in addition to myself.

The procedures to be used in this research are indepth interviews. The time and conditions required to participate in this project will be scheduled at a time and place convenient for me and the researcher. I understand that the possible risks or discomfort to me as a participant will be minimal. Safeguards that will be used to minimize my risk and discomfort will be provided in consultation with the university Counseling Center.

My participation in this research project will provide information regarding the identity formation of Black graduate students which will be beneficial to student development research, theory and practice. I understand that no guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage my participation. I may receive a synopsis or summary of this research when completed by providing the researcher with a self-addressed envelope.

The results of this study will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will the researcher release the results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without my written consent. The information I provide will have my name removed and only a subject number or pseudonym will identify me during analyses and any written reports of the research. Audio tapes used in the data collection for this study will be reviewed by Marlene Brown, the researcher, and will be erased after one year from completion of the study.

For my participation in this research, I understand that I will not receive any monetary compensation. Also, I will not receive any kind of academic credit. If as a result of this project, the researcher or I should determine that I should seek counseling or medical treatment, services are provided through the university Counseling Center and Student Health Services.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.
This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

I grant permission for any data collected to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, including a dissertation and any other future publications.

I agree to meet at the following location __________ on the following date __________ for an initial interview of one and one half to two hours, and to be available at mutually agreed upon times and places for two additional interview sessions.

I have read and understand the informed consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

Should a reason arise which would prohibit my participation in this project, I understand that it is my responsibility to inform the researcher as soon as possible. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

I understand that I will receive a copy of this participation agreement/consent form for my records. Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I will contact the investigator, the investigator's faculty advisor, or the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board.

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APPENDIX B

PERSONAL DATA FORM
PERSONAL DATA FORM

Name ___________________________ Date of Birth ________
Race/Ethnicity ____________________ Sex ____________
Marital Status ________________ Educational Level ________
Children (Names, ages, sex) ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Occupation ________________ Years in Occupation ________
Occupational Aspiration ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Mother’s Educational Level ________________________________
Father’s Educational Level ________________________________
Mother’s Occupation ________________________________
Father’s Occupation ________________________________
Your Volunteer/Community Service Activities ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Your Personal/Professional Organizational Affiliations ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Religious Affiliation and Activities ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

PHASE I STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW QUESTION
PHASE I STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW QUESTION

OPENING ACTIVITY: In any manner or style that you prefer, please respond to the following question with twenty responses. "Who are you?"

Please respond to the following question in as much detail as possible. Follow-up questions will be asked by the interviewer as a way of clarifying your response.

Question: At this stage in your life, what experiences, people, and/or events account for who you are as a Black person living in the United States?
APPENDIX D

PHASE II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
PHASE II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Considering your race/ethnicity, what do you prefer to be called? Why?

2. In what way do you believe being Black is a positive experience?

3. In what way do you believe being Black is a negative experience?

4. How do you feel when you are around a large number of Black people?

5. How do you feel when you are with a large number of White people?

6. Describe any daydreams you have had about being White?

7. In what way does being Black feel natural to you?

8. How is a person's race important to you when establishing relationships with others?

9. How are you accepted by most Black people?

10. How would you describe your world view?

11. Are there forms of discrimination within the Black community toward other Blacks?

12. How are hair styles and types of clothing significant to being Black?

13. In what way is the Black social-political movement still viable?

14. Describe your role in the Black social-political movement?

15. How are the personal changes which have occurred in your life related to your race/ethnicity?

16. How are the professional changes which have occurred in your life related to your race/ethnicity?
17. Do lighter-skinned Blacks fair better in conducting business and interacting with Whites than darker-skinned Blacks? If yes, in what ways?

18. What incidents or events have occurred in your life which affect the way you feel about yourself as a Black person?

19. In what ways have you experienced racism? At what age? How did you resolve the conflict?

20. How comfortable are you when attending an all White function?

21. Why would you buy a product if it is promoted by Whites rather than if it is promoted by Blacks?

22. What is your usual manner of thinking about and interacting with other people?

23. Describe any changes in your personal identity or how you feel about yourself today. Five years ago. Ten years ago.

24. Describe your occupational aspirations and career goals.

25. Describe your participation in any specific behaviors or activities in support of Black causes.

26. How did your parents’ attitudes and beliefs about Blackness and the Black experience affect how you feel about yourself?

27. Have you ever been turned down for membership in an organization in which you really wanted to be a member? Was race/ethnicity a factor?
APPENDIX E

REVISED PROTOCOL
PHASE II
REVISED PHASE II INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Considering your race/ethnicity, what do you prefer to be called? Why?

2. In what way do you believe being Black is a positive experience?

3. In what way do you believe being Black is a negative experience?

4. How do you feel when you are around a large number of Black people?

5. How do you feel when you are with a large number of White people?

6. Describe any daydreams you have had about being White?

7. In what way does being Black feel natural to you?

8. How is a person’s race important to you when establishing relationships with others?

9. How are you accepted by most Black people?

10. Would you describe your Afrocentric or Eurocentric world view?

11. Are there forms of discrimination within the Black community toward other Blacks?

12. How are hair styles and types of clothing significant to being Black?

13. In what way is the Black social-political movement still viable?

14. Describe your role in the Black social-political movement?

15. How are the personal changes which have occurred in your life related to your race/ethnicity?

16. How are the professional changes which have occurred in your life related to your race/ethnicity?
17. Do lighter-skinned Blacks fair better in conducting business and interacting with Whites than darker-skinned Blacks? If yes, in what ways?

18. Is the identity formation process different for Black women and Black men? How?

19. In what ways have you experienced racism? At what age? How did you resolve the conflict?

20. Is your usual manner of interacting with people mono-cultural, bi-cultural, or multi-cultural?

21. Why would you buy a product if it is promoted by Whites rather than if it is promoted by Blacks?

22. How would you define Black identity?

23. Describe any changes in your personal identity or how you feel about yourself today. Five years ago. Ten years ago.

24. Describe your occupational aspirations and career goals. How are they related to your race/ethnicity?

25. Describe your participation in any specific behaviors or activities in support of Black causes.

26. How did your parents' attitudes and beliefs about Blackness and the Black experience affect how you feel about yourself?

27. Have you ever been turned down for membership in an organization in which you really wanted to be a member? Was race/ethnicity a factor?
APPENDIX F

PHASE III INTERVIEW STIMULUS QUESTIONS
PHASE III INTERVIEW STIMULUS QUESTIONS

Directions: Please respond to the following passages by Black authors in terms of their implications for your life or in terms of how the passage makes you feel as a Black person living in the United States. Be as descriptive as possible in describing your personal feelings and attitudes.

Passage One

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness as an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder.

From The Souls of Black Folks
W.E.B. DuBois (1953)

Passage Two

A nigger's a black man who don't know who he is.

From The Long Dream
Richard Wright (1958)

Passage Three

Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go.

From The Fire Next Time
James Baldwin (1963)
Passage Four

I am an invisible man. No I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allen Poe; nor am I one of your hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids--and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless head you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed everything and anything except me.

From The Invisible Man
Ralph Ellison (1952)

Passage Five

Through education we seek to change attitudes, through legislation and court orders we seek to regulate behavior. Through education we seek to change internal feelings (prejudice, hate, etc.); through legislation and court orders we seek to control the external effects of those feelings. Through education we seek to break down the spiritual barriers to integration; through legislation and court orders we seek to break down the physical barriers to integration. One method is not a substitute for the other, but a meaningful and necessary supplement.

From I Have a Dream: The Quotations of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Lotte Hoskins (1968)
Passage Six

(A conversation between Malcolm and one of his teachers). He told me, "Malcolm, you ought to be thinking about a career. Have you been giving it thought?"

The truth is, I hadn't. I never have figured out why I told him, "Well, yes sir, I've been thinking I'd like to be a lawyer."

Mr. Ostrowski looked surprised, I remember, and leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head. He kind of half-smiled and said, "Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer, that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You're good with your hands--making things. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. Why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person--you'd get all kinds of work.

From The Autobiography of Malcolm X
Alex Haley and Malcolm X (1964)
APPENDIX G

PHASE I INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT AND ANALYSIS
Phase I Interview Transcript and Analysis
M: Marlene Brown
S: (Samuel)

M: As I explained to you about my study, it is about identity formation and I’m applying a model by William Cross who came up with a model of black identity development that had five stages. And my basic research question is looking at whether or not black graduate students at Virginia Tech go through the same process that he described in their identity formation or that they have similar or different types of experiences than what he had proposed. To get started with opening activity, in any manner that you prefer, any style, any way, in depth as you want to be, answer the following question with at least twenty responses. Who are you?

S: I'm Samuel, born in Danville, Virginia, January 10, 1964. Son of Mr. and Mrs. ____________. Member of the Disciple of Christ Church, Chatham, Virginia. Only child. Male. Easy going. Curious. I like to think thoughtful. I like to think I'm my own person, form my own opinions. I'm a pretty nice guy. I mean, that's how I would describe myself. I consider myself an American. I was born here. This is my culture. The south is the region I grew up in, so I think I feel a certain tie to this region. My family is from the south. I feel comfortable in the south. I lived in the west coast for two years. I feel pretty much comfortable everywhere. I don't see myself as having any problems getting along with other people. Other than that, that's pretty much me. I can't think of anything else that would describe me. I've been community conscious.

M: In what way are you community conscious?

S: I'm concerned with the youth. I've been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters in the New River Valley for about five years. I was matched with Danny who is a thirteen year old kid. And I think my primary goal in that relationship is to be Danny's friend, try to show Danny that there are options, that there are no limits to his ability.

M: Is he African-American?
S: Yeah, he is.

M: How did you happen to come to Virginia Tech for your graduate work?

S: At the time I was interested in botany and Virginia Tech had the only botany program in the state and that's how I ended up here.

M: Did you go to here for undergraduate?

S: Yes. I graduated, worked for awhile and came back, worked as a lab technician for two years or so, and became a student of Dr. Carl Peters in the biology department. I've been working with him for the last three and a half years. I'm a PhD, but right now I'm trying to determine whether I'm staying at Virginia Tech or leaving because my major advisors are gone and he's made an offer to me to follow him, so I'm trying to determine whether or not I'm going to take that offer. I don't know what else to tell you.

M: Well, that's good. Okay, I use this opening activity just to try to begin to get you thinking and you can think in your own way and your own words and it is not so directed or guided by a specific question. Now, I have this specific question and I want you to respond in as much detail as possible and I may ask you some follow-ups to what you are saying. The question is, at this stage in your life, what experiences, people and/or events account for who you are as a black person living in the United States?

S: People, of course, are my mother and father, they are very influential as to who I am. My mother shaped me as a youngster. She is the foundation of my religious affiliation, church. My father, he has always provided and taught certain responsibilities to the family. And, of course, my extended family, my grandparents, my uncles, all had the greatest impact on me.

M: In what way have they impacted on how you feel about yourself as a black individual?

S: As a black individual, you know, they always stressed that you are no better, you are no worse than anyone else. As far as self-esteem is concerned, they always stressed that you are just as good as anyone so that
helped in building the early foundation that I'm just as good as anyone else. So, as a black person, again, you know, there was never any stress, anything stressed as far as limitations because of your ethnic affiliation. Sure we were black and sure there were people, groups, that dislike you because of your ethnic affiliation but you shouldn't let that impede you on your dreams or your goals.

M: Have you ever felt any kind of restriction because you were black?

S: No. No, not really. I mean, if there were restrictions I either moved around them or moved through them or just avoided them all together. Again, being from the south, you know that there are groups, people, who dislike you. So, you either avoid those people or you move around those people...

M: To accomplish what you want to accomplish.

S: Sure. You don't let those people impede you. But I've never had any real problems. When I went through elementary school in 1964, not 1964, it was 1970, I was born in 1964, you know, schools in the state of Virginia had been integrated not too long ago, but there was no real problems that I faced as a youngster in school. The majority of the population in elementary school and high school was black, so as far as having people there from your community and looked like you and understood the things that you understood, there was never any problem with that. I never had any problems with teachers.

M: Well, how have you adapted to Virginia Tech where the majority of the population is white as opposed to what your upbringing has been?

S: I don't think that was a big - I think I was more intimidated by the size of the campus than the ratio of the students, white to black. I think because I knew who I was when I came here, you know, from that earlier foundation that my mom and father gave me, I never had any problems with knowing that I could compete or knowing that I had the same skills or my skills were just as good as anyone else. So, I was never intimidated from that standpoint.
M: You talk about the foundation of your parents and your extended family. What kind of things did they do, if you remember anything especially, that they did to help you in terms of your Afro-American heritage that was in your upbringing? Did they do anything specific or was it just a lifestyle or something?

S: Uh, Afro-American heritage? Nothing was ever done to say, you know, you are Afro-American, you should be proud to be an African-American. I think more than anything else it was the things that were not verbalized. For instance, my grandfather, he went out and he worked at the saw mill and he provided for his family. He was a very strong male role model in the family and I respect him for being the man that he is and I think that probably did more to make me who I am than anything else, was just the people around me. Sure, I mean, when he was a young man there was problems in Chatham for him. His opportunities were restricted. You know, he had problems with local law officials, largely due to him being black. But, you know, he didn’t let that stop him. He knew he had a family to take care of and he went out and he did those things necessary to make sure his family was housed and that they were respected in the community. So I think, you know, affirming my heritage or anything of that nature, I think that the things that he did as a man were more important. So I see myself, obviously I am of African heritage, but I see myself more as a good, decent man. And I think if someone were to evaluate me, I would want them to see that I am a very decent person. You know, my color is obvious. You would be a fool to look at me and think I’m anything other than African-American.

M: Well, what about your father, can you think of any specific things he did, because you mentioned your father as a strong role model and your mother as a strong role model and your extended family as a strong role model in who you were to be or to become as a man and how you feel about yourself as a person? Did your father do anything particular or was it just the lifestyle he lead or what was it?

S: Well, his relationship with my mother is important. Their strong relationship...

M: Their strong love relationship, marital relationship?
S: Sure. I felt, you know, he respected my mom and that was important to me. In a male, I think it is important that he sees his father’s relationship with his mother, that forms his relationship with women later. So that was important as far as, you know, how I related with females in the community. His work ethic, of course...

M: Which was what? What was his work ethic?

S: I mean, he very rarely missed work. He would go to work everyday. He did his job very competently and he provided for his family. He was honest and those sort of things I saw and those are the things I wish to imitate.

M: Was there a situation when you were growing up or even in your present situation where you looked at either black authors or entertainers, performers or something like that, that had a special influence on you, or political leaders or anything?

S: I can’t think of any particular author or political leader that I can say has had an impact on me. I think, from the science standpoint, George Washington Carver would be one of the people that interested me early on, and one of the people that interested me in science. I can’t think of any particular person.

M: With your studies and with your responsibilities at work here, do you find that you have any time to follow current events and what is going on and everything and do you have any particular feeling one way or the other about some of the things that are going on, whether it is in South Africa or some of the things that have gone on out in Los Angeles with Rodney King or some of the - what’s another one - the death of Michael Jordan’s father down in North Carolina, which is very close to us? I mean, do you have time to follow those things or do you feel anything particular about those as a black person in thinking about those things?

S: Yeah, I read the newspapers, Roanoke Times, local newspapers, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and that sort of thing. Michael Jordan’s father is tragic, you know, just a very senseless crime. Rodney King, I felt that there was excessive force used from newspaper accounts, which sometimes can be very accurate and sometimes can be very misleading. But
from the newspaper accounts, I felt Mr. King had fled. I think he was being stopped for speeding and it seems this thing just escalated. I understand there is historical foundations to, you know, black, white and Afro-American police interactions in south central IA. Maybe that was the reason he felt he needed to flee. Again, according to the newspaper accounts, he was on probation. So, I don’t know his motives. But again, I think that there was enough policemen on sight to have subdued him without the beating. And I guess if I look at that thing, when I look at that, I’m not sure if I am enraged because he was a black man. I’m just enraged, you know, because they beat him to such a degree.

M: I mean that would enrage you if it was anyone?

S: Sure. Sure. And there are things in the black community that definitely make me angry...

M: Like what for example?

S: Sometimes it seems as if we put more energy in fighting old battles instead of putting energy into improving our present situation. Point of interest is the present battle going on in the state of Georgia about the confederate flag. I understand that is a very emotional thing for black people. The flag has a different meaning for black people as opposed to the sons or the daughter of the confederacy. I think if we can sit down and talk rationally, perhaps there is a compromise that can be made. But to put so much energy into protesting the flag when at the same time in Atlanta, that is one city in Georgia, in Atlanta the drug and crime rate in the black community is so high...

M: Unemployment.

S: Right. Unemployment is so high, it seems to me that that energy could be better spent if you were to go in to those communities and try to figure out, well, what we can do to curb some of the rates of black on black crime. How do we reach the youngsters with so much potential and how do we prevent that potential from going down the drain. I mean, it seems to me that we should put much more energy into those sort of activities, not to suggest that the flag issue is not important, it is important. We should definitely try to understand the other person’s position, but I have
a feeling that this is such an emotional thing that a lot of times rational discourse is lost and people get involved in screaming matches. To me that's not very constructive or effective.

M: Well, do you think you have a role to play in prioritizing some of these issues, like crime, the drug problem, the fact that about 45% of black males are either incarcerated, on drugs or unemployed, or whatever? I mean, do you think that you have a role to play in addressing some of those problems and in what way can you see yourself at this point in your life playing that role?

S: Sure. Yeah, I think I have a big role to play and I think a lot of that responsibility comes from my religious upbringing. You know, I feel that I am my brother's keeper and I was taught as a child to look at people who are "less fortunate" and look at them in the context that but for the grace of God they'll go down, so I could become involved with the Big Brothers Big Sisters in the New River Valley. As I mentioned earlier, I've been matched with this teenager in Blacksburg and I feel my role with Danny is to again speak with him, to be his friend and to let Danny know that there are options and to let Danny talk about his feelings and to try to help him work things through. When I first met Danny, he was eight years old and I asked Danny, "what do you want to do", "what do you want to do when you grow up", and Danny says "I'd like to get a house, get a car" and I said "how are you going to pay for those things" and he said "well, there are government assistance programs" and at the time his mom was on government assistance. And that was his reality. Those were his goals, you know, at eight years old he was thinking about government assistance. He was thinking about how am I going to acquire these things, this house and car and what have you. I am going to acquire them on government assistance. And now that he is thirteen, he is in high school and we have been talking about things, his goals have changed and maybe it probably would have changed regardless whether I was there or not. But now he says "well, I need to start thinking about my future, I need to think about the things I like to do, the things I want to do and how to achieve those things". And that is a big change from one to live on public assistance. So, yeah, I think I have a responsibility to do as much as I can to affect a change in our community. I'm only one person but, you
know, I've reached out to this one child who has five brothers and sisters, five different fathers, and I respect his mother. When I go to her house, it is her house. I ask her permission to do anything with Danny and I'm not about to try and pass judgment on her situation. But I think it is not a good situation for those five children not to have any real contact with their father, or fathers in this case. His older brothers are unemployed. They don't have any desire to be employed. They both dropped out of high school. So, you have to wonder that if the United States, you know, this global competitive push that we are having now, you have to wonder if we are going to truly be globally competitive, what is going to be left for these two kids, eighteen and seventeen years old.

M: Did your parents instill any values in you in terms of the role of education in your future in creating options for you or is that something that you came to realize as you grew up?

S: My family instilled in me the importance of education. That it was always something, if you had it, no one could take it from you. It was always emphasized that you have to try to position yourself to take advantage of opportunities presented to you and I think that was the major position that my parents and my family tried to look for. That you had to take advantage of the opportunities given you and make the most of those opportunities. And that is what I am trying to do. Like I said, I always had an interest in science. There were no role models in my community. There were no PhDs, no engineers, or anything of that nature. When I came here to Virginia Tech, it took me awhile to understand how the system worked, you know, how to gain access to certain things. For instance, gaining access to undergraduate research opportunities. It took me awhile to figure that out. It took me awhile to figure out how to exploit the system you know, not in a mean, vindicative way, but exploit the system to get the things you needed to move forward. For instance, contact the faculty members, ask them for a lab experience, you know, I'm working in there, you know, I never realized how important networking is and it took me awhile, maybe to the end of my sophomore year to realize how important those things were. You know, you have all these resources here at the university and you have to go out and
exploit it though. You can't wait for it to come to you. And I think that is something that I learned from my father and my grandfather, to always go out and try to see what is out there and what you can do.

M: Do you think you had to exploit the system because you were a black person or do you think anybody coming into this situation would have to do the same thing to reap the greatest benefit or was that a factor?

S: I think that if you are not somewhat aggressive, especially if you don't have "connections", no matter who you are, if you are not aggressively going out and seeking opportunity, you are not going - it is not going to happen for you. As a black person at this university, there were no black faculty members in the biology department or biology undergraduates, so, I'm not sure if there were black faculty members, what they would have really meant to me. It is not like, you know, this black faculty member could have seventy some odd black undergraduates to have helped and be a father figure. So I'm not sure what it means - I guess I saw the system and I saw if I wanted to be a part of this, I have to go and try to move in certain circles and I didn't see it at the time as I had to exploit it because I was black. I saw it as I had to exploit it because that was where I wanted to go and if I want to get there then I have to go make certain contacts. I didn't see it that way, because I was black.

M: Let me ask you one other question, do you feel any concern or any sense of responsibility with what is going on in South Africa, with Nelson Mandela and all that kind of stuff? Do you feel any sense of connectedness or any reason to be connected to Africa?

S: Again, it is obvious that I am of African heritage. Perhaps that is the connection - well, that is the only connection I have with Africa, that I am of African heritage. I have African friends, colleagues and I'm not familiar with the African culture, not really. It is totally different from the culture we live in. I am concerned with what is happening in South Africa because of the apartheid system, you know, people being oppressed, but I think my major is because of the oppressed people. But I don't feel any real ties to Africa per se. Again, I don't know Africa, I'm talking about Nigeria and what have you, their way of looking at things in a social standpoint,
politically, I guess is the way we see things. They have a different culture and a different way of accomplishing things.

M: When you talked about, you know, being able to realize and some concern over the oppression that they feel in South Africa because of apartheid, but have you ever felt like you were oppressed?

S: No. I never felt like I am an oppressed person. I realize there are people out there who would oppress me, sure, if I allowed them but, yeah, I don’t see myself as oppressed. I think if you started thinking of yourself as an oppressed person, you would start to lose hope. You always have to fight. You have to realize that, yeah, there are certain factors out there that will dislike you for whatever reason. The thing is you have to come to grips with that, you have to realize it, and you persevere. It’s just that simple. I guess one of the things that really, really distresses me as far as the black community, is the lack of knowledge of self. You know, three years ago, what have you, the fad was to wear the continent Africa as a medallion on your chest and you’d see the young children wearing this medallion. And I noticed once that the continent was turned around backwards and I asked the kid that was wearing the thing, do you think that’s continent Africa that you have on your neck, is it oriented in the proper way according to the map, to the globe. He was clueless, he didn’t know. So my question is, why are these kids really wearing this thing, are they trying to make a statement that I’m black, I’m African, I’m proud of my African heritage and I’m proud of that, or are they wearing it because of some fad, you know, the word, the colors...

M: With the red, black and green?

S: Sure.

M: What do you think?

S: I think it is a fad, sure. I don’t think they were really serious about it. I don’t think they know exactly what it all means. My little brother had a shirt, a t-shirt, and I think it had five or six African-American leaders, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, what have you on this shirt, and I asked him, you know, who are these guys, what were
they about, and of course he didn’t know. That was a cool shirt, you know.

M: How old was he?

S: He was twelve. But it was a cool shirt.

M: Well, do you think parents have an obligation for kids that are coming up, because I have nieces and nephews that will do the same thing, do you think we have an obligation to clue them in on their heritage or sense of who they are?

S: Certainly. Sure. Definitely. I mean, it is meaningless if you don’t know what it is about. Why wear the shirt if you don’t know what it is about. What statement are you trying to make. What are you trying to tell people. You know, I understand that in this country because for four hundred and some odd years, the value of being a black person has been minimized. I understand that you want to make a statement, hey we contributed too to this country, we contributed to the growth and development of this country whether you want to believe it or not. There may be some people who will say, well, you are talking revenguous history but if not revenguous history you are not going to tell the entire story.

M: Well, what about what you were taught in school? I mean, about African-American history, slavery, the African-American history, what was going on in your schools when you were at your formative years?

S: Sure. You get the basics, you know. You get George Washington Carver. You get Frederick Douglas. Of course, they are going to talk about Nat Turner and, you know, Martin Luther King, of course. When I was in high school, there was very little talk, very little discussion about Malcolm. You know, a lot of people didn't understand Malcolm and how Malcolm evolved over the years. So, there was very little discussion about Malcolm...

M: He was seen as a radical.

S: Well, I think he was too controversial and a lot of people didn’t know how to present him. You know, you have to present Malcolm in a very structured way, I think, because you have to understand how he evolved over the years and where he came from, you know,
because Malcolm actually didn’t come from a poor family per se. His family was considered middle class. So, to understand — if you say, well, he came from a poor inner city or a poor rural situation and he had a lot of anger, then half of our people could identify with that and understand the anger but Malcolm came from a totally different place because his family didn’t start off in poverty. But, at any rate, I guess what I am trying to say is, you get the basics in high school as far as African-American history, and I think the parents and the grandparents and the aunts and the uncles and the community and the church have a responsibility to present factual information to the children to let them know that, yeah, you contributed to this society. You need to talk about Charles Drew, you know, and his contribution. You can also talk about the irony of Charles Drew’s death. You know, this is a man who pioneered isolation of blood but yet he bled to death because he wouldn’t be admitted at the time in an all white hospital.

M: Well, how does something like that, Charles Drew’s situation, how does that make you feel? You are going to be a scientist and everything. You will probably discover something important and wonderful, win the Nobel Prize for science and everything. I mean, how does it make you feel when you think of Charles Drew’s situation, his contribution and the circumstances of his death? Have we progressed beyond that?

S: No, I don’t think so, not really. Not as a people, because we are too caught up in this racism thing. That becomes — sometimes this is preoccupation with other people disliking you, it becomes so engrossed that you forget what is really important. I participated in this pre-graduate school program a few years ago here on campus...

M: Academic enrichment.

S: Right. And, you know, these kids were seniors and juniors in college and we would have discussion groups and the thing they would talk about, the things that really concerned them was this racial thing. The white people were the cause of this, the white people were the cause of that, the white people were the cause of whatever. And they are truisms, sure, yeah. There were slaves. There are still problems. But my thing is, how many of those children — they were maybe
twenty, twenty-one years old, how many of those children rode on the back of someone’s bus. How many of those children were denied admission to ODU, Virginia Tech, or what have you, because they were black. So my question is what’s your gripe? If Frederick Douglas, if W. E. B. Dubois, if Charles Drew, if George Washington Carver, could excel during the times that they were in...

M: With a lot of oppression.

S: Sure. What’s their excuse? The road has already been paved. So, what’s their excuse. I don’t understand this preoccupation...

M: So you are saying racism should not be used as a cop out but it is often used as a cop out.

S: It is. It is used as a cop out.

M: Do you think these young people, young adults you were with in the academic enrichment program, spent much time in introspection, looking inside themselves, setting personal goals and what they wanted to accomplish in those meetings that you were with them, or did they just complain about the racial issue?

S: In my opinion, they complained about racial issues and other hindrances. There was preoccupation because there was not allowed a lot of introspection. Again, I guess what I tried to get them to understand is, they need to sit down and map out a strategy to get to where they want to. And have that strategy flexible enough so if there are road blocks, you can get around them or over them or through them, what have you, but don’t let those things get you caught up into these side arguments that are going to slow you down. I’m not sure, I don’t think they really feel that they can do it.

M: Well, what do you think about programs like that, academic enrichment programs that are special programs set aside to assist minorities? I mean, do you think they are necessary or do you think they create more problems than they solve or do you think they make you feel a certain way about yourself, that you are less qualified or less capable as the other white students who don’t go through programs like this? How does something like that make you feel?
S: I mean, if you look at it extraordinarily, there have always been those sort of programs for white children. There will always be academic camps and what have you for white children. I think those programs, yeah, they have a place but I don’t think that you should sit on those programs forever. You know, you put those things in place and sometimes they can become a crutch, because you feel I can probably get in graduate school because I’m black or he’s black. Yeah, that’s true, we need black graduate students but you don’t want someone to say, oh, you only got in graduate school because you are black or you only got the job because you are black. You must make them sure of their competence and that they can do the job. That’s the best way to combat any argument about your lack of confidence. You must be good at what you do. You must be honest with yourself. Yeah, I think the programs have a place but again I think they need to be evaluated on a regular basis to see where you are and I think that same program needs to go back to the community that these children are coming from to make sure that the parents understand that you play a role too. You just can’t send your kids to school and expect the teacher to teach them and come home and all of a sudden, you know, send Johnny to school empty and expect him to come back full. It is a cooperative type thing. Everybody has to play a role and, you know, I was concerned that not enough black children are interested in science. They see it as, one, being a nerdy type pursuit and, two, the gratification is not there instantly. It is a long process. You know, you are not here to make money as a graduate student. You don’t make money as a graduate student basically. But, you know, it is the ultimate goal that you are after and there is plenty of ways, especially in the biological sciences nowadays to take advantage of your education, your skills, to make money afterwards, sure. The people I’m working with now are taking advantage of their skills. It took them awhile to acquire them but they are taking advantage of them. But I think, I see in the black community this thing of instant gratification. You want it now. You want it yesterday, and I’m not sure you are willing to wait...
M: Do you think that need for instant gratification leads to some of the crime that happens, or involvement in selling drugs or using drugs or whatever that they really want things right away as much of it as they can get?

S: Yeah, I think that and the perception that there are too many options for them. Again, in this pre-graduate school program, your options, the children - I say children, they were basically to me, the options that they felt they had were pretty limited. I understand that. I thought the whole idea if you became a professional, you know, that the options were pretty road. You could pigeon hole yourself into just one or two things that you want to do, then, yeah, you have limited opportunities. But there are lots of things to do. So, yeah, I think that crime, selling drugs or what have you, is a very complex problem and part of the problem is the instant gratification, the need for instant gratification, the inability to see that there are other options.

M: Let me ask you this. Who do you mostly interact with on campus? Do you interact a lot with a lot of the black students on campus or do you just interact with whatever circle you call friends or do you just stay to yourself mostly, how do you interact with the people on campus?

S: I interact with quite a few black students on campus. I haven't been too near the black graduate student association meetings this year because I have been busy with other things. But, yeah, I interact with quite a few black students, quite a few of my other colleagues. I find it interesting to talk with foreign students, China, students from Japan, students from Africa, just to try to see how they see themselves in the world, their contributions to society.

M: So what you are saying is that you interact and socialize with or whatever with a tremendous mixture of people?

S: Yeah.

M: And you don't feel the pressure or the need to just be with black students or anything. Yours is more global as far as you are concerned?
S: Yeah.

M: Is there anything else that you want to add to what accounts to you as a black person, how you feel about yourself? Any concluding remarks or anything?

S: Again, there may be some people that disagree with me, but when I look in the mirror I see myself as Samuel first and foremost.

M: You don’t see no ethnicity or race...

S: Yeah, I understand that I am a black man. But I mean, you know, what does that mean in the larger scope of things, what does that mean in the context of being an American or being a graduate student. I see myself as being Samuel. Sure, I’m African-American and I’m proud of that fact. But, I guess sometimes I don’t understand the preoccupation of having to belong to one or another group. You know, I see myself. I guess, maybe it is a crazy notion, but still that phrase, as a global citizen, I really do. When I look in the mirror, I don’t see any limitations and I don’t see, well, you are a black man and you have a responsibility to the black community. I feel I do have a responsibility to the black community, but in my opinion that’s not something that is automatic, just because you are black you must feel you have the responsibility to the black community. My responsibility to myself is to try to be the best person I can be, to try to help as many people as I possibly can and just be a decent person.

M: So then you see yourself, you are saying your responsibility is to yourself first and then to whatever else in the community that you could impact upon?

S: Sure. You have to develop yourself first. You have to know who you are and what you want, where you want to go, before you can go out and try to help someone else discover those same things.

M: And do you think you also need to know where you came from?

S: Definitely. Everybody talks about, you know, family values. Family is very, very important. Extended family is very important to me. That’s who I am. You ask me who I am, you know, I’m a mosaic of my father,
my mother, my grandparents, you know, both sides, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins. I mean, these are the people I grew up with, these are the people who impacted me early on. You know, by the time I reached twelve or thirteen years old, I was pretty much who I am going to be. They all set decent examples. They all allowed me to think for myself. I think one of the most important things, I was able to talk to my parents, my mom especially, and express myself as an individual, you know, not necessarily as a child. I wasn’t told that’s a super idea or what have you. I was asked to defend or explain myself. Sometimes I could and sometimes I couldn’t but at least you were required to think it through.

M: Do you think it made a difference your being an only child as opposed to if you had five or six siblings in terms of the attention you were getting?

S: For all practical purposes I had siblings because, you know, my whole family lived in the same area, so you know I had a whole slew of cousins and we were always together. So it wasn’t any particular time that I was isolated to myself. I think, yeah, being the only child, I wanted siblings but I had them basically. But I think, yeah, we were a little different.

M: I want to thank you very much for sharing with me all those thoughts. It is some interesting stuff for me to look at as I continue on with my project.

END OF INTERVIEW.
Phase II Interview Transcript and Analysis

M: Marlene Brown
S: (Samuel)

M: Samuel, as I told you when we started this process that this is a study about identity development and I will be interviewing a select group of black graduate students at Virginia Tech and I will be applying a model developed by William Cross. So with these questions, it is a series of twenty-seven questions, I want you to answer as freely as possible and I may ask you some follow up questions about your response. So, let's get started. Considering your race and ethnicity, what do you prefer to be called and why?

S: I think I prefer to be called Samuel, but because there is such a large desire in this country to group people and categorize people, if I had to be called anything I guess African-American, because that tells you something about my ethnic background. But that is only if I had to be categorized. There's been a big discussion about whether we should be called black or Negro-American or African-American. It doesn't really matter to me. But again if I had a preference, African-American would be it.

M: Okay. In what way do you believe being black is a positive experience?

S: Well, you look at it from a historical perspective. In this country, I think being black means being able to overcome a lot of adversity. I guess from that perspective the positive thing is being able to persevere.

M: Do you think there is anything that is called the black struggle?

S: Do I believe there is a black struggle?

M: Uh-huh.

S: Yeah, I think there is a black struggle.

M: In what way do you see that happening?

S: There's a black struggle from forces, exterior forces and interior forces, to constantly have to prove yourself or have to demonstrate your ability, your competence. In that sense, yeah, there is a black struggle. You know, for so long, people have - certain factions in this country especially have sought to
diminish your contributions to the evolution of the country, the contributions to society, the whole nine yards. And, yeah, from that standpoint there's been a struggle to prove yourself worthy.

M: Do you think it is different for a black man than it is for a black woman, that the struggle is different for both of them, or is it the same?

S: I think basically the struggle is the same. But the key is you can't allow yourself to be divided because unfortunately I feel sometimes there's a division between the two, black men, black women. I mean there's a division between men and women, period, you know, regardless of your ethnic or racial background. But, there's a definite division between the two for various reasons, but in that case, black men and black women allow themselves to be divided.

M: Do you think society gives messages to black men that are different from black women that would affect how they would feel about themselves, their identity, you know, black men as compared to black women? Another way of putting that, do you think society expects more of black men than black women?

S: No, I think society sometimes expects less of black men and of black women, and I think that's the thing that you have to, I guess, be conscious to try and resist is that expectation of lower standards. Because if you say, well, no one expected me to, so, no loss. Yeah, I think there's definitely messages that are very blatant and some that are less blatant that you are not expected to succeed or what have you. There are definite messages.

M: In what way do you believe being black is a negative experience? Before you answer that, let me explain that you prefer to be called African-American, if you have to be called anything at all, I certainly understand that. In the literature and in the language of this model, Dr. Cross uses the word black, so that is why the word black is being used in these questions cause that is the word that is used in the literature and in the model itself. Okay, so the question is, in what way do you believe being black is a negative experience.

S: I don't see any negative experience with being black. I don't see any negatives at all. Are there any negatives with being white or Hispanic or Asian. I don't see any negatives at all with being black.
M: Do you think there are things that black individuals have to do to overcome obstacles, things like that, in order to be successful in America’s society or do you believe that you just have to apply yourself?

S: I think you have to apply yourself and I think you have to overcome the same obstacles that are given anyone else, but at the same time I think you are a little naive to believe that everyone has the same obstacles historically as black people have to overcome. I mean, just the other day, to give you a perfect example, and this is a true story. Just the other day, someone called my house. I have no idea who it was and in the background I heard someone say “that sounded like a nigger” and left a message on my answering machine. I guess they assumed that the answering machine had terminated or that no one would hear them, but, you know, that was strange to me. I don’t know who it was and it doesn’t matter who it was, but how many other ethnic groups other than minority ethnic groups do you think would receive a call like that. So, yeah, there are certain hurdles we have to overcome. You know, I could have gotten irate and let that upset me, but...

M: How did that make you feel?

S: It didn’t bother me. I figured it was just the ignorance of the other person. I didn’t know who it was. It didn’t really matter. Now, you know, we are in southwest Virginia, so it is par for the course. But I thought that was sort of interesting. I think that is unique to being black, because for some reason this person recognized my voice as perhaps being black and he made the comment, you know, “that sounds like a nigger”.

M: Most people when they talk to you on the phone, like if I am setting up a job interview or meeting someone, they will say, oh, I didn’t know you were black because you didn’t sound black, and I thought, what does that mean to sound black.

S: Yeah, like what is black suppose to sound like, yeah.

M: And in one instance the secretary said you didn’t sound colored. And, I thought, okay, and everything. Well, the next question is, how do you feel when you are around a large number of black people? How does that make you feel?
S: I feel comfortable. And I feel comfortable around a large number of white people. I mean, going to Virginia Tech, you are constantly surrounded by a large number of white people. But I feel comfortable no matter what group I'm in.

M: Do you think there's a certain comfort zone that has to be established at Virginia Tech as a predominantly white school for black graduate students? I mean, do you think - in order for them to be successful?

S: A comfort zone?

M: A comfort zone.

S: No, I don't think so. I think the key is that, you know, with any student you just have to be comfortable with yourself. You can't look to outside sources to provide a comfort zone for you. You create it yourself. I feel comfortable because I know who I am and I don't have this feeling of inferiority to anyone.

M: Well, you answered the next question which is how do you feel when you are around a large number of white people, so...

S: I mean, I don't know how you go about creating a comfort zone for people. I mean, what do you do. That's the question. And you bring in minority students and people from different cultures and what do you do? Do you go out and create special programs...

M: Are you attending any of the black history month activities?

S: I haven't attended any yet, but I have attended them in the past, yes.

M: Well, I know this year they didn't mail the program out like they usually do and I've seen it posted around campus and everything, and I haven't attended as many of them as I should but it looked like they had a lot of good stuff planned.

S: Yeah, they had some pretty decent things. But, yeah, I don't know. I don't know how I feel about black history month celebration. I mean I see it on one hand as being necessary because things have been so strategically omitted in history about black contribution and it goes back to your feelings of inclusion as a black person. On the other hand, you know, that means too you have to start having a Hispanic-American history month, although I mean I would suggest to anyone that the black experience in...
this country is unique. No other ethnic group was enslaved, you know, the way we were. Yeah, some horrible atrocities have been committed against native Americans, but again, no one was enslaved the way the black people were. So, yeah, there is justification for having black history month, but at the same time, I guess the purpose is to highlight contributions but sometimes it seems as if you almost become exclusionary.

M: By setting yourself apart.

S: Yeah, so you just have to constantly evaluate and try to really define what you want to accomplish there.

M: You know, I think Virginia Tech, as an institution, really tries in good faith. I mean, they’ve got the black cultural center which is very, very nice and pleasant to be in and browse and see all the things that are there. They’ve got Ron Giddings in the Dean of Students Offices, Assistant Dean of Multi-Cultural Programs and everything, and so I think they do make an effort to try to be responsive throughout the whole time period, not just black history month. But I was reading in JET Magazine - do you get JET Magazine?

S: Not any more.

M: I was reading in JET Magazine this time, and the question was why did they pick February as black history month. And so they went through each day of February and listed what happened historically on that day and just about all twenty-eight days had something very significant that happened. And I never knew that, I mean, I never knew why they picked February. And I thought to myself, well, that’s real educational and I’m going to have to keep that magazine for future reference, you know.

S: Yeah, see, that’s the key though. I mean, I’ve heard something about brothers and sisters complaining about the month of February being chosen as the month to celebrate black history month as if there was some conspiracy to choose the shortest month in the year to celebrate black history month, but, you know, blacks had a lot of say so or a lot of influence on what month to be chosen. And some time I think they get away from (inaudible) Woodson establishing this thing, you know, and he was definitely a black man. So, yeah, it was chosen for a reason, strategically, and a lot of blacks don’t understand that. And so again my argument is that, okay, we celebrate this thing to highlight our contributions, then we should make sure that our own people understand the significance of the month and a\[\text{Miss education}^c\]
lot of them don't. It goes back to the first conversation we had about young brothers and sisters running around with the continent Africa or the t-shirt with Marcus Garvey or Malcolm X or Martin Luther King, not really knowing who these individuals are or what they contributed, but wearing these things because it is cool. So, you know, it is a little weird.

M: Describe any daydreams that you've had about being white? Have you ever daydreamed about being white?

S: No. No, I must honestly say I have never daydreamed about being white. I think if you - I don't know - I am no psychologist or psychiatrist or what have you but there's never been any need for me to dream of being white because I've never seen myself as having any limitations. Perhaps you've dreamed of yourself being white because you see certain limitations that you can't do as a black man that you may be able to do as a white man. So I don't dream of being white because I don't see any limits.

M: Okay. In what way does being black feel natural to you?

S: I mean, again, I don't define myself necessarily as a black man first and foremost. When I breathe, you know, I don't breathe as a black man. I breathe as a man. So I mean it is natural for me to breathe and to live and to exist as a man, not necessarily as a black man. So it is natural for me to breathe as a Homo sapien. I don't know what it means, you know. I don't know what it means - ask the question again?

M: In what way does being black feel natural to you?

S: Yeah, what does that mean?

M: Do you think that's because you have a strong sense of identity in who you are and if I set the scene that you could say I just am me, I'm here, I'm doing my thing, where if some other black individual did not have such a strong sense of identity, did not have such high self esteem and confidence in their capabilities might feel that being black is unnatural or a handicap or something like that. Do you think your strong sense of who you are makes it seem that it is not very important to you?

S: I would imagine so, yeah, that has a lot to do with it. You know, the natural portion of that question, throws me for a loop. I mean, is it natural to feel good about yourself as a white person, or you know, or a Asian person or a Hispanic person. I don't know what
that means because I’ve never been anything but, so, I
don’t know what it means.

M: Okay. How is a person’s race or ethnicity important to
you when establishing relationships with others?

S: How important is a person’s race or ethnicity. Uh,
now, okay, from that standpoint I think being a black
man influences my approach to people of different
ethnic backgrounds. The reason I say that is because
if I approach a person of Asian or oriental, whatever
you want to say, oriental or Asian ethnic background,
then I think I approach that person a little
differently than I approach someone of African-American
heritage simply because I know what it is like to be a
black person. I’m not quite sure what it is like to be
an Asian person, now I want to know, so I want to go
into that relationship very deliberately and very slow
because I don’t want to make any mistakes or I don’t
want to try and make mistakes to offend that person.
And I probably will offend that person but if I do, I
want that person to let me know how I have offended him
or her.

M: What about a white person and, you know, you said that
you might approach an Asian-American or an oriental
person differently than a black person, but what about
a white person? Would you approach the white person
any differently?

S: Well, sure, yeah. But my contacts with people of
European heritage have been so much greater that I feel
that I am more familiar with that person’s culture and
heritage than I am with an individual of some other
culture that I come in contact with. Again, I’m from
the south, from Chatham, Virginia, and basically, you
know, you have blacks and whites in that town. I can’t
ever remember going to high school or elementary school
with anyone of any other ethnic background. So, I
think because I’ve learned so much about people of
European descent and I’ve lived in the black community,
I’m familiar with those two communities. I’m familiar
with the history between those two communities. I’m
familiar with a little bit of the history of people
from Asia or people from Africa for that matter. I
approach those relationships a little more gingerly
than I do one with a white counterpart simply because
I’m not as familiar with those cultures and again from
a black man’s viewpoint, I want to make sure I make
that person feel comfortable and I want to learn from
that person. I don’t want to come off as being
arrogant and insensitive and make that person feel
uncomfortable. So, yeah, that’s my reason for
approaching those people a little differently.
M: The next question is, how are you generally accepted by most black people?

S: I think I’m generally accepted favorably by most black people.

M: Have you had an opportunity to interact with other black professionals that are in your field?

S: There aren’t that many black professionals in my field. I’ve yet to see or meet any...

M: Even when you go to professional meetings and stuff like that?

S: Yeah, sure. For instance, last year, it was 1993, there were 4,800 and some odd PhD's granted to graduate students in the United States. Of those 4,800 and some odd, only 3% were granted to black individuals and of those 3%, I think, it was something like 60 or 70 odd PhD's granted to minority students, that is including black students, Hispanic students, Asian, so, yeah, there’s not that many.

M: Does that bother you? I mean, does that concern you in any way or do you see yourself as a trailblazer kind of a person?

S: I guess I see myself as a trailblazer because there are black scientists out there. But it bothers me from the perspective that young black people aren’t interested in science because in my opinion there are some bias. In my opinion, it is probably one of the more important disciplines that any person could be involved with as far as advancing. Technology and just information itself, you know, wondering at the marvels of nature. I think that’s one of the more noble things that you could do but for some reason black children just aren’t very interested in it. And it could be because there aren’t many role models in the community. It could be just because it is not a very glamorous type of pursuit. Most of my colleagues when I was an undergraduate were either business, sociology, psychology or engineering majors. Those were probably the big three or four or whatever.

M: Do you think there is something about this argument that if you have low expectations for black children that they will respond accordingly, or they will perform poorer, but if you have higher expectations of black children they will rise to the occasion and meet those high expectations?
S: Sure. I mean, yeah, that's the case...

M: Was that part of your experience when you went to school? You know, because that was part of my experience. I mean, I had teachers, about three teachers that had very, very high expectations and encouraged me and pushed me a little to meet those expectations until it became to the point when I went off to college I was very confident in my intellectual capabilities in what I could do and I could meet any challenge.

S: Sure. I think that's proof of any child. If you have high expectations then that child will strive to meet those expectations, sure.

M: Do you think it is a factor with black children, especially if they have white teachers, that the teachers have such low expectations of black children in reading, math and science, and things like that, that it kind of hampers them as they go along?

S: Yeah, I'm not sure it is just white teachers because I had some black teachers who had more expectations. But, yeah, that happens, sure. I mean, all children come into, you know, kindergarten, head start, bright eyed and bushy tailed. It is when they get to the fourth, fifth grade that that light in their eyes is dim. Yeah, sure, but again that goes back to the parents in the community to keep that light bright so you have to encourage the child. You have to expect more of the teachers too. I mean, not that the teachers are miracle workers, but for instance, I remember when I was in school, very few black parents would show up at PTA meetings, you know, and if you don't come and meet the people who are teaching your child reading, writing and arithmetic, you know, how can you truly evaluate the child's progress or whether he did anything you deem necessary. So, yeah, you have to have high expectations, but you have to have some impetus to push the child to meet those too.

M: How would you describe your world view in terms of how you perceive the world generally, interact with the world, I mean, what is your world view, how would you describe that? I mean, you talked a lot about European focus or international focus and things like that.

S: I think I have a positive world view. I think that everybody in the world deserves to be understood and listened to. I think if you were to just try to make an honest effort to try to make it every one has a say and every one has to listen to and take it seriously, then the world would be a better place. That may be a
simplistic view of things but I think a lot of problems that we have with relationships, whether it be personal relationships, international relationships, domestic, foreign, what have you. A lot of it has to do with people not truly understanding what the other person wants and not truly respecting the other person's views, you know. Whether they conflict or compliment your own views, you still need to make sure you understand that person's viewpoint. I think that's the key, that's the key to world relationships.

M: The next question is, are there forms of discrimination within the black community toward other blacks?

S: Sure. We have the nitty groups. I mean I don't think that is just blacks...

M: Give me some examples that you know about personally or heard about.

S: Know about personally, I mean everybody, whether you are white or black have problems with the poor. They feel uncomfortable around the poor. Or feel uncomfortable around people with physical disabilities or feel uncomfortable with people who have different viewpoints other than your own. Yeah, and I think that's the problem with the black community or any other community, there are problems with black people seeing other black people as, you know, want-to-bes, want-to-be white, or want-to-be in some other social setting other than the one they are in. And that again comes from misunderstanding and sometimes the misunderstanding is perpetrated on both sides. Yeah, there are problems. There are problems in all groups like that. You want to be around people who make you feel good about yourself so you feel you should be, you know, in the upper crust of society, then you ought to be surrounded by those people who, you know, make you feel good and if you are surrounded by poverty, poverty is depressing, you know, and not many people want to be bothered with depression. So you move out of the neighborhood that is depressed or people don't have jobs or children having babies, you know, instead of staying there. And it is very difficult to try and change those trends, but yeah, there are problems in the black community. There are problems in all communities.

M: How about this one. How are hair styles and types of clothing significant to being black?

S: Well, I think that the significance in hair styles or clothing is the manifestation of suppressed expression of black people. You couldn't express yourself on the
movie screen or you couldn't express yourself in literature because a lot of people either wouldn't publish it or wouldn't read it. So, black people express themselves by creating their own hair styles or creating their own dress styles that you see emulated throughout society. I mean, you see these kids who come with their fakes or what have you and the next thing you know you see the white counter part or the Asian counter part or the Hispanic counter part having fakes or low hair cuts or putting lines in different figures in their hair, wearing baggy clothes, sure, the zoot suits and what have you. So, yeah, it has always been that way. It is a way of expressing yourself.

M: Do you think that has anything to do with - are you expressing yourself as an individual or are you expressing yourself as a black individual? Do you think that has anything to do with expressing yourself as a black individual?

S: I think sometimes yeah. You try to express yourself as a black individual because you want to be able to set yourself apart because in the past, historically, once you've been included in the group, sometimes the pressure to conform is so great that you want to break away and you want to express yourself as a black individual. That goes back to the formula of my world view of having everybody understand the other person's viewpoints. Everything that you have, you know, as Americans we are guilty of this, everything that we embrace as near and dear, we feel everybody else should embrace it the same way. And it doesn't work in different cultural and societal settings. So you can't force your viewpoint. You can't bring a person into the group and then expect them to neglect or reject all of his viewpoints or cultural norms to embrace yours solely, you know, that causes problems.

M: What about incidents that you were telling me about earlier in this interview and you talked about it in the first one, of young kids wearing the African continent on their sweat shirt, t-shirt, you know, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, or they will wear the black liberation colors and things like that, but they don't know what any of that means. Do you think they are just imitating people around them or what they see on the TV and in the magazines or do you think it is the beginning of them to sense something unique and special about being black and the black experience?

S: I think it is a combination of all things, that's what makes it so confusing. It is largely an issue of imitation. But at the same time it is an attempt to
try and set yourself apart to say, hey, you know, we contributed too, this is where I am from, I'm proud to be from this continent, although I may know absolutely nothing about it, but I'm proud to be from this continent. You know, these are the people that I see as my heroes who've had an impact on the American society, but at the same time they don't really know who these people are or what they thought or what they felt, you know, really read about them. They know their names and they get those images from television and from popular media. So it is a combination of all things. Again, it causes a great amount of confusion because sometimes you feel - I've experienced where young people who will embrace Malcolm X feel as though they have to be super radical in order to be down as the saying goes, but they don't understand that Malcolm himself evolved, you know, and Malcolm never completely evolved to a point that he would be considered a great political figure. He is considered to be a great political figure in the black community but a lot of white people have misconceptions and a lot of black people have misconceptions about Malcolm. They feel okay, you have to go out and you have to separate yourself...

M: Burn down buildings.

S: Yeah, and Malcolm had a lot of anger, but in the end, though, Malcolm started to change and Malcolm said, yeah, we have to be proud of who we are and we still need to try to exercise some self discipline and determine all destinies, but at the same time there is no need to burn down white people's stores or to have such anger.

M: Okay. Well, it is a good thing you talked about the social political movement because that is the next question I'm going to ask you. In what way is the black social political movement still viable? In what ways do you see that really still happening today?

S: I think the social political movement in the black community has been divided. There's no common vision. I don't think there ever will be. That's the thing. I think at one point there was a common foe and everybody could identify that foe and everybody could direct their energies toward that foe. Now I think the black community like any community has different issues and different interests. I'm not sure if you can expect to galvanize this group because - let me make this point. On one hand, the white counterpart in this country seems to the black community as a monolith, okay. Because they say, okay, Jessie Jackson or, what's that guy's name, Lewis Frakhan or Al Shockton, are the
spokesmen for the black community. And on the other hand, you have certain black groups who say, look, those guys aren’t the spokesmen for us, for me, and you know, you can’t lump us all into the same group. You have to see us as a bunch of individuals like we see you as a bunch of individuals from a political social standpoint. For instance, if a black kid or a black male would go out and commit some heinous crime, for some reason in this country, you know, you look at the black - you look at that one person’s actions and you equate that with the black community, you know, "I told you, they are all a bunch of evils", but at the same time, you know, Jeffery Domer goes out and kills people and eats them and no one says "all white people are bad and cannibalistic. So I think what you have to do from a social political standpoint as a black community, you have to make sure everyone understands that we don’t share the same interests all the time. That we are individuals and that’s what I think as a social movement or political movement black people have to make sure everybody understands that we are individuals and want to be viewed as individuals.

M: Do you think our strength as a people is in our individuality or is our strength as a people trying to come up with common positions or common approaches to some pretty serious problems? Where do you think our future lies?

S: I think our future lies in having common interests with the group at large as a narratives because again I don’t think you can find common ground in a group of black people. You didn’t see that necessarily during the civil rights movement. Yeah, people who lived up north had a totally different problem or they perceived their problem as being different than their brothers and sisters in the south. These guys wasn’t living under Jim Crowe although they were restricted to a large extent but, you know, they weren’t living under a Jim Crowe type of social structure. So I’m not sure if you could ever find the group interest that is going to galvanize everybody together and everybody that is black, sure, doesn’t want to be discriminated against. They want to be seen as individuals and they want to be judged on the merits, but of course again, that’s maybe a little idealistic too, you know. I guess no one is truly judged solely on the merits.

M: Well, how about this, why don’t you describe your role if you see a role that you have in the black social political movement. Do you see yourself as having a role in the black social political movement?
S: Other than trying to be the best person that I can possibly be, serve as a mentor, role model with as many children as I can, whether they be white or black, it really doesn't matter to me. I think that's my responsibility, to be the best person that I possibly can be and try to help as many people as I can. But, I mean, that's - I don't see myself as having a regional or national role to play as a black person.

M: Do you think you are more the type of person that will try to impact on whatever is in your scope that you can impact and what is beyond your scope to have a sense of caring and concern about, but is beyond your scope so, therefore, you can't impact upon it? I mean, do you see yourself as being more that type of person?

S: No, I don't see myself as having limits as far as the scope of my impact. But I'm realistic in that I know that I should impact the people that are immediately around me and if everybody does that, then we have the largest scope of the field too, you know. So, for instance, I'm not sure what I can do for a kid in the Bronx or in Harlem, but I know what I can do for a kid in Blacksburg, you know. So I can go out and interact with some young people in Blacksburg, but it is up to some other person in the Bronx to interact with those people in the Bronx. So I have a concern for those people in the Bronx or Harlem or wherever, but, you know, what can I realistically do for Blacksburg other than lend my verbal or emotional support to whatever effort is being expended there.

M: Okay, good. How are the personal changes which have occurred in your life related to your race or ethnicity?

S: I'm not quite sure I completely understand the question.

M: Okay, I mean, the next question is about professional questions so you can answer both of them together, how are your personal and professional changes in your life related to your race or ethnicity? Do you think things happened to you, either positive or negative, the things that happened to you where being a black male was a great factor of that happening or do you see things happening to you personally and professionally based on your own merit and your capability and race has nothing to do with it - any kind of changes that have occurred personally or professionally - what accounts for those changes?
S: I think my faith in God and my efforts to be a decent person have impacted my personal and professional relationship more than my being a black man. I can't see my success being directly related to my ethnicity.

M: Well, what is your success related to?

S: Again, my success is related to, you know, the blessings bestowed upon me and my efforts and that's pretty much it. I reject any notion that, you know, I'm where I am solely because I'm black. I know that doors have been opened because the black people have gone before me and I'm very grateful for that but that allowed me to come through the door, you know, but to make it once you pass the threshold is on you. You have to have some ability. So I reject any notion that I've succeeded just solely because someone has said, okay, you are a black man so let's give you the job. I think there is certain efforts made to try to rectify certain inequalities. There's a big debate now, I read just yesterday in the newspaper that the Clinton administration has decided they want to push affirmative action program and they want to push certain race based scholarships and there are certain other factions, they say well you can't do that and you say we are going to give you a scholarship because you are black or we are going to give you a scholarship because you are Asian and they say that alienates the white student. Everything in this country is pretty much black to white but that alienates the white student. And if you look at it from a historical point then you say okay race based scholarship grant is somewhat justified because certain families haven't been able to progress out of poverty because they never had the opportunity for their offspring to go to college or to better themselves. So you say okay, what we are going to do, now we are going to try to offer the opportunity. If you want to try to reduce poverty, if you want to try to reduce ignorance and crime, then you have to try to bring people into or give people opportunity to participate fully in this American dream. So I see that policy as being a positive policy, or one that doesn't have to exist forever, nothing has to be set in stone and you know exists from here to eternity. It is something you have to evaluate.

M: Do you think as a black man that you have had the opportunities to participate fully in the American dream?

S: Yeah, I think I've had the opportunity to participate fully in the American dream. My grandfather didn't have the opportunity to participate fully in the
American dream. That sometimes makes me feel bad, feel sad, not necessarily bad, but sad because I think he had the ability to do great things. I mean, intellectually he is equal to anyone, but he never realized that. He never realized his full potential and I guess you can see that's true of a lot of people. But as a policy, you know, people of my grandfather's generation especially in south central Virginia, just weren't allowed to participate. But I think, yeah, as a direct influence of my grandfather I am able to participate.

M: The next question is, do lighter skinned blacks fare better in conducting business or interacting with whites than darker skinned blacks? If yes, in what way?

S: That's a perception I think. But I don't think that is true.

M: Is that a perception on the part of black people or is that a perception on the part of white people, that light skinned folks do better and are better off and get along better and have more success than darker skinned folks?

S: I think it is probably a larger perception among black people. Simply because the images that you see of "successful black persons" is often that of a light skinned black person. It's like Hazel O'Leary, you know, Secretary of the Department of Energy, you know, you look at her and you think what her ethnicity is. Do you know who Hazel O'Leary is? Well, you look at her and what did you think?

M: I think she's white.

S: But she has African-American heritage. So this is a person that is, you know, the Director of the Department of Energy, a pretty nice position and you look at Ron Brown, he's not a man of dark complexion, you know, or I can't remember his name right now, but the Secretary of Agriculture, you know, he's not a man of dark complexion. But is that important, that they have darker complexions, is that important?

M: So what you are saying is as long as these people know their heritage and are proud of their heritage, then it doesn't matter whether they are light skinned or dark skinned?

S: I think as long as they know who they are, sure. I mean, it is not necessary that they get up there and say, yeah, I'm African-American. It is obvious. It is
obvious that Ron Brown and the Secretary of Agriculture are black men. It is not so obvious that Hazel O'Leary is, you know, has African-American heritage but she does. I think as long as they know who they are and as long as they are confident. You have to be confident, that's the thing. You have to be confident because unfortunately, as I said earlier, in this country, we are looked upon as a group of people all having the same goals, desires and what have you. If they aren't confident, if they look like the fools, then it reflects on all of us. It shouldn't but that's the reality. So it is more important to me that they are confident and that they do their jobs to the best of their ability.

M: What about during the time when the Cosby Show was so popular and people made the accusation that he was very much in favor of very light skinned people, black people, being on his show and very opposed to having very dark skinned people on his show?

S: I don't know if that is true or not. Cosby, you know, himself is not...

M: He's dark...

S: Yeah. But I don't know.

M: You know, I hadn't thought about that as an issue and then I was reading it in JET Magazine and I thought to myself and I thought about the people that were on the show and I said yeah I can see that. But then again your point was, if they know who they are and their heritage, then does it make a difference.

S: Yeah, and it shouldn't.

M: And they are comfortable.

S: Sure, because, you know, you have to look at the black community for itself. They promoted a lot - we internally promoted a lot of people of lighter complexion for some reason. I don't know why, but, you know, the little girl and little boy who had light complexion was often given the impetus to move to the head of the class. So, what are we being upset about or what are we being concerned about. Are we being concerned that darker skinned black people, you know, this rife between dark and light, what difference does it make, you know. People of different hues are still people. So that's none of the issue as far as I'm concerned.
M: Okay. What incidents or events have occurred in your life which affect the way you feel about yourself as a black person?

S: The only incidents that I can think of that has affected me is my childhood. You know, again, I was always made to feel that I was a (person of worth) and, you know, that early establishment that I was a person of worth carried throughout. So, that is the only thing I can think of that affected me or affected my perception of myself being a black person. But, again, I go beyond seeing myself as a black man. I see myself as a man, first and foremost.

M: In what way have you experienced racism, at what age, and how did you resolve the conflict? Have you ever experienced racism?

S: Have I experienced racism. Yeah, I’ve experienced racism. I experienced racism two days ago. Yeah, and how did I resolve it?

M: With your phone call two days ago, yeah, you hung up.

S: Yeah. Yeah, you know, again, how many white people do you think if someone calls and says that sounds that a cracker, what kind of nut is that. Have I experienced it? Yeah, I’ve experienced it. How did I deal with it? I just moved beyond it, go through it or over it or brush it off. If you let it get to you, you are going to have problems. So just take it for what it is and move on. Don’t let it affect you too much. It is going to affect you. I mean, it sort of threw me for a loop, who is this person, you know, why would he say something that ignorant. But after awhile you say, okay, well, it is just that ignorance and you just move on.

M: Okay. How comfortable are you when attending an all white function?

S: Very comfortable.

M: You don’t worry about those kinds of things, interacting with people like that when you are in the minority?

S: No. Because I’ve always been in the minority, and, you know, that’s just a fact of life.

M: Okay. Would you buy a product if it is promoted by whites rather than if it is promoted by blacks?
S: I wouldn’t buy it solely for that reason. I wouldn’t buy it just because it is promoted by a white person or a black person for that matter. I’d buy the product because it is a good product. That’s the reason I would buy it.

M: Do you feel the need – I haven’t been to Chatham in a long time, a long time, not since I was in high school, but do you think where there is a black business, a black owned and operated business, that you feel an extra special responsibility to patronize that business as opposed to going to a white owned business?

S: I sometimes will go out of my way to patronize a black owned business simply because I think it is good for young people to see that in the community there are black businesses. That, yeah, you can be a business person too. That just because you are a black child, there are no limitations. So, yeah, I will go out of my way to support that business for that reason because I think it is important that the images be there.

M: Do you see that business as adding to the strengths of the black community or the total community for that matter?

S: Yes.

M: Yeah, I do too. I have the same feeling that you do. I will definitely patronize a black business and, of course, I expect the same level of quality in the product that I would expect for anyone because I want the most for my dollar as a consumer and everything, but I see black individuals having a responsibility to patronize the businesses so they will be successful and not go under and things like that. And Virginia is not a place, well, Richmond is and Norfolk is, and in some ways in Petersburg, but Virginia by large is not a state where black owned businesses occur very often and it is not like being down in Atlanta somewhere or anything like that. Okay, the next question, we are almost getting done, is what is your usual manner of thinking about and interacting with other people?

S: What is my usual manner of thinking about and interacting with other people. It goes back to this question you asked earlier about my view of the global world, the global community. Again, I try to go in and understand the person that I’m dealing with. I feel if I understand that person, if I listen and listen honestly to that person’s views and try to understand that person and try to make sure that person understands me, then our relationship will probably be a very fruitful one. Relationships tend to break down
when there is a lack of communication, a lack of honest effort on both parts to understand each other. That doesn't mean we have to like each other but just understand each other, respect each other. That's about the extent of it.

M: The next one, describe any changes in your personal identity or how you feel about yourself today, five years ago and if you could think back ten years ago.

S: I think I feel the same about myself today as I did five years ago as I did a year ago.

M: And what is that? How do you feel about yourself?

S: I feel good about myself. I feel good about my efforts to improve myself personally. I feel good about my efforts to interact with my community. I feel good about my philosophical and religious relationships with myself and others. So I think that is pretty much the same approach that I had five years ago or a year ago and that's to try and understand people, try and make sure that I have a decent working understanding of the people that I interact with.

M: Do you think that feeling about yourself, feeling good about yourself and having a working understanding, do you think that has a lot to do with how your mother and your father and your grandmother and grandparents raised you?

S: Yeah. Definitely, yeah. Again, I was able to express myself as a child, as a full member of the family and I think the idea that children should be heard...

M: Seen and not heard...

S: Yeah, that never applied to me as a child and I think that had a lot to do with it, sure.

M: Describe your occupational aspirations and career goals.

S: Occupational aspirations and career goals. Again, to be as confident as I can be as a molecular biologist, to - I guess like anyone else, the gain of certain career recognition and respect from my peers. Other than that, just to contribute, to contribute as much as I possibly can to this field of biological research.

M: Describe your participation in any specific behaviors or activities in support of black causes. What do you do in support of black causes, if there are such things as black causes.
S: What do I do in support of black causes? I try to stay away from having a criminal record. I try to live the best life that I can. I try to encourage as many of my brothers and sisters to develop an image of self and to always know who you are and those are the things I think I do in support of the black cause.

M: In other words, try to be the best that you can be.

S: Yeah.

M: You have talked a lot about your parents and in a way I think you have already answered this question, but it is such an important question I want to ask it again, how did your parents attitudes and beliefs about blackness and the black experience affect how you feel about yourself?

S: Again, I think they had a tremendous impact on how I feel about myself. They allowed me to express myself. They allowed me to ask questions. They gave me honest answers. They allowed me to reflect on and to understand - let me say this, they allowed me to understand my family, you know, the good, the bad, the whole nine yards, there was nothing ever hidden. So I understood the frailties, the scrims, the indifferences in the family and based on that I understood the relationships that people have with each other. I think that had a lot to do with molding me as a young person.

M: And the last question I have for you is, have you ever been turned down for membership at an organization in which you really wanted to be a member and was race and ethnicity a factor in that decision? Have you ever been turned down?

S: Not that I know of, no. And I guess it really wouldn't matter to me because I'm not that crazy about belonging to any group, not that crazy about belonging to any organization that if they did turn me down, that it would devastate me, I don't think so. It's just not that important to me. I know who I am, and again, I'm somewhat of an individual or individualist. Group identity is not important to me.

M: Well, I want to thank you for this time. This concludes the second interview and we will set a date and time for the third one. This is very interesting, so thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW.
APPENDIX I

PHASE III INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT AND ANALYSIS
Phase III Interview Transcript and Analysis
M. Marlene Brown
S: (Samuel)

Samuel, as I told you this is the last interview. I’m going to be giving you passages and you will respond to them. The directions are: please respond to the following passages by Black authors in terms of implications towards your life or how the passages make you feel as a black person living in the United States. Be as specific as possible in describing your personal feelings and attitudes. I’m going to give you passage one by W.E.B. DuBois.

S

I think as a result of W.E.B. DuBois’ writings I don’t share sentiments in his passages in that I don’t feel torn. I don’t see two individuals when I look in the mirror. I only see one, I see Samuel. I know who I am. It doesn’t really bother me how the outside world perceives me or how they pity me.

M. How’s that?

S

I’m secure in who I am. I know what I am capable of. I know what I am not capable of. I know who I am. So, someone’s opinion of me without knowing me is meaningless. This passage, I would imagine if you were the type of individual to allow society perception of you as a black person dictate how you perceive yourself, again you are going to have problems with being torn, trying to identify yourself and also trying to reconcile with the perception of others.

M

Do you think society dictates what to you what you can be about and what you can do as a black person?

S

I think society definitely tries to dictate what I am, who I am, what I can and cannot do, yes. Images, the media, community, yeah they try to. If you have a strong perception of self, given a strong identity through your community and family, you have no problem with those misconceptions that society tries
to lay on you. I don’t have any problem with someone seeing me as a black man or someone looking at me as a black man and thinking or making statements or thinking I am limited. I know I am not limited.

M If someone perceives you that way, as having limitations because you are black, do you generally respond to them and generally respond to them and say I can do anything that I set my mind to do?

S It depends on how it is communicated. If it is communicated in such a way you get a strange look when you walk into a room, then it’s no, I don’t see any reason to even respond to something of that nature. If someone would say to me, there isn’t that many black microbiologists, so your chance for succeeding are slim. I would tell that person that it is a shallow statement. I am the person that determines where I go and how far I go. So, yes, it all depends on how it is communicated. Someone is going to personally tell me then yeah I will respond.

M Let me give you passage 2 by Richard Wright and let you read that and then.

S Yeah, that’s pretty much right. The black man has to know who he is. It’s a word and in our community it has a different connotation than the connotation given the word by white counterpart for different reasons. If a white man calls you a nigger, he is definitely not using it as a term of endearment. He is using is as destructive, very mean spirit. Where in the black community where someone says you are my main nigger, it is a different connotation. That’s the way it works. Maybe no one should use the word. But in this particular passage, if you allow that word to have the impact they want it to have, will it have any meaning. Like sticks and stones can break my bones, but words never hurt me. Yeah, they can shout nigger all day long but as long as you know there is no physical violence behind
it, it's not really going to bother you, not going to impact you.

M How do you feel, I read magazine all the time, how do you feel when they have a situation where a public figure uses the word nigger or says something derogatory about black people and then there is a big issue made of that in the press. Do you think that we waste our time fighting those kind of battles or should we be concerned.

S No, I think for instance if Chuck Robb gets up in the Senate and deliver a speech and use the word nigger. I think Chuck Robb because of his position, because of the responsibility he has, should not use that word. He is representing Virginia, he is representing me too. As a black man that is not a word I want to be used in the Senate. Because of his position, if he uses that word, other people think it gives them license to use it too. If it is good enough for Robb, it’s good enough for me. No, it’s is not a waste of time to call Chuck Robb, or John Warner, or Holman from Carolina, which he recently used it. Yeah, you have to waste your time in combatting that sort of thing. Because if your leaders are insensitive or ignorant enough to use that word, you never get over those barriers in society. You definitely have to talk to them about it.

M So Richard Wright says here there is a black man here who doesn’t know who he is. Do you think if a person doesn’t know who he is, what he is about, where he came from and where he is going, do you think that applies to anyone?

S True, if you are Chinese and I call you a Chink, and if you know who you are, a Chinese person, that doesn’t bother you at all. That’s a derogatory term that someone with a small mind made up so why should that bother you. Just move on. If you are Mexican heritage and some calls you a spik greaser, what have you, you let that roll off your back if you know who you are. My heritage,
my ancestor, my culture is much more than that. It's small minded people who come up with those type of phrases, names to try to hurt you.

M Do you think this sense of identity, this sense of who are, as a person do you think it operates the same for women as it does for men? or do you think there is a difference between women and men, black women and black men?

S I think it is the same. Sure there are obvious differences between men and women. As far as developing a sense of self, no it doesn't matter. I don't think that has anything to do with gender.

M In the struggle, we talked some about the black struggle, do you think there is a greater cross for men to bear than for women to bear in dealing with who you are as black individuals?

S I think there is a myth constantly being pushed in American society. Black men are more aggressive, highly sexed, highly emotional, irrational, yeah, you have a perception problem that black women have to deal with, that perception of being physically opinionated. Perception that black men are aggressive, loud and intimidating. Again, the thing that black men tend to be physically intimidating, irrational, perfect example you hear the stories about young black men getting into elevators and white women clutching their purses for fear of being robbed, probably an irrational fear. White men and white women crossing the street when they see a group or young black men coming down the sidewalk. At the same time, there are certain problems that I don't think is race specific. No matter what color they are. If I was in DC, I would cross the street too if I saw the black man. How many times do you see Jesse Helms or Pat Buchanan speak in the city. No one that makes the suggestion that nigger speaks to the Georgia white people, but if
you have Jesse Jackson or rare confidence, they are going to suggest that you are a black leader. I don't remember a ballot being passed out, saying black leader leading candidate, vote for one. There is a different perception for black men. You have these characters out there who say things and get a lot of press for various reasons and say they are black leaders. I think that is part of the problem we have.

M I've always thought of it as interesting that if you look at someone who commits a crime, they won't say a white man 37 years old or say that he is white, but they will definitely say a black man 37 years old assaulted this woman.

S Sure, that's because that's the way the media operates. Sometimes I'm not even sure it is a conscious thing, but yet they definitely do it. The perception that blacks have much bigger problems with crime and drugs than whites. How can 30% of the population cause all the problems? But if you see a drug bust, you see blacks. That's the kind of people you see on the street corners selling the drugs, but the distribution of those drugs, you barely ever see those people who are arrested for that because those people are barely ever arrested for one thing. And the money that is laundered, it is laundered through banks and financial institutions. Who do you think owns those financial institutions?

M They are white institutions.

S Sure. If I have a million or two million dollars to launder, I'm not going to Joe's Chicken Wing Shack to do that. They couldn't handle that amount of money. It's definitely a different perception of problems for black men, but I think at the same time the solution is to be a decent person you can be to combat that perception.
M I'm going to give you passage #3 by James Baldwin and let you read that and we'll talk about that.

S It's pretty much about the same thing Wright passage said. It's all from where you came, and if you know where you came from and you are secure in who you are, there are no limits in where you can go. It is basically the same thing.

M I know you work with a young boy in the Big Brother/Big Sister program, how do you instill that in young people, that sense of who they are, where they came from, and what they are capable of?

S I think first of all you have to meet them to task that they can do and understand. When I say that I try to help (Danny) to understand that he is capable of anything. We don't necessarily talk about him being black young man at 14. What I am trying to do with (Danny) is say, (Danny)t, what do you want to do, what are you capable of. Whatever he thinks he is capable of, I think he is capable of much more. I always encourage him. Whatever he says, he says I want to play basketball. I don't jump on him initially and say that's an unrealistic dream and shoot it down. I say that you know that's a long shot. We sit down and calculated it last week. I think there are 3000 plus basketball players are on the division 1 age level in college basketball or 3360 odds that are going to be drafted. Of those 3360 players that are going to be drafted, I think you are talking about 100 for 20 teams, yeah, I think there are 20 teams in the NBA. 100 of those guys will be drafted and of those 100, about 60 will actually play or be on the team. So, you see that the numbers drop drastically, so if you want to be a basketball player, you have to stay on the basketball court. You have to practice, you have to excel, you have to be that much better than any other player on the court. You have to go out and work. I think he knows that if he works hard and he's the
best at what he does, he will be rewarded regardless of his color. If he knows that no one is going to give him anything, no one has ever given him anything, if he is to get anything, he is going to have to work for it.

M Do you think that works with most kids?

S Yeah, I think so. Their expectations are high and most of the time they can reach or exceed those expectations. (Danny) comes from definitely not a middle class family and in order to exceed, he is going to have to hustle and do it himself. He doesn’t have all the resources that some people might have excess to. In order to gain access to those resources, he’s just going to have to work a little harder.

M What about teachers? Since the children spend most of their time in school during the day, do you think teachers have an obligation, a moral obligation, to encourage black children to excel at whatever it is they want to do and to work very very hard at it.

S I think teachers should encourage students to excel. I think more than anything else you have to have a family structure at home. That’s what makes the difference.

M What happens when both parents aren’t in the home, say just the mother and the children and the fathers are gone.

S It becomes that much more difficult for the kid. One parent is extremely different. For all practical purposes no parent and dad there physically and not giving any guidance, it is extremely difficult to make. In (Danny’s) case there is no strong push for him to do well academically in school. I think (Danny) is somewhat an exceptional young man, he knows there is no future for him to follow in his older brother’s footsteps.

M What does his older brother do?
His brother does nothing. They have some girlfriends. No jobs, they don’t want jobs. They have girlfriends that basically support them. They are not interested in anything but partying, going out at night, getting intoxicated, coming home, sleeping it off, and doing the same thing. They are in a rut for the most part. He sees that.

Is (Danny) able to distinguish that kind of behavior, non productive behavior, of his brothers and seeing himself as different and set apart from that?

Sure, it is difficult, but he sees himself set apart from that. It’s difficult in that he is exposed to that environment every day. It’s difficult for him to keep his motivation, because he gets negative feedback constantly. And sometimes he says why bother, why bother trying to do good in school and getting good grades and doing well.

Does he want to go to college?

He would like to go to college, sure. Again, you have to make sure he understands the reality of the situation, he must do well in school, at this time he’s in the 8th grade. He needs to start to read a little more. He needs to start thinking about the SATs. That’s going to help him out a lot. He needs to do well in those things. But he doesn’t have the environment at home where he could go in his room and shut the door and have peace and quiet to study. That’s not going to happen. There’s no support there for that.

Do you think that when young black men and women are confused about who they are, miseducated about being black, what black is all about living in the United States. Do you think when that happens, and they are confused about where they came from, who they are, what they are about and what they should be about, do you think there is anyway to counteract that, you as a black man, I myself
as a black woman, professionals, do you think you can counteract that when it is self-
defeating and hate filled?

S I’m not quite sure what he means about mis-
educated about being black? I’m not sure there is one universal experience and anyone you can talk to universal that blacks in the United States, we are all different, we come from different breeds. With my experiences in Virginia are different from someone’s experience in Minnesota or South Dakota. It’s definitely, some of the people who settled in the frontier towns in Oklahoma or Kansas. They are a different breed of folk, for a lack of a better word, that they were determined. They built something for themselves and I imagine you had a kid come out of that situation, a black kid. That kid did not let anything stand in his way. His parents instilled in him this do or die type. You are going to succeed regardless, that’s more than one of those stiff kind always try, try, try. So, yeah, the way we combat the negative perceptions that, sure you say the reality in this country there will be people that will dislike you for irrational reasons, because you have a higher content of pigment. That’s pretty much it. There’s no other reason. It is nothing you can rationalize. That’s the fact. Given that fact, don’t let those people dissuade you from achieving. You either move through them, around them, over them, but don’t let them hinder you. You can get caught up in this thing of disliking them so much that it becomes all engrossing. You never move anywhere because you always deal with this thing, this wall you are bouncing off of. This hatred.

M So you are saying that if you have a good sense of what you are and what you are capable of achieving, it is best to let go of those hate filled types of feelings.

S Sure, you realize and recognize them for what they, and you go on. I think that is what you do to combat or educate them of what it means to be black. What it means to be black
in this country, and institutions or people that are going to dislike you or stand in your way. The key is not to let that-not to spend too much time trying to deal with that, but just move on. I think that is basically the key. You can't get wrapped up in that stuff.

M Do you think the limits placed on what black individuals can do in this country are placed there by white society?

S Sure, they try to place limits, but you have to slide through them. It is easier said than done. Lots of people that have tried to fight for these things and not made it, but I think the key is to try to fight things for yourself or within your own community. Why should you have to go join them, story I remember about a year maybe 2 years ago, a lawyer wanted to join the country club in Connecticut or what have you, was turned down, and decided to go undercover and become a bus boy and he found out the people there just didn't want black people as a member of the club. One of the reasons he wanted to join this club, he knew how networking worked. If you are a member of this club, you pick up clientele, business tips, and this and that. That's fine but why not create your own. It may take a little longer but you may be able to cultivate or create a club that people who aren't prejudice against you and want to be a member of your club and you can still network and pick up pointers. Sometimes people get too caught up trying to mainstream too fast and too completely. This country club mentality, why would you want to be involved in something that was that pretentious anyway. You know that had you not gone to Yale and not belonged to certain clubs or what have you, they probably wouldn't speak to you anyway. Why bother? Why do people want to bother when the people didn't want you. I can understand this young man's not being accepted, but why would he want to be accepted in something like that in the first place. You should be able to join or belong to anything you want to, you should
be able to, but we don’t live in Utopia. This is not the ideal situation and you have to realize that. It doesn’t necessarily limit you, you have to realize what you can and cannot do and what you really want to do. You know, I say I don’t think I want to belong to this club, and I don’t think it is worth my effort to belong to this club so you have to find another club or create my own.

M I’m going to give you passage 4 and this was done by Ralph Ellison. What do you think of that - the invisible man?

S I think that eloquently describes the frustration that a lot of young black males and young black women feel because their contributions are often made to seem insignificant. You have people, for instance, that say well, this rap music is nonsense. You don’t have to have any talent to use it or talent to make it, it’s a non-musical form. But yet, Wall Street and Madison Avenue use it to advertise their products. It’s a confusing thing and it makes you angry for somebody to tell you that is such a mess but use it to promote their products, and you don’t get any credit for the force behind this thing. I think that’s the emotions, the frustration, he uses to illustrates in this passage.

M Have you ever experienced that, frustration, I mean, professionally as you plan to become a microbiologist. Have you ever felt that what you are doing and trying to accomplish ever been made to feel insignificant to white people.

S Not directly, I think indirectly I have received fellowship money for being a black graduate student in microbiology. I’m not sure that money solved the problem. I was very grateful to get it, don’t get me wrong. It’s just that I think it might give whites the perception that he’s here because he’s black, or he got the money because he’s black. It doesn’t bother me, I’m looking at the money from historical standpoint, from
the viewpoint because the lack of opportunity for black people for years. This is an attempt to try to make up for some of the damages that have been done. I don't think that any suggestion that it is the most effective way to do it, or the only way to do it, but it definitely a way to try to address some of the problems that have been created.

M: So you are saying things like receiving minority fellowships does not affect your capabilities as a scientist?

S: Yeah, I think that if a person received those fellowship being a minority should not let that affect him or his perception of himself. It is not saying that they only give me this money because I am a minority or you are not as good as other guys so we need to make a special effort to keep you here. Some institutions try to make a good faith effort at trying to keep you at the university. Again, you look at the historical standpoint, it's always been an affirmative action special program for the white counterpart whether they want to admit it or not. That's always been the case. I'm not sure the affirmative action programs would last forever. We should go back and evaluate and see where we are. I don't think you should see them as making you feel invisible, you know, that you are just some person they are using to satisfy some quota or their guilty feelings or whatever. You should use that opportunity as competent as you can to prove otherwise.

M: Do you think black men women are always in the predicament of having to prove themselves all the time and that if you don't have that frame of mind and the majority of society will look at you as if you are not there. What do you think?

S: I think that's true. I think that it's true, but that means that it's something that I have to deal with and fight against all the time. Not give me this mentality that I have to prove myself to someone constantly. The
pressure to do that is always there. You might overhear a conversation that I wish I was in the minority so I could get money, or I can’t get money, or if I was a minority I could get money. You can’t let that theme get in your head and start to say I’m only here because I’m black or I must prove myself to be worthy. I don’t think that’s the case.

M Is that because you set your own standards?

S Yes, it’s difficult to do that with outside pressures. Everything you need, most recently in the last couple months, there has been talk about this affirmative action thing, this based on scholarships, whether they should exist or should not exist, this and that. That sort of things if you are not focused, concentrated on who you are and what you want to accomplish, all things can bother you, you can be made to feel invisible because you see you are a statistic. They are not looking at you as an individual but a statistic and something they can say we have black students at this university in the graduate program.

M We have one of them.

S If you are not cautious, it’s difficult. It is something you have to constantly think about. The black person or minority has to think about why they are jere and not get caught up in this craziness about a race for the scholarships.

M Do you think some of this frustration you talked about earlier leads to some of the black on black and the black on white crime, the racist crimes, on the part of black people to white people that they are just fighting for an opening anyway they can get it.

S I’m not quite sure the frustration should be blamed for the manifestation of violence. People have hard times everywhere, it’s hard all over. I’m sure your parents and your grandparents, like my parents and
grandparents, were frustrated too but that doesn’t mean they went out and knocked people in the head and stole from them for illegal contraband. I’m not quite sure, the frustration levels was just as high then.

M

If not higher, because things were very overt back then and I might have told you this, I’m from a very large family, I’m one of 12 children and they instilled in us that as an outcome of frustration to work hard and to take advantage of opportunities made available. So their frustration, I think, and my grandparents’ frustration was turned into a more positive things.

S

That’s the thing I’m told. I’m not sure you can make that correlation that frustration is the problem on black on black crime, or black on white crime, or white on white crime. I’m not sure that that is quite true.

M

What do you do, if you are a teenager and it’s the teenage years that we begin to deal with develop identity and some of that frustration that comes with that. What do you do as a black teenager to have this sense of what you are? You are not getting much from the media and if you live in a community that is showing a lot of role models, you are not getting a lot from that. The schools do that, some do it well, some don’t. What do you think?

S

There aren’t any simple answers. I think that is why our society is always coming up with simplistic answers, the problem and solution. It is a complex thing. My community today where I grew up was drastically when I was a kid, about 20 or 30 years ago, which is not a long time, but I think the difference between communities then and now is that everybody knew everybody and everybody had a church home and the community expected certain things of individuals who lived in the community. People wanted to be able to walk up and down the streets at night without fear of someone knocking them in the head. If there was a kid or children in the neighborhood that were potential hoodlums or
problems, you dealt with it, because Ms. So and So would come to your mother and say Samuel was out just acting a fool today. And my mom would take care of the problem. Now, you don’t know people that well and you don’t know if you can approach them, people do crazy things, if the kid is making a problem in the neighborhood and you say something to the parent, they are going to get more upset with you than the kid. So the community has to be willing to make changes and accept responsibilities for everybody in it. I think the church has to be a focal point. That’s where you learn a lot of your morals. Teachers in the schools have to be professionals and competent. Unfortunately, there weren’t a lot of competitive teachers in my school. But the community, again, that’s where the community has to come in, because the community has to go out and say we demand competent teachers. We demand people who are good at what they do. We as a community maybe we have to increase our tax base so we can pay those people we deem worthy of teaching our children. Parents, grandparents, everyone has to play a role. With all the other images out there, you have to be there to make sure you can talk to that teenager and that teenager can talk to you and you can work these things out. Otherwise you have big problems with peer pressure, it’s something else. You need to be accepted and they need to be cool and very strong. Good kids end up doing stupid things because they want to be accepted because they are cool. It’s tough. Frustration is always going to be there. How you try to channel that frustration, how you try to deal with that, make sure they understand that, money, money, money is the most important thing. You want to be successful and society hold up the people who make money, the rich and the famous, not these people contribute to the society but you hold up Michael Milton or Ivy Boston and again the black men prospective and black youth prospective. They got hooks, and basically that’s what they were, they were hooks, high tech hooks. Michael Milton and Ivy Boston sold billions of dollars, they
paid cash with whatever they stole or coned out of people. Michael Milton paid five hundred million dollars, two-hundred fifty million. So, you say these guys send me to jail for holding up a 7-11 and these guys get a couple of months in club-med and he still gets to keep half his money. What kind of justice system do we have. That’s frustrating. You get George Bush says be calm and let the legal system take its course. And we are being screwed by the legal system. Trust the legal system. Those are things you have to combat as a community. You have to make your people understand, don’t get frustrated, work with the system, work through the system, and if you don’t like the system, we need some lawyers, we need some legislators. Let’s cultivate our youth to become these things if they can and influence the system. If the frustration is there, you have to try to figure out the most effective way to break through it.

M Ok, I’m going to give you passage 5 by Martin Luther King, Jr. and we’ll talk about that in a few minutes. Ok, what did you think?

S What he said is basically true, but at the same time you can’t separate the two between legislation and education. To go out and say we are going to pass a civil rights bill and again at the same time the civil rights bill has to be ratified, readopted or reproved every so often. That doesn’t make sense, that you have to civil rights bill that is not made an amendment to the constitution should be there. You say well you guys have good will - do they have good will. You question that from the minority standpoint. It seems silly to be out there to debate to reapprove the civil rights bill. What’s the big deal if you say China and Iran have civil rights violations and the United States is supposed to be the beacon of democracy in the western world and do not have civil rights as part of this constitution that all men are created equal. When this thing was written all colored were slaves so it should have said all white men were created equal. When
Dr. King would quote that sure we must educate, we must make sure people understand all men are created equal and are good and bad.

M Do you think education is capable of providing some of the solutions to several of the problems in the black community?

S Sure, but it has to be, again, true education.

M What do you mean by true education?

S I think if you have a discussion about the origins of civilization, you can't start and end in Greece and Rome. You talk about the evolution of science, you can't start and end in Europe or Greece and Rome. You talk about philosophy, you can't always start with Socrates and Plato. If you talk about the contributions to the development of the United States, you can't always start and end with George Washington. There are other people, both black and white, who have contributed. So, if you are going to tell the story, tell the whole story. Look at Lincoln. Okay, Lincoln didn't see slavery as a viable option, but at the same time, even though Mr. Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation, Mr. Lincoln in his heart didn't feel black folk were equal to him. He never said they were equal, he just said they should not be slaves. So, in that context, you have to understand Mr. Lincoln's motivation which is rarely talked about. What they want to hold - when I say they, a lot of the white historians - they want to hold Mr. Lincoln up there as the savior of black people, that he did so much to save black people. Mr. Lincoln's main concern was not holding the meeting together and two, he did think slavery was not a viable option but he never said the black folks would be equal to white men. So, let's tell the whole story.
So, by telling the whole story, do you mean to apply that education has to tell the black contribution of Africa, Egypt, of all people.

Yes, all people. Let's tell the contribution of Chinese to technology, to paper, to gun powder. Let's talk about these things, let's talk about the evolution. Let's talk about the contacts that Marco Polo had with Asia and how they go back to Europe. Let's talk about how the inventions impacted civilization. Let's tell the whole story. Let's tell the good and bad, and let's deal with the good and bad.

Do you think that would make some young person in school feel better...about themselves or would that person look at that and say I don't believe it, because they never heard that stuff before.

Sure, yeah, they are going to say that's not true but at the same time I'm not saying let's tell the whole story to make any one person feel bad or good, to make the good feel superior. Let's tell the whole story so people can made a very informed decision about how these things came to be.

Do you think formal education, appropriate kinds of education, is capable of changing people's attitudes and feelings.

I think so, I think so. Because part of this whole racial thing is the white counterpart is made to feel superior because you say that is U.S. history and U.S. history is basically white history. Our forefathers settled in the country, our forefathers discovered America, our forefathers invented the Ford, our forefathers invented insulin, our forefathers invented this-what did you contribute? True education is very very important because if you are the black youth sitting there and you are hearing about the contributions of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Henry Ford, what have you. It's like well, we didn't contribute anything. When it comes down to your history what you
hear about is Nat Turner, Fred Douglas, Booker T. Washington, the standards, the standards. Sure, George Washington Carver, but we talk about them, we are talking to white folks and no body talks about in Florida, I think it is Rosewood in Florida back in 1920's there were some black men, never substantiated, accused of raping a white woman, they went out and burned and killed and looted a whole community in Rosewood, Florida. There are only a handful of survivors alive that actually tell the whole story. If you are going to hold up Nat Turner or some radical person going around killing white folks, should we talk about how irrational it was for white men to go out and lynch and kill black folks too. Let's not, what I am saying that certain messages serve images that are portrayed in historical things about Nat Turner that are true, but at the same time I'm not sure you get the whole story, you understand that Nat Turner's frustration of being an invisible man. No one saw him as a man, but a piece of property. Yeah, maybe they did some very irrational and bad things, but let's not put it out there and say here it is, because kids make their own conclusions about these things. Dr. King talked about legislation, what kind of legislation do you want, but you can't legislate goodwill. If you have both working together when you educate people to understand that everybody contributes something. Look at the time frame, historical time frame, Egypt lasted two thousand years, a long time for a civilization to last. The United States has been in business for 400 plus years, that's a drop in the bucket. You came into this home as an empire for the last I guess 1200, 1600, 400 years, that's a small time. Let's look at the time chart. It hasn't always been the case where Europeans had a big influence on the world. We never talk about history past Europe, we never talk about the great army of Ethiopia or Egypt or if they talk about Africa, they ignore the Africans, never central Africa or Southern Africa. They
never talk about those places or contributions that may have been made.

M How do you feel as a black man in 1994, looking at what Martin Luther King said in 1968 that we still have to have education, and court orders for us, black people, to have a fair chance or an equal opportunity in this society in that we are fighting the same battles?

S We will probably always be fighting the same battles.

M Is that because we are a minority?

S No, I don't think it is because we are a minority. I think it is because the things that are seen as important in this country. This country was built on self-satisfaction and self-preservation, and that's the problem we have to deal with. We don't see other people as equal or having just as much value as we do. They did very selfish things. They came over here and took something from somebody that was already here. That's the problem we have to deal with, unfortunately as we try to mainstream these people, you pick up those same attitudes. I got mine, I take care of mine.

M Do you adopt an integration or separate viewpoint as how we as different people should interact and get along in the society?

S I adapted an exception viewpoint. Everyone should be accepted for basically for who they are. If you separate, you lose something from learning from other people. If you separate the different camps, whether it be black or white, left or right, different viewpoints, you lose something. Everyone has something to contribute and the integration viewpoint. If you integrate too wholeheartedly and too completely then you lose self. So, I think what you need to do is accept people for who they are and learn from them. Accept Asian persons for who they are and learn from them. They have an old culture, lots of good moral ethical stories
to tell that we can learn from, and we have some of the same things. I think sometimes from the integration viewpoint is rate the differences and see everybody as the same.

M You think that’s unrealistic?

S That’s definitely unrealistic. It’s not that I don’t want to go to school with white people or live next to white people. That’s not that. I’m saying that if you should have to force someone to do something just because you have an ideal. You have an ideal of a happy place.

M So you don’t want to lose your sense of who you are and your culture?

S Sure. That’s the thing in this country, what is the American culture? I think the American culture is a melting pot, anything that comes homogenous. You cook the soup too long, the beans break down and the potatoes break down and everything comes mush. You say, well we are not a melting pot because everything blends together and gets lost, we’re a mosaic. We come together to make a unit, a single unit made up of different parts and pieces and colors. I think that’s probably true. I don’t think we will ever operate as a single unit. Not that I am a stick in the mud. I think again we must have education, we must have legislature. Let me tell you something though, I know this professor that was recently hired by the biology department and came in the fall. She came in the neighborhood, I can’t remember the street name, right across from the biology department, she lives across the street.

M McBryde?

S Yes, I think it’s McBryde. She gets the community covenant that was written in the 1940s. In this community covenant, in 1994 it says no black people should live in that community. Here’s that covenant that was 50 some odd years old that had not been revised
in 1994. You would think someone would have revised the covenant by now. That's the thing. I don't think even the legislature will. I don't care what they say about fair housing or what have you. People don't want you in that neighborhood, you don't want to be in that neighborhood. I found that very interesting that in 1994 that was still in the covenant. Yeah, we have to educate people and the people have to be willing to take the education and listen. Right now the big thing is some of the more conservative of the congress, the movement, is that they say you are getting into this ridiculous history when you start talking about contributions of people or you start talking about the real story behind some of the things. I think in this country, we tend to glorify or hold people up and forget about the trunk. I realize? had shortcomings as a man, he made mistakes. Big deal, we all make mistakes. Some of the majority want to hold some of these people up as valuable, perfect, made perfection decisions all the time. That's silly. Like the Ronald Reagan thing. Ronald Reagan would die to find something of concern and ignore it. They broke the law, what it boils down to. The college people aren't very educated and don't know how to accept people for what they are. They tend not to think about the uglier things and amplify the good things, or what they perceive to be good things.

M Okay, I am going to give you passage #6 by Malcolm X. What do you think about that?

S That goes back to what we said earlier about, you know, allowing you or me to have meat. This guy is telling Malcolm his perspective of a white person. His idea to become a lawyer was unrealistic and he should become something more in line with his ability and his person, become a carpenter, general laborer, something like that. A black lawyer, that's prohibited. Sometimes you have that, you have all sort of things. Teachers, even today, limit students to the idea of what they can and cannot do. They
try to guide their students to being general laborers. I had the same thing happen to me. We had an aptitude test and I was told at the time, I wanted to be a botanist, I was told a botanist was not a realistic goal for me. I should consider some general trade, some vocation, of course, in my mind that was nonsense. I didn’t listen.

M Did your family intervene, did your mother intervene?

S I didn’t say anything to my mom about it.

M You just had a sense that you wanted to be a scientist?

S Sure, so it didn’t matter to me what this lady said. She was a school teacher. Not that I didn’t respect school teachers, but what did she know about botanists? Nothing, so it didn’t bother me at all. I let it roll of my back and I didn’t pay no mind.

M Do you think hard work and perseverance help you make up the difference over the years.

S Sure, I think so, definitely. There are very very few individuals that are going to get anything that are not talented, or blessed, or gifted into having some skill whether it be music, math, writing, or whatever. These individuals are very very rare. Most of us have to work very hard for what we get. Persistence, practice, patience always pays off, but you have to keep focused. You can’t let things like that bother you. I should have talked to my parents about it. It wouldn’t have changed me, but I didn’t let that bother me.

M Do you think you were different from your friends when you were growing up? Do you think that you talked with your mother, grandmother, father, and everything, do you think their influence of wanting you to excel and seek out opportunities and challenges and things like that, but inside did you feel any
different from the rest of your friends you went to school with that didn’t have that view or kind of support?

S I think I was a little different as far as support goes. Yes. But as far as intellectual ability, I don’t think I was any different from my friends. Those guys had smarts.

M What has happened to them now?

S General laborers. But when I go home and talk to these guys, I look at them and I look at myself. And I say I have been blessed. I don’t see myself as more fortunate, well I guess I see myself more fortunate because I have been able to pursue something that I always wanted to pursue. I see myself more fortunate in that sense. But, I say I have been blessed in that, I have been given opportunities and I have taken those opportunities and try to make the best of them. Intellectually, Charles and Hugh, those guys were intellectual and capable of doing anything, unfortunately they didn’t have the support or the direction at home. That made a difference.

M So the parental support is very important?

S Sure. Like anything, you are trying to become a carpenter and you try to learn from the best carpenter and you want someone to show you where to put your best efforts with maximum efficiency. If no one shows you how to accomplish these things or puts you on the right path, chances are you are not going to make it. Everybody has dreams of becoming rich and famous. But in ten years, there are a hundred or thousand ways, a billion different ways to make money. What you need is to have someone to help you narrow it down what you do best and maximize your talents and map out a course of action to get there. So if you run around with these ideas in your head and no direction, most of the time you become frustrated and never achieve. I think that is the main difference between myself
and Charles and Hugh and Ray and all of them. They are good guys and it saddens me that they didn't have the same opportunities.

M I think any work that you do honestly and faithfully and true to your heart is honorable. Are you saying that one of the differences and something that might have happened, they really didn't have the support to help them maximize their potential?

S Sure, I think that the parents did the best they could for what they understood themselves. It's not an indictment of their parents. It's more an indictment of the community and the teachers. Again, I make the statement before that teachers can't do it all. You have to have it home. But you can recognize talent when you see it. I think it is a crime to recognize that talent and you don't do things to help that person realize their potential. I think it happens real often. I think too the community didn't try to say, talk to these children. What about a few of the successful working person talking to the kids in the neighborhood, not your own son, niece or nephew. Say, what do you want to do in life or whatever or what can I do to help you. It's not done in the community anymore, by the barber, the funeral home director or by the pastor or deacon, the people you look up to.

M When I read this passage by Malcolm X and the conversation with his teacher. His teacher was right on time asking him about what he wanted to do and he started thinking about that. But the teacher was wrong in setting limits because of his race and not looking at his potential at whatever he set his mind to do.

S Yeah, but the teacher's retrospective the way you looked at it, he thought it was a best realistic goal for him.

M But it would have been something tough to achieve back in the time when he grew up and this was happening?
S  Sure, but the teachers as a result, had they ever heard of H? or Hampton, they are options. Black could have went to Harvard or Yale. Moving into the community where black people are only capable of being gardener or carpenter, when you see them. They can become the best carpenter. The community has to say the sky is the limit or you limit yourself.

M  This is a general question. You’ve read six different passages by six different authors that are very prominent authors in our history. What do you think all six of them are saying, the six passages? Do you think they are quite appropriate for 1994 as they were back when they were written?

S  They are not original thoughts. It’s not something new under the sun. People have been saying these things in the 1700s and 1800s, forever, and always will say these things pretty much. The question is will we, as a community, black people and the white folk, will we be able to actually one day look at individuals just as individuals and if we can do that and allow people to express themselves without any preconceived notions, perhaps we can make some advancements as far as having people have access to resources. That’s the problem. Some people would suggest the whole problem is having equal access to all these resources. That’s idealistic in no one is going to have equal access, but we should have access to these resources. No one in my school system got to meet a real scientist. We only got ideas of what scientists do from reading or watching it on television. I don’t know if anyone ever said let’s try to find some of these guys. I think the community at large is concerned need to stop entertainers and, nothing is wrong as entertainers, you hold these people up as models and what do they contribute. You never hold up a regular working guy. And that should be held up, the guy who goes to work, does his job, is competent in his job, makes widgets, is the best widget maker in the factory. That’s a
very important job that this person does. But yet still we hold up the other guys, Loraina Bobbitt or Melanze’s brother. We get all upset about Nancy Kerrigan and Tanya Harding. Come on. Then you ask yourself when is the country going to ?. That’s silly. You have to communicate with the children. The media is saying this stuff. I read these things and agree with them. They make a lot of sense.

M

I had a lot of choices in terms of what to select and what to put in as I decide to formulate this third part in my data collection. It concerns me as a professional counselor and an educator that right now as of March 7, 1994, it concerns me that we all can get to the table, but we all don’t come with the same opportunities. It concerns me that we have not progressed any further than what we have and our energies are diverted to these other issues. Maybe they are important but they are not very significant to what is going to happen to us as a people.

S

Ideally, it would be nice if everyone came to the table and could participate or have part or equal opportunity, but I know that’s not realistic, because there will be individuals that will excel and individuals that go out and try to take advantage of any opportunities. You have to make sure that everyone is at least aware of the resources and that’s the thing. You have to be aware of what’s out there and whether your take advantage of it is up to you. But there has been such a long time we haven’t been presented this information. You have to make sure they are aware of it. That’s the key. Kids can come here to Virginia Tech and a lot that come here are a first generation college students. My parent’s generation a lot of them didn’t go to college. They don’t know that the university has these services. Sometimes it is best if you know someone that has been through the system to help you take full advantage of it. I guess again I was able to come here and I said to myself I want to become a scientist and I know one of the
ways to become a scientist is learn yourself by a scientist. So I went out and I picked one I could find. I like to work in the lab, I like to do something in the lab, I'm not looking for pay. I'm looking for experience. I like to come with mixed emotions, make zerox copies, whatever, being around that thing to see if you really want to do it. I tell students all the time, if you want to be a vet, go to a vet school and bug somebody until they let you work in the lab. See what being a vet is all about. Don't have this idea of folks watching all creatures great and small. See what it's like being a vet. That's something you have to think about. Do you really want to do it? Don't have this great idea that you are going to become a vet back home and take care of everybody's dog and cat. You have to know what is beyond this situation. Unfortunately, not a lot of kids can go out and do that. You come here and there are all sorts of opportunities here in the various resources. Sometimes you neglect to take full advantage of it. If you want to succeed, you must become one of the best. Best way to do is involve yourself with people who are doing what you want to do. I think that's the secret. But again not too many people can tell me that because they haven't been there. It is my responsibility to tell (Danny), if you want to become a basketball player, I know one of the assistant coaches in basketball. I can give you his name and I will give you his telephone number, but you will have to go out and meet this guy and tell him what you want to do and if he has any advice for you, you listen to him. If he has any position for you, like ball boy or whatever, if you want to play basketball, take advantage of it. If you want to play basketball, you play with the good guys. You follow the example of Michael Jordan or Charles Barkley. You say well how did those guys get to where they are now. They tell you through hard work, I shot 500 baskets a day, I jumped, I ran, I climbed, I did this, I got cut from basketball. Who would believe that Michael Jordan got cut from the JV basketball team.
It’s hard work. If you are just out there just shooting baskets everyday on the court without some kind of guidance, chances are you aren’t going to make it to the NBA. If you want to practice on the hook shot, people don’t make hook shots anymore, you should be out there jumping. That’s the type of thing you need. I feel it is my responsibility to try to tell them as much as I can. If I know somebody, I tell them. That’s how it works. It’s not what you know, what you know is important, but keeping the job.

M  Is there anything else you want to say?

S  No, not really.

M  Well, I appreciate you taking the time and making yourself available and participating in my study. I will keep you posted on how I progress as I go along. Thank you very much.

S  Sometimes I have a tendency to ramble, but yeah, I hope I have been a help.

M  You have been.
Marlene Faye Brown

PERSONAL DATA

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Counselor Education and student Personnel, August, 1994, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

MAEd, Counselor Education and Student Personnel, May 1984, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

BA with Distinction, Political Science, May 1975
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Blacksburg High School, June 1971
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WORK EXPERIENCE

Co-Project Manager - Virginia Tech Employee Development Program
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
July 1993 - May 1994

Counselor - Student Support Services
Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke, VA
December 1988 - August 1990

Director - Career Planning, Placement and Cooperative Education
St. Paul’s College, Lawrenceville, VA
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Assistante Director - Career Planning and Placement
Longwood College, Farmville, VA
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Counselor - Upward Bound/Talent Search Program
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
February 1985 - September 1986

Chief Case Manager
New River Valley Alcohol Safety Action Program
Christiansburg, VA
June 1982 - February 1985
Program Coordinator - Rivendell Youth Center
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PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

• National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
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