Black Men's Perceptions of Sense of Belonging with Faculty Members in Community Colleges

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The purpose of this study was to examine factors contributing to Black male students’ sense of belonging with faculty members. Data from this study were derived from the Fall 2013 administration of the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM) and was analyzed using hierarchical linear regression. Findings from this study indicate that, after controlling for relevant extraneous variables, perceived racial-gender stereotypes held by faculty members, faculty validation, and faculty student engagement are significant predictors of respondents’ perceptions of belonging with faculty members. Additionally, masculine identity (e.g., school as a feminine domain, breadwinner orientation and competitive ethos) moderated the effects of the perceptions of belonging with faculty members. Implications for policy, practice, and future research are provided.

Keywords: Black, African American, males, men, sense of belonging, masculinity, community college

INTRODUCTION

In 1954, the landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education ended de jure racial segregation in the United States. After years of tumultuous integration efforts during the 1960s through 1980s, Black enrollment in postsecondary education has steadily increased. For example in 1976, there were 1,033,000 Black students enrolled in postsecondary institutions. The data indicates that there are now 2,962,000 Black students enrolled, a 187% increase (Digest of Education Statistics, 2013). However, access is not always synonymous with success. Unfavorable outcomes have been evident for Black students in the post-Brown era (Dancy & Brown, 2008). Contemporarily, student success outcomes for Black men have been concerning, as indicated by dismal persistence and graduation rates in comparison to their majority male and same-race female counterparts (Newman, Mmeje, & Allen, 2012). Some critics of the Brown ruling have argued that integration led to the demise of many predominantly Black institutions that were successful in serving Black students. In particular, scholars have highlighted that while Black students attended segregated schools prior to Brown and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) post-Brown, faculty–student interactions at these institutions were more affirming, thereby bolstering student success (e.g., Allen, 1985, 1992; Davis, 1994; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Wood, 2012). In contrast, Black students entering predominantly White campuses post-Brown experienced psychosocial challenges from negative campus climates (i.e., racism and isolation) instigated by their White peers and faculty members (e.g., D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). Clearly, Black students interactions with faculty members have played and will continue to play an important role in academic outcomes.

Sixty years after the Brown ruling, community colleges serve as open access venues for those who may have received poor academic preparation in their secondary schooling. Therefore, community colleges serve as apt sites for analysis, given these institutions serve as the primary pathway for Black students with 46.6% attending two-year institutions as compared to 42.9% attending four-year institutions (Staklis, 2010). Specifically, for Black men attending public postsecondary institutions, 54.9% of these collegians will begin their academic experience in community colleges (U. S. Department of Education, 2004/2009). Therefore, it is necessary to better understand how Black men who enter these institutions experience and
perceive community college environments. In particular, attention should be given to their interactions with faculty members who, according to prior research, play a critical role in the persistence of Black men in community colleges (Wood & Williams, 2013). Bearing the aforementioned in mind, the purpose of this study was to examine factors contributing to Black male students’ sense of belonging with faculty members. This study used hierarchical linear regression to examine the following research questions:

1. When controlling for relevant extraneous variables, is there a significant relationship between students’ perceptions of and interactions with faculty (e.g., perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes, faculty validation, faculty–student engagement) and Black male community college students’ perceptions of belonging with faculty members?

2. Is the relationship between students’ perceptions of and interactions with faculty and Black male community college students’ perceptions of belonging with faculty members mediated by their masculine and racial/ethnic identities?

This study is an important contribution to the existing literature. Cole and Griffin (2013) reviewed a comprehensive body of scholarship on faculty–student interactions and a vast majority of the published research is conducted at four-year colleges and universities. Furthermore, this study is also significant given the importance of interactions with faculty for Black men. Dancy and Brown (2012) conducted a qualitative study of Black male students attending historically Black and predominantly White institutions. Their research sought to determine how Black students, in a post-

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Brown era, make sense of their experiences in college and to uncover factors that influenced students’ success in these schools. Specifically, participants remarked about the importance of faculty members who engaged with students in ways that were supportive of issues and challenges facing them. Given the ubiquitous importance of such experiences, the authors concluded by stating, “the most engaging college experiences for African American men in the post-Brown era are rooted in student-faculty connections” (Dancy & Brown, 2008, p. 999). Given the documented importance of faculty–student interactions, at the time of this writing, there are no other studies that have examined the effect of Black male masculine identities moderating their sense of belonging with faculty members. This research will provide a better understanding of the relationship between how Black men make sense of their masculinities and the impact this has on their perception of a sense of belonging with faculty members. The next section explores research literature that provides a contextual framework for this study.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Faculty–Student Engagement

Black men are often portrayed in the scholarly literature in a monolithic manner. For example, scholars have often conducted analyses on these men that have failed to be attentive to within-group differences (e.g., class, generation, status; Harper & Nichols, 2008). Moreover, Harper and Nichols (2008) contend that they are a heterogeneous group, as different as the institutions serving them. For instance, Wood (2012) examined background differences between Black men in two- and four-year colleges. Based on national data, he found that Black men in two-year colleges were more likely to be older, married, independents, and to have delayed their enrollment into postsecondary education. He also found that these men were less likely to have high degree aspirations and adequate levels of preparation for college. For example, some Black men experience institutional climates as being supportive and nurturing. In contrast, many Black college men are targeted by peers, administrators, and faculty members through negative stereotypes and out-right racism (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2009; Harper et al., 2011; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), which contributes to disproportionate rates of degree completion (Newman, Mmeje, & Allen, 2012).

An extensive body of literature highlights the importance of faculty–student interactions for college outcomes (Cole & Griffin, 2013). In focusing specifically on African American students,
researchers have found an association with faculty–student interactions and college satisfaction (Strayhorn & Saddler, 2009), grade point average (GPA; Cole, 2008, 2010), self-perception of academic ability, intellectual self-confidence (Cole, 2007; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010), and persistence and attainment (Wood, 2012). Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) disaggregated faculty–student interactions by students’ racial identification and found “working harder due to instructor’s feedback” was strongly correlated with an increase in Black students’ level of faculty engagement. Interestingly, African Americans had the highest self-rating of their frequency of interactions with faculty members, but the lowest perception of the quality of their faculty relationships (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Newman (2011) extended further insight on Lundberg and Schreiner’s (2004) study and found that Black engineering students had low expectations for quality interactions with faculty members. Similarly, Cotton and Wilson’s (2006) findings suggested that students are sensitive to their perception of whether a faculty member is responsive to student interactions. Lundeberg (2010) suggested, “Perceiving faculty to be approachable, helpful, encouraging, and understanding is more important than the frequency with which students of color engage with faculty” (p. 61). This finding signals the importance of mentoring relationships.

Mentoring has been the focal point for a number of studies looking to evaluating its contribution to college students’ academic outcomes. Campbell and Campbell (2007) investigated possible differences between mentored students who were matched with same ethnic or same gender mentors. Their findings suggest that students with ethnically matches continued to enroll for more semesters, completed more units, and were more likely to enter a graduate program than their non-ethnically matched mentored counterparts. However, the impact of same race and gender mentoring is inconclusive as other studies have found no significant increase in academic outcomes as a result of race- or gender-specific mentor pairings (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). While the traditional notion of mentoring and advising relationships has been established as a positive outcome for faculty–student interactions, Baker and Griffin (2010) encouraged staff and faculty to take on a slightly different role as a “developer” where faculty take on traditional mentor roles, but also focus on future goals. Baker and Griffin (2010) suggested the developer’s role is similar to an apprenticeship model where learning occurs through active engagement.

In comparing faculty-student interactions across institutional types, Flowers (2006) found that African American students at four-year institutions reported spending significantly more time talking with faculty members about academic matters outside of class time than those who attended a community college. Chang (2005), in a comprehensive study of faculty–student interactions in community colleges, found that students are more likely to engage with faculty members if they perceived that faculty encouraged them. In one of the few studies focusing on Black men in community colleges, Wood and Ireland (2014) used the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (www.ccse.org) to examine 11,384 Black male respondents faculty-student engagement. Utilizing a hierarchical multilevel regression analysis, Wood and Ireland found that learning communities, reading remediation, student skills courses, and participation in orientation were significant predictors of faculty–student engagement. Interestingly, the effect of belonging and diversity were moderated by the addition of academic and environmental factors.

**Sense of Belonging**

Feeling a sense of connectedness with others is a core human desire (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) that influences how individuals engage with and react to others in social settings (Ostrove, 2003). In academia, the phrase ‘sense of belonging’ has been extended to represent an individual’s perceptions of connection, group membership, and value in educational contexts (Berger & Milem, 1999; Rhee, 2008). Strayhorn (2012) defined a sense of belonging as

students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling of sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers; p. 3).
A preponderance of prior research has shown that a sense of belonging is a critical facilitator of student success in postsecondary education, particularly for historically underrepresented and underserved students (Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000; Hausmann, Schofield & Woods, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Maestas, Vaquera & Zehr, 2007; Rhee, 2008; Strayhorn, 2001; Tovar & Simon, 2010). Similarly to other students in postsecondary education, Black men in college community benefit from feeling a sense of belonging with faculty members, staff, students, and the general campus community. In particular, qualitative studies with Black men have illustrated that feelings of mattering, value, and care from faculty result in greater success while feelings of isolation and alienation produce disparate outcomes (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood & Turner, 2011). Given this, some scholars have set out to explore factors that are predictive of a sense of belonging for Black males in the community college. Specifically, Harris and Wood (2013) used hierarchical linear modeling to investigate predictors of sense of belonging for Black males in the community college. They operationalized sense of belonging to refer to students’ perceived degree of connectedness to students, faculty, staff, and the general college community. They found that three engagement measures (e.g., faculty–student interaction, exposure to diversity, and usage of support services) were significant predictors of sense of belonging.

**Academic Identification and Dis-Identification**

Researchers have explored the role of negative stereotypes and other disaffirming societal cues regarding the intellectual ability and capacity of racial minorities. Using psychological frameworks, social scientists have theorized and empirically tested the impact of negative stereotypes on academic domain identification and self-concept or esteem (Lawrence & Crocker, 2009; Steele, 1997). These frameworks help explain the underperformance of some Black men who may dis-identify with an academic domain. These Black men may have perceived a stereotype or stigma relevant to their experiences, which serve as a barrier to a positive academic domain identification. Hope and her collaborators (2013) employed cluster analysis to explore within group differences for self-esteem, academic performance, and racial identity. In this study of 324 Black college students (74% were women), Hope and colleagues found that respondents had heterogeneous outcomes with regard to the combination of high or low academic performance and high or low self-esteem. For some, high self-esteem served as an asset and for others it hindered their academic performance. Additionally, these authors found a correlation with a strong racial identification and academic performance. While this body of research seeks to explain the psychological factors impacting academic outcomes, these studies also point to the dramatic impact of the educational setting, which are often hostile to Black men.

**Masculinity in College**

It is important to understand the role of gender in the collegiate experiences of Black men. Researchers have found that gender plays a vital role in the identity of Black college men. For example, Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011) found Black men often revealed feeling forced to be the “breadwinner” and had to exhibit “masculine” qualities like strength and aggressiveness. Harris and associates’ (2011) study participants linked academic success with being breadwinners and the ability to provide for their future families. Therefore, these young men placed value on earning high grades and being involved in co-curricular leadership positions. Subsequently, these male collegians were guarded about being perceived as homosexual and some participants distanced themselves from gay male students. In a study of 68 college men, Harris found that participants attributed masculinity to being respected, confident, self-assured, assuming responsibility, and exerting physical ability. The way men are socialized prior to college, pursue academic and career interests, interact with male peers, and become involved in the campus community shape the meanings men make of masculinity (Harris, 2010).
While there is a broad range of how college men present their masculine identities, Harris and Harper (2008) attributed the problematic behaviors of some college men to the “male gender role conflict” (MGRC). Often, men are socialized to embody the breadwinner role and therefore seek careers in lucrative industries in order to fulfill this expectation. This stress causes challenges in how college men cope with failure, which may lead to destructive behavior (Harris & Harper, 2008). Moreover, MGRC may also explain the preponderance of male judicial offenders (Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2005).

**METHODOLOGY**

Data from this study were derived from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM; Wood & Harris, 2013). The CCSM is an institutional-level needs assessment tool used by community colleges to examine factors influencing student success outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved men. The instrument is used to identify cross-racial/ethnic differences in male student experiences and perceptions of their campuses in four primary domains. These domains include:

- the non-cognitive domain—referring to the affective, dispositional, and identity characteristics of men;
- the academic domain—representing the academic engagement experiences of students with campus resources, services, and personnel (e.g., faculty, staff);
- the environmental domain—portraying factors that occur outside of college (e.g., employment, familial obligations, stressful life events, transportation) that influence student success inside of college; and
- the campus ethos domain—referring to students perceptions of the campus climate. Colleges participating in the CCSM receive comprehensive reports that are used to guide interventions for students and campus personnel.

Thus far, the CCSM has been employed at 37 community colleges spanning seven states: Arizona, California, Maryland, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Arkansas. The instrument has been used to survey 5,113 men at these institutions. Data employed in this study were delimited to Black male respondents from the third pilot phase of the instrument, which included 17 community colleges in Arizona, California, Illinois, and Maryland. The final sample included 364 Black/African American respondents. These data were collected in fall of 2013. The instrument has illustrated strong psychometric properties in prior analyses (Wood & Harris, 2013).

**Measures**

**Perceptions of belonging from faculty.** The outcome variable of interest in this study was students’ perceptions of belonging with faculty. Rather than measuring belonging solely focused on whether students feel like they belong, as a whole, in the institution. The CCSM has separate items and scales to measure belonging with faculty, students, and student service staff. The perceptions of faculty belonging focuses on students perceptions of whether faculty members care about them, value them, and believe that they belong at the institution. This variable is a composite measure, derived of student responses to five items. On a six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, students scored the following statements with regarding to their perceptions of faculty: “faculty care about my perspective in class,” “faculty value interacting with me during class,” “faculty value my presence in class,” “faculty care about my success in class,” and “faculty believe I belong here.” The construct illustrates high reliability (α = .94).

**Predictors.** Three primary predictor variables were used in this analysis. These variables assess students’ perceptions of and interactions with faculty. The first predictor variable employed was perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes. Using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, this item asks students to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement “my professors hold negative stereotypes about men from my racial/ethnic group.” The second predictor variable was faculty validation. This composite measure is comprised
of three items that assess the total number of faculty members who communicate validating messages to students. Students respond to the statements on a six-point Likert scale, including: none, one, two, three, four, five or more. The statements posed to students are “professor who regularly tells me that I have the ability to do the work,” “professor who regularly tells me that I can succeed in college,” and “professor who regularly tells me that I belong at this institution.” The construct also illustrates high reliability ($a = .92$). The third predictor employed in this study was faculty–student engagement. This composite measure is used to evaluate the degree to which students and faculty engage in and out of the class. Using a six-point scale measuring the frequency of events (e.g., never, once this semester, once a month, a few times a month, weekly, several times a week), students indicate how often they “talk with professors about academic matters inside of class,” “talk with professors about academic matters outside of class,” “talk with professors about non-academic matters (e.g., personal, family, current events) outside of class,” and “talk with professors about course grade(s).” The construct illustrates satisfactory reliability ($a = .82$).

**Interaction effects.** To address the second research question (focused on mediating effects), this study also employed four interaction terms assessing men’s masculine and racial identities; (a) school as a feminine domain, (b) breadwinner orientation, (c) competitive ethos, and (d) racial/ethnic affinity. All five variables were composite measures derived from students’ degree of agreement with statements on a six-point scale of agreement. School as a feminine domain reflects students’ perceptions that school and academic endeavors are more suited for women than men. Higher scores tend to reflect more healthy conceptions of masculinity, illustrating a perception that school is a domain equally suited for both genders, as opposed to being a feminine dominant domain. This composite measure is derived from responses to four statements “school is structured to serve both men and women,” “school is equally important for men and women,” “being in school does not make me feminine (e. g., punk, sissy, wuss),” and “men and women are equally capable of doing well in school” ($a = .80$). Breadwinner orientation reflects students’ perceptions of the role of men as primary earners. Higher scores tend to reflect more positive conceptions of masculinity where men are not defined solely by their breadwinner status. This composite measure is derived from responses to three statements, “Becoming a better educated man is more important than the amount of money I will earn from a college certificate/degree,” “I will choose (or have chosen) a major that I am genuinely interested in regardless of how much money it will allow me to make,” and “being able to provide for a family is not the main reason I decided to go to college” ($a = .69$). Racial/ethnic affinity provides an indication of students’ perceived connection and positive feelings toward their racial/ethnic community. This composite measure reflects students’ responses to four statements “My race/ethnicity is important to me,” “I am proud of my racial/ethnic heritage,” “My race/ethnicity is an essential aspect of who I am,” and “I have a strong connection to my racial/ethnic community” ($a = .86$).

**Controls.** Five control variables were employed in this study as a means to account for potentially extraneous factors influencing the relationship between the predictors and outcome variable. These controls are action control, respondent age, time status, total credits, and high school GPA. Action control is a composite variable reflecting the degree that students exert focus or effort on their studies. The variable reflects students levels of agreement (on a six-point scale) to the following statements “I am completely focused on school,” “I work as hard as I can to earn good grades in all my classes,” “I put forth my best effort in school,” and “I am driven to be successful in school” ($a = .92$). The researchers controlled for this variable as a strategy for mitigating the effect of the students on their perceptions of belonging. This approach allowed the researchers to more adequately understand the role of institutions and their agents (in this case faculty) in influencing students’ affective responses to their environments. Respondent age was an ordinal variable, reflecting how old respondents were at the time they took the CCSM. Response options included: ‘under 18,’ ‘18 to 24 years old,’ ‘25 to 31 years old,’ ‘32 to 38 years old,’ ‘39 to 45 years old,’ ‘46 to 52 years old,’ ‘53 to 59 years old,’ ‘60 to 66 years old,’ and ‘67 or older.’ Time status referred to
whether or not students were enrolled full-time. This dichotomous variable coded full-time students as ‘1’ and less than full-time students as ‘2.’ Total credits indicated the number of credits/units that students had taken. This was coded as ‘none yet,’ ‘1 to 14 credits,’ ‘15 to 29 credits,’ ‘30 to 44 credits,’ ‘45 to 60 credits,’ and ‘61 or more credits.’ High school GPA was used to control for students’ prior academic performance. This variable was collected on an ordinal scale ranging from ‘0.5 to 0.9’ (F to D) to ‘3.5 to 4.0’ (A- to A).

**Analytic Technique**

Prior to more advanced analyses, the researchers engaged in exploratory data analysis. In doing so, examinations of descriptive statistics (e.g., means, percentages, standard deviations) were used to better understand the characteristics of the data and their adherence to analytic assumptions. Correlations were also examined among study variables. Given small to moderate correlations among variables, all ordinal and continuous variables were standardized. As part of this process, missing value analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which missingness was evident in the sample. Missing data are common in secondary analyses of survey data (Strayhorn, 2009). When missingness is not adequately addressed, models can be produced that depict inaccurate estimates and standard errors. The researchers elected to employ maximum likelihood imputation using the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm. This technique is more accurate than mean replacement and a better alternative than listwise deletion.

As noted earlier, this study was guided by two research questions. The first question inquired whether after controlling for relevant extraneous variables, there is a significant relationship between students’ perceptions of and interactions with faculty (e.g., perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes, faculty validation, faculty–student engagement) on Black male community college students’ perceptions of belonging with faculty members. To examine this question, the researchers employed hierarchical linear regression. The first model examined the effect of the control variables on the outcome variable in isolation. The second model added the faculty predictor variables. This approach provided insight into the additive effect of the faculty predictors above and beyond that of the controls. Findings are reported using $R^2$, adj$R^2$, and the $R^2\Delta$. The second research question sought to determine whether the relationship between students’ perceptions of and interactions with faculty and Black male community college students’ perceptions of belonging with faculty members was mediated by their masculine and racial/ethnic identities. As such, subsequent models were employed that explored the interaction of the predictors and mediating variables on the outcome. These models also employed the control variables.

**RESULTS**

The first model examined the effect of the three primary predictors (e.g., racial/gender stereotypes, faculty–student engagement, and faculty validation) on the outcome of perceived sense of belonging with faculty members. The first hierarchical regression tested the effect of the control variables on the outcome (see Table 1). The initial model accounted for 13.9% of the variance in the outcome ($R^2 = .151$, adj$R^2 = .139$). This model indicated significant prediction of the outcome, $F = 12.741, p < .001$. Three of the five control variables were significantly predictive of the outcome. Action control was positive predictor of perceptions of belonging with faculty (Std. $B = .342, p < .001$). This suggests that students who place greater levels of focus or effort on their studies are more likely to perceive a sense of belonging with faculty members. This relationship was anticipated, which is why action control is included as a control variable in this study. As noted, this strategy allowed the researchers to focus on institutional factors affecting belonging by holding constant the effect of the student on the outcome. The control variable, age, was also a significant predictor of the outcome (Std. $B = .123, p < .05$), this indicated that students perceptions of belonging with faculty increased with their age. Finally, enrollment status was negatively predictive of perceptions of belonging (Std. $B = -.116, p < .05$). Given that full-time students served as the reference category, this result indicates that part-time students have lower perceptions of belonging with faculty than do their full-time peers.
students have lower perceptions of belonging with faculty than do their full-time peers. As '1' and less than full-time students as '2.' Total credits indicated the number of credits/units that students' prior academic performance. This variable was collected on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 to 5. The analysis of controls and predictors on perceptions of belonging with faculty was conducted using hierarchical linear regression. The first model examined the effect of the control variables on the outcome (see Table 1). The initial model accounted for 13.9% of the variance in the outcome (F = 13.086, p < .001) and illustrated significant model improvement from Model 1 (R^2 Δ = .077). The second model accounted for 21.0% of the variance in perceptions of faculty belonging (R^2 = .228, adjR^2 = .210). As with the first model, action control (Std. B = .255, p < .001) and age (Std. B = .123, p < .05) were both significant positive predictors of the outcome. In contrast with Model 1, the effect of time status remained negative, but became non-significant with the addition of the faculty interaction variables. With respect to the predictors of interest in this study, all three illustrated a significant effect on the outcome. Perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes was a significant negative predictor of perceptions of belonging with faculty (Std. B = -.159, p < .001). This suggests that as Black men had greater awareness of stereotypes about their racial and gender identities from faculty members, they were less likely to perceive a sense of belonging with faculty. Faculty validation illustrated a significant positive effect with the outcome (Std. B = .140, p < .05), suggesting that greater validation messages from faculty (e.g., “you belong here” and “you can succeed”) resulted in higher perceived belonging with faculty. Finally, faculty–student engagement also illustrated significant prediction (Std. B = .176, p < .01). Men who had greater levels of formal and informal engagement with their faculty members were more likely to perceive a sense of belonging with their faculty. Altogether, the three primary predictor variables of interest adhered to their hypothesized relationships with the outcome variable in this research.

The subsequent models in this study examined whether the effect of the faculty predictor variables on the outcome were mediated by the respondents’ masculine and ethnic identities (see Table 2). No significant interactions were identified for faculty validation or faculty–student engagement. However, several identity variables produced significant interaction terms for perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes. School as a feminine domain was found to have a negative interaction on the relationship between perceptions of stereotypes and perceptions of belonging (Std.

### Table 1

*Analysis of Controls and Predictors on Perceptions of Belonging with Faculty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1 Unstandardized β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 1 Standardized β</th>
<th>Model 2 Unstandardized β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 2 Standardized β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>26.228</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>25.189</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Control</td>
<td>1.582***</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>1.178***</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.570*</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.568*</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Status</td>
<td>-.196*</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.480</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>-.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Credits</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>-.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>-.205</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>-.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial-Gender Stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Validation</td>
<td>.649*</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty–Student Engagement</td>
<td>.813**</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. β is the Beta coefficient; SE is the Standard Error; GPA is the grade point average; and R^2 is a coefficient that estimates the amount of variance explained by Model 1 and Model 2.
This suggests that the negative effect of stereotypes on belonging is mitigated for students with higher healthy perceptions of school as a feminine domain. Stated simply, for respondents who believed that school was a place equally suited for men and women (as opposed to exclusively for women), the negative effect of stereotypes on belonging was lessened. Similarly, competitive orientation also resulted in a negative interaction between perceptions of stereotypes and belonging (Std. \( B = -.323, p < .001 \)). As a result, this suggests the negative effect of stereotypes on belonging was reduced for respondents with healthy perceptions of competitive ethos. In other words, for respondents who believed competition with other men did not define them, the negative influence of stereotypes on their belonging was diminished.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Validation</th>
<th>Faculty–Student Engagement</th>
<th>Racial-Gender Stereotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School as a Feminine Domain</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadwinner Orientation</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Ethos</td>
<td>-.151</td>
<td>-.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identities</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. All models controlled for action control, respondent age, time status, total credits, and high school GPA.*

In contrast to findings regarding school as a feminine domain and competitive ethos, findings for breadwinner orientation illustrated a positive interaction (Std. \( B = .346, p < .01 \)). Given this, the negative effect of perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes on belonging were intensified for men who had healthier perceptions of their roles as breadwinners. This suggests that men who did not see breadwinning as solely a role for men experienced more detrimental perceptions of belonging when faced with stereotypes about their racial and gender identities. Findings around masculine identity for perceptions of stereotypes provide unique insights into the role of identity in mitigating and intensifying perceptions of belonging. The next section explores rationales for the identified relationships derived from prior research on college men and masculinities.

**DISCUSSION**

Although there is a considerable body of literature focusing on faculty–student engagement, there is a lack of clarity around which types of interactions are essential for student success (Cole & Griffin, 2013). The findings from this study begin to disentangle the faculty–student engagement experiences contributing to favorable outcomes for Black community college men. Regarding control characteristics, action control, age, and time status were significantly associated with respondents’ perception of faculty belonging (i.e., faculty care about their perspective, value interacting with them during class, value their presence in class, care about their success, and believe they belong at their respective community college). Students who place greater emphasis on their studies were more likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty members. While researchers have found that intellectual self-confidence and self-perception of academic ability were important benefits of faculty student interactions (Cole, 2007; Komaraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010) there is limited knowledge of how students’ focus and effort impacts faculty–student interactions. This is a unique finding of this study because too often Black male students are blamed for their disengagement due
to lack of focus and effort. Contrary to this habitual portrayal, while holding constant Black male students focus and effort there is still a significant effect of other factors.

This study supports the findings of Chang (2005) given that as respondents’ age increased, so too did their perceived sense of belonging from their faculty members. Maturity may play a factor in how students make sense of their interactions with faculty members. With regard to enrollment status, this study was consistent with previous research articulating a negative association with part-time enrollment and faculty–student engagement. Non-traditional students who may have more distractions outside of the classroom are more likely to have a negative perception of their academic environment including their sense of belonging with faculty members.

Although some have declared a post-Brown era as a post-racial society, this study documents the relentless endurance of racial and gender stereotypes propagated by faculty members. Respondents’ perceptions of their professors holding negative stereotypes about Black men was negatively associated with their perceived sense of belonging with faculty members. This finding is consistent with a considerable body of literature that has documented the negative impact of faculty members serving as a persistent barrier for Black men and students of color (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2009; Harper et al., 2011; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). As noted by Smith (2009), intentional efforts must be made to ensure diversity among the college professoriate, which will help create more inclusive campus environments. Smith stated, “it is not that faculty of all backgrounds in these departments cannot be good mentors to URM [under-represented minority] students, all students of color or White women; it is that the absence of significant diversity influences perceptions of possibility and openness” (p. 139). An increase in faculty diversity may foster more positive perceptions of Black male students’ sense of belonging with faculty members.

In contrast to the perception of racial-gender stereotypes, faculty validation and faculty–student engagement were positive predictors of the outcome measure. The perception of a sense of belonging increased the more students received validating messages from faculty members. This is consistent with previous literature that has found a positive association with encouragement from faculty members (Bush & Bush, 2010; Chang, 2005; Lundeberg, 2010; Wood & Turner, 2011). Additionally, increased engagement with faculty members both inside and outside the classroom was positively predictive of a sense of belonging with faculty members is congruent with the extant literature (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Faculty members’ actions in both formal and informal settings has a tremendous impact on how Black men perceive their educational setting.

Lastly, these researchers tested the interaction effects of masculine and ethnic identities and found that school as a feminine domain, breadwinner orientation, and competitive ethos were significant factors in mediating respondents’ perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes and belonging with faculty members. The relationship of feminine domain and competitive ethos resonated with Harris (2010). The perception that faculty members held negative racial-gender stereotypes was assuaged by the belief that school was a place equally suited for men and women and not feeling defined by competition with other men. In light of this finding, faculty members need to be cognizant of how they structure competitive or collaborative environments within the course curriculum as this may exacerbate the perception of a negative learning environment for some Black male community college students.

Pertaining to the breadwinner orientation, the belief that the role of earning money to support your family is not a role solely for men intensifies the effects of racial-gender stereotypes and engenders a malign sense of belonging with faculty members. This finding is inconsistent with previous literature, but may be accounted for through the lens of male gender role conflict (MGRC; Harris & Harper, 2008) or stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Given the differential racial and gender stereotypes for Black men as compared to White men perhaps the role of breadwinning provokes a divergent impact when presented with racial-gender stereotypes. In other words, if a student has a perception that a faculty member holds negative stereotypes about Black men not serving in the function as financial provider, Black men, who do not see breadwinning as a role solely for men (i.e., Black men), may be more sensitive to and conflicted by racial-gender stereotypes. More research is needed to further investigate the role of masculine identities in faculty–student engagement.
CONCLUSION

While six decades have elapsed since the Brown decision, the intended outcomes have not yet been achieved. While college campuses have welcomed a more diverse student body, faculty and administrative diversity has not kept pace. Therefore, more attention is needed to purposefully recruit and retain diverse and culturally competent faculty and staff. Furthermore, faculty members serve as institutional agents who often play the role of gatekeeper. Higher education institutions need to rethink this orientation given the inequitable outcomes attributed to faculty–student interactions. Higher education, especially at community colleges, is a place where everyone deserves a chance to demonstrate their ability and fulfill their goals. While changing the college culture and academic environment are a long-term goals with many obstacles, a short-term goal should seek to connect students to support networks on campus, including resources specifically created for Black students.

REFERENCES


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