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The Social Support Networks of Black Males in Higher Education Administration Doctoral Programs: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study examined the social support networks of Black males in higher education administration programs. Social network theory as framework to investigate the various mentoring experiences that has led to or hindered their success. Ten Black males from five predominantly White institutions (PWIs) participated in this study. Five distinctive themes emerged from this investigation including traditional and untraditional mentoring approaches; the experiences of homophily and mutiplexity within and amongst network groups; and a discussion of the mentoring experiences that impeded their success. Using a comparative case study approach, the results indicated that many of the participants developed extensive, primarily Black social support networks. These networks provided emotional, instrumental, informational, and affirmational support for the men of the study. In addition, these networks significantly contributed to the participants' doctoral student socialization. The findings suggest barriers to effective socialization still exist for Black male students. Additionally, there appears to be a particular need for race-specific support. This manuscript provides recommendations for assessment and implementation of socialization policies and practices as well as potential future research.

With the falling percentage of Black males attaining doctoral degrees (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009), research on their experience and the challenges they face becomes imperative. An area of concern for Black male doctoral students, especially those attending predominantly White institu-

tions (PWIs) are their struggle to gain support in their programs. There is a limited, but consistent literature that indicates Black graduate students often suffer from marginalization, isolation, and discrimination, both within their programs and at the institution where they matriculate that impedes their development of support-



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ive networks (Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve & Croom, 2011; Ellis, 2001; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; Turner & Thompson, 1993). Sufficient social support contributes to a number of academic outcomes including persistence (Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999), sense of belonging (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996) and adjustment (Tinto, 1975). Specifically for doctoral students, social support, particularly from faculty and peers in a student's program, facilitates socialization into academic roles (Sweitzer, 2009).

In this article, we examined the social support networks of Black male doctoral students in higher education administration programs. Specifically, we sought to understand how the interaction between gender and race, influenced the composition of the students' networks, the type of support offered, and the socialization experience. Limited research exists that specifically examines support networks of the graduate students. For example, in a study of the developmental networks of doctoral students in a highly rated business program, Sweitzer (2009) found students relied on faculty, peers, and family for support; however, family and peers unrelated to the academic program provided markedly different support than those associated with the program. In their study on the support networks of Black professional and graduate students, Defour and Hirsch (1990) found that Black students who developed social support networks that facilitated social integration into their departments reported greater satisfaction with their performance. These results indicate the profound influence of social support networks on the graduate experience.

Although both aforementioned studies aid in our understanding of the influence of support networks on the graduate experience, there appear to be no studies that examine doctoral student support networks specifically in the context of race and gender. Scholars have found that Black doctoral students often have different experiences than White doctoral students (Nettles, 1990; Turner & Thompson, 1993). Additionally, Ellis (2001) found that Black male doctoral students reported a qualitatively different experience than Black female students. Therefore, it is important to examine the social support networks of Black male doctoral students to understand how the composition of their support networks affects their doctoral experience.

Thus, using qualitative research methods, the purpose of our study was threefold: (1) to determine who was included in the social support networks Black male doctoral students in Higher Education Administration

(HEA) programs at PWIs, (2) to examine what kind of support members of these networks offer, and (3) to examine how these support networks influenced the student's socialization. We begin this paper discussing the role of higher education programs and graduate student socialization, focusing on the agents that facilitate the process. Within the discussion, we will highlight the socialization experiences of Black doctoral students attending PWIs. We then present the theoretical framework, social network theory, which informs our data analysis. We conclude this article with a discussion of the key findings and implications for practice.

Literature review

The field of higher education emerged over the last 120 years. Specifically, in graduate education, master's and doctoral programs prepare its graduates to serve in administrative, faculty, student affairs, and policy analyst positions (Goodchild, 2002). Increasingly, graduates from these programs have sought degrees in this field to prepare them for senior level positions within the academy including the college and university presidency (Freeman, 2012). Although this field derived out of the scholarship of leaders in the United States, over the last 40 years many new programs have sprung up internationally (Altbach et al., 2007). Higher education graduate programs are diverse as they can prepare students to work in a particular context. For example, there are programs at such places as Jackson State University and Adams State University that prepare their graduates to serve at Minority Serving Institutions (Freeman, 2012). And there are other programs that prepare its graduates to serve in senior level positions such as the Universities of Alabama and Pennsylvania. Additionally there are programs that prepare its graduates for leadership opportunities in student affairs and community colleges (Hugley & Burke, 2010; Eddy & Roa, 2009).

The field of higher education is important because in addition to producing knowledgeable faculty and leaders for the sector, it provides rigorous study of issues that effect the more than 4,000 U.S. institutions of higher learning (Wright, 2007; Freeman, 2011). There have been several recent studies that have looked at how higher education programs prepare its graduates for service in the field. In the sub-field of student affairs, Richard J. Herdlein III's (2004) developed a study titled, "Survey of Chief Student Affairs Officers Regarding Relevance of Graduate Preparation of New

Professionals.” The study examined the perceptions of chief student affairs officers at 50 colleges/universities providing insights into the extent to which preparation programs effectively prepared new professionals for the field. He concluded that it was unclear whether graduate programs in student affairs have been satisfactory in preparing student affairs administrators. And, in (2012) Haley and Jaeger explored the career paths of women faculty within higher education graduate programs. Based on the results of the qualitative sample of 18 faculty members from 14 different institutions, the authors found that that participants chose to pursue their careers as faculty based on both their previous experiences as higher education professionals and exposure through their graduate programs to research and teaching opportunities. Most recently (2012) Freeman and Kochan’s research found that higher education graduate programs can assist in preparation of students for college and university leadership roles. In particular, they discovered that these programs are well-positioned to prepare students in the areas of interpersonal development, personal attributes, management, and communications skills. Although there has been various studies that look at the preparation and socialization of women and mid to senior-level leaders in higher education programs, to date there has not been any research that looked at the socialization of Black males in this field.

Socialization is a commonly employed approach to conceptualize the doctoral experience (Gardner, 2010; Sallee, 2011; Weidman & Stein, 2003). The process by which students enter their Ph.D. and develop an understanding as well as make meaning of the values, norms, and practices that exist within an organizational culture is considered an essential component of doctoral education. Scholars indicate that faculty, fellow students or peers in the program, as well as family, friends, and organizations outside the program are agents that influence the degree to which a student identifies with and commits to academic roles (Bragg, 1976; Baird, 1992; Rosen & Bates, 1967; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001).

In models of graduate student socialization, faculty are considered essential agents in the process (Baird, 1992; Bragg, 1976; Rosen & Bates 1967). According to Bragg (1976), faculty members, “transmit their attitudes, values, and behavioral norms both formally---through the structures they establish and through the courses they teach---and informally---through individual advising and supervising of study and through social activities” (pp. 19-20). It is through these interactions that students learn what it means to be a doctoral student and scholar in their field of study. Thus, for example,

a Black male doctoral student in an HEA program will come to learn that students are expected to engage in research from his observations of and interactions with faculty.

There exists a considerable body of literature reflecting the importance of faculty in shaping the experiences of doctoral students through their varied roles as advisor (Barnes & Austin, 2009; Barnes, Williams, and Archer, 2010; Barnes, Williams, and Stassen, 2011), and mentor (Hayes & Koro Ljungberg, 2011; Patton, 2009; Lechuga, 2011). While most students report having frequent encounters with faculty whom they view as helpful (Golde & Dore, 2001), there is a sizeable number of students, often from underrepresented populations that report limited and less than collegial interactions with faculty (Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2007; Nyquist et al, 1999; Lewis et al, 2004; Turner & Thompson, 1993). These poor relationships with faculty have been associated with less than positive outcomes for students. For example, Golde (2000) found that troublesome interactions with advisors caused doctoral students to drop out of their doctoral programs.

The literature exploring the experiences of Black doctoral students suggests that Black students at PWIs often experience difficulties building relationships with faculty. Nettles (1990) found in his study of 953 doctoral students that Black doctoral students had fewer interactions with faculty than White or Hispanic students. Other scholars have reported differences in the quality of interactions that Black doctoral students have with faculty. Both Burrell (1997) and Ellis (2001) found that Black students reported problematic relationships with faculty and advisors. Ellis found this was particularly true of Black women. The women indicated that problematic relationships with advisors contributed to their lower levels of satisfaction with their graduate experience. These studies suggest the nature and tone of the faculty-student relationship profoundly shapes the socialization of students.

Like faculty, fellow doctoral students are integral to doctoral socialization (Austin, 2002; Becker & Carper, 1956; Bragg, 1976, Gardner, 2007, Weidman et al., 2001). Two categories of academic peers might influence a fellow student’s socialization: advanced students and those who entered the program with the student (Bragg, 1976). Advanced students are potentially a rich source of information, providing a realistic picture of the actual departmental culture. For example, more seasoned peers might offer insight into the implicit expectations and norms that exist within a program. They may also help novice student

navigate the doctoral process by sharing their perceptions regarding the selection of courses, advisors, and mentors. A Black male student might turn to a senior level student when determining who should serve on his dissertation committee. Gardner (2007) found that advanced students provided information regarding the expectations faculty had regarding hours worked in the lab as well as which faculty members provided a better work environment. Advanced students may also aid in a student's identification and commitment to an academic role.

Peers who entered a program with a student also have a role to play in socialization. Like advanced students, they might provide formal and informal information such as knowledge and skills they have acquired from coursework, their associations with faculty, and their memberships in both campus and professional organizations. Additionally, it is with these peers that students are most likely to form support groups for study, writing, and research. Such groups may agree upon standards of work output and behavior to facilitate the success of all members (Bragg, 1976). They may also act as sounding boards and cheerleaders to encourage one another's success (Austin, 2002).

Researchers have found that Black doctoral students often have less than collegial relationships with White peers in their program (Burrell, 1997; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; Patterson-Stewart, Richie, & Sanders, 1997). In response, Black students often form very close relationships with Black graduate students in other programs (Ellis, 2001; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith). These students provide similar support as was described above.

The preceding results suggest that both fellow novices and advanced students offer important information and support that facilitates graduate student socialization; however, while the studies based on mostly white samples indicate these peers are drawn from the students same program, Black students, perhaps due to their limited presence, often seek out same race peers from other programs for support.

In addition to faculty and peers, family, friends and outside organizations influence the socialization process (Austin, 2002; Ellis, 2001; Sweitzer, 2009). However, there is relatively little research on exactly how these entities influence the process. In a study of students pursuing a Ph.D. in a highly ranked business program, Sweitzer (2009) found that business students whose family played a significant role in their graduate student support network experienced greater incongruence between the espoused goals of the program and

their personal goals than students who relied on faculty and peers from the program for support. Gardner and Barnes (2007) found that professional organizations had a profound influence of doctoral students by aiding in their identification with academic roles in their field of study.

While limited, there appears to be some evidence that family, friends, and others outside the student's particular doctoral program, offer meaningful support for Black students. Ingram, Palmer, and Hilton (2009) found that for the Black male doctoral students in their study, race-based organizations were particularly important sources of support. Specifically, students found support in Black graduate student organizations and Black Greek letter organizations. Lewis et al. (2004) found that Black doctoral students developed a network of friends on whom they relied to encourage and push one another to succeed and complete their doctoral studies. These studies provide limited evidence that Black doctoral students, for various reasons find those outside their academic program vital resources to facilitate their success.

While these studies provide some insight into the role of family, friends, and peers outside the student's program, the small number of them makes any assertions that they apply for all doctoral students, including Black males specious. Consequently, additional research is needed to understand how these parties might contribute to socialization, especially in under-represented populations.

Overall, the preceding discussion indicates that the social support networks of Black male doctoral students might include faculty and peers within the program as well as family, friends and organizations outside the program (Defour & Hirsch, 1990; Ellis, 2001; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004). However, these studies fail to examine the social networks of this population specifically. Thus, it is not clear how race and gender influences Black male doctoral the social support networks. This study seeks to address this gap by applying social network theory to frame and inform the study.

Theoretical Framework

Social network theory rests on the assumption that society is essentially organized around relationships (McGuire, 2000; McIllwain, 1999; Smith, 1999). Individuals interact and develop relationships with each other based on several sociocultural and socioeconomic factors such as race, gender, class, social status, and education level (Smith, 1999). The concept of networks

is based upon the ties individuals have with one another (Wasserman & Faust, 1999). For example, one person has a relationship with a second person. This is considered a direct tie. The second individual may have a relationship with a third person who does not know the first person. Thus, the first and the third individuals are connected through the second and have an indirect or weak tie to one another. The sum total of all relationships that a group has with one another either directly or indirectly makes up the social network.

Social network theory assumes that relationships are more important than the individual as it is the relationships and linkages between individuals that facilitate the exchange of needed resources and support (Ibarra, 1995). Thus, it is not important that someone have a direct tie to an individual who has a desired resource. Others with closer ties may secure the needed resource from the owner and pass it along to the party who needs it.

Underlying social network theory is the idea that relationships are shaped by the context in which individuals interact (Blau, 1977). According to the theory, the composition of a social support network will be affected by the environment in which it is located. Thus, the social structure of a PWI is likely to influence whom Black male doctoral students include in their social support networks and the composition will affect their socialization.

There are a number of characteristics and types of relationships associated with social networks (Kadushin, 2004). Three often discussed by researchers are range, multiplexity, and homophily. Range refers to the number and diversity of individuals within the network (Burt, 1992). It is commonly asserted that larger support networks with greater diversity yield its members access to a greater array of resources (Burt, 2001). It is assumed that those with social support networks of greater range are more likely to gain the necessary support to achieve their desired goals. For example, Collins and Clark (2003) found in a study of top management teams (TMTs) in 73 corporations, that range (diversity in contacts outside the corporation) was associated with higher sales growth and returns on stocks. The authors asserted that the diversity in contacts lead to gathering important information that the (TMTs) used to benefit their company. In terms of this study, it could be assumed that a more diverse group of individuals in a student's social support network, the greater the access to needed information and support, and thus, the better the doctoral experience.

Homophily is defined as the similarity between the

members in the network based on personal or ascribed characteristics or organizational affiliations (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). An example of a homophilic relationship would be friends who are also Black, male, and fellow students in a Ph.D. program. A greater degree of homophily facilitates greater levels of trust. In terms of confidants (Marsden, 1988), and work relations (Ibarra, 1995), race is the strongest predictor of who individuals will indicate are included in their network. Thus, we might expect that Black male doctoral students will include a number of other Blacks in their network.

Finally, multiplexity is the extent to which members fill multiple roles in the support network (Haythornthwaite, 2001). An example of a multiplex relationship is individuals who are both students in a program and close friends who frequently socialize outside the academic context. Relationships with greater levels of trust are thought to lead to a greater willingness to share resources (Verbrugge, 1979). Chen, Wang, and Song (2012) found four types of relationships correlated for 100 Chinese MPA students who were members of the same cohort at a Chinese university. Specifically, academic, friendship, career advice, and socioemotional relationships were all correlated with the strongest correlation between academic interactions and friendship. These correlations suggest that students relied on each other to offer multiple types of support.

Overall, we believe social network theory is the appropriate theoretical framework to guide our analysis. Our intent is to understand whom the participants turned to and from whom they received support, the nature of the support received, and how the support affected the socialization of the participants. This aligns well with the second and third stages of Weidman et al.'s (2001) theory of doctoral socialization where students learn formal and informal habits from mentor and peers that prepare them for advancement scholars and professionals. The specific aspects of socialization that this study investigated includes social network theory explains how individuals, through relationships gain access to the resources and support they desire. Furthermore, the theory holds that environment and personal characteristics influence who are members of any individual's network and thus affect their access to certain resources. We propose that the theory will provide us the ability to explain the particular nature of the participant's support network in addition to presenting who were its members.

Research Design and Method

The purpose of this study was to explore how race and gender influenced the compositions of the social support networks of Black male Ph.D. students in HEA programs at predominantly White institutions. Additionally we sought to understand how their social support networks contributed to their graduate student socialization. At this time, we will discuss the research methodology followed by a discussion of how we analyzed the data.

The research team utilized a comparative case study approach. It was an appropriate approach, as we wanted to gain specific knowledge through interviews about the participants' experiences. According to Merriam (1998), a case might be selected because of its "uniqueness for what it can reveal about a phenomenon" (p. 35). Our case of interest was Black male doctoral students matriculating through HEA programs at PWIs. The particular phenomenon that we wish to understand was the nature of the participants' social support networks and how it shaped their socialization. Given the limited research on the social support networks and socialization of Black male doctoral students in addition to rarely hearing their perspective on the subject, we felt it was particularly important to conduct a qualitative study.

Data were collected utilizing in-depth interviews, reviewing institutional websites, and examining program recruitment and requirement literature. Our 10 participants, all of whom were pursuing a Ph.D. in a higher education administration program at a PWI were recruited using a chain sampling approach. The field of study of higher education administration was chosen purposefully as the researchers were interested in examining whether there were any unique structural components that contributed to the number of Black males persisting through their Ph.D.s training. Participants in this study came from five different doctoral granting institutions. Their tenure as doctoral students ranged from one semester to near completion.

Interviews were 30 to 60 minutes long and were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol focusing on the doctoral experiences of the participants. Participants were asked to describe their pre-doctoral education experiences, expectations they developed regarding the doctoral process, skills they had acquired that were useful in their graduate experience, the people who they found supportive throughout their educational

experience, and how these individuals supported them. Interviews were conducted in person, via video conferencing, or telephone and were digitally recorded. For all interviews, at least two of the members of the research team participated with one taking notes and the other interviewing. After each interview, the members of the research team that were present conducted a short debriefing session in which they discuss similarities and discrepancies in the experiences of the participants and added these to the notes.

Interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each of the authors were asked to engage independently in an open coding process where the transcripts were read and reread to create a list of initial codes specific to the topic of social support networks. Afterwards, the authors individually recoded their initial lists consolidating related codes into common, overarching themes. The authors then met on several occasions to compare and discuss their independently developed themes. Our intent was to form a set of themes based on a common understanding of the data.

Trustworthiness

We employed two strategies to reduce potential researcher bias and to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. First, we used member checking with each of the participants receiving their transcript and they were asked to review and verify all information was correct. Through the process, credibility for the study was established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The second strategy we used was peer debriefing. In this process, a colleague with some familiarity or expertise with the qualitative method employed engages in the development of themes independently of the primary researchers. Its purpose is to explore "aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, p.308). Two colleagues were asked to review the data and develop their own patterns. We then discussed their results. As the peer reviewers and we reached similar themes, we proceeded with our study.

Limitations

We must acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, our participants totaled ten. While scholars have indicated such sample sizes are acceptable in case study (Merriam, 1998), a larger sample size may have

led to additional or different findings.

Second, only Black male doctoral students in higher education administration programs at PWIs were included in this study. Thus, the results can only be applied to this population in these types of institutions. For greater applicability, future researchers should examine the social support networks of Black doctoral students across disciplines including both males and females and across institutional classification.

Finally, our case study was cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies may yield different results. Students may develop meaningful relationships with faculty and peers in their department as they progress. Future researchers should consider conducting a long-term study of the social support networks of Black doctoral students to determine if membership within an individual's support network changes over time.

Findings

The findings indicate that the majority of the participants relied on a relatively small number of individuals within their social support network. Members of participants' support networks while relatively racially homogeneous were diverse in that they came from a variety of locations and backgrounds. Hence, members were from (1) within the participants' academic program, (2) outside of their program but within the institution, and (3) outside the institution. Furthermore, the social support networks of the participants included faculty, academic peers, family, friends, and employers. Additionally, there was a great degree of homophily; that is, there were a number of similarities in the personal characteristics of the participant and the members of their social network. Finally, many of the members of the participants' social support network offered multiple types of support. For example, not only did some supply academic support but also emotional support.

All the resources supplied to participants, to varying degree, contributed positively to the participants' doctoral socialization. In some cases, it was important that the participants include members from different constituencies to attain the resources necessary for successful socialization. While a high degree of homophily facilitated access to some types of support and socialization, it was not necessary in all cases. Finally, greater levels of homophily seemed to be related to greater level of multiplexity but there was not necessarily a relationship between the degree of multiplexity that existed in a relationship and its influence on socialization. We will now turn our attention to a more in depth

discussion of the findings.

Range

Graduate student socialization theorists have found that there are three main agents of support, upon which students have traditionally relied: faculty, peers, and friends and family (Baird, 1992; Bragg, 1976; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Faculty and academic peers are viewed as the most influential. As socialization is centrally concerned with preparing students to take on scholarly roles within their discipline, it is often assumed that the faculty and peers from the student's program are considered the most supportive. The findings of this study indicate that this was not always the case.

The participants in the study had great variation in the individuals they included in their social support networks. Although there were some who had somewhat traditional models of support with faculty and peers from their department as well as family and friends (5), others included faculty from their department but not peers (1) or peers but not faculty (2). In every one of the aforementioned cases, additional individuals such as faculty or peers from outside the program were also part of the network. For two participants, only individuals outside their program were included in their network. The networks of the participants are represented in **Table 1**.

We found that the range and composition of the participants' networks influenced their socialization. Specifically, we found three patterns: traditional socialization, untraditional socialization, and impeded socialization. The following is an example of each.

Traditional socialization

We found that four of our participants followed the traditional model of socialization outlined by theorists. Specifically, faculty and peers in the student's program were key agents of socialization with family, friends, and others playing a distinct, but secondary role. Hank's experience provides a typical example.

Hank encountered a relatively supportive faculty and peer environment during his doctoral career. His interactions with his major professor, which he included in his support network, followed the traditional mentor-mentee model and supported his socialization into the scholar's role. Initially, Hank indicated that their interactions took place within a relatively formal structure. Hank relayed a story of when he was first

accepted into the program. He called his advisor to ask about housing options and was told, "I don't deal with that, I help you academically." Later, as a graduate assistant to his professor, Hank stated he was "working with my major professor on several projects related to higher education administration programs and working on several articles to get published." Ultimately, as their relationship has developed Hank's professor offers support in an increasingly familiar and informal manner,

I'm noticing now (that) my major professor is investing more in me now as far as time ... He'll come out of his door and he'll give me (advice)... He may say when you're speaking, you may want to use this term or use that term... He'll just be random... He'll just plant a seed in me.

As these examples suggest, Hank experienced a relatively typical process of socialization that began with his professor clearly defining the expectations of how he was to interact. The professor also began the process of preparing Hank to engage in the work of a scholar by involving him in a central activity of the academy, research. Finally, as the professor increasingly began to see Hank as a colleague, their interactions became more casual, though no less focused on helping Hank fully adopt a scholar persona.

Supportive peers also played a prescribed role in Hank's socialization process. Being admitted into his program off-cycle, Hank did not have a cohort of fellow students; thus, he depended upon advanced students to aid him in his doctoral experience. These students provided him with guidance and advice that theorists assert is often shared by senior students. Hank stated that Yohann (who is also a participant in this study) was particularly supportive. Specifically he expressed that:

I guess Yohann [is] a mentor. [He told me] these are some things to look out for, these are the classes you should take, these are the classes you shouldn't take. [He'd say] 'let's go out to lunch' ... [It's nice to have someone] if you have some issues on your chest just to be able to share something in confidence without worrying about it going somewhere or being misinterpreted (as an African-American male).

Hank named members of his family as sources of support. Specifically, his wife and his father, and father-in-law provided him with particularly important support:

My wife has been a great support...Just having a person that you can talk to and...another income... (My father-in-law) went to graduate school so a lot

of times; I call on him to ask him questions about how to navigate various scenarios and situations that I'm dealing with here on campus so he's been a great resource and support. (Finally), my dad. Even though he didn't finish school, you just always want to have your dad's ear to listen to you.

As stated above, those that had similar support networks as Hanks' intimated that faculty, peers, and family and friends provided similar kinds of support as is discussed above.

Untraditional socialization

Untraditional socialization is defined here as participants receiving critical socialization into the role of scholar from sources outside their department. Although it is not always the case, often essential support was sought from outsiders because the student was not receiving such support from those in their program. In our study, we found four cases of the 10 where such socialization occurred. We will provide two examples of this phenomenon.

Yohann's support network included peers and faculty in his program. Peers in his department provided emotional and informational support generally noted by scholars. Yohann reported that, "(My peers and I) would sit and talk to each other and have a forum and vent our frustrations and that was great support for us. We got to a point where we understood the rules of the game and started sharing resources and generating resources on our own."

Yohann also experienced support from faculty, but this was limited. During his first semester, Yohann inadvertently disrespected a well-connected member of the faculty by arriving late to her off-campus class. From this, the faculty member formed the opinion that Yohann was not a serious student and shared this with others in the department. This led to Yohann's conclusion that "...when I went into other classes all of the people who were close to them already had that impression of me and it seemed I was fighting uphill." An example of "fighting uphill" was that Yohann was rarely made aware of the awards and fellowship opportunities,

...competing for certain prestigious awards you are pretty much in the dark on that. So they (white students) ran away with certain awards and certain fellowships you didn't even know about. Name it, they had it except for maybe one or two other African-Americans who got it because great

credentials and someone pushed or made a big push with them.

As defined previously, socialization is the process that prepares an individual to become a scholar in a given discipline. There are several of developmental tasks associated with being a scholar such as learning how to conduct research and give presentations. Additionally, there may be the need to understand how some areas of institutional administration work. Yohann had limited opportunities to learn the aforementioned skills within his department. Fortunately, Yohan's employer, a student affairs professional on campus not associated with his program provided this kind of support and development. Yohann states:

I went by chance to the Multicultural Center and I met a very smart black woman. She asked me what I was doing and I told her where I was trying to go. And she said I can help you. (She gave me) my assistantship and she's become a mentor. She introduced me to lots of people in the field. She sent me to conferences. These are opportunities I didn't have in the two years prior to meeting her she helped me put together my literature review she help me to conceptualize (my dissertation) by asking me certain questions. She actually made me a better researcher.

This example illustrates that some students, like Yohann, encounter difficulty finding faculty in their department to facilitate some aspects of socialization but fortuitously find individuals outside their program that provide support and opportunities that assist the development of their scholarly identity. Grant offers another example of others outside of the participant's program playing a crucial supportive role that contributed to socialization. Grant did not include any faculty from his program in his social support network. When asked about his interactions with faculty, he replied:

Outside of class, I have no contact with the faculty or staff for that matter. So in the classroom I'm engaged. We're engaged with each other. We create a good learning environment but outside of class, there's no mentorship. There is not a bond. They are just my teachers. They're my professors when I'm in class and outside there is nothing.

However, in his job on campus, he developed personal and professional relationships with faculty in a different discipline. These faculty provided much of the support that might normally be provided by those in his

program. He states:

They support me. They encourage me to make sure that in the grand scheme of things ...that I am progressing the way I should in the doctoral program. They want to know if I have any questions concerns or any problems. I mean I work with... a bunch of folks who are faculty and they applaud the effort (working on a Ph.D.) hey, you're your doing a PhD while you're working let me know if you need people.

It appears that because Grant has developed interpersonal as well as professional relationships with the faculty in his work environment, it has afforded him the ability to ask for and receive support from them.

Moreover, lacking the camaraderie with fellow students in his cohort, Grant sought advanced students in his program and peers outside his program. Grant stated "(I) don't have any contact outside the classroom (with) black students particularly in my cohort or the cohorts after me... I actually have the most contact with (those in the cohort before me)." Additionally, Grant turned to former schoolmates and colleagues to provide support often received from cohort members. For example, he spoke of the support his former roommate who was working on a Ph.D. at another institution, "We will call each other up about once a week and talk about our programs classes and things are going on... We kind of bounce things off one another. She talks about (us) doing presentations at conferences. In addition, Grant also had four male colleagues at other institutions that referred to themselves as the "Ph.D. brothers". Grant depended on these men to get him through particularly difficult times as the next example demonstrates:

I remember last year, I did not want to go to class and it just so happens (my friend calls). I said, I ain't going to class. I was literally in my car. I had cranked up my car and he said to go to class... He broke it down to me and I literally got out of my car and went to class.

The preceding examples demonstrate that when sufficient support is lacking within the program, participants sought out individuals from their current and past relationships in an attempt to meet their socialization needs.

Impeded socialization

Two participants in our study had social support networks that we exclusively composed of individuals outside their program. While these individuals

received emotional support, they gained little support that contributed to their socialization into their roles in their discipline; their doctoral experience could be characterized as marginalized and tenuous.

It is important to note that a number of factors contribute to their limited support. Laird secured conditional entry into his Ph.D. program at a major institution. Thus, he had been perceived by some faculty as not having the ability to become a scholar and thus, not a student in whom one should invest many resources. Evidence of this is that he had no assistantship with anyone within the program. Ultimately, Laird's only supportive relationship within the program was with an administrative assistant who regularly asked about his well-being and encouraged him. Although he had some contact with Ph.D. students at other institutions, their interactions were rare and thus their support, sporadic. These conditions meant that Laird socialization into the discipline was nearly nonexistent.

Wayne's condition set him on a path of inadequate support and socialization. A full time employee and new husband, he found it difficult to allocate additional time to socialization activities. He intimated that his first semester was "very demanding" with more reading than he had experienced in his master's program in another field of study. The greater rigor did not lead Wayne to solicit help from faculty or peers. When asked why, he replied, "I just didn't do it." At the time of the interview, Wayne was taking a leave from the program. This further separated him from those in his program.

Three sources provided Wayne with support: his wife, a friend at another institution, and his family. Besides emotional support, his wife occasionally provided academic support by offering Wayne help with his papers. His friend, who was in professional school, had been a constant source of advice for Wayne, first encouraging him to pursue a Ph.D. as well as offering insight into how to navigate his doctoral process. Wayne's family provided emotional support. While some of the support offered by these network members could aid in the socialization process, without agents in his support network with a clear understanding of the support needed to foster his development into a Ph.D. student and scholar, left Wayne's socialization, like Laird, largely nonexistent.

In the preceding analysis, we discussed the range that exists in the social support networks of the participants. We found significant variance among the participants with some including members largely from the traditional categories of faculty and peers in the program as well as family and friends. However, we also found

that many included individuals outside these categories such as faculty and peers outside the program.

We also found that composition of the support network influenced the socialization of participants into their discipline. In fact, we discovered three patterns of socialization based on the composition of the network. What became apparent is that, often when desired support went unmet within the program, participants sought individuals outside the program to meet these needs. This had varying effects on their acclimation into their discipline and adoption of the scholarly role with some facing a strong likelihood of failure.

While we did not discuss it above, Table 1 also includes the race and academic or personal status of the members of the support networks. Certain patterns and degrees of homophily emerge. We now turn our attention to this topic.

Homophily

As a reminder, homophily is the number of similarities in background, personal characteristics, and affiliations that the members of a support network might have. Analyzing the participants' support networks, certain patterns of homophily emerge. Specifically, most of the members of the participants' support network were Black, male, and similarly educated and in the same discipline. However, this pattern primarily existed for peers, friends, and family. There was less homophily among the faculty who were members of the participant's networks. These results are seemingly influenced by the conditions of the environments where our participants found themselves.

A review of Table 1 reveals that the social support networks of the participants are mostly composed of Black people. For five of the participants, their entire network consists of Blacks. It is important to note that for all the participants, every peer, family, and friend included in their social support network was Black.

Three participants spoke specifically about their reasons for particularly seeking out Blacks for support. Ullrick indicated he expected to be supported by Black students in the program after meeting them prior to his being admitted. This was particularly important to him given that there were no Black faculty in the program. The expected support of Black students was "one of the reasons that I came here."

Hank indicated that support from other Blacks reduced the likelihood of him being "misinterpreted." As noted in the previous section, he felt unencumbered

Table 1. Social Support Networks of Participants

	<i>Faculty In Program</i>	<i>Faculty Outside Program</i>	<i>Peers in Program</i>	<i>Peers Outside Program</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Family</i>
Name						
Hale	White Male Advisor		Several Black Peers		Black Best Friend	Wife(Black)
Hank	Black Male Fac White Major Prof White Dean of College		Several Black Peers			Wife (Black) Father in Law Father
Grant		Two Black Male Several White Fac Associates	Two Black Males Black Female	Four Black Males Black Female Friend		Family Girlfriend (Black)
Laird				Several Black Males	Black Administrative Assistant	
Quincy	Black Female Advisor		Several Black Studs	Several Black Males		Wife (Black)
Ullrick		Black Male Fac	Number of Black Peers		Several Black Grd Studs	
Van	Black Male Fac		Three Black Males			Wife (Black)
Wayne						Wife (Black) Black Best Friend
Yohann	Black Male Fac		Two Black Males		Black Minister Black Female Administrator (Employer) Several Black Grd Studs	
Zeke	White Male Advisor White Male Fac White Female Fac	Black Male Faculty		Several Black Grd Studs Several Black Males		

in his interactions with other Blacks students in his program as he felt they understood his condition as a Black male doctoral student in a predominantly White environment. With other Blacks, Hank felt he convey his frustrations and displeasure without repercussions. To do so with Whites might leave him” labeled (the) angry black man.”

Additionally, Hank saw that other Blacks could intervene on his behalf to avoid misunderstandings between him and Whites. This was his justification for soliciting the support of a Black faculty member on his dissertation committee, the topic of which had nothing to do with race:

I have to make sure that I can request a person of color as an outside reader... just to bring a little color, (a) different perspective to make sure that nothing is misinterpreted or whatever and have someone to be able to speak on my behalf.

Quincy chose his program primarily because of the reputation of faculty member who would be his advisor. A Black scholar, she was known for her outstanding research regarding black students. Particularly important to Quincy was her goal of rigorously preparing him and other Black students for the challenges and responsibil-

ity of being Black scholars. Race seemingly played a factor in how their relationship was fostered, “We connect not just academically but with the experience of being a black person.”

In three cases, the intersection of race gender and educational experience created a special kind of support. Zeke, Grant, and Quincy, all spoke of a special group of Black male Ph.D. students that they relied upon to provide encouragement, motivation, and advice. These were either men that they had met during their time working in student affairs positions or men they met through attending national conferences and organizations such as the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). As noted earlier, Grant spoke of his “Ph.D. brothers” who encourage one another through their doctoral process. Zeke and his Black male colleagues engaged in research and presentations together around his secondary research interest, Black male collegians. Quincy’s description of his circle of Black male doctoral student friends from across the country is similar to that of Zeke and Grant:

There are several brothers I can point to who are friends of mine who are either more advanced than I am or who have now recently started a program

that I remain connected too. So we support each other through the process whether that's reading each other's work, calling to vent to each other, or just talking to each other about what's going on. So that's been something for me that has been really important as I go through the process being able to connect with other people who are having the same experience.

In examining homophily as it relates to faculty, a different pattern emerged. Specifically, there was less homophily regarding race than had been present with peers, friends, and family. Of the ten participants, four included White faculty in their support network.

There appear to be three factors influencing this different pattern for faculty. First, of the ten cases, nine of the participants were in programs with no more than one Black faculty member. Two of these participants were in programs with no Black faculty. With limited options in choosing faculty support, some simply sought White faculty for support. Ullrick adjusted his expectations regarding faculty interaction given that his program had no Black faculty. He states,

I expected less when I came here than in terms of faculty interaction because I had the experience of having a black faculty member at (previous institution). (With) no black faculty members, I kind of expected to have less interactions with faculty here.

Not surprising, Ullrick has no White faculty in his support network. Second, participants develop supportive relationships due to other commonalities. Zeke developed supportive with White faculty based on his research interest and skills:

[A faculty member], he has me on his research team (so) I get involved in research projects. Because I'm interested in [said field of study], I talked to [another faculty member] who is like a guru [said field of study]. I end up speaking to her a lot.

Finally, this pattern may emerge due to participants including faculty who play an official role in their doctoral experience. Of the three included their advisor in their support network.

It is apparent from examining **Table 1**, that a significant level of homophily exists for our participants. This was particularly the case in terms of peers, family, and friends. The lower level of homophily existed between the faculty who were members of the network and the participants. This was largely related to race,

with three participants including their White faculty advisor. It appears that the inclusion of White faculty in a participant's network is related to the limited access to Black faculty who can offer similar support, some similarity between the student and the faculty member, and their official role in the student's doctoral experience. We will now turn our discussion to multiplexity to understand the number and types of support members of the network provided.

Multiplexity

Multiplexity refers to the instances of a member of a social network provides multiple types of support. An example of a multiplex relationship is a faculty member that provides a student both advice as well as an income through an assistantship. Multiplex relationships are facilitated by high levels of trust and loyalty between the parties in the relationship. The participants experienced relationships that offered varying levels of support. Some members supplied only one type of support while others engaged in some degree of multiplexity. Multiplex relationships were often facilitated by a higher degree of homophily. Multiplexic relationships commonly occurred between participants and the faculty and peers within their program. Of the six participants who had relationships with faculty in their program, three of those relationships could be characterized a multiplex. All seven participants had multiplex relationships with peers in their program.

When the participant considered the faculty member as a mentor, they characterized the relationship as yielding multiple forms of support. Quincy developed such a relationship with his mentor, a Black female faculty member in his program. Quincy indicated his mentor was "very serious about my academic progress in the program" and "very, very critical of my work and very much interested in [me] improving and doing well in the program." Along with this, his mentor was "very supportive." This combination of challenge and support ultimately led to what Quincy stated was "a very close relationship with her both professionally, academically and just in terms of advisor support."

Yohan suggested that the one Black faculty member in his department provided both advice and emotional support. Yohan offers an example of the kind of advice this faculty member gave him and other Black students in the program, "He (was) very candid about what's going on (in the department). He would say, "Watch your back." As the only Black faculty member, he and

the Black students felt he could not be perceived as showing favoritism to Black students, thus to provide Yohann and other students emotional support became a covert operation, "...because he is one of the few African-Americans on this campus and the only one in our department, we tend(ed) to be very strategic in our communication. We tend(ed) to meet outside of school or (communicate through) e-mail... just (to) check in.

Hank's major professor provided him with advice and professional development assistance. As discussed above, the long term relationship between Hank and his major professor lead to informal words of advice related to how Hank might present himself both personally and in writing. Additionally, the faculty member also provided Hank with opportunities to establish himself professionally. Hank shared that he and his major professor were working on a article . If well received, Hank would benefit professionally.

In all seven cases where participants had Black peers in the program that they considered part of their support network, multiple kinds of support were offered. Participants indicated they received a combination of two or more of the following types of support: academic support, emotional support, friendship, and advice. Grant provides an example of how advanced students in his program provided both emotional and academic support. Monthly potluck dinners provided an informal setting for Grant and this group of peers to relax. The conversations rarely revolved around academics but offered the attendees a safe, informal space to be themselves and know they were not alone. Additionally, these peers offered academic support. In one case, Grant regularly called on one male to tutor him through his statistics course. Grant recounts another incident of academic support. "(Advance peer) sent me his comp questions to let me know... what to expect."

Hale's case is an example of advanced peers offering friendship and advice. Hale shared that, "... We (advanced peers) went out to lunch and they would come to my office and talk to me on occasion... They shared advice about which classes to take and who to take them with. They shared advice about when to take certain courses and how they managed to navigate certain courses."

Our findings did not indicate that multiplexity was specifically related to the socialization of the participants of this study. Participants equally gained important skills and knowledge and adopted certain scholarly practices and beliefs whether they had multiplex relationships or not. For example, Zeke seemingly only gained academic or research support from the faculty

he indicated to be part of his support network. Quincy, in contrast, forged a much more complex relationship with his faculty advisor that involved emotional and academic support as well as advice. Each however, was moving towards adopting the scholarly role. Evidence of this was their numerous affiliations with professional associations. Both Zeke and Quincy were members of three professional organizations where they frequently presented their research at the annual meeting of these organizations.

The preceding discussion indicates that often the participants of this study received multiple types of support from members of their social support network. This was particularly true of faculty and advanced peers in the participant's program. Participants received some combination of two or more of the following types of support: advice, emotional, friendship, and academic. There was no indication that multiplexity was directly related to the socialization experience of the participants.

Discussion

Researchers have long shown concern for the socialization experiences of doctoral students (Baird, 1992; Gardner, 2008; 2010, Golde, 2005; Weidman & Stein, 2003), with more recent efforts focused on the experiences of those from underrepresented populations (Ellis, 2001; Gardner, 2007; Glasgow, 2005; Nettles & Millett, 2006). This literature reveals a problematic process for ethnic minorities; particularly Blacks who face difficulties in securing the kind of support they need from key agents of socialization. This study sought to examine how race and gender might affect how a student secures the support needed to facilitate their doctoral experience. Specifically, we investigated the social support networks of Black male doctoral students in higher education administration programs at PWIs.

What our study revealed is that the Black men obtained support from a broad range of individuals; however, there is no apparent pattern in the types of individuals a student might include in their support network to facilitate their socialization. Thus, students may include those recognized by the literature: faculty and peers in the program as well as family and friends. However, our participants also include faculty and peers from outside their program. Thus, there exists a much more variable range of individuals in the network than often considered in the literature (Bragg, 1976; Sweitzer, 2009).

Additionally, the participants develop social support networks are significantly influenced by their race and to a lesser degree their gender. For example, the majority of individuals in the participants' networks were Black. Moreover, many of the closest and most supportive relationships; particularly related to doctoral experience were with other Black male doctoral students. Finally, in half of the cases where faculty in the program were part of the network and in all of the cases where peers in the program were part of the network, the members supplied multiple types of support. Specifically, individuals supplied two or more types of support that might include advice, friendship, academic support, career assistance or advice, or emotional support.

We also found that the type of socialization experience that participants had were related to the individuals included in the social support network. We identified three different possible types of socialization: traditional socialization, in which, socialization depended upon faculty and peers within the program; untraditional socialization, in which nontraditional agents of socialization provided key socialization experience; and impeded socialization, in which students had no real agents of socialization in their support system. We found that the particular model socialization a participant was experiencing was unrelated to race or gender. Additionally, it was not related to homophily or multiplexity.

The findings illuminate our understanding of Black male doctoral student support and its relationship to socialization. First, until recently, scholars limited possible socializing agents to faculty and peers within the program with family and friends playing a minor role (Baird, 1992; Bragg, 1976; Rosen & Bates, 1967). This study reveals not only the more expansive role that peers play in the socialization process, but also the sometimes critical roles that those outside the participants' program play.

Researchers have always acknowledged that peers share their knowledge, skills, and insight in order to help the participants make meaning of and succeed in the doctoral process. However, for our participants they additionally provided what might be considered psychosocial support. Black peers supplied a type of affirmational and emotional support that allowed the participants to survive and thrive in an environment of which they were suspicious and felt was discriminatory. Thus, the roles they satisfied in the participants' doctoral experience seemingly went beyond that indicated in previous research on the relationship between doctoral and professional students and their peers (Austin, 2002; Becker and Carper, 1956; Gardner, 2007; Orth, 1963;

Weidman, Twale, and Stein, 2001).

This study also revealed that those outside a participant's program may not only influence socialization process of the scholar, but might also potentially play an instrumental role in facilitating it. When these individuals have an understanding of the academy and the socialization process as well as the resources and a willingness to aid the student, they can provide equally effective socialization-related support as faculty or peers in the student's program. Thus, while this study confirms the assertions of others regarding the role of peers and those outside the participant's program in shaping the socialization process (Austin, 2002; Defour and Hirsch, 1990; Sweitzer, 2009; Weidman, Twale, and Stein, 2001), it reveals an expanded role for both.

Second, the strong presence of Blacks and to a slightly lesser degree Black males pursuing doctoral degree seemingly confirms what other researchers in business, organizational studies, and other fields have noted, that is Black relationships are often characterized by high degrees of homophily (Ibarra, 1995; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998; Mollica, Gray, & Trevino, 2003). This apparently is true within a PWI academic environment. The question that still exists is why. The participants intimated that they sought out relationships with those who (1) understood the experience and particular needs of a Black male doctoral student, and (2) was willing to assist a Black male doctoral student. It appears that participants intentionally sought out those with whom they had common identities. This allowed them to communicate their concerns and needs without fear of being misunderstood or penalized. Additionally, the interpersonal similarities between the participants and their supporters likely increase the willingness of the support network member to supply the needed resources.

Third, scholarship on multiplexity indicates that familiarity and trust in relationships result in an individual's willingness to offer multiple types of support to another. This appears to be the true for our participants. In particular, in half the cases of faculty from within the department and in every case of peers within the department, the men of the study received two or more types of support. Frequent formal and informal interactions with faculty and peers might be one reason offered to explain multiplex relationships. However, taking into consideration that all the peers named as providing multiple types of support were Black, another reason that might be offered in this case is that multiplex relationships were facilitated by the homophily that existed between the peers. Specifically, the fact that the peers

and the participants were both Black and experiencing the doctoral process, likely created a sense of connection and camaraderie that made it natural to offer whatever types of support were needed.

Finally, the analysis reveals an alternative to the traditional socialization and ineffective socialization that are cited by most socialization researchers. Specifically, some participants relied on those outside their program to supply critical socializing experiences. Thus, these individuals took an untraditional path to socialization. The need for taking such a path was apparently based on the participant's inability to build supportive relationships with faculty in their program. Golde (2005) found that when students had such difficulties, it often lead to attrition. Our findings suggest that attrition in these cases may not be inevitable.

It is important to note that the preceding findings are consistent with the underlying assumption of social network theory which is that context matters (Blau, 1977). Specifically, in response to PWI environments, where they were minorities and where the threat of racism, discrimination, and being misunderstood loomed, the participants sought support from individuals with whom they could confide and in whom they could trust. The findings validate previous findings that indicate that when Black graduate and doctoral students are in PWI environments, they regularly seek out relationships with other Blacks (Ellis, 2001; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davis, and Smith, 2004).

Implications and Conclusions

The participants of this study all developed support networks of various range, multiplexity, and homophily to secure the necessary level of support during their doctoral studies. While some gained their primary support within their programs, others, in order to develop into the students, scholars, and practitioners they wanted to be were forced to cultivate extensive network of support beyond their institution. Scholars should be concerned for any student who cannot attain adequate support within their program; however, it is of particular importance for Black male doctoral students when we consider abysmally low representation in doctoral education. Thus, we should determine what might be done to ensure Black male doctoral students are adequately supported and socialized in their doctoral programs.

Recommendations include cultivating critical dialogues between faculty, staff, students, and administrators that seek to expose barriers to support and

socialization. Such discussions are likely to reveal hidden bias and unexamined assumptions about faculty and students. It is hoped that the result of these dialogues will be the creation of more collegial environments and more instances of effective socialization.

Additionally, faculty might consider developing new approaches to student socialization that center on the goals and aspirations of the student rather than recreating their own experience(s). This will involve creating a new dynamic in the interaction between student and faculty. We suggest that faculty no longer view students as passive in their socialization and students take responsibility in the co-creation of their experience. Enacting such changes will create environments where both students and faculty can work together to create a socialization experience that fully meets the needs of the student.

Finally, while not sufficient, if structural conditions and practices continue to create challenges for Black male doctoral students in finding support and being effectively socialized into their field, increasing the number of students and faculty of color is still a viable option in improving the experiences of Black male doctoral students. Making such a commitment is not only a signal that the program values diversity, but communicates to a Black male student that he will not go through his studies without others who have common experiences and backgrounds.

If we are to increase the number of these men represented in the academy, it is vital to understand to whom such students turn for support and why. The results indicate that many men overcome poor relationships in their programs by intentionally developing extensive networks of support with members from diverse programs and geographical location. Additionally, when possible, they seek to forge relationships with other Blacks. The findings suggest that relationships with other Blacks allowed students to feel that their experience is understood, validated, and respected. Faculty and administrators must commit themselves to developing programs and recruiting students and faculty such that students of all backgrounds feel that their presence in a given program is not only welcomed but also desired.

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