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Racial Ideology and Black Students’ Leadership Experiences at a Historically White Institution

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Racial Ideology and Black Students’ Leadership Experiences
at a Historically White Institution
ReChard Peel

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ReChard Peel
Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to understand the relationship between racial ideology and leadership experiences of Black student leaders at a historically White institution (HWI). Using a phenomenological approach, the study seeks to delineate the experiences of Black students as it relates to their leadership and racial identity. Using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI); (Sellers et al., 1997) and one-on-one semi-structured interviews, data was collected from Black undergraduate students at a midsized HWI who were classified as juniors or above and who participated in one or more student organizations or campus activities in a leadership capacity. Among the data collected was information about students’ racial ideology, racial centrality, and their experiences and perceptions about leadership at a midsized public HWI. Findings suggest that most students at the research site hold the Oppressed Minority racial ideology. Also, racial ideology plays a clear role in Black students’ perceptions of their leadership experiences, beliefs, and decisions. Black students whose ideology emphasized assimilation or humanism were more likely to deemphasize the impact of racial oppression, and choose leadership opportunities which enhance their professional development, respectively. Ideologies associated with a higher emphasis on Black identity and the Black experience were more likely to feel racially isolated as a student leader and to choose organizations which provided them with a stronger sense of community and belonging.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 3  
Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ 4  

Chapter 1: Introduction  
  Problem statement .......................................................................................................................... 7  
  Importance and rationale .............................................................................................................. 10  
  Background .................................................................................................................................. 12  
  Statement of purpose .................................................................................................................... 15  
  Research questions ....................................................................................................................... 16  
  Methodology ................................................................................................................................ 16  
  Delimitations ............................................................................................................................... 21  
  Limitations .................................................................................................................................. 21  

Chapter 2: Literature Review  
  Research paradigm ....................................................................................................................... 23  
  Theoretical framework .................................................................................................................. 24  
  Synthesis of Research Literature .................................................................................................. 41  
  Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 49  
  Conclusions ................................................................................................................................. 49  

Chapter 3: Methodology  
  Research site ............................................................................................................................... 50  
  Research participants and sampling ............................................................................................. 51  
  Instrumentation and data collection ............................................................................................. 53  
  Data analysis ............................................................................................................................... 55
Summary……………………………………………………………………………….56

Chapter 4: Results

Introductions………………………………………………………………………….57
Context…………………………………………………………………………………..57
Findings………………………………………………………………………………….61
Summary……………………………………………………………………………….76

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Summary……………………………………………………………………………….77
Discussion……………………………………………………………………………..79
Recommendations for Practice……………………………………………….85
Recommendations for Future Research………………………………………87
Conclusions………………………………………………………………………….88

Appendix………………………………………………………………………………89

References……………………………………………………………………………..106
Chapter 1

Problem Statement

There is a lack of higher education research focused on Black college students’ racial ideology, race centrality, and how these factors impact rates of leadership participation for these students at historically White institutions (HWIs). Though there is a large body of research on Black college students who attend these institutions, little attention is paid to how these students’ beliefs inform their behaviors and interactions when involved in leadership roles on campus. Instead, previous researchers have examined Black students as a demographic group without much attention to within-group characteristics such as racial centrality or ideology (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). Racial ideology is defined as the meaning a person associates with the race they identify as (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Racial centrality is the degree to which someone believes race is an important aspect of their self-concept (Sellers et al., 1998). These two concepts add more depth to the knowledge base surrounding Black students and their experiences. Some researchers have explored these topics, however, the researchers who have explored these within-group differences among Black college students have not given much regard to leadership experiences. Many of them have opted to study factors such as Grade Point Average, general involvement, mental health and others (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Byars-Winston, 2006; Chavous, 2000; Sellers et al., 1998). Experiences of leadership as related to racial ideology are relatively unexamined.

Contrary to much of the way in which previous researchers have studied Black students, they are not a monolithic group with a singular experience. Black students’ experiences of HWIs are not all the same. Chavous (2000) argues that the reason this idea of a monolithic experience permeates so much of the previous research has to do with the fact that much of the research has
centered around comparison to White students. Chavous further argues that studies that ignore differences such as *racial ideology* among Black students tend to utilize blackness as a demographic category for comparison rather than as a lived experience. The consequence is a limited understanding of characteristics that help explain Black students’ educational experiences and outcomes. Without further inquiries into individual characteristics of Black students, it can become hard to explain variances in their behaviors and ultimately their outcomes (Sellers et al., 1998). Not only does a monolithic conceptualization of Black students limit our understanding of their behaviors, it also can be problematic because it can centralize negative experiences and outcomes (Sellers et al., 1998). Harper (2012) notes that many previous studies, particularly about Black male achievement, have used a deficit approach in order to analyze Black students. Harper mentions deficit thinking research statistics such as “Black male college completion rates are lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in U.S. higher education” (Strayhorn, 2010, as cited in Harper, 2012, p. 3). This and other statistics on Black males listed by Harper have a common theme of broadly addressing an issue among Black males while ignoring the experiences of students who do achieve. By utilizing blackness as a demographic category rather than as a complex experience, researchers can ignore valuable information about what may work to improve outcomes for Black students.

There are researchers who have enriched the literature by studying within-group differences, particularly when it comes to the concepts of *racial ideology* and centrality. Sellers et al. (1998) have studied how *racial centrality* and ideology can impact students’ GPAs and Chavous (2000) has examined how *racial ideology* can impact perceptions of fit into the campus environment. These examples are amongst several that have added a wealth of knowledge to the existing literature; however, none of these have explored student leadership experiences and
Black students’ racial ideology. Therefore, little information is known about how Black students’ beliefs and attitudes towards race influence their motivations to be involved with certain types of leadership positions, how they make meaning of being in a leadership role, or their perceptions of how leadership may impact their life and future. Because previous researchers have not explored leadership in this way, there is a gap in our knowledge. Having this knowledge may help college administrators further understand Black college students’ needs and how to support and develop their leadership potential that in turn may guide their success through college and beyond.

**Importance and Rationale**

Studying Black students’ racial ideology and centrality is imperative because it undermines monolithic portrayals of Black students (Sellers et al., 1998). Rather than only utilizing Black identity as a demographic category, it adds nuance and complexity to the Black experience. In addition, certain perceptions of race, particularly negative perceptions, can play a huge role in a Black student’s college experience; the impact of which can sometimes have detrimental effects (Strayhorn, 2012). For example, Strayhorn (2012) notes:

Black males who have a negative perception of themselves, particularly when it comes to race… tend to view HWIs as less supportive, less sympathetic, and less welcoming.

Taken together black male undergraduates at HWIs tend to have less sense of belonging than their same race counterparts at Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs). (p. 80)

Not only can negative perceptions of race affect Black students’ sense of belonging, there is also evidence that suggests that academic performance could be negatively impacted as well. In a study that was specific to college students Reid (2013) found that Black male students in the
earlier stages of their identity development, who hold anti-black views and perceptions, are more likely to have significantly lower academic achievement. In contrast, strong, positive racial identity can have lasting effects on students and is associated with positive psychological, social and academic outcomes. Parker and Flowers (2003) study of 118 Black college students at historically White institutions found that in the internalization stage of Black identity development had a stronger sense of connectedness to campus. The internalization stage of Black identity development, per Cross (1994), is the stage in development associated with internalizing a Black identity, and being comfortable in that identity with respect to other racial identity groups. Mitchell and Dell (1992) found that Black students with strong racial identity attitudes were more likely to be involved in student organizations and feel a sense of belonging on campus. Harper’s (2012) study of high achieving Black males found that many of the Achievers had a Black identity that was central to them and thus responded better to racism and stereotype threat on campus. These students were deemed as achievers based on relatively higher GPAs than their Black male peers (Harper, 2012). Based on this knowledge, there is tremendous value in understanding characteristics such as racial ideology and centrality for Black students. It can be presumed that understanding these factors more deeply would allow for college student affairs administrators and practitioners to help these students in their college experience and address their needs as individuals more effectively, leading to increased success in college and beyond.

Leadership participation has been shown to have many positive effects on student outcomes (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001). Cress and colleagues (2001) discuss how involvement in student leadership positions can improve students’ sense of civic responsibility, understanding of personal and social values and awareness of multicultural and community issues. Additionally, for Black students, leadership positions can positively impact
students’ social integration, sense of belonging, development, career aspirations and outcomes, and mental health (Greene & Winter, 1971; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Oaks, Duckett, Suddeth, & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013; Strayhorn, 2012). Several studies have also shown that higher levels of involvement, generally, can improve retention, achievement, and graduation rates (Astin, 1999; Cress et al., 2001; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Given the value that leadership positions can have for Black students it can be inferred that gaining a better, more nuanced understanding of how Black students make decisions about leadership and make meaning of experiences with leadership positions, would be extremely beneficial to professionals seeking to serve these students and support their college success. Additionally, leadership is the chosen factor for the current study because previous studies indicate a need to further research on leadership and Black students. Sutton & Terrell (2003) state that there is a need to “assess more directly Black men’s perceptions of leadership and the availability of these opportunities at historically White campuses” (p. 58). Haber (2012) states that “A valuable area for further research is examining participants’ understandings of leadership in conjunction with their leadership behaviors, providing insight on the relationships that may or may not exist between how students view leadership and how they engage in leadership” (p. 47). There is a clear need for deeper understanding of student leadership. Given the effects of racial identity on Black students, there is also evidence that there is a pressing need to understand the relationships between Black student racial ideology, centrality and their leadership participation.
Background

Racial ideology

Research on racial ideology stems from the body of research into racial identity. Racial identity refers to “a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009, p. 254). Sellers and colleagues (1998b) argue that prior to their own work and the work of others, research on racial identity, including many of the developmental theories had two limitations: (a) they assumed that race was the most central aspect of self for all Black people, and (b) they conflated identification with what being Black means. These limitations were the catalyst for the Sellers’ work on racial ideology and centrality. Racial ideology is defined as what meaning a person ascribes to being Black (Sellers et al., 1997). There are four racial ideologies or philosophies: humanist, assimilationist, oppressed minority, and nationalist. Racial centrality describes how essential the aspect of being Black is to one’s self-perception (Sellers et al., 1998). These factors allowed for more thorough investigations of racial identity that separates individual constructions of identity. This is quite useful in understanding Black college students, particularly as the experiences in college can enhance racial identity development more than other parts of a student’s adult life (Evans et al., 2009).

One area where Black college students’ racial ideologies and centralities have been investigated is in how it effects their achievement. Sellers and colleagues (1998a) discussed how ideology might affect Black students’ academic performance through quantitative analysis and comparison of GPAs between students with certain ideologies. Their study found that racial ideology and centrality were significantly related to Black students’ cumulative GPAs. The students who held the humanist ideology that is (associated the most with de-emphasizing of the
importance of race in society), were less likely to have high achievement (Sellers et al., 1998a). Also, students who scored low on *racial centrality* showed little difference in GPA, while students who scored higher on centrality, had GPAs that were significantly affected (Sellers et al., 1998a). These findings indicate that deemphasizing race may not be the most effective method for students seeking higher overall achievement.

*Racial ideology* can also have important effects on career perceptions for Black students. Byars-Winston (2006) researched *racial ideology* and its effects on perceived career barriers, self-efficacy, outcome-expectations, and career interests for Black students. The author found that students career interests and the perceptions of career barriers were more affected in students whose ideologies were more focused on the importance and significance of being Black (the *nationalist* philosophy) (Byars-Winston, 2006). This indicates that students who have ideologies centered on the significance of blackness may be more interested in careers but may also may perceive greater barriers in the way of their success. A *nationalist* philosophy may have a negative impact on students’ perceptions of barriers to their success.

Another study conducted by Chavous (2000), discusses *racial ideology* and perceptions of fit within the campus environment. Chavous (2000), found that *racial ideology* did predict perceptions of fit into the campus environment. Students with ideologies emphasizing blackness as important in society (the *oppressed minority* and *nationalist* philosophies) had the lowest perception of fit at a HWI. This indicates that for Black students too much emphasis on race may have a damaging effect on their view of their institutions and whether or not they fit in.

The findings of prior research on *racial ideology* and centrality illustrate the significant impact that students’ beliefs and attitudes regarding race can have on their college experience. This indicates that Black students’ *racial ideology* and *centrality* warrants further investigation.
Student Leadership

One of the most recognized and highly cited pieces of literature in the study of college students is Astin’s theory of involvement (Evans et al., 2009). Astin (1991) posits “Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features. A quantitative aspect of involvement would be the amount of time devoted to an activity; a qualitative component would be the seriousness with which the object was approached and the attention given to it” (as cited in Evans et al., 2009, p. 31). Through this lens, student leadership can promote the qualitative aspect of involvement. Astin (1991) also theorizes that “The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program” (as cited in Evans et al., 2009, p.31). Because student leadership activities promote qualitative aspects of involvement, the more participation, the higher the levels of student learning and student development. Many scholars and researchers have substantiated Astin’s theoretical framework. The research around involvement, and more specifically leadership, not only points to increases in student learning and development, it also points to higher retention rates and achievement (Cress et al., 2001).

For students of color, many of these conclusions hold true. Harper (2012) found that for Black men who are successful in college (i.e., higher GPAs, on track towards graduation, etc.), the factor that attributed to their success most often was their active involvement as leaders in organizations on campus. This suggests student leadership is important as an activity that should be promoted to Black students, because it may improve their achievement and college outcomes. Strayhorn (2012) notes that for Black college students, leadership and organizational involvement increase sense of belonging and overall well-being. This means that leadership involvement may improve Black students’ college experiences and help them to feel more
connected to campus, ultimately resulting in increased retention and motivation during their college experience. Additional studies have focused on factors such as career development and mental health and have shown the positive impacts of involvement and leadership participation on these factors (Greene & Winter, 1971; Oaks et al., 2013).

Racial ideology and leadership have been shown to have a variety of impacts on Black students’ experiences. Various racial ideologies have been shown to effect achievement, involvement, perceptions of fit, and career attitudes differently. Leadership has been shown to have positive impacts on students’ experiences. Understanding the relationship between the racial ideology and leadership may provide important context for how to guide students towards student leadership positions that may improve their chances for success. Understanding this relationship may also provide clues to understanding why certain students are more affected by certain leadership positions than others, ultimately helping professionals in higher education address the unique needs of individual Black students to guide them towards success.

Statement of Purpose

Using semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with Black student leaders on a historically White campus, the present study expands our knowledge with regard to the racial ideologies of Black students attending HWIs by focusing on the students’ experiences with college leadership positions or in leadership programs. By focusing on Black, college student leadership, this study expands the existing body of literature on the effects of racial ideology and centrality. This expansion of the knowledge base will be beneficial to student affairs practitioners at HWIs who work with Black students. The result of this study allows for a deeper understanding of how racial ideology affects Black college students and what techniques may be useful in guiding these students toward becoming involved in leadership and getting the most value out of their
leadership roles on campus. Additionally, future research will benefit, as these findings will hopefully open doors to further inquiry.

**Research Questions**

The present study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What racial ideological philosophies do Black student leaders hold on a historically White campus?

2. How does racial ideology and centrality affect the leadership experiences of Black college students at a HWI?

3. How does racial ideology and centrality shape the ways in which Black college students perceive the role student leaders play on campus?

4. How does racial ideology and centrality inform the decisions Black students make about leadership (i.e., such as the type of leadership positions, types of organizations, and amount of leadership)?

**Methodology**

**Design**

The study used a phenomenological approach to understanding students’ experiences of leadership and how racial ideology shapes these experiences. Per Merriam (2009) “a phenomenological qualitative study is interested in understanding one’s lived experiences” (p. 25). This approach was chosen because capturing the lived experiences of student leaders is essential. The present study included two phases. Phase one included an electronic survey. The survey included subscales from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). The subscales measure racial centrality and score each of the four racial ideology philosophies. The remaining subscales measure what a person believes it means to be Black. Phase Two was
qualitative in nature and used semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule consists of two categorizations of questions: The experience of student leadership and beliefs about leadership. The questions are guided by the 3rd and 4th tenets of Astin’s (1991) theory of involvement which states that involvement is both quantitative and qualitative and, that the amount of student development of an activity or program is directly related to the amount of involvement. Thus, interview questions asked about quantitative and qualitative involvement in leadership activities as well as the impact of these activities on students’ overall development. The questions were also guided by the MMRI, specifically the areas that guide racial ideology: political/economic (campus community) development, cultural/social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998).

Sample. The general population for this study was undergraduate students who identify as Black, had the requisite credits to be classified as a college junior or senior status, and have participated in one or more student organizations, or campus activities as a leader. Because of their classification, these students had more opportunity to participate in leadership experiences on campus. Thus, were more likely to have more to share about their leadership experiences. Also these students, again due to their classification, were more likely to have a deepened racial identity development because of their experiences in college (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). In order to recruit these students an email was sent through the institution’s institutional analysis office to all junior and seniors who self-identified as Black or Black. In addition, the researcher recruited by contacting student organizations directly to ask for interested participants.

The sample was recruited using the non-probabilistic criterion, or purposive, sampling technique. According to Merriam (2009), purposive sampling directly reflects the purpose of the study and guides in the identification of information rich cases. This is useful for this study as it
is important that those who are studied have a substantial amount of leadership experiences on campus, have a high *racial centrality* score and reflect the entire spectrum of racial ideologies. There are five factors that comprised the criteria for selecting participants. Participants must

1. Have identified as Black
2. Have had credits that classify them as juniors or seniors in college
3. Have had at least 1 semester in a leadership role in a student organization on campus or at least 1 semester of participation in a leadership development program or activity on campus
4. Have completed selected subscales of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)
5. Have scored in the top 50% in the *racial centrality* subscale among those who completed the MIBI subscales. The MIBI subscales measure *racial centrality* and provide four individual *racial ideology* scores.

**Data collection.** The data for this study were collected through the online survey and the semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible allowing the interviewer to ask more open-ended questions and in an order that works best for each interview (Merriam, 2009). This is the chosen method because it allows for follow-up questions to participants. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person, one-on-one. Participants were asked questions related to their leadership experiences generally and asked questions related to how race influences their decisions and actions about their leadership roles and participation. These questions were created based upon the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) developed by Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous (1998b). The MMRI is the theoretical model guiding the question generation.
Data analysis. For the analysis of the survey data, the scoring method described in the instrument was used to determine participants’ scores on each subscale. Next, the scores of participants were categorized into the four ideological philosophies based on which philosophy each participant scored highest on. Relevant descriptive statistical analysis was done to understand the meanings of the scores. The main phase of the study was qualitative. To analyze the data from this approach the researcher utilized the process of analysis which includes open coding, and analytical coding. Open coding is the process of noting comments, notations, or queries next to bits of data from interview transcripts or documents (Merriam, 2009). The researcher began this process for each interview conducted after each interview has been transcribed. The open codes were reflections from the researcher and related to relevant literature. Analytical coding refers to the process of grouping open codes into groupings which reflect interpretation or meaning (Merriam, 2009). The analytical coding groupings became final themes and observations of the data. The process of open coding and analytical coding was done repetitively and was iterative throughout the data analysis process.

Definition of Terms

Assimilation Philosophy

“The racial ideology associated with and emphasizing the connection between Blacks the rest of American society” (Sellers et al., 1998b p.13)

Humanist Philosophy

“The racial ideology associated with interest in viewing all people as one interconnected group or one race, and emphasizing social issues that affect all humans.” (Sellers et al., 1998b p. 13)
Nationalist Philosophy

“The racial ideology associated with stressing the uniqueness of being Black in American Society” (Sellers et al., 1998b p. 13)

Oppressed Minority Philosophy

“The racial ideology associated with valuing the interconnectedness of all oppressed groups of people” (Sellers et al., 1998b p.13)

Predominantly White Institution (HWI)\(^1\)

“Institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment” (Brown & Dancy, 2010, p. 524).

Racial centrality

“The importance a person places on their racial identity as a domain of who they are” (Sellers et al., 1997 p.807)

Racial Identity

"A sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group." (Helms, 1995 as cited in Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999 p.40).

Racial ideology

“The construct surrounding how a person makes meaning of their racial identity” (Sellers et al., 1997 p. 806)

Racial salience

“The degree to which a persons’ race is a relevant part of their self-concept at any given moment in time” (Sellers et al., 1997 p. 806)\(^1\)

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\(^1\) The term “historically White institutions” is used throughout this thesis as a way to disrupt the narrative which erases the history of how predominantly White institutions came to exist.
Delimitations

The present study seeks to understand the relationship between racial ideology and Black students’ leadership experiences and attitudes. As such the study focuses on junior and senior students who likely have had more time to experience student leadership in the campus environment. The study does not extend to first year or sophomore students. The study is also bound geographically to one midsized Midwestern institution and does not cover Black students at other HWIs.

Limitations

Participants in this study were only selected from one institution and therefore the results may not be representative of HWIs. The study is intended to provide new understanding at the institution, which is the research site but may have transferability at other similarly-situated HWIs. In addition, it is important to note that racial ideology may not be the only factor that effects the leadership experience of the participants. There may be other factors that influence how they experience and make decisions about leadership. Therefore, the present study does not set out to demonstrate that a specific ideology or ideologies is directly responsible for why a student chooses the leadership positions they choose. Finally, it is important to also note that intersecting identities were not considered in the study, therefore the effects of gender, sexuality, religious difference, etc. on leadership experience are not discussed.

Organization of Thesis

In the chapters to follow, relevant literature, study methodology, results and relevant findings will be discussed. Chapter 2 will include an overview of relevant literature, including literature discussing the two theoretical frameworks for the study: Astin’s theory of student involvement and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. Chapter 2 will also discuss
racial identity development literature and student leadership literature related to Black students. Chapter 3 will explore further the design of the present study, outlining the data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter 4 will show a thorough analysis of the results of the study and discuss patterns among the racial ideologies and the leadership experiences. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude with a discussion of the relevant findings and implications for Black students and leadership.
Introduction

The present study seeks to understand better Black college students at historically White institutions (HWIs) and explore relationships between certain aspects of their Black identity, particularly racial ideology and centrality, and various leadership experiences and attitudes. This chapter will detail the use of phenomenology as the paradigm for the study. This paradigm allows for deeper examination of racial identity and leadership phenomena. The chapter will also explicate the frameworks utilized to conduct the study. Particularly, this chapter addresses the history of racial identity constructs that have led to today’s current understanding of racial ideology and centrality. The chapter will also address Astin’s theory of student involvement and how it is used a guide for understanding student leadership in the present study. Previous studies dealing with both racial identity and student leadership are explored. To conclude, this chapter will discuss the limitations of existing studies and the factors that provide justification for the present study.

Research Paradigm

Phenomenology

The current study uses a phenomenological approach to understand the essence of what it means to be a Black student leader on a historically White campus. Merriam (2009) states that phenomenology is “the study of people’s conscious experience of their life world, that is their everyday life and social interaction” (p. 25). Phenomenology makes the assumption that there is an essence or shared experience among the area being studied (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology utilizes three techniques to depict the structure of a phenomenon. The first technique is phenomenological reduction. This is the process of isolating the phenomenon that arise from the data in order to derive meaning (Merriam, 2009). Another technique is horizontalization, which
is equalizing the data to ensure that each piece has equal value in the results or findings (Merriam, 2009). The final technique used in phenomenological research is imaginative variation. This is the process of viewing the data from multiple perspectives, or multiple angles (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenological studies should produce a description that explains the structure and essence of a phenomenon. The present study seeks to better understand the phenomenon of both Black racial identity and leadership on a historically White college campus by attempting to delineate the structure of these two phenomena. The present study uses a survey and interviews to collect data and then analyze the data using the techniques of bracketing, phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and imaginative variation in order to delineate the structure and essence of the experience of Black student leaders.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Approaches to Racial Identity Research**

Using the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), this study seeks to understand relationships between racial ideology, centrality, leadership experiences, and attitudes. The MMRI is a model developed to further the understanding of racial identity for Blacks by combining many of the strengths of the approaches that preceded it (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998b). It draws from the two most prevalent perspectives through which Black identity has been researched.

The first perspective many researchers have utilized is what is considered as the “mainstream approach” (Gaines & Reed, 1994, p. 13). This approach focuses heavily on the oppression and prejudice experienced by Black people in America and its destructive effects. This approach, deemed as mainstream because of its higher level of prevalence within the research community, emphasizes the importance of group identities in individuals’ lives, the
stigmas that come from lived experience in an environment that is oppressive, and universal properties of race and/or group identity (Gaines & Reed, 1994). Researchers utilizing this approach do not emphasize specific characteristics that are unique to Blacks, but rather emphasizes the psychological and cognitive structure of group identity (Gaines & Reed, 1994). From this perspective, Black identity is just one example of such group identity. Examples of the mainstream approach to racial identity include the work of Phinney (1989) who proposed stages of ethnic identity. Phinney’s (1989) ethnic identity development model deemphasizes the uniqueness of racial cultures and instead promotes a more generic idea around how identity is developed. Likewise, Lutanhan and Crocker (1992) utilize the mainstream approach in their Collective Self-Esteem Measure, which measures attitudes and feelings about one’s own ethnic group. The Collective Self-Esteem Measure does not emphasize any of the cultural practices beliefs or values associated with one’s ethnic group, but rather seeks to understand how individuals feel about their membership in particular groups (Sellers et al., 1998b).

Per Sellers et al. (1998b), the strengths of research using the mainstream approach are that researchers have created a large body of research that delineates the structure of identity. Additionally, the mainstream approach has produced work that provides evidence of the effects of group salience on individual’s self-concept and self-esteem (Sellers et al., 1998b). Group salience is the degree to which a person recognizes a particular part of their identity as distinctive in an environment (Sellers et al., 1998b). Crocker and Major (1989) suggest that when the context of an environment is manipulated to increase salience, individuals of the group are more likely to evaluate fellow members of their own group more favorably or devalue members of other groups to which they do not belong to. Overall, it can be suggested that the mainstream approach is effective in delineating various constructs of group identity, such as self-esteem and
salience. However, research utilizing this mainstream approach has the limitation that it is not specific to the Black experience (Sellers et al., 1998b).

The “underground approach” seeks to solve this limitation by placing larger emphasis on the qualitative and experiential meanings associated with being Black (Gaines & Reed, 1994). This approach usually explicitly expresses characteristics of history and culture. These characteristics are specific to blackness and how these characteristics can shape and mold individuals’ Black identity. The most commonly recognized theory to utilize this approach is Cross’s (1971) Nigrescence. The original version of this model describes five stages of development as Black people grow into a healthy Black identity (Cross, 1994). The later version of this model shifted from these 5 stages to 3 worldviews (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Phagen-Smith, 2002). The first worldview is called the pre-encounter worldview wherein an individual has not emphasized being Black as an important part of their identity. Rather, they may place more importance on another identity or have a stronger connection to the dominant race. Within this worldview there are three identities: assimilation, miseducation, and self-hatred. The assimilation identity is characterized by low racial salience and a tendency to lean towards participation in the dominant societal norms. Miseducation is characterized by the belief in negative stereotypes associated with the Black community. Self-hatred is characterized by a negative view of one’s self because of race (Vandiver et al., 2002). The second worldview is immersion/emersion and is the worldview in which an individual seeks out a stronger connection to Black identity by being overly obsessed with how to identify with Black culture (Vandiver et al., 2002). This worldview host two identities: intense Black involvement and anti-White. Intense Black involvement is characterized by romanticizing Black identity. Anti-White identity is characterized by the rejection of cultural norms established by White society (Vandiver et al.,
The final worldview is internalization. Internalization emphasizes a commitment to, and security in an individual’s Black identity. This worldview hosts three identities: biculturalism, multiculturalism, and Black nationalism. Biculturalism emphasizes Black identity and one other form of identity. For example, a Black woman may emphasize both her gender and race. Multiculturalism focuses on emphasizing multiple identities beyond race. Black nationalism focuses solely on Black identity (Vandiver et al., 2002).

Cross’s Nigrescence theory-expanded (NT-E) is important because rather than focusing on group identity generally, the model recognizes culture and tradition as an important part of blackness (Sellers et al., 1998a). It also recognizes that healthy Black identity must commit to and internalize these norms, culture, and values in some form. In other words, this model and models similar go beyond assigning value to how much a person identifies with blackness and includes assigning value to what identifying with blackness means. This is true of much of the other research that has come out of the underground approach, and represents one of the strengths of this perspective (Sellers et al., 1998b).

The two approaches to research on Black identity are not contradictory of one another. On the contrary, Sellers et al. (1998b), argues that these two approaches can be complimentary. He describes how a method of observation, which integrates the two approaches, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Black identity than the two approaches provide separately (Sellers et al., 1998b). The MMRI, was produced particularly with this goal in mind.

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)

In its efforts to formulate a more comprehensive approach to understanding Black identity, the MMRI defines racial identity as the notion of how important race is to a person’s self-concept and what it means to identify with a race (Sellers et al., 1998b). The MMRI makes
several assumptions to understand this concept more fully. The first assumption of the MMRI model is that identity has both situational and more stable properties (Sellers et al., 1998b). Researchers have argued on either side of this topic, some focusing on the situational properties of identity such as group salience, and others arguing for more stable properties such as the role race may play in an individual’s life. It is important to note that the more stable properties may change gradually over time due to certain stimuli, but that they are not as susceptible to changes as the situational properties (Sellers et al., 1998b). The second assumption of the MMRI is that individuals have numerous identities and these identities are hierarchical when described as a part of a person’s self-concept (Sellers et al., 1998b). In other words, some individuals may place more importance on their gender than their race, or place significant importance on their sexual orientation. Because the MMRI makes this assumption, it is possible for the model to include other identities as factors in how an individual defines what it means to be Black. For example, a cis-gender Black woman’s concept of what it means to be Black may include a gendered form of blackness different from that of a cis-gender Black man. The third assumption of the MMRI is that an individual’s perception of self is the most valid indicator of identity (Sellers et al., 1998b). This is important because it shapes the MMRI’s phenomenological approach to understanding racial identity. Other researchers have focused on behavioral aspects of identity rather than subjective self-perceptions, because behavioral aspects can more accurately show the meaning a person prescribes to their identity (Sellers et al., 1998b). However, the MMRI is interested in both that meaning and the importance placed on that meaning and thus, self-perception is a more valid indicator to grasp both concepts (Sellers et al., 1998b).

In addition to assumptions, the MMRI has primary areas of concern which differ from other research on Black identity. First, the MMRI is primarily concerned with what it means to
be Black without ascribing any value to that concept (Sellers et al., 1998b). Essentially, the MMRI does not attempt to place one definition of what blackness means over another. All categories of what blackness means have the same degree of validity. There are no assumptions of healthy, unhealthy, positive or negative identities made about the categories in the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998b). It is important to note that it may be true that certain categories may produce certain effects and outcomes such as higher self-esteem or psychological wellbeing, however, these outcomes raise empirical questions that could be answered by the use of the MMRI but are not what it directly measures (Sellers et al., 1998b). The other primary area of concern for MMRI is a person’s racial identity at a given point in time. This differs from models such as Cross’s theory of Nigrescence, which focuses on identity development over a span of time and the trajectory of that growth (Cross, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998b). In this way, the MMRI can be seen as a complement to development models, providing a rubric of understanding more in depth individual steps, along the developmental journey.

With the assumptions and areas of concern providing its foundation, the MMRI proposes four dimensions of racial identity that can be operationalized and thus scored. The four dimensions are: racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology (Sellers et al., 1998b). Racial salience and racial centrality are dimensions that seek to understand the importance of race to a person’s self-concept while racial regard and ideology are dimensions that are about what meaning one ascribes to being Black (Sellers et al., 1998b).

**Racial salience.** Racial salience refers to how important race is for a person in a moment, given the context of what is happening at that time (Sellers et al., 1998b). Race may be more salient for someone who is the only Black person in a room, for instance. Salience is an extremely dynamic variable that is a function of personal factors and situational context (Sellers
et al., 1997). Not everyone’s salience is the same in similar situations. Two people can have the same experience and their level of salience can be very different. Salience also, as previously mentioned, is one of the least stable factors that make up racial identity (Sellers et al., 1997). The other dimensions of the MMRI are more stable in nature.

**Racial centrality.** Racial centrality refers to the extent that a person defines himself or herself by, and places importance on, their race (Sellers et al., 1998b). Unlike salience, it is not defined by situational cues but rather by personal perceptions of self-concept regarding race (Sellers et al., 1998b). Racial centrality is also the dimension wherein the notion of hierarchical identities comes into play more. Race may be less central to a person’s self-concept than another identity such as gender, religion, sexuality, etc. The concept of centrality has been particularly prevalent in much of the research that utilizes the underground approach to racial identity. However, many of these models have assumed that centrality is beneficial; that a higher level of centrality indicates a healthier Black identity. The MMRI differs in this regard, because it gives no assumption of value or beneficial benefits to any of its dimensions including centrality (Sellers et al., 1998b). It simply measures them and allows future researchers to operationalize the dimensions to compare to other factors and factors.

**Racial regard.** Racial regard refers to the extent of feelings a person has about their own race (Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers et al., 1998b). Like centrality, racial regard has been a prevalent part of the underground approach of studying Black identity. Many researchers who have used this approach imply that a more positive regard is an essential component of a healthy Black identity (Gaines & Reed, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998b). Racial regard has two categorizations: Private Regard and Public Regard (Sellers et al., 1998b). Private regard refers to how an individual feels about being a part of their racial group while Public regard relates to how
a person perceives others may feel about them because as a result being a member of that racial group (Sellers et al., 1998b). These two categorizations provide the clearest example of why the MMRI focuses on not prescribing positive and negative values to its dimensions and categories. Researchers from the two approaches have very different views regarding how racial regard effects Black people (Gaines & Reed, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998b). Many models utilizing the mainstream approach assume that because of the oppression that Black people face (e.g., racism, prejudice, stigmatization, etc.), Black people have low public regard, which in turn damages their self-concept, and private regard (Gaines & Reed, 1994). The underground approach views the oppression with less emphasis while emphasizing private regard and how cultural factors such as religion or the Black community can shape self-concept and mitigate the influence of societal oppression (Sellers et al., 1998b). The MMRI does not side with either approach but rather makes no assumptions about the functionality of higher or lower regard.

**Racial ideology.** Racial ideology refers to an individual’s concept of how a Black person should act, behave, or beliefs they should hold (Sellers et al., 1998b). The MMRI specifically understands this concept through attitudes and actions in four categories: political/economic development, cultural/social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group (Sellers et al., 1998b). A person’s beliefs and attitudes about actions in these four areas shapes their ideology. The MMRI delineates four overarching ideologies that a person can have regarding race: the nationalist philosophy, the oppressed minority philosophy, the assimilationist philosophy, and the humanist philosophy (Sellers et al., 1998b). These philosophies are not mutually exclusive but rather indicate a person’s tendency to behave or believe a certain way (Sellers et al., 1997). For example, just because the MMRI indicates the Nationalist philosophy as a person’s ideology does not mean that they cannot have any views like that of the other
philosophies; it simply indicates a higher preference.

**The nationalist philosophy.** The nationalist philosophy stresses the uniqueness of being Black (Sellers et al., 1998b). It is associated with actions such as engaging in black specific social and cultural activities, believing that Black people should control their own economic and political development, etc. (Sellers et al., 1998b). The Nationalist ideology can stem from a need to resist the oppression that Black people face in the United States, or from a deeper appreciation of the cultural accomplishments of Black people (Sellers et al., 1998b). Though the underground and mainstream approaches often have placed value on the Nationalist philosophy as the most valuable philosophy of healthy identity, the MMRI does not (Gaines & Reed, 1994).

**The oppressed minority philosophy.** The Oppressed Minority philosophy emphasizes the connection between other Oppressed groups and the Black experience (Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers et al., 1998b). It is associated with actions such as coalition building, attending multicultural or diverse community activities, and encouraging collective economic and political development to enhance the most vulnerable communities in society (Sellers et al., 1998b). It is also associated with an acute awareness of the oppression faced by Black people and deeper understanding of Black culture (Sellers et al., 1997)

**The assimilationist philosophy.** The assimilationist philosophy emphasizes a connectedness to being an citizen of America, or a part of the larger general society; however, it does not necessarily deemphasize the importance of race or the oppression faced by Black people (Sellers et al., 1998b). For example, a person who falls within this philosophy can still be an activist for social change but is more likely to emphasize the use of the current systems that are in place to achieve their goals, or are more likely to suggest working with the White majority to make change. This philosophy is also associated with attending social events that have no
specific focus on race and identity, or with specifically seeking to socialize with the White majority (Sellers et al., 1998b). Similar to the other philosophies, researchers who have subscribed to the underground approach have generally made assumptions and ascribed value to this philosophy. The general view of this philosophy-type has been that it is symptomatic of an unhealthy Black identity (Gaines & Reed, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998b).

**The humanist philosophy.** The *humanist* philosophy emphasizes the shared experience of all humans. This philosophy is associated with attempting to solve issues all humans face such as issues of the environment, peace and hunger (Sellers et al., 1998). It is associated with actively wanting to socialize and interact with all humans regardless of race. Though this may be the desire of a person who falls within the *Humanist* philosophy, their actual interactions may be skewed towards interacting with the White majority most because of the nature and hierarchy of this racialized society (Sellers et al., 1998b). The *Humanist* philosophy is most associated with deemphasizing difference amongst humans. Again, many researchers have made value assumptions about this philosophy in their models of racial identity. However, the MMRI does not make such assumptions (Sellers et al., 1998b).

**The MMRI and the present study.** The MMRI is a model that adds several areas of value to the research on Black identity. It is a more comprehensive approach to Black identity than is offered by the research that has come out of the mainstream and underground approaches, because it separates and organizes the dimensions of Black identity rather than attempting to combine them and define identity types. For example, in the MMRI *racial ideology* is completely separate from *racial regard* and there is no typology which combines the two dimensions. This comprehensive method allows for much greater delineation and nuance to understanding the complexities of Black racial identity. In addition to being more
comprehensive, the MMRI allows for reflection and interpretation of the intersections of identity. The MMRI does not make the assumption of race being the most central form of identity for all Black people and thus leaves room for other identities that may intersect with race to be examined and the effects of those other identities on one’s racial identity to be assessed (Sellers et al., 1998b). Also, the MMRI focuses on a particular moment in time rather than a longitudinal process (Sellers et al., 1998b). This is beneficial for empirical research because the understanding of racial identity does not require longitudinal studies, but rather can be examined through glimpsing a moment in time. Lastly, the MMRI makes no assumptions, negative or positive, about any of the dimensions or philosophies of racial identity. This may provide opportunities for unbiased, less subjective empirical studies utilizing the MMRI.

These attributes make the MMRI a very useful model to understand Black college students’ racial identities. Because the MMRI is more comprehensive, it is possible to understand both how Black students ascribe meaning to their race, and how Black students view the importance of race, without conflating the two. In addition, the MMRI does not make the assumption of race being the most valued identity for Black students, nor does it assume that there is something inherently wrong with not having blackness as the most central identity. Because of this, Black students who are women, identify as LGBTQ, or have other identities can have their meanings of blackness assessed through the lenses of those intersections. For example, for a Black gay man, his sexual identity can shape how he feels about what it means to be Black, and that shaping of his Black identity will not be inherently viewed as the “wrong way to be Black”. This is important in the context of college because it is a rapidly changing environment, where identity salience can fluctuate and change quickly (Quaye & Harper, 2014). In addition, the college experience for many students is one of the most influential periods of their identity
development (Evans et al., 2009).

The present study seeks to understand the relationships between Black students’ feelings or understandings about their race and their experiences as student leaders. To understand this, it is imperative that a model like the MMRI is used because there is a need for comprehensiveness, and lack of judgement of students’ attitudes and views. Any model that lacks a separation of the dimensions of racial identity would likely not tell the full and complete story about how a Black student’s race plays a factor in their leadership experiences. Likewise, any model that ascribes to a “healthy or unhealthy notions of being Black” would likely alienate certain students and/or devalue parts of students’ identities that are not race. Therefore, the MMRI was carefully chosen as the model guiding the present study.

Though the present study utilizes the MMRI, it does not utilize every dimension. The MMRI model is designed in such a manner that each dimension is separate, thus can be investigated independently of one another (Sellers et al., 1998b). The present study, because of its emphasis on leadership experiences, seeks to understand blackness through actions and attitudes. For example, the present study would be interested in how the meaning a student ascribes to blackness has influenced their decisions to be a leader of certain organizations as opposed to others. Additionally, this study would be interested in how that meaning has influenced their reactions to campus incidents as a student leader. Racial ideology is the dimension that is most aligned with actions and attitudes (Sellers et al., 1998b). Thus, it is one of the chosen dimensions to be emphasized in the present study. Though some assumptions about each ideological philosophy’s general attitudes and behaviors have already been mentioned, the present study seeks to learn more specific understandings of student leaders’ actions and attitudes based on their racial ideology. In addition to racial ideology, racial centrality is also
going to be assessed in the present study. This was chosen because, though the dimensions of the MMRI can be examined independently they can influence each other. Previous empirical research suggests that racial ideology has less influence over ones’ actions when racial centrality is low (Chavous, 2000; Sellers et al., 1998a). This makes sense intuitively. If a person places less importance on race, they are less likely to perceive race as influencing how they behave and interact with others. Therefore, the present study must address racial centrality to fully understand the effects of racial ideology on Black students’ leadership experiences.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

In addition to the use of the MMRI and the study of the racial ideology of Black students, the present study also involves analysis of leadership experiences and involvement among Black students. The present study seeks to specifically understand why students choose the quantity and/or specific types of student leadership experiences they do, what attitudes students hold about campus leadership and its responsibilities, and finally what negative or positive experiences students have while being Black and a student leader. All of these questions are directed at understanding the nexus of race and leadership for the benefit of knowing how to better guide students towards improved outcomes and success. The present study explored these topics using the framework around general student involvement developed by Astin.

The theory of student involvement proposed by Astin (1999) was developed out of a need to consolidate and contextualize how students move from receiving the college experience to certain developmental and learning outcomes. Astin relates this notion to using the student as a black box, stating:

On the input end of the box are the various policies, programs, and decisions of a college and university, and on the output end are various types of developmental outcomes such
as GPA or test scores. It seemed that something was missing; some kind of mediating mechanism that would explain how these policies and program are translated into learning and development. (p. 519)

Astin (1999) argues that involvement is the missing factor in this equation. Involvement is defined as “the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to their academic experience” (p. 518). Involvement being the missing factor in the black box equation means that involvement facilitates developmental outcomes of students. This is the overall premise of the theory of student involvement (Astin, 1999). In order to further elaborate on this idea, Astin points out the shortcomings of other frameworks for understanding student learning and outcomes. Particularly he discusses content theory, resource theory and individualized theory (Astin, 1999). Content theory is a framework around how students learn that focuses on students being exposed to the right subject matter (Astin, 1999; Edgar, 2012). From the content theory perspective, learning and development is a function of the proper exposure to content (Astin, 1999). In this approach, the professor or teacher holds all of the knowledge and it is assumed that simple exposure to it will lead to learning. The primary limitation to this theory is that it is beneficial to only the most motivated students, and those who are fast readers and listeners (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) argues that students need a less passive voice in the learning process. The second theory, resource theory, focuses on resources: physical, human, financial, etc. It maintains that if adequate resources are brought together in one location, student learning will occur (Astin, 1999). This approach has the primary limitation that it does not take into account how the resources are used (Astin, 1999). Having a particular resource does not always mean that students will use it, or use it effectively. The last approach and theory disputed by Astin is the individualized approach. The individualized approach maintains that no single
approach to learning works for every student (Astin, 1999). All students learn differently. It seeks to identify content methods and resources that meet each individual student’s needs (Astin, 1999). The largest limitation of this theory is that it is expensive and difficult to define. In order to meet individualized needs of all students, an unlimited amount of resources and methods would need to be utilized. However, resources are finite and therefore the efforts utilizing this approach will likely always fall short (Astin, 1999). In addition, because individualized student needs are virtually unlimited in variety, it is very difficult to define and contextualize as practice (Astin, 1999).

The theory of student involvement fills in the missing areas that cause the limitations of the previously mentioned theories and/or approaches. The theory of student involvement provides a link between content, resources, and individualized needs and student learning/developmental outcomes. For example, the theory argues that for a program or resource to achieve its desired outcome a student must put forth a sufficient effort and invest a sufficient amount of energy. Thus, it is not enough to expose students to content, have the resources, or seek out individualized needs. In addition to that, a student must be involved and engaged in the learning and development process (Astin, 1999). The theory of student involvement has five tenets which build its foundations: a) Involvement is the investment of physical and psychological energy into certain objects or concepts; b) Involvement occurs on a continuum and is different for each student and for each object; c) Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative attributes; d) The amount of student learning and development associated with a program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program; and e) The effectiveness of any program or policy is directly proportional to its ability to increase student involvement (Astin, 1999).
The first three of these five propositions are explained relatively easily. They provide simple context for the theory by providing a concrete definition of involvement, explaining the way involvement operates differently for individuals and for programs, and then explaining the properties of involvement. However, the last two propositions require more elaboration. Astin (1999) argues that much of the recommended research around involvement and the theory would be designed to test these two propositions in some way or another. These two tenets specifically relate to involvement’s translation into educational outcomes. The amount of student learning of a program being directly proportional to the amount of student involvement in it signifies that the more involved a student is in a program the more likely that program is to elicit the benefits of learning and development it is intended to. This means student involvement is a powerful tool to strengthen the effectiveness of programs and policies at institutions (Astin, 1999). In addition, if the effectiveness of any program or policy is directly proportional to its ability to increase involvement, this means that it is not only up to the student to be more involved in a program but is also the responsibility of the program or policy to elicit more student involvement.

The relevant research that was used to conceptualize the theory of student involvement was a longitudinal study of college dropouts conducted in 1975 (Astin, 1999). The longitudinal study included data collected from various samples totaling 200,000 cases and examined over 80 factors as it relates to student outcomes (Astin, 1999). The results of the study showed increased retention for students who fit several key categories: students who lived on campus, students who had part time jobs, students who were involved in student government, students who were involved in fraternity and sorority life, students who interacted with faculty outside of the classroom, students who were involved in athletics, and students who had identity markers that were also a part of the college’s identity (i.e., Black students attending a Historically Black
Another relevant finding from the study was that there is a correlation between retention and whether a student attends a four year or two-year institution. Students who attended four-year institutions were more likely to persist (Astin, 1999). Astin argues that this is due to the fact that students at two-year institutions are less likely to be involved on campus because they are more often commuter students and more often carry part time status. Astin (1999) generalizes all the findings to the topic of involvement. Students who live on campus are more involved with their peers and more connected to the college environment (Astin, 1999; Quaye & Harper, 2014). Students who have identity markers that are also a part of the college’s identity, feel more connected to campus and thus spend more time and energy in activities on campus (Astin, 1999). Students involved in student government and fraternity or sorority life are more connected to their peers and have more agency with the policies and procedures at the college they are attending (Astin, 1999). All of this is involvement, and these activities and forms of involvement, help to facilitate student development.

Theory of student involvement and the present study. Many of the theoretical frameworks that specifically discuss leadership focus around how leadership is developed. The present study approaches leadership as a mechanism that benefits other student outcomes. Rather than examining the growth of leadership skills, this study attempts to understand leadership as a tangible action or activity that improves a student’s outcomes. Astin’s theory of student involvement addresses involvement in this way: as a mechanism that leads to student outcomes. The theory of student involvement does not focus specifically on leadership. However, its framework is relevant to the present study because student leadership activities are a form of involvement. By being involved in leadership experiences, students are investing time and energy into their academic experience. The present study examines the value of that investment.
to the student and how race and racial ideology might factor into a student receiving that value and benefit. Astin’s theory of involvement helps in this process because it provides the framework for examining leadership as an investment of student’s time and energy.

Synthesis of Research Literature

Racial ideology and Black student outcomes

The MMRI has been used in a variety of studies to better understand racial ideology, centrality, salience, and regard. These studies compare these racial identity dimensions with a variety of student outcome factors (Barr & Neville, 2014; Byars-Winston, 2006; Chavous, 2000; Sellers et al., 1998a). The primary reason such research is important has to do with the areas of achievement and outcomes which Black students do not do well comparatively with their White counterparts. In the area of academic achievement, literature points out gaps in Black students’ success in college. Black male college completion rates are lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in the United States. (Harper, 2012; Harper & Davis, 2012; Quaye & Harper, 2014). Black students overall are less prepared for the rigors of college than their White counterparts (Harper, 2012). Black students also experience less sense of belonging and have more difficulty with social and academic integration at HWIs which can contribute to lower rates of involvement and investment in their college experience (Harper, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, Black students have lower self-efficacy in terms of career outcomes, when compared to White students (Byars-Winston, 2006).

To understand these comparative gaps better, researchers have sought to examine several factors that could be influential factors in the Black college student experience. Studying cognitive and psychological factors has been one such approach. Racial identity factors, such as ideology, have been researched significantly in recent years in order to understand the gaps in
outcomes relative to Black college students (Chavous, 2000). One of the studies that utilizes this approach focuses on academic performance as it relates to racial ideology and racial centrality. Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke (1998) studied a sample of 248 Black college students at both a HWI and a historically Black institution. The goal of the research was to assess the relationship that racial ideology and centrality have with academic performance (Sellers et al., 1998a). Students who participated were scored utilizing the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)—the instrument used to measure the constructs of the MMRI—and then asked their cumulative GPAs. The MIBI scores each of the dimensions of the MMRI on separate subscales (Sellers et al., 1997). The sample of the study consisted of more women students than men and more students who attended the HWI than who attended the Historically Black College (HBCU). None of these factors were shown to affect the results significantly (Sellers et al., 1998a). Part of the findings of the study reflected school differences in Racial ideology and GPA. Students who attended the HWI had lower GPAs, and reported higher scores on the Assimilation subscale (Sellers et al., 1998a). A separate part of the findings compared racial ideology to GPA and found that assimilationist and nationalist philosophies were associated with lower GPAs. This was only true for students who had racial centrality scores in the top quartile (Sellers et al., 1998a). Thus, the findings suggested that racial centrality played a moderating role in the effects of racial ideology on GPA (Sellers et al., 1998a). For students with low racial centrality scores, GPAs were not significantly related to racial ideologies (Sellers et al., 1998a). Though it played a moderating role in conjunction with ideology, when separated and studied by itself racial centrality was significantly related to GPA (Sellers et al., 1998a). Students with higher centrality scores had higher GPAs (Sellers et al., 1998a). An overall analysis of all the findings would conclude that racial centrality and racial ideology, together and separately, could
affect GPA. What the findings suggest is that when looking to understand ways to increase GPA and academic performance for Black students, deemphasizing race may not be an effective strategy. Higher race central students had higher GPAs and students with ideologies that emphasized connection to mainstream American culture (while deemphasizing Black culture) had lower GPAs (Sellers et al., 1998a). Sellers et al. (1998a) suggest that this may be because centralizing race can lead to a stronger self-esteem and more security in one’s self and abilities. It also may not be an effective strategy for Black students to stress the uniqueness of race too much. Students who fell within the Nationalist ideology did not have higher GPAs when compared to other ideologies (Sellers et al., 1998a). It is suggested that this may be due to the fact that these students may have a heightened awareness of racism and discrimination in their environment and thus may experience stronger feelings of isolation and alienation (Sellers et al., 1998a).

Another study around racial ideology sought to understand the relationship between racial ideology and perceptions of fit into the college environment. This study centered around the theme that Black students have more difficulty with social and academic integration on campus. To understand this better, Chavous (2000) studied 146 Black students at a HWI. The study utilized the MIBI to quantify racial ideology and racial centrality, while also utilizing the Perceived Ethnic Fit Scale (PEFS) to understand student’s feelings about their congruence with the college environment (Chavous, 2000). Additionally, students listed their student organizational involvement, marking with an asterisk any organization designated specifically for Black students. In the analysis, racial ideology was compared to perceived fit as well as organizational involvement. The findings suggest that racial ideology has an impact on perceptions of fit, specifically students who fell within the ideology that most emphasizes the
uniqueness of race (nationalism) had lower perceptions of fit (Chavous, 2000). This may mean that stressing the uniqueness of blackness may not be the most effective strategy to decrease difficulty of social integration on campus or to overcome feelings of isolation that accompany being Black on a historically White campus. Additional findings suggest, as with the previously mentioned study, racial centrality plays a moderating role (Chavous, 2000). For low race central students, there was no significant relationship between racial ideology and perceived ethnic fit or organizational involvement (Chavous, 2000). For high race central students there was a significant relationship. Students who had higher racial centrality were more likely to participate in organizations that were designated for Blacks and were more likely to feel lower perceptions of fit into the college environment (Chavous, 2000). These results suggest that centralizing race may have a negative effect on students’ thoughts about how they fit in during their college experience but that negative effect may draw them towards more organizations that they can identify with more strongly.

A third study to understand more about racial ideology focused on Black students’ career self-efficacy. Byars-Winston (2006) examined the relationships between racial ideology and centrality and Black students’ career expectations, interests, and perceived barriers. Unlike the previously mentioned studies, Byars-Winston studied Black students at a historically Black institution (HBCU); (Byars-Winston, 2006). The study included 141 participants who were administered 6 different instruments: the MIBI; the academic self-efficacy scale (measures how students assess their own ability to complete the tasks related to earning a college degree); the occupational interests scale (measures students range of career interests); the outcome expectations scale (measures how much value students believe their degree provides in helping them to procure a job and career); and the perceived career barriers scale (an inventory that
assess students’ perceptions of the barriers they will encounter while perusing their career goals); (Byars-Winston, 2006). The results of this study indicated several things. First, no significant relationship was seen between racial ideology and academic self-efficacy or coping self-efficacy (Byars-Winston, 2006). This may mean that students’ ideas about blackness did not effect students’ beliefs in their abilities to finish college or cope with their environment. Byars-Winston (2006) suggests this may be because the students who participated in the study were at a HBCU where there is less stigma around being Black and how that effects opportunities to achieve in college. An additional finding was a positive relationship between the assimilationist ideology and outcome expectations (Byars-Winston, 2006). Students who fell within the assimilationist ideology were more likely to expect more positive outcomes. This may suggest that students who subscribe to this ideology feel more comfortable going into a world of careers which is dominated by White cultural values and thus perceive there to be more opportunities for them there (Byars-Winston, 2006). A further finding was the positive relationship between the nationalist ideology and range of career interests. Students who subscribed more to the nationalist ideology were more likely to have a wider range of career interests (Byars-Winston, 2006). Byars-Winston (2006) suggests that Black students who fell within this ideology use race as a buffer against occupational stereotypes and thus believe they can achieve more than what the dominant societal narratives might suggest. A final finding was a positive relationship between the nationalist ideology and perceived career barriers (Byars-Winston, 2006). Students who fell within the nationalist ideology believed there were more barriers in front of them in terms of career opportunities. This may be influenced by the fact that these students have a heightened sensitivity to racism and the systemic oppressions faced by Black people in the United States. Given that there is also a positive relationship between nationalist ideology and
outcome expectations, it is apparent that students who subscribe to the *nationalist* ideology may not be discouraged by the barriers they perceive to be in front of them (Byars-Winston, 2006).

The studies mentioned constitute good evidence that *racial ideology* and centrality can play a role in the experience, outcomes, and attitudes of Black college students. Collectively they suggest that racelessness or the deemphasizing of race may not be the best strategy for mitigating the negative experiences or outcomes of Black college students. Rather, centralizing race can play a substantial role in improving certain factors. However, this is not the case for all factors. These studies also indicate that *racial ideology* is less likely to impact students’ experiences, attitudes, and behaviors when they have low *racial centrality* (Sellers et al., 1998a). This suggests that *racial centrality* must be considered when seeking to understand *racial ideology*.

**Student Leadership**

As was suggested previously, much of the research and understanding of student leadership in literature is centered around leadership as a set of skills rather than an action or behavior with certain outcome benefits (Dugan, 2011; Pendakur & Furr, 2016). Researchers discuss developing leadership through university programs aimed at students. In these studies, and articles leadership is the dependent variable. The development of leadership skills is among the outcomes being assessed. An example of this approach is a 2013 study which looked at the effectiveness of a leadership development program on *Black* male students at a HWI. The Oaks, Duckett, Suddeth, and Kennedy-Phillips (2013) study included 11 individuals who took part in interviews about the leadership institute program being conducted at the institution. Among the outcomes assessed were social engagement, professional and student development, and leadership skills (Oaks et al., 2013). The authors found that the mentoring program did have positive effects on participants’ social engagement through its mentoring and peer-to-peer
aspects. Participant reflections indicated that they received strong benefits to their leadership development through the exposure to others who were accomplishing the same goals (Oaks et al., 2013). An additional finding of the study was that the students’ leadership development ultimately benefitted from the leadership institute’s ability to recognize the students’ individual, pre-entry characteristics (Oaks et al., 2013). Students entered the program at varying levels of development and the students’ reflections indicated that the leadership institute recognized these differences and ultimately challenged students to capitalize on those varying degrees of development. The authors also found that self-reflection, which was a key component of the institute, also improved leadership skills. This approach to understanding leadership is valuable, as it cultivates in student affairs professionals an understanding of how to help students get the best out of themselves. However, this approach to leadership limits the ability to understand how decisions towards leadership can affect other factors and outcomes. This approach also is limited in its defining of leadership experiences. Several studies, including the Oaks et al. study, analyze leadership through leadership development programs at institutions. However, few studies have analyzed student leadership through student positions held on campus, in student organizations, or in campus programs not specifically intended as leadership development programs.

There are studies that have indirectly analyzed and captured information related to this type of leadership and its effects on students. For example, Harper (2007) studied student organizations as venues for Black identity expression. Harper’s study focused primarily on racial identity and students utilizing campus involvement to express, celebrate, and cultivate their Black identity. Though not directly assessing the implications of leadership, the qualitative study of 32 Black students at six HWIs found that Black students who were highly involved in leadership activities, particularly within Black student organizations, felt a higher level of
connectedness to campus and more sense of belonging (Harper & Quaye, 2007). In addition, the study’s participants reflected on the fact that being a student leader gave them a stronger sense of connectedness to the problems of the world outside of their campus community (Harper & Quaye, 2007). This shows that leadership positions may improve students’ capacity for empathy and make them stronger advocates beyond their college years. Adding to that, the study also revealed that Black students involved in leadership positions gained a deeper understanding of diversity issues related to other oppressed groups, not simply through exposure to different populations but through their responsibilities as student leaders (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Another study that indirectly assessed Black students’ leadership involvement and its associated effects is Harper’s (2012) study analyzing Black male student success. The purpose of the study was to reframe Black male college achievement and move beyond deficit models of Black male achievement in higher education (Harper, 2012). The approach used was to interview high achieving Black males who were on the path to completing college about what factors led them to success. Though this study was not directly about leadership involvement specifically, the findings reflect several implications for leadership involvement on the subjects’ overall success in college. The study was qualitative in nature and was done nationally, capturing the beliefs, attitudes and experiences of 219 Black male students (Harper, 2012). According to the study, student leadership positions helped Black male students “resolve masculinity conflicts…Develop political acumen for success in professional settings in which they are racially underrepresented…and acquire social capital and access to resources” (Harper, 2012, p.12). The study provides overwhelming evidence of a connection between being a student leader on campus and important benefits that can lead to success beyond college. These findings are further supported by other literature examining student engagement that indirectly discusses
leadership as one such form of this engagement (Cress et al., 2001; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012, 2014).

**Summary**

Previous studies conducted on racial identity show clear indication that racial identity dimensions, such as ideology and centrality, can play a role in students’ experiences on campuses as well as be associated with cognitive factors related to other attitudes they may have about careers or perceptions of fit (Byars-Winston, 2006; Chavous, 2000; Sellers et al., 1998a). These studies provide tremendous value in understanding Black identity for students. Previous studies around Black students’ leadership experiences, though not explicitly, have shown strong connections between student leadership experiences, developmental outcomes, and social benefits (Harper, 2012; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012). This literature provides a strong narrative for why the present study can be an effective and worthwhile endeavor.

**Conclusions**

The present study seeks to explore the relationships between racial identity dimensions and leadership experiences to understand how Black students’ attitudes and college experiences can shape their future outcomes and how student affairs professionals can guide them to success. Previous studies of racial ideology have been limited in that they only address these topics from a quantitative approach. The essence of what students have seen, heard, or been exposed to on their campus has been silenced. In addition, the factor of why students make certain decisions about involvement and leadership have also been unexamined. For example, in the study by Chavous (2000), no direct insight is given from students about why they chose particular student organizations. The researcher makes assumptions based on the data, however the qualitative
approach used in the present study may open the door for a deeper insight into areas of uncertainty such as this. Thus, the present study seeks to fill the gaps of previous racial ideology and racial identity research by utilizing an approach that delves deeper into the lived experience of the students participating. Further, the current study seeks to expand upon the literature surrounding Black student leadership by directly exploring leadership as an action and decision rather than a set of skills. This is important because previous studies have not directly discussed leadership as a vehicle for increasing student outcomes nor have they discussed the nexus between racial ideology and leadership experiences. By exploring Black student leadership more explicitly, the present study will increase understanding of the ways in which leadership enhances students and benefits them in college and beyond.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

**Introduction**

The present study seeks to understand the relationship between racial ideology and Black students’ leadership attitudes and experiences. The aim of the present study is to use a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of Black students and the influence of racial identity characteristics on those experiences. In this chapter, a description of the research design and instrumentation used are discussed. Furthermore, the methods of data collection and analysis are outlined. The chapter concludes with a review of the study’s overall approach.

**Research Site**

The site of the present study is a master’s large, Midwestern, public four-year university. This institution’s total enrollment in Fall of 2016 was over 25,000 students. Of the total enrollment, 1,304 students identified as Black. That accounts for 5% of the total enrollment. Sixty-two percent of those students who identified as Black were women, 37% were men. One
percent of the Black students identified as a gender other than woman or man, indicating the presence of gender non-conforming or gender non-binary Black students. Of the total enrollment in Fall of 2016, 5,283 students were classified as junior undergraduate status and 7,145 students were classified as senior undergraduate status. Junior and senior students made up 48% of the total enrollment. Of Black students, 582 students were juniors or seniors.

The institution hosts 122 degree options, including 86 undergraduate and 36 graduate programs. The institution also has 422 registered undergraduate student organizations, 52 campus departments that students can be actively involved in, and 22 registered graduate student organizations. Of the undergraduate student organizations 19 have the specified intent of being for Black, Black, or African diasporic students.

**Research Participants and Sampling Method**

In the present study, college students who identify as Black or Black are the primary participants. The institution was chosen due to its location. In addition to identifying as Black and attending the university chosen as the site of the study, a purposive, criterion based approach was used to select participants in the study. This method of sampling was chosen because within criterion based sampling, the criteria established for selecting participants directly reflects the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). In the current study, it was imperative that the sample reflect students for whom Black *racial ideology* and leadership are an influential a part of their college experience, and thus reflects the overall purpose of the study.

The present study is split into two phases. Phase one was used for the collection of a limited amount of data on participants and as the basis for selecting participants to invite into phase two. The criteria used for sample selection for phase one were:

- Students who identify as Black
• Students enrolled at the research site institution with junior or senior classification status
• Students who held at least one leadership position in a campus student organization or in a campus program

These criteria are required for each participant in the study to enter phase one. The need to identify as junior or senior status is a criterion because these students will have had the most opportunity to be involved in leadership and presumably may have more leadership experiences to analyze than those students who are of first year or sophomore status.

To recruit participants for phase one multiple methods were used. First, an email was sent to all Black students who met the first two criteria. This email was sent through the institutional analysis office at the research site. The office conducts research and statistics relative to the institution. Next the researcher contacted various student organizations to specifically encourage Black students in leadership positions to participate in the study. After students completed phase one, the data collected on racial centrality and ideology was used to designate students who were invited to phase two. The criteria used to select phase two participants was based on students scoring in the top 50th percentile on the MIBI racial centrality subscale. Two students from each racial ideological philosophy were then invited to participate in an interview. The top 50th percentile is an important criterion because, as literature indicates, racial centrality can play a mediating role on the effects of racial ideology (Chavous, 2000; Sellers et al., 1998a).

Once phase one was completed, students were categorized by their scores in the ideology subscales, placing into the category of the ideology they scored highest on. Students who did not score in the top 50th percentile on the racial ideology subscale were not invited to continue to phase two. Next, two students from each category were randomly invited to be interviewed.
**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

In the present study, a two-phase approach was used to collect data on Black students’ racial ideologies, racial centralities, leadership experiences and leadership attitudes. Phase one of the study used an online survey to gather data about students’ racial ideologies, racial centralities, and quantitative student leadership involvement. This was done using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). The MIBI is an instrument developed to operationalize the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1997). The MMRI is one of the primary frameworks for the present study and delineates several dimensions of racial identity including racial ideology and racial centrality, which is of interest in the present study. The MIBI is written as a set of 56 statements that those who are administered the survey are supposed to answer using a Likert scale where one reflects strong agreement and seven reflects strong disagreement (Sellers et al., 1997). The MIBI has been shown to have reliability coefficients reported from $\alpha = .70 - .79$ (Sellers et al., 1997). The 56 statements are divided into seven subscales: centrality, private regard, public regard, assimilationist, humanist, oppressed minority, and nationalistic. A composite score is drawn for each ideological philosophy and for the centrality subscale. These subscale scores categorize students according to their agreement or disagreement with the statements. For the present study, only the centrality subscale and the four ideology subscales were used. Private and public regard statements were eliminated from the survey. In addition to the statements from the MIBI subscales, students who participated in phase one also provided basic demographic information (e.g., gender, college classification [junior or senior], major, etc.). Lastly, students who participated in phase one were asked to share the number of leadership positions they have held on campus, and what leadership position(s) they currently hold in campus organizations or programs. Students were also asked to submit their phone
number, so that they could be contacted if chosen to participate in phase two. All of the students were informed of their rights as participants including information regarding confidentiality and anonymity prior to submitting responses to the survey.

First, of the students who meet the leadership criterion and complete the selected subscales of the MIBI instrument, the top 50% of the racial ideology scores were separated out and categorized into four racial ideology groups based on their scores on the ideology subscales. Next, two students representing highest scores in each ideology were selected for interviews. In the assimilationist ideology only one student met all the qualifications. This method of selection insured that (a) only students with high racial centrality were selected, and (b) that all four racial ideologies were represented in the study. The racial centrality score is important because previous studies have indicated that racial ideology has little impact for those students who have low centrality (Sellers et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 1997). All four racial ideologies being represented was important as relationships between ideologies and various experiences can be discussed more thoroughly. Of the students completing the MIBI survey, a sample of seven students was convened for the interviews. The seven students represented two students from three of the ideological philosophies and one student from the fourth ideology.

Phase two of the present study gathered information about students’ leadership experiences and their attitudes about what it means to be a student leader. This phase consisted of one-on-one, semi structured interviews. All participants were informed of their rights as a participant prior to being interviewed. This included information about anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews were audio recorded, with the consent of the participant. Each participant was interviewed once during the winter semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. All audio recordings were deleted.
after being transcribed. All transcriptions were stored on secure servers. In addition to recording the interview, the researcher also took notes during the interview. The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The interview schedule consisted of two categories of questions: The experience of student leadership and beliefs about leadership. The questions were guided by the 3rd and 4th tenets of Astin’s (1999) theory of involvement which conceptualizes involvement in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and the amount of student development of an activity or program as directly related to the amount of involvement. Thus, interview questions surround the quantitative and qualitative involvement in leadership activities as well as the impact of these activities on students’ overall development. The content validity of the interview questions was established by seeking input from experts in the field. The questions were also guided by the MMRI, specifically the areas that guide racial ideology: political/economic (campus community) development, cultural/social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group (Sellers et al., 1998b).

**Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the survey data, a composite score was drawn for each ideological philosophy and for the centrality subscale. The distribution of ideologies was conducted, as well as mean, median and mode for each subscale. Scores on the racial centrality subscale were analyzed to understand the distribution of centrality scores and its relationship to the ideology scores. Each of the subscales was analyzed for gender difference. In addition to analyzing the data resulting from the MIBI subscales, students’ involvement was analyzed. Frequencies were conducted for organizational involvement and leadership roles. The interview data was analyzed utilizing the categorization process of analysis described by Merriam (2009). Merriam (2009) denotes two type of categorization and coding for analysis: Open coding and analytical coding.
Open coding is the process of noting comments, notations, or queries next to bits of data from interview transcripts or documents. The primary researcher engaged this process for each interview conducted, after each interview was transcribed. The initial open codes included reflections from the researcher and notes related to relevant literature. The second type of categorization noted by Merriam (2009) is the analytical coding. Analytical coding refers to the process of clustering open codes into groupings which reflect interpretation or meaning. The analytical coding became final themes and observations from the data. The process of open coding and analytical coding was done repetitively and was iterative throughout the data analysis process. Specifically, the coding was done once for each individual interview, then done collectively for all interviews, and then done separately for interviews of participants in each ideology classification. This process ensured meaningful analysis of recurring themes from multiple perspectives of the data. It also ensured understanding of the data relative to the theoretical frameworks discussed.

Summary

The present study intends to understand the relationship between racial ideology and centrality, and Black students’ experiences of leadership. The study was conducted at a master’s large, public, HWI in the Midwestern United States. Participants in the study identified as Black or Black and were undergraduate students with junior or senior status at the institution. The study consisted of two phases. Phase one collected demographic data, quantitative leadership data, and scores of racial centrality and racial ideology. Phase two used one-on-one, semi-structured interviews which gathered data related to students’ experiences of leadership and attitudes about leadership. Data were analyzed during both phases of the study first using statistical analysis of survey responses, and then qualitative coding of interview transcripts.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. The research questions that this study sought to answer were:

1. What racial ideological philosophies do Black student leaders hold on a historically White campus?

2. How does racial ideology and centrality affect the leadership experiences of Black college students at a HWI?

3. How does racial ideology and centrality shape the ways in which Black college students perceive the role student leaders play on campus?

4. How does racial ideology and centrality inform the decisions Black students make about leadership (i.e., such as the type of leadership positions, types of organizations, and amount of leadership)?

Within this chapter, background information about the participants in both phases of the study is described and the findings of the study are discussed by exploring themes associated with each racial ideology category as well as themes that presented across all four ideologies.

Context of the Study

This study took place at a public, midsized, master’s large institution located in the Midwestern United States. Five percent of the institution's total enrollment identified as Black. Sixty-one percent of those students who identified as Black were women and 37% were men. One percent of the Black students identified as a gender other than woman or man, indicating the presence of gender non-conforming or gender non-binary Black students. Forty-eight percent of the total undergraduate enrollment are classified as upperclassmen with 28% being seniors and
20% being juniors. The study was conducted in two phases.

**Phase One**

In phase one of the study students were asked to fill out a brief online survey. This survey was used to gather information about students’ *racial ideology* as the precursor to phase two in which qualitative data would be collected. One hundred thirty two Black undergraduate students participated in phase one of the study. Forty one respondents were disqualified from the data due to being incomplete. These respondents included those which scored zeros in one or more *racial ideology* categories indicating the respondent did not choose any responses to certain questions. Ultimately, 91 respondents comprised the dataset. Using the survey instrument collected data regarding: (a) students’ classification in school; (b) the gender students identified with; (c) the number of student organizations and leadership positions students participated in; (d) students’ willingness to participate in phase two of the study; (e) students’ *racial centrality* and; (f) students’ scores along the four *racial ideology* categories: *assimilationist*, *humanist*, *oppressed minority*, and *nationalist*.

**Demographic information.** Of the students who participated in phase one of the study 60% were 4th year seniors or above, 35% were juniors, and 4% did not specify in the survey (see Table 1). Twenty percent of respondents identified as men, 74% identified as women, and 5% did not specify. About half of the respondents were involved in two or more student organizations. A majority held one or more than one leadership role on campus. About half were involved in only one organization or none at all and fewer were not involved in any leadership positions. Of the 91 respondents, 39 agreed with being contacted to participate in phase two of the study.

Table 1
### Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Org. Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Positions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Racial centrality.** For the study, it was important to understand students’ racial centrality as it plays a moderating role in understanding racial ideology. Therefore, only students with high centrality were considered for phase two of the study. This study defined “high centrality” as above the median score for all survey participants in phase one. The median racial centrality score for all participants was 5.25 (out of 7). Forty-five respondents were above this threshold.

**Racial ideology.** With regard to racial ideology students’ received scores for all four racial ideology categories and were categorized by which ideology they received the highest score (see Table 2). The largest number of respondents scored highest in the Oppressed Minority ideology. The ideology with the least number of respondents was the Nationalist ideology. A small number of respondents scored the same in two or more ideology categories.
Table 2

Racial ideology and centrality Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Undisclosed gender</th>
<th>Met all criteria for Phase 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilationist</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanist</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppressed Minority</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more ideologies</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualifying for phase two. As previously stated, for respondents to be invited for phase two of the study they needed to have scored at or above the median racial centrality threshold of 5.25. Of students in the assimilationist category (including those who scored the same in two or more categories) six respondents met this criterion. In the humanist category, there were eight respondents who met this criterion. Of the students in the oppressed minority category, 26 students had racial centrality scores above the median. Of the students in the nationalist category, six had racial centrality scores above the median.

In addition to having a racial centrality score at or above the median, there were two other criteria that needed to be met for participants in the study to be eligible for phase two. These included, participation in one or more student leadership positions, and agreeing to share their phone number so that they could be invited to participate. A total of 19 students met all of the criteria to be eligible for the next phase of the study.

Phase Two

In Phase two of this study students participated in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the researcher. These interviews consisted of questions regarding student leadership
experiences, beliefs about leadership, and beliefs regarding racial identity. Seven students participated in the interviews with only one student who was identified as scoring in the *Assimilationist* ideology participating while each of the other three ideological categories had two students representing each (see Table 3). Of the seven interviewees, five identified as women and two identified as men. Three of the participants were in their junior year, and four were in their fourth year or more. One participant held three leadership positions over their time as a student, another held only one leadership position. The other five students held two leadership positions.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Leadership positions</th>
<th>Centrality scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ace</td>
<td><em>Assimilationist</em></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td><em>Humanist</em></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traci</td>
<td><em>Humanist</em></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td><em>Oppressed Minority</em></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td><em>Oppressed Minority</em></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td><em>Nationalist</em></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew</td>
<td><em>Nationalist</em></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**

The findings presented from this study are grouped into four themes: 1) Leadership experiences, 2) Leadership beliefs, 3) Beliefs about race, and 4) Decision making. Each of these themes has subthemes that are associated with certain ideological viewpoints. The Leadership experiences theme has three sub-themes: 1) De-emphasis of racism (associated with *Assimilationist* Ideology), 2) Isolation (associated with *Humanist* and *Oppressed Minority* Ideologies), and 3) Underrepresentation (associated with all ideologies). The Leadership beliefs theme has three sub-themes: 1) Empowerment (associated with the *Nationalist* Ideology), 2)
Brand and image (associated with the *Oppressed Minority* ideology), and 3) The importance of involvement (all ideologies). The Beliefs about race theme has three sub-themes: Emphasize similarities (associated with the *Assimilationist* ideology), 2) empowerment (associated with the *Nationalist* ideology), and 3) education and self-examination (associated with the *Humanist* and *Oppressed Minority* ideologies). Lastly, the Decision-making theme has 3 sub-themes: 1) Personal growth (associated with the *Humanist* ideology), 2) Sense of community and belonging (associated with the *Nationalist* and *Oppressed Minority* ideologies), and 3) The influence of others (associated with all ideologies).

**Leadership Experiences**

All seven of the participants in the interviews talked at length about their experiences as student leaders and their experiences with their student involvement in general. Though many of them shared similar backgrounds, and some were a part of the same organizations, many had varying perspectives about their experiences and the meanings of things that have occurred during their times in leadership positions. These variations manifested in accordance with varying ideologies and thus are important to discuss and examine.

**De-emphasizing racism.** One of the themes that emerged from the interviews is the idea that, though racism exists and discrimination and prejudice may occur, they have not been extreme barriers to success or as big of burdens as others may think. This theme emerged from the interview with Ace, who scored the highest on the *Assimilationist* ideology scale during phase one. Ace discussed how he has experienced discrimination on campus stating 

I do [experience discrimination], quite a lot actually. I feel like I’m discriminated against by White people, it’s mostly white girls actually. I’ll be walking, and first of all, I’m tiny. I look like a tooth pick. I am about the most harmless person you can see. But
when walking, generally at night, White girls tend to be more cautious of me…. I think it’s simply because of this preconceived notion that black men will generally do bad things to you at night.

He also articulates how he recognizes that race is a barrier, however he does not let that barrier divide himself and his peers:

It [race] is technically a barrier but it’s not this great wall, Trump puns, haha, Its not this great wall that’s dividing us, it’s more so something we [in student organizations] recognize our differences and build harmony through those differences….History is history, things have happened. Don’t forget but It happened. There is nothing we can do about it. If I walk to shake your hand and I sneeze on your hand, it happened. While it’s gross, there’s nothing we can do about it now. It happened we have to move passed the past things that have happened and emphasize the present and the future.

These quotes show an acknowledgement of race and racism but an interest in deemphasizing incidents, which happened in the past, to work toward building harmony and emphasizing the future. This deemphasis aligns well with Sellers et al. (1998) description of the assimilationist ideology in which he states that those who embrace this ideology recognize the significance of the Black experience, yet are more inclined to consider how Black people can better fit into mainstream society. Ace does not speak directly to fitting into the mainstream society, however he makes it a point to not emphasize barriers and problems associated with race and racial oppression. Though Ace was the only participant interviewed who espoused the assimilationist ideology, there is confidence that this theme is relevant because it is well aligned with the understanding of the Assimilationist ideology presented in the Sellers’ et al. MMRI framework.

**Isolation.** The next sub-theme regarding leadership experiences was most closely
associated with four of the participants in the study. These four participants—Sandy, Alex, Traci, and Alissa—all scored highest in either the humanist or oppressed minority ideologies. These participants discussed how being Black and a student leader led to feelings of isolation or the necessity of shying away from the larger campus community and to participate more closely with those of the same racial identity. For instance, Traci, a member of an organization for queer and trans students who are people of color and a national organization that combats relationship violence, spoke about how when interacting with White peers in the national student organization that combats relationship violence, she felt as though she had to speak for all Black people:

[The national organization that combats relationship violence] is not predominantly Black. In terms of [the organization for queer and trans students who are people of color] I mean kind of like I said before it's not often that students of color and minorities students have those safe spaces on campus to have those conversations. And so I feel like it's more of a community feeling… Whereas like in [National organization that combats relationship violence] for a training session mostly white people and me being one of a few black people there. Those conversations. When you're talking about black people then in a way I feel as if I have to speak for - And I don't like that feeling - but speak for black people. It’s just a lot of excusing and explaining. I feel like I'm doing for people of my race whereas I don't get that in [Organization for queer and trans students who are people of color].

Alex, who scored highest on the oppressed minority ideology also expressed feeling the need to be in isolation with other Black students, but instead of discussing it from a social perspective, she discusses how as a leader in a student organization she is forced to isolate events to the Black
community on campus specifically:

Well there’s always a saying, “You always have to be twice as good to be just as good as other races.” So being on eBoard of other Black groups it shows all the effort we must put in to get a turn out and how we must target a certain group when other groups they just kind of target everybody and they can have a good turnout because it’s historically White. So when they target so many people they can have good turnouts but we’re targeting such a small aspect of people because no one else will come to our events. So this is why we target the people that we do, because if we have an event that's like oh we’re having soul food you’ll see only one White person. So it’s like, we just have to publicize so much more.

Similarly, Sandy, who scored in the oppressed minority ideology, stated

It makes me aware that I am part of kind of like two communities. I would see myself, like yeah I'm a student at [the institution] and I'm Black. So, that puts me in the Black student community. But also there is a larger community of just [the institution] of you know people who don't view themselves as so connected to their culture I would assume. But because of that, I feel like when I'm portraying a Black student leader on campus type thing, I'm making myself known that this community is active on campus and we are doing things and we are making moves to make [institution] a more diverse place.

Alissa, who embraced the humanist ideology, described another reason for isolation: the discomfort of microaggressions. She stated

Sometimes I just always think I got to be on my P's and Q's because they might say something that's going to make me feel like, “Really like did you really say that?!” If we are just having a good time then you just called me a nigger. Like no, it's not ok. Versus
hanging out with Black people. Like I said I have no problems doing it. I prefer to hang around Black people just because I feel there is more a better level of comfort for me. These interview excerpts all emphasize the underlying idea that being on a historically White campus can lead some Black students to feel as though they must socialize, plan events for, and act as a student leader for, people of their same racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998). From these excerpts, it can be surmised that the reason for this in many cases is that these students do not feel understood by or connected to, the larger campus community.

Underrepresentation. Most respondents, across all four ideological categories, expressed concern about the representation of Black students in leadership on campus. Many of them expressed being the only Black person in a student organization, or generally not seeing many students who look like them in important student roles on campus. Drew, who scored in the nationalist ideology, expressed how this can affect Black students and the role he plays in helping to solve this problem:

That’s one reason I took the role as an orientation assistant. I remember on my first day at summer orientation. Coming there was 120 students about, and I was the only black male. So, I was uncomfortable until I talked to another Black orientation leader. So, I feel like from the start, for every Black student that comes in after me, my job is to make sure that their first time coming on campus as a [Institution] student, whether its summer or during [orientation], that they feel comfortable and that they feel welcomed. Because at some point they’re not going to feel comfortable or welcome. There’s nothing welcoming about coming into a class with all White people and being the only Black person.

Alissa similarly stated,

I think because I go to a HWI [Historically White Institution], I don't have many student
leaders who are going to stand up for me or lead me and my peers who look like me into greatness. So the few of us that are here who do want to be leaders, it's kind of like we have to, you know, start a new trend and if we’re not going to do it who knows if anyone after us will.

These excerpts from the interviews not only show the common thread that underrepresentation is a problem on campus but also that student leaders feel that they have a responsibility to make change happen on campus. They also show that, despite ideological differences related to Black identity, underrepresentation of Black students in leadership on campus can have an effect on Black students’ experiences. Underrepresentation can also have an effect on how they interact in their campus environment.

**Leadership Beliefs**

As previously seen with some of the quotes from the student interviews, several of the students who participated in this study hold beliefs that they as student leaders must be the ones to create change on their campus. The ways in which these students perceive that change or what change should look like varied widely.

**Empowerment.** The two students who embraced the *nationalist* ideology were intent on believing that role of a student leader begins with empowerment. Drew stated,

A student leader’s responsibilities are to take into account what’s gonna be best for the students here. What’s gonna be best for them isn’t always what they want. If there is gonna be a Black event on campus and all the Black students want this big rapper but this big rapper isn’t talking anything about Black identity or how to help us. He’s not talking about what’s gonna help us. But, instead there’s a motivational speaker, a financial education workshop. That’s more important. Part of being a student leader is to help
people navigate to what’s really gonna help them and empower them for the future.

Nicole stated,

I definitely think more unity is necessary. I always go back to empowerment and unity I think that needs to happen. Nobody else can tell us except ourselves and nobody else can make us believe except ourselves.

These interview excerpts align well with the descriptions of the nationalist ideology discussed by Sellers et al. (1998). They show a centering of the Black experience and determination for self-improvement and Black people controlling their own destiny. Sellers et al. (1998), write “The nationalist ideology posits that Black people should be in control of their own destiny with little input from other groups” (p. 13). The two students who scored highest in this ideology emphasized that Black students had a responsibility to lead initiatives for change and to unite with one another to make an impact on the campus community.

**Branding and Image.** The two students who embraced the oppressed minority ideology had a different perspective and belief on the role of student leaders. Both of these students, Alex and Sandy, discussed how leaders are a representation of Black students and sometimes blackness in general. For instance, Alex describes having to be intentional in paying attention to how her actions may be perceived when being a student leader:

So when maneuvering through life it's always in the back of my head how I regard myself or how I uphold different things or how it would interpret [reflect] not just on me but us [Black people] as a group. I’ve never felt like an individual on this campus I’ve always felt like I’m a representation.

Alex also had similar thoughts later in the conversation when asked about a student leader’s responsibilities. She stated:
Representing a good image for your organization because everyone has to always look at you or when everybody needs to know something about them [the Black organization] they always come to you so, it’s hard to have an off day because then people will base the things you’re connected to because of that.

Sandy also described a similar feeling:

So it’s like you are expected to kind of hold yourself up to a higher standard than just regular students and just that you represent something more than yourself. You represent your organization. You also represent [the research institution].

These statements show a heightened awareness to stereotypes and assumptions made about Black students/people. Because both students scored within the oppressed minority ideology, they are more acutely aware of how any action or misstep can cause them, and fellow Blacks, to experience more racial oppression. They express a need to counter problems associated with racism by trying to eliminate any opportunity for stereotypes or negative portrayals to be perpetuated.

**Importance of involvement.** Across all ideologies, there was one belief about student leadership and involvement that arose from the student narratives: involvement is extremely important to self-improvement and to the improvement of the university campus. A majority of the students interviewed described how involvement helped them to become better and more well-rounded students. Several of them talked about how involvement was so important that they felt obligated to get their younger peers involved on campus. They also described feeling a stronger sense of community and sense of belonging from being involved as student leaders. This seems to suggest that racial ideology does little to impact the way students feel about the value of involvement. It also directly emphasizes and validates the theory of involvement.
proposed by Astin (1999)—students not only see the value of involvement for their social interactions but also they see where involvement can benefit their development and growth as student and as a person.

**Beliefs about Race**

The third major theme, which arose from the students narratives, was their beliefs about race. The students discussed at length what they believed about race and about being Black. Ideological differences were emphasized greatly within this theme.

**Emphasizing cross-racial similarities.** The participant who scored within the *assimilationist* ideology, Ace, had a unique perspective from many of the other participants when it came to topic of race. While he acknowledged the presence of racism and discrimination in multiple contexts, his beliefs about how these could be addressed was in stark contrast with those holding other ideological perspectives. Ace stated

It’s [racial oppression] definitely here, I wouldn’t say it’s not here. But we need to stop focusing on it as much. We over emphasize racial oppression to the point where we oppress ourselves. We need to stop focusing so much on racial oppression and focus on how we are alike as people, Black, White or otherwise.

Considering Sellers et al. (1998) MMRI model and the description of the *assimilationist* ideology, Ace’s perspective is somewhat surprising and would seem to be more fitting of the *humanist* ideology. This discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that the MMRI model ideology scales are fluid and not mutually exclusive. Seller et al. (1998) states, “The MMRI recognizes that individuals’ racial ideologies may vary across different life domains. For instance, a person may be *nationalist* in their political views but possess a more *humanist* view of their relationships.” This may explain why Ace’s perspective may take on a *humanist*
ideological viewpoint when asked about how to end racial oppression.

**Empowerment.** In contrast to Ace’s perspective, the students who embraced the nationalism ideology were not interested in emphasizing racial similarities. These two participants discussed empowering Black people as a means to ending racial oppression. Drew for instance discussed how overall solutions to racial oppression might be in controlling the narrative around blackness, building and establishing wealth, and keeping money within the communities of Black people. This is not surprising given the MMRI model. As stated previously, Sellers et al. (1998) describes the nationalism ideology as having the belief that Black people should control their own destiny. Drew’s perspective aligns perfectly with this description. Nicole also discussed empowerment; however, rather than economic empowerment, she discussed empowerment through unity and cooperation. Nicole stated:

> If not for anything else, but the progression of our race. We need to be together because, I believe that once we all stand together and empower each other, there's nothing that anybody else can do to try to or continue to oppress us.

This message, like Drew’s, aligns with Sellers et al. (1998) description of the nationalism ideology, which posits that regarding social change, a person who espouses the nationalism ideology is more likely to seek solutions which only involve other Black people. Drew and Nicole focused heavily on how Black people need to be the solutions to social issues which affect them.

**Education and self-examination.** The last category in the “beliefs about race” themes was shared by those who scored within the humanist and oppressed minority ideologies. In this case, the four students who espoused these ideologies had similar perspectives about race. They addressed the need to for education and self-improvement as a means to improve racial division.
Traci and Alex, who scored within the humanist and oppressed minority ideologies respectively, discussed how the first step towards improving race relations is education. Traci stated:

So part of it is just kind of educating themselves on the history of racial oppression. And just like race relations in the United States in general that education could go far. And so definitely educate. We need to educate ourselves about that.

Similarly, Alex stated:

Just educate ourselves continue to educate ourselves continue to grow and prosper and just be successful and do not get comfortable and settle for anything and everything that is given to you.

These excerpts both mention the need for Black people to educate themselves about race and about history. Sandy, on the other hand, discussed improving race relations with first having Black people heal themselves. Sandy commented:

Black people must first heal themselves before they can begin to. It's like... if you heal yourself you can begin to fight oppression because there are so many things that have been done to Black people throughout history that you need mental healing from. And if you don't do that healing there is no way you can begin to address not only the oppression in America but elsewhere with other people the African Diaspora. There is so much to be done but we cannot do anything unless we begin to heal our minds.

Both ideas stress a need to improve one’s own condition separate from fighting racism directly. These sentiments speak to addressing negative feelings about Black people that must be improved before Black people can address larger issues. The perspective on education presumes a lack of accurate education among Black people, while the perspective on healing presumes a level of damage Black people inherently have based on oppression.
Decision-making

The last major theme that arose from the interviews was around decision-making. The participants were asked about why they made the decisions they did to join organizations and take on leadership positions. A few dimensions of this theme arose from discussions of this topic.

**Personal/professional growth.** The two students who espoused the humanist ideology shared very similar sentiments around their decisions to join various organizations and to become student leaders. Both participants discussed how their involvement in the student organizations was led by their desire to improve their professional development for their future careers. Both were interested in careers that deal with supporting and advocating for people and both students discussed the desire to specifically help minority populations, therefore they joined minority organizations which would expand their skills to help those (and their own) communities. Traci stated:

Mainly because in the work that I want to do I want to be able to reach out to different populations and the majority of these are minority populations. And so, I wanted to be more of a well-rounded professional. I always had an interest in doing work with victims of relationship and domestic violence and I believe this was the perfect opportunity to explore my interests while in college.

Alissa similarly shared:

Like for example for my future career. You know I want to go into higher education because I want to mentor Black students in colleges and stress the fact that they need to get out of that shell and be a student leader, be independent, go join organizations and do those things because it makes a difference.
Both of these excerpts speak to a desire for a larger impact on society and a desire to create change for within one’s own community. For Alissa, her involvement in a Black women’s empowerment organization has given her skills to empower college students. She plans on using these skills to impact future generations of college students as a higher education professional. In the case of Traci, her participation in a national organization that combats relationship violence by empowering college students across the country to combat relationship and domestic violence, equips her with certain skills which apply to her desire to work with victims of relationship and domestic violence in her future career. At first these excerpts do not seem to be parallel with Sellers et al. (1998) description of the *humanist* ideology, because they show the participants thinking in terms of Black identity rather than one “human race”. However, a closer examination of these statements show participants who espouse the *humanist* ideology placing importance on *larger* social issues that all humans might face, particularly domestic violence and sense of belonging in higher education settings.

**Sense of community and belonging.** The four students who held the *nationalist* and *oppressed minority* ideologies also shared a common theme. These four narratives all spoke to the fact that their decisions were made through a desire to belong and have a sense of community around them. For Nicole and Alex, *nationalist* and *oppressed minority* ideologies respectively, it was important because they initially joined organizations where they did not feel a sense of belonging, that experience led them to seek out organizations with which they could identify. For Nicole that was transitioning from a White dance organization to a predominantly Black one:

> But what really urged me to join [the predominantly Black dance organization] is I joined [the historically White dance organization] which is a student-run organization by students in the dance programs, predominately White. When I got into that organization
there was myself, a Black female, one Black male, and one other Black female that was already in the dance program. They were helping run it. So there were three of us and there were all White people in the organization and then us three Black folks. So, I joined because of dance. I’ve been a dancer all of my life but I didn’t feel like I fit in there and even when I’d try to identify with the other two Black folks that were there, it was like they didn’t really seem to see what I saw as far as…. Like….the White people in the room weren’t really friendly to us.

Similarly, for Alex, there was a transition from a White sorority into things like the Black Student Union. Alex stated:

I chose to join BSU and NAACP because (it’s going to get real personal now) when I first got here I knew I wanted to be Greek and with our Greek life on campus it’s very non-existent and so I didn’t like the process that you had to go through to be in the Divine Nine [Black Greek Letter Organizations], so I decided to go to Pan Hell which is the White sororities. So, I went there and I wasn’t really in the Black community my first couple of years here because I was there. But, I realized the sorority wasn’t for me because of the way it was structured, and the people involved, so I had disaffiliated last spring and then, when I came back to school my junior year, this year, I got really involved in other things on campus such as BSU, NAACP because I felt like I was detached from them when I was in the White sorority and that I want to be more involved with people who I could identify with.

For Drew, there was an experience of feeling isolated during his first days on campus, which inspired him to seek out organizations and opportunities to stay connected to and give back to his own community. All of these narratives speak to a desire of many Black students to belong on
their campus and to feel like they have a place in the campus community, which resonates with them and where they are understood. It aligns directly with the work of Strayhorn (2012) who discussed sense of belonging as paramount to students’ success and comfort at an institution.

**The influence of others.** All of the participants in the study discussed, in some way or form, how an administrator or peer suggested they participate in an organization in which they are currently involved. This speaks to the importance of relationship building. It also can speak to the importance of initial involvement creating more opportunities for involvement later down the line. The fact that this theme resonates across all four ideologies suggests that ideology may not have a significant effect on students’ acceptance of others’ suggestions or ideas when making decisions about organizational involvement.

**Summary**

The findings of this study indicate that student perceptions of leadership experiences, beliefs about leadership, beliefs about race, and decision-making about involvement can vary widely based on their racial ideological viewpoint. Though from similar racial backgrounds, students who participated in the study expressed very different ideas when addressing particular interview topics. However, there were several key experiences and key themes that all students shared. The findings of the study indicate that involvement is powerful for all racial ideologies and that students from all racial ideological viewpoints are influenced by their peers and administrators when it comes to joining organizations.
Chapter 5: Results

Summary

This study sought to understand how racial ideology and racial centrality effect black students’ perceptions of their leadership experiences and their beliefs and decisions about leadership. Limited research has been done in the field as it relates to Black students’ leadership experiences and racial ideology. The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)(Sellers et al., 1998) is used as an aspect of the theoretical framework for the study. The MMRI was used as the basis for defining and quantifying racial ideology and centrality. It also was utilized as the foundation for the constructing the research and interview questions and for identifying the themes that emerged from the study. Astin’s (1999) theory of involvement was the second aspect of the theoretical framework which was used. The theory of involvement played a role in understanding and developing research questions, the interview protocol, and identifying emerging themes from the study.

A phenomenological approach guided the execution of this study. This approach was chosen because the study sought to understand the lived experiences of its participants. Using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, data was collected from seven upper class participants representing the four racial ideologies. The interview protocol prompted students to discuss their experiences and beliefs regarding student leadership and race. The research questions which guided the study included:

1. What racial ideological philosophies do Black student leaders hold on a historically White campus?
2. How does racial ideology and centrality affect the leadership experiences of Black college students at a HWI?
3. How does racial ideology and centrality shape the ways in which Black college students perceive the role student leaders play on campus?

4. How does racial ideology and centrality inform the decisions Black students make about leadership (i.e., such as the type of leadership positions, types of organizations, and amount of leadership)?

The requirements for participation in the study included: (1) identifying as Black; (2) having credits to be classified as a junior or senior in college; (3) having at least one semester in a leadership role in a student organization on campus or at least one semester of participation in a leadership development program or activity on campus; (4) completing selected subscales of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI); and (5) having a racial centrality score in the top 50th percentile among those who complete the MIBI subscales.

The research site, a historically White institution in the Midwestern United States, provided a backdrop in which student participants represented a small minority on campus. Black students made up 5% of the total campus enrollment. Juniors and seniors made up 51% of all Black students while Black juniors and seniors made up 4.7% of the university’s total upper class population.

The findings of this study support the notion that Black students are not a monolithic group. It appears that racial ideology plays a significant role in Black students’ perceptions of their experiences and their beliefs. Findings also suggest a need for further inquiry into Black students’ racial ideologies and leadership experiences. For example, a quantitative study could analyze correlations between racial ideologies and the number of leadership positions students hold.
Discussion

Racial ideology Philosophies

Based upon the 91 respondents from phase one of this study, it appears that most Black students at the research site may hold the *oppressed minority* ideology. This ideology according to Sellers et al. (Sellers et al., 1998) is the philosophy that emphasizes the similarities between the oppression that Blacks and other groups face. This indicates that a majority of students at the research site are acutely aware of racial oppression and the oppression of other identity groups such as those of varying gender identities, sexualities, ethnicities, religious affiliations, and socio-economic backgrounds. This also may indicate that a majority of Black students at the research site lean towards coalition building as the most appropriate strategy for social change.

In contrast, very few Black students embraced the *nationalist* ideology. The *nationalist* philosophy emphasizes the uniqueness of Black people and the uniqueness of Black oppression (Sellers et al., 1998). Those who hold this philosophy believe that Black people should control their own destiny. The low number of students who espouse this ideology may indicate that only a few Black students at the research site would prefer to solve social problems related to the Black experience without the help of other groups. These low numbers may also indicate a larger awareness of intersecting identities. Black students at the research site may have awareness that they are not solely Black but also a part of a large array of identity groups thus, solely working with Black people in lack spaces is less appealing when it comes to solving social issues.

Racial ideology and Centrality’s Effect on Leadership Experiences

**Ideology.** The overall qualitative data from this study indicates that *racial ideology and*
centrality do influence Black students perceive their leadership experiences. Though certain themes arose across ideologies, a substantial amount of variance was seen between ideological groups when it came to experiences of discrimination, experiences putting together campus programming, and the social aspects of leadership and involvement. Particularly, a stark contrast is seen between the assimilationist ideology and all other philosophies. The participant who espoused the assimilationist ideology de-emphasized the effect of racism and oppression. All other ideological philosophies placed more importance on describing the impacts of oppressive interactions. The participant with the assimilationist ideology also placed a significant amount of importance on not reliving past events but rather focusing on the present and the future. These attributes may indicate that racial ideologies which emphasize mainstream involvement in society may not perceive the burden of racism on campus similarly to other Black students. This also may indicate that these students may want to emphasize similarities and avoid discussion of events which may separate or divide them from their peers of other racial backgrounds.

In contrast, in the humanist ideology and the oppressed minority ideology, Black students who participated were more talkative about the impacts of oppression. While the humanist and oppressed minority ideologies are very different by the MMRI, findings from this study indicate that there may be some similarities in their overall perceptions of leadership and involvement experiences. Both groups emphasized how experiences of racism, discrimination, bias, and more influenced them to want to isolate themselves with people who looked like them. They also described this transition as disheartening or uncomfortable at first, but necessary in some form. This may be because specific traits of both ideologies, namely the connection to other people and the acute awareness of social issues, rose to the forefront and became the ideological traits that guided their narratives. The humanist ideology is described as acutely aware of larger social
issues and keen on emphasizing similarities between all humans. The *oppressed minority* ideology is more acutely aware of social issues relative to the Black community and emphasizes the links between the oppression of Black people and the oppression of others. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that both groups may be more sensitive to oppression and grapple with isolation from other groups on campus.

The *nationalist* ideology showed no distinguishing characteristics in the study but rather were aligned with issues raised across all ideologies. This may indicate that espousing the *nationalist* ideology has a stronger effect on students’ beliefs than on their perceptions of their leadership experiences.

**High centrality.** Based on the preliminary data collected in phase one of the study the participants who interviewed all had above the median centrality score. Still, the participant who scored highest in the *assimilationist* philosophy had the lowest centrality score of all interview participants at 5.85. Though still a high score on centrality, the fact that the lowest centrality score corresponds with the *assimilationist* ideology supports the MMRI model and its description of the *assimilationist* ideology in comparison to the others. Sellers et al. (1998) argues that the *assimilationist* ideology centralizes the value of being a citizen of the United States rather than being Black.

The highest centrality score belonged to a participant in the *humanist* ideology and a participant who espoused the *oppressed minority* ideology. Both participants had scores of 6.28. Though there was difference in centrality scores among the participants, all participants seemed to strongly identify with their Black identity and strongly identify with the oppression of Black people. None of the participants indicated any distinguishing characteristics in how central race was to their self-concept. This is likely because at a higher level of centrality these differences
become harder to identify and since all of the participants had centralities above the 5.25 the distinctions between them bore little visibility in their narratives. Thus, the conclusion of this study is that high centrality has little to no influence on how students perceive their leadership experiences.

**Racial ideology and Centrality’s Effect on Beliefs about the Role of Leadership**

**Ideology.** The findings of this study indicate that *racial ideology* may play a role in what students believe about race and student leadership. Specifically, there were distinctions in what students believed to be the role of student leader. For the *nationalist* ideology, which is most associated with emphasizing the distinguishing characteristics of Black identity, the major belief around the role of student leadership was empowerment. The participants who espoused this ideology consistently spoke of empowerment as central to a student leader’s role and consistently used examples which centered on Black identity. This supports Sellers et al. (1998) theory that the *nationalist* ideology is more likely to heavily emphasize the power of Black people in controlling their own destiny and making change for themselves with little help from other groups. This indicates that the more Black students’ ideological perspective emphasizes that solving Black social issues as a task only for Black people, the more they will emphasize the uplift and collaboration of Black people as the role of student leaders. These Black students perceive social issues as paramount and thus make little distinction between student leadership and Black leadership in society.

For the ideology which emphasizes the connectedness of various forms of oppression, namely the *oppressed minority* ideology, the impetus is on Black student leaders to be a representation of their group/organization, and of their race. The participants who espouse this ideology saw the image and brand they portray as paramount to being a good student leader. This
may be because these students are hypersensitive to racial oppression and thus more alert to which aspects of themselves, or the way they are perceived, can affect how they are treated. This indicates that emphasizing brand or image may be a coping mechanism to mitigate the effects of racism for Black students, particularly for those who espouse racial ideologies that are more acutely aware of oppression and its effects.

For humanist and assimilationist ideologies little distinguishing characteristics manifested regarding their beliefs about leadership. This may be because these ideologies place less emphasis on race and more emphasis on belonging with others as either humans or as citizens of the United States. Thus their beliefs around Black student leadership are more generalizable to mainstream perceptions of what it means to be a leader.

Across all ideologies, a strong overarching theme was the belief that participants own involvement and getting others involved on campus was important. Students who participated in this study spoke highly of leadership as a mechanism for their own development and placed importance on student leaders actively bringing in a younger generation of student leaders. Because of the fact that all students who participated are upperclassmen who will soon graduate, it is understandable that many of them would want their various organizations and groups to continue on after they are gone, or that they would want the work that they were doing on campus to continue. This idea of the importance of involvement supports the work of Strayhorn (2012) who discusses how involvement may be key to Black students’ sense of belonging on campus and Harper (2007) who discusses the role involvement plays in developing students’ Black identity and growth. This also supports Astin’s (1999) theory, which states that “The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of student involvement associated with that
program” (p. 519). This finding may indicate that ideology plays little to no significant role in Black students’ beliefs on the impact and importance of involvement.

**Centrality.** Little to no distinguishing characteristics related to centrality emerged from the data when responses to questions about their beliefs about race and leadership were carefully analyzed. Though, a number of themes related to the importance of race emerged from the data, including the notion of educating and empowering Black people, these themes seemed to correspond with variations in ideologies rather than variations in centrality. This may indicate that, as previously stated, at a higher level of centrality, distinctive themes become harder to identify.

**Racial ideology and Centrality’s Effects on Decision-Making**

**Ideology.** The findings from this study show that racial ideology effects Black students’ decision-making around leadership participation in a variety of ways. Findings suggest that ideologies most aligned with emphasizing or understanding the oppression of Black people, namely oppressed minority and nationalist, actively seek sense of community and sense of belonging when deciding on organizational involvement. These students chose leadership positions which allowed them to connect with peers who looked like them and made them feel secure and a part of something greater. This indicates that the more a student’s ideology is focused on the importance of Black identity and the Black experience, the more significance that student puts on building community with other Black students. By contrast an ideology which emphasizes Black people’s place in society as human beings—more broadly—is less concerned with building community when making decisions; but is more concerned with developing skills which may help them in their professional career. The two students who espoused this humanist ideology had career interests related to human sciences and justice issues. This may indicate that
those who express such an ideology, because of their interest in *larger* social issues that affect humans, are more interested in work to benefit humanity than what will benefit their experiences on campus.

The *assimilationist* ideology showed no distinguishable characteristics from the rest of the participants. However, was aligned with the overall idea, across ideologies, that the influence of faculty staff and peers in a major reasons black students join student organizations. This might indicate that holding the *assimilationist* ideology has little to no influence on Black students’ decisions. Instead, those who hold this ideology simply make decisions about involvement the way that the general student would.

**Centrality.** The findings show no significant differences in students’ reasons for joining student organizations between their various racial centralities. Again, though several themes arose from the data, they seemed to correspond with racial ideologies rather than variations in centrality. The conclusion from this is that differences in high centrality may have little to no effect on Black students’ leadership experiences, leadership beliefs, or their decisions to be involved in leadership or involvement.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the conclusions of this study recommendations for student affairs and higher education professionals come in two forms: recommendations for institutions and recommendations for individual practitioners in higher education and student affairs.

From the qualitative data of this study, there is clear indication that historically White institutions should prioritize improving representation of Black students on campus. Across all ideological boundaries students indicated that lack of representation among faculty, staff, and students was a problem. This supports the work of Strayhorn (2012), who argues that increasing
representation improves sense of belonging and cultural relevance for black students. If institutions make creating a critical mass a priority, Black students will feel less alienated on campus and feel more connected to the campus community as a whole. It is also recommended that institutions emphasize and market various opportunities for involvement specifically to Black students. The data paint a clear picture that involvement may be important to a majority of Black students regardless of their ideological group. Moreover, the participants’ demonstrate that many older Black students believe that they have to persuade younger students to get involved. Institutions can lessen this burden placed on Black student leaders’ shoulders by promoting involvement to Black students at higher levels and by improving communication about the importance of involvement to these younger students. Doing so reflects Astin’s (1999) theory about the importance of student involvement supports the findings of Strayhorn (2012) and Harper (2007) who stress the importance of involvement for the overall college success for Black students.

Individual practitioners also have certain responsibilities in this effort to improve experiences and outcomes for Black students. First, practitioners must prioritize supporting, engaging, and creating interventions for Black students based on individual needs rather than assumptions about the demographic as a whole. The data points to significant differences in Black students’ perceptions, beliefs, and ideas regarding leadership. Thus, it is important for practitioners to not gloss over these differences because these students come from the same racial background. Compounding ideology with experiences related to multiple identities, makes it is hard to argue for a monolithic view of Black students. As individual practitioners, the onus is on staff and faculty to understand deeper, each individual student and what factors play a role in their experiences and beliefs. In addition, individual practitioners should continue to recommend
and share opportunities for student involvement. Across all ideologies, students in this study shared that among their reasons for joining organizations was the suggestion or insistence of another person, often faculty or staff, who told them about joining or provided them with some information about the organization. The practice of personally talking directly with students about participation in organizations or leadership seems to be effective at making students more aware and interested in becoming involved and in taking on leadership roles. Practitioners must be more intentional about not just sharing these opportunities but also traveling the journey of discovery with the students, helping them to find their place as a student leader.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was qualitative in nature, using only quantitative data to help build the interview sample. Therefore, this study does not fully analyze or explore frequencies or correlations between *racial ideology* and student leadership. More quantitative research of *racial ideology* and student leadership is necessary to understand the correlation between specific ideologies and the amounts leadership positions students take on campus.

In addition, while this theme did not align with the research questions posed by this study and was mentioned as a limitation, several participants discussed their intersecting identities. Future research should explore how *racial ideology* may be effected by intersecting identities such as gender, social class, and sexual orientation. This would provide deeper insight into the holistic development of Black students.

Lastly, this study focused on students with high centrality and thus seemed to find little meaningful differences in students’ perceptions and beliefs based on their *racial centrality*. Further research which analyzes a broader distribution of *racial centrality* is warranted. This may effectively show contrasts and differences which were not readily visible in this study’s findings.
and which may matter for students just as much as the ideological philosophy.

Conclusions

This study gathered qualitative data on the effects of Black students’ *racial ideology* on their leadership experiences and beliefs at a Midwestern HWI. The data indicates clear and identifiable differences among racial ideological groups and charges faculty, staff, and administrators at HWIs with the task of deconstructing monolithic beliefs and assumptions about Black students. This study also challenges institutions to be more engaged with improving the numerical representation of Black students on campuses.

Black students are far from a monolithic group. They come with a variety of backgrounds, beliefs, and intersecting identities. It remains important to respect, understand, and value students holistically and without preconceived notions or assumptions relative to the student’s racial identity. It also remains imperative that historically White institutions continue to commit to and be steadfast in pursuit of improving diversity and representation on campus, and commit to the goal of improving all aspects of the college experience for Black students.
Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Student Leadership Experiences

1) What student organizations are you involved in on campus?
   a. In which of these organizations do/did you hold a leadership position?

2) Why did you choose to be a part of these organizations?
   a. Why did you choose the leadership positions you chose?

3) Tell me about your experience as a student leader on campus?
   a. What aspects of your leadership positions have you most enjoyed?
   b. What aspects have you least enjoyed?

4) In what ways, if any, are you aware of your Black identity when acting as student leader on campus?
   a. Which organization/position made you most aware?
   b. How does that awareness compare to your awareness of race before taking on the role or position?

5) Has there been a time when you felt as though you were being discriminated against while acting as student leader on campus
   a. If yes, give me an example.
   b. How did it make you feel?

6) Are any of the organizations in which you hold leadership positions predominantly Black?
   a. What impact do you see that having when you are interacting with others as a student leader?
   b. For non-black organizations, what impact do you see when you are interacting with
others as student leader?

7) How has being a student leader on campus influenced other interactions with your peers?
   a. What about your interactions with faculty and staff?

8) In what ways, if any, do you think your leadership experiences have influenced your beliefs regarding being a Black student?

**Student Leadership Attitudes**

9) What do you believe a student leaders’ responsibilities are on campus?
   a. What influences these beliefs?

10) Do you believe you are a good leader?
    a. If yes, what traits or qualities make you a good leader?
    b. If no, why not?

11) What responsibilities or obligations, if any, do you believe you have to your peers and younger students as a Black student leader at a historically White institution?
    a. Did you have the same opinion as a freshmen entering college?
    b. Have your student leadership positions shaped this opinion at all?

12) What role, if any does leadership positions in student organizations play in improving the campus culture?

**Qualitative Racial ideology**

13) What, if anything, do you believe Black people must do to end racial oppression in America?

14) In your opinion, how important is socializing outside of one’s own race?
    a. How important is socializing within one’s race?

15) Do you have anything else you would like add regarding race, or your leadership experiences?
Appendix B

Recruitment Flier

ARE YOU AN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT LEADER ON CAMPUS?

WE WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES.
If you are an African American junior or senior student who holds one or more leadership positions on campus, you are eligible to participate in a study to understand the Black student leadership experience.

AS PART OF THE STUDY YOU WOULD:
- Take a brief 10-20 minute survey about your views of what it means to be African American
- Possibly be interviewed about your leadership experience

This study will help the benefit the campus community by helping us better understand black students and their leadership activities.

If you are interested please contact: Rechard Peel 219 951 8714 peelre@gvsu.edu
Appendix C
Survey Instrument

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

Scoring Instructions

Reverse score all items that have a (R) next to them by subtracting 8 from each individuals’ score on the item. Next, average the scores for each of the items within a particular subscale. DO NOT CREATE A SUM SCORE FOR THE ENTIRE SCALE. Because the MIBI is based on multidimensional conceptualization of racial identity, a composite score from the entire scale is inappropriate.

CENTRALITY ITEMS (8): 1(R), 6, 9, 13 (R), 19, 33, 48, 51 (R)
PRIVATE REGARD ITEMS (6): 4, 7, 8, 24 (R), 54, 55
PUBLIC REGARD ITEMS (6): 5, 15, 17 (R), 52 (R), 53, 56
ASSIMILATION ITEMS (9): 10, 18, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46
HUMANIST ITEMS (9): 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35
MINORITY ITEMS (9): 20, 34, 36, 38, 42, 45, 47, 49, 50
NATIONALIST ITEMS (9): 2, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 21, 22, 25

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Black people should not marry interracially.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I feel good about Black people.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>In general, being Black is an important part of</td>
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7. I am happy that I am Black.
8. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.
9. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.
10. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.
11. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.
12. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.
13. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
14. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.
15. In general, others respect Black people.
16. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.
17. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.
18. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.
19. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.
20. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.
21. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.
22. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.
23. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.
24. I often regret that I am Black.
25. White people can never be trusted where
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<tr>
<td>26. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>27. Blacks and Whites have more commonalities than differences.</td>
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<td>28. Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.</td>
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<td>29. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.</td>
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<td>30. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.</td>
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<td>31. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>32. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>33. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>34. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.</td>
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<td>35. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.</td>
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<td>36. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.</td>
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<td>37. Because America is historically White, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>40. Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.</td>
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</table>
43. The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
44. Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
45. Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
46. There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
47. The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
48. Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
49. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
51. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
52. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
53. Blacks are not respected by the broader society. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
54. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
55. I am proud to be Black. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
56. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
57. Society views Black people as an asset. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Centrality Scale

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself. (R)
2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.
4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.  (R)

5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.

6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.

8. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.  (R)

**Private Regard Subscale**

1. I feel good about Black people.

2. I am happy that I am Black.

3. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.  4. I often regret that I am Black.  (R)

5. I am proud to be Black.

6. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society

**Public Regard Subscale**

1. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.

2. In general, others respect Black people.

3. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.  (R)

4. Blacks are not respected by the broader society.  (R)  5. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.

**Assimilation Subscale**

1. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.
2. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.
3. Because America is historically White, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.
4. Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.
5. Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.
6. Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.
7. Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.
8. Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost.
9. The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system.

**Humanist Subscale**

1. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.
2. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.
3. Blacks and Whites have more commonalties than differences.
4. Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.
5. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.

6. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.

7. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.  

   Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.

8. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.

**Oppressed Minority Subscale**

1. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.

2. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.

3. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.

4. Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.

5. The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups.

6. There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.

7. Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups.

8. Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.

9. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.
Nationalist Subscale

1. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.
2. Black people should not marry interracially.
3. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.
4. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.
5. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.
6. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.
7. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.
8. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.
9. White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned.

Demographic Information

Gender: Male Female
Other Classification: Junior Senior

How many Student Organizations are you involved in?
How many leadership positions do you hold?
DATE: January 15, 2017

TO: ReChard Peel, Master's
FROM: Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee
STUDY TITLE: [977083-2] Racial ideology and Leadership for Black College Students at a Historically White Institution
REFERENCE #: 17-072-H
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 15, 2017
EXPIRATION: January 15, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The Human Research Review Committee has approved your research plan application as compliant with all applicable sections of the federal regulations, Michigan law, GVSU policies and HRRC procedures. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please insert the following sentence into your information/consent documents as appropriate. All project materials produced for participants or the public must contain this information.

This research protocol has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. File No. 17-072-H Expiration: January 15, 2018.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and assurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between
the researcher and research participant. *Federal regulations require that each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.*

This approval is based on the HRRC determination that no greater than minimal risk is posed to research participants. This study has received expedited review, 45 CFR 46.110 category 7, based on the *Office of Human Research Protections 1998 Guidance on Expedited Review Categories.*

Please note the following in order to comply with federal regulations and HRRC policy:

1. Any major change to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the *Change in Approved Protocol* form for this submission. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in key personnel, study location, participant selection process, etc. See HRRC policy 1010, *Modifications to approved protocols.*

2. All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS and SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS to participants or other parties affected by the research must be reported to this office within 7 days of the event occurrence, using the UP/SAE Report form. If the adverse event includes a fatality, hospitalization, or security breach of sensitive information immediately notify the Human Research Review Committee Chair, Dr. Steve Glass, (616)331-8563 AND Human Research Protections Administrator, Dr. Jeffrey Potteiger, Office of Graduate Studies (616)331-7207. See HRRC policy 1020, *Unanticipated problems and adverse events.*

3. All instances of non-compliance or complaints regarding this study must be reported to this office in a timely manner. There are no specific forms for this report type. See HRRC policy 1030, *Research non-compliance.*

4. All required research records must be securely retained in either paper or electronic format for a minimum of 3 years following the closure of the approved study. This includes original or digitized copies of signed consent documents. Research studies subject to the privacy protections under HIPAA are required to maintain selected research records for a period of at least 6 years after the close of the study.

5. **At least 60 days prior to current approval expiration,** please submit a Continuing Review form:
   - Protocols that are active and open for enrollment require both the Principal Investigator and Authorizing Official to electronically sign the Continuing Review submission in IRBNet.
   - Protocols that are active for data analysis or long term follow-up ONLY require the Principal Investigator's signature but do not need to be further authorized.
   - A copy of the informed consent/assent form currently in use in the study must accompany the submission unless the study has been closed to enrollment, and active only for data analysis, for more than 1 year.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at (616) 331-3197 or rci@gvsu.edu. The office observes all university holidays, and does not process applications during exam week or between academic terms. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with our office.

Research Protections Program | 1 Campus Drive | 049 James H Zumberge Hall |
Allendale, MI 49401 Ph 616.331.3197 | rpp@gvsu.edu |
www.gvsu.edu/rpp
Appendix E

Research Informed Consent

Title of Study: *Racial Ideology and Black students Leadership Experiences at a Historically White Institution*

Principal Investigator (PI): ReChard Peel

**Purpose of study:** The purpose of this study is to learn more about the relationship between racial ideology and black student’s leadership experiences. This will help to inform higher education practices regarding how to better engage black students in practices which will better their college experience.

**Purpose of consent form:**
This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. If you choose to participate, I will need verbal consent.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Study Procedures:** This study has two phases. In Phase One student participants will take an electronic survey which asks questions regarding racial ideology and racial centrality as well as simple demographic information. In Phase Two, 16 student participants selected from those who completed phase one will be interviewed about their leadership experiences on campus.
Benefits
• There may be no direct benefits to you; however, information in this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Risks
• Participants may experience distress or discomfort while recollecting some leadership experiences.

Study Costs
• There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation
• There is no compensation for participating in this study.
Dear GVSU Student,

My name is ReChard Peel and I am conducting research at Grand Valley State University. This email is a request for you to be involved in the study. The title of the study is, “Racial Ideology and Black Students’ Leadership Experiences at Historically White Institution.”

You are being asked to reflect on your understanding of what it means to be an African American and your attitudes and beliefs about Student Leadership so that higher education researchers, practitioners, and I may learn more about Black student leadership and the impact of race on that experience.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please begin the online survey by going to this link [Survey link]. You will be taken to the welcome screen for the survey.

You are asked to voluntarily provide specific information to a web site. You may skip any question, or stop participating at any time. The information collected will be used for the stated purposes of this research project only and will not be provided to any other party for any other reason at any time except and only if required by law. You should be aware that although the information you provide is anonymous, it is transmitted in a non-secure manner. There is a remote chance that skilled, knowledgeable persons unaffiliated with this research project could track the information you provide to the IP address of the computer from which you send it. However, your personal identity cannot be determined.

As a research participant, you have various rights:

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your name will not be given to anyone other than the research team. All the information collected from you or about you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed by law. In very rare circumstances specially authorized university or government officials may be given access to our research records for purposes of protecting your rights and welfare.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:** Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate. You may quit at any time without any penalty to you.
If you have any questions or if you need any additional information, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator ReChard Peel at 219-951-8714, or at peelr@mail.gvsu.edu. If you want to speak with someone in the Human Research Review Committee at GVSU, please call 616-331-8563 (HRRC Chair) or 616-3313197 (HRRC Office) or visit http://www.gvsu.edu/hrrc/about-us-62.htm. I look forward to your participation!

Sincerely,

ReChard Peel

Graduate Student M.Ed College Student Affairs Leadership

Grand Valley State University
References


https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.49.1.71