Embodying Blackness: Perceptions of African American Identity and Hiring Practices within African American Businesses

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EMBODYING BLACKNESS: PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AND
HIRING PRACTICES WITHIN AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES

by

LAUREN ARRINGTON

Under the Direction of Akinyele Umoja, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study examines African American owned businesses with a focus on identity and
hiring. African Americans are traditionally community centered, but they have also been
enculturated in a Eurocentric society and may hold similar values and discriminatory attitudes as
that of the dominant culture. There is a gap in the literature regarding the effects of African
American cultural signifiers for adults working in these businesses. The perception of cultural
signifiers may affect hiring and placement within businesses. The sample enlists six African
American business owners or personnel responsible for hiring and placement of employees
within each workplace. This qualitative study examines three overarching questions about the
influence of culture in the hiring practices of Black owned businesses in Metropolitan Atlanta.

INDEX WORDS: Black business, Discrimination, Hiring, Employment, Identity, Workspace
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HIRING PRACTICES WITHIN AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES

by

LAUREN ARRINGTON

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May 2019
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my family. I thank my parents, Shelby Arrington, Sr. and Gertrude Arrington, who have supported me throughout this journey. They have instilled the love and faith of God in me, and I know that through God all things are possible. I thank my brother, Shelby Arrington, Jr. who has encouraged me to hold fast to my goals and to persevere. I also dedicate this manuscript to my immediate family; I have those who have prayed for me, laughed with me, aided me, and have listened to all of my complaints. I am especially blessed to have a praying grandmother, Alberta “Swanny” Brown who who endlessly prays for my safety and success. I dedicate this thesis to those family members that I have lost along the way, and I thank them for their encouragement whilst still on this earth. I thank my friends who have stood in solidarity with me through the creation of this work, specifically Jessica Stewart and Shakia Guest. Their kind words, their hugs, their assistance, and their genuine interests and encouragement has not gone unnoticed. I would also like to thank my participants who dedicated their time to speak with me and impart their knowledge and experiences in order to contribute to this manuscript. To them, I am truly grateful and hope that I have captured their perspectives respectfully and accurately. Without this community of individuals, I know that this manuscript would not have been possible, and I am truly grateful that God has placed them in my life.
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context of Study

I have worked in and around businesses since I was thirteen years of age, and in my working repertoire, I have witnessed several forms of discrimination emanating from varying sources. The inspiration for this research derives from the treatment I observed directed towards African American employees and African American job candidates. I begin this manuscript by noting two instances of discrimination I have witnessed towards those of the African American community as well as rhetoric used as cautionary warnings to members of the African American community. The first instance involves a testimony that was told to me by a close friend. My friend attends a prodigious Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the South. He attended several conferences and networked with many noted figures within his field. Even though my friend presents himself in what would otherwise be deemed a professional manner, he has often been informed that sporting “dreadlocks” may curtail real employment opportunities, and he has been advised to cut them. Dreadlocks, also referred to simply as dreads or locks, are a hairstyle whereby the hair is formed into intertwined, roped bundles that emanate from the scalp. My friend was told this from both Black professors at his university as well as Black business owners. In thinking of my friend’s experiences in particular, I reference Rinaldo Walcott’s “Reconstructing Manhood; or, the Drag of Black Masculinity.” Walcott commences the article by citing a type of mask that men have been forced to wear that “obscures and covers over how black men have been able to articulate their selfhood both consciously and unconsciously to themselves and to others” (Walcott, 2009, p. 75). My friend is advised to deny aspects of himself and his community to appeal to the dominant society and become successful within the corporate realm. He is forced to wear a “mask” to succeed economically.
The second narrative is one of my own experience, whereby I witnessed an employee being reprimanded for sporting braids in a Black-owned professional setting. The owner of the establishment is a middle-aged Black woman with a professional degree. She graduated from a southern HBCU and considers herself middle class. She informed her employee that his braids were inappropriate, and he needed to take them out to continue working at her establishment. A few years later, I noticed a different employee who was sporting locks working at the same location. Thinking that the employer had loosened what is referred to in the business arena as “grooming standards,” I asked her if she found any issue with this young man wearing locks. The employer stated that because the young man worked in the back of the establishment filing papers, she had no issue with his dreadlocks, but he could not continue to wear his hair in that style if he were to work in the front interacting with customers. This employer’s outlook stunned me because I know that she has graduated from an HBCU and she is also intricately involved in the Black community (e.g. she both physically participates in sickle cell walks as well as donates the sickle cell foundation). Considering her entrenchment within the Black community, I would expect (perhaps presumptuously on my part) someone in her position to acknowledge and appreciate those elements that derive from the Black community, are unique to the Black community, and are preserved within the Black community.

What troubled me about both narratives, and what I consider to be inspiration for this study, is the way in which African Americans interact with and view each other within business settings, especially within environments that are of their own construction. Within the current body of literature, there is an abundance of information examining interactions, and specifically discrimination, directed at Black people from White-owned establishments, but there is minimal information examining this occurrence amongst Black people, i.e. intra-racially. This is
surprising considering the ways that numbers of Blacks/African Americans police themselves and others from their community when it comes to the politics of respectability. For instance, when selecting a name for their unborn children, I have heard numerous conversations rife with concerns for the child’s future employment. When a parent reveals a name that is not mainstream or European in nature there is often the question “Are you sure?” followed by the remark “They will struggle getting a job with that name.” Quite recently, sometime in October of 2015, Raven-Symoné Pearman (a young woman of African descent who is an actor and cohost on ABC’s television show *The View*) stated that she would not hire someone with a ghetto-sounding name and that she would in fact discriminate against such individuals (The Young Turks, 2015). Raven stated, “…I am very discriminatory against words like the ones that they were saying in those names [i.e. a YouTube video making fun of names attributed to Blacks and Black culture]. I’m not about to hire you if your name is Watermelondrea…it’s just not gone happen…I’m not gonna hire you” (The Young Turks, 2015). This statement followed another cohost, Whoopi Goldberg’s acknowledgement of a study found in the *Journal of Evolution and Human Behavior*, whereby it noted that “Americans make racist assumptions based on people’s names” (The Young Turks, 2015). It appears Raven-Symone felt it necessary to align herself with those in the study that carry this opinion. Within this manuscript, I note that naming and appearance are not the only areas in which Black Americans have been found policing each other; the same type of policing has been found with language (i.e. Ebonics). Further analysis of these topics will be addressed later within this paper.

It is my belief that everyone possesses biases, which in turn dictates actions. It is my training to acknowledge any biases that I may carry when approaching a situation, including research. When applying the Afrocentric research cannon *ukweli*, “One’s life experiences
influence all aspects of the research process” and “in the interest of truth and openness, the researcher must make the implicit interests explicit” (Reviere, 2001, p. 714). It is because of what I have witnessed that these research questions are even a reality and the basis for this research. Personally, I see Black-owned business environments as locations for potential cultural preservation and appreciation. I view these environments as locales where European-derived cultural and value standards/criterion should not overshadow the essence, experience, cultural capital, and expertise of the Black/ African American employee. If applicants are turned away from the business at first sight, they are marginalized by those who are coming from the same or similar historical lineage and who have similar perceptions of them originating from the dominant culture, for no other reason than that they are a person of color. This is an essential area to examine because “…critical theorists insists that ordinary people who do not share White supremacist beliefs can still talk and behave in ways that advance the projects of White racism” (Hill, 2008, p. 7). Black business owners who act in a discriminatory fashion towards other members of the Black community may unintentionally reproduce racist practices.

This is my perspective, but I also acknowledge that Black business owners may not see themselves in relation to other Black Americans; they may disassociate from them because of a real or imagined class structure and attitude; they may not view themselves as belonging to the same community because of a different “zip code” or upbringing; they may view their education and professional degrees as further degrees of separation. Professional Black business owners may not have the same outlook and end goals; varying political ideologies will also be explained with this essay. An additional consideration of this study is that Black business owners may not possess as much power within their businesses as originally believed. They may have to mute elements of cultural expression in order to “secure broader access to the public sphere” (Durham,
Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 724). Under the politics of respectability, they may not only be policed by those within their racial group but under the broader spectrum of white supremacy.

The Afrocentric cannon *utulivu* “requires that the researcher actively avoid creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities but rather strive to create harmonious relationships between and within those groups”; this is all done in the pursuit of justice (Reviere, 2001, p. 717). It is not my intention to create division within the Black community, but simply to pinpoint factors that attribute to diversity within this racial category. I have chosen not to focus solely on the disparities plaguing a specific gender category, but rather I am examining the state of the Black business community as a unit to address factors that have the potential to affect one’s livelihood. This subject matter is one that involves respectability politics and intra-racial/intragroup prejudice and discrimination, which is an area that has been criticized within the Black community as airing “dirty laundry” (Turner, 1995, p. 684). It is not my intention to ascribe maladies to the Black community with mention of intra-racial/intragroup differences and discrimination, but for intra-racial relations to improve they must first be investigated. For “…prejudice and discrimination are no less damaging when inflicted by a member of one’s own ethnic or social group, intra-racial discrimination must be recognized as an extant and impermissible form of workplace discrimination that must not be hidden by nor lost under the protective cloak of so-called racial solidarity” (Turner, 1995, p. 684). This point is the rationale and context behind my pursuit of this topic and study.

### 1.2 Overview of Study

This thesis concerns intra-racial relations within the Black business space and focuses on the treatment of African American cultural influences, and whether this affects hiring and placement of Black employees within those spaces. This study also examines varying aspects of
identity and group affiliation (and disassociation) through the lens of Social Identity theory. This chapter contains a brief insight into the rationale and need for the following study. It involves the purpose and significance of the study, the ways in which it adds to the previous body of literature, an overview of the research methods utilized in this study, mention of the theoretical framework, primary topics, assumptions, limitations, and gaps in the current literature.

This study addresses a social concern involving intra-racial working relationships. Black-owned environments are locations for potential cultural preservation and appreciation. As mentioned previously, by designating individuals to specific areas within a business because they do not adhere to Eurocentric dress, language, etc., their income may be compromised. And if they are turned away from the business at first sight, disregarding their credentials, and denied access to the job because of their use of a stigmatized language variety or another cultural element, they are further marginalized. This area is necessary to examine because the employee faces discrimination by those who are coming from the same or similar historical lineage and who have similar perceptions of them originating from the dominant culture, for no other reason than embracing or exhibiting cultural elements. These environments as locales where European-derived cultural and value standards/criterion should not overshadow the essence, experience, cultural capital, and expertise of the employee.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of Study

As members of the Black community seek employment, it is important for them to know the criteria required for them to attain that employment. Within frequently held conversations with members of the Black community, one has heard statements such as: “You can’t get a job talking like that [i.e. speaking Ebonics],” and questions such as “Does your job have problems with you wearing locks?” Both statements point to workplace standards that mute elements of
cultural expression. Job sites have standards specific to their businesses, but there are implicit national standards uttered by citizens pertaining to professionalism; these standards govern dress, speech, etc. The data gathered from this study has the potential to bring about self-reflexivity on the part of Black business owners as well as provide information for Black individuals seeking employment and agencies and career counselors that place unemployed Black job candidates. The information acquired from this study may be beneficial for job candidates by informing them what is expected as well as the social and political implications involved in middle class employment.

As mentioned previously, Black-owned environments (including businesses) are locations for potential cultural preservation and appreciation. These environments are locales where European-derived cultural and value standards/criterion could potentially take precedence over elements of the African American culture and emphasizes conformity to White, middle class, standards. This is an essential area to examine because, as mentioned previously “critical theorists insist that ordinary people who do not share White supremacist beliefs can still talk and behave in ways that advance the projects of White racism” (Hill, 2008, p. 7). Black business owners who act in a discriminatory fashion towards other members of the Black community or prioritize dominant cultural values as the standard could unintentionally reproduce racist practices. This study may provide insight into a trend of discriminatory practices on the part of Black owned businesses. Results from this study will serve as a useful resource for those researchers interested in the operations of white supremacy, the intersectionality of race and class, intra-racial/intragroup dynamics, and workplace standards in African American businesses. This study adds to information pertaining to intragroup/interracial interaction, information on the mentality of the Black middle class in Metropolitan Atlanta, and it may spark further
investigation into broader areas of research on white supremacy, patriarchy, and other structural components that limit or control aspects of one’s personhood or business.

1.4 Overview of Methods

This is an exploratory, qualitative study. This research is not a comparison study to non-Black businesses, but rather a study of the Black business owners themselves (or personnel assigned to hiring), their view of the Black community, and the way that has translated into their treatment of other African Americans in terms of hiring and placement within their businesses. This research utilizes six African American/Black business owners or personnel who are responsible for hiring and placement of employees within each workplace. Respondents are acquired via convenient and snowball sampling. Individuals are interviewed at a convenient time and location of their choice. They retain anonymity of their identities and are identified using pseudonyms. This study takes place in Metropolitan Atlanta; exact locations, zip codes, and business names are not included in this study in order to protect the respondents. Black professional businesses are used as a criterion in order to eliminate niche markets that specifically target Black consumers. Black businesses where nepotism may be a significant factor in the hiring and placement of employees are also eliminated from this study.

1.5 Research Questions

This qualitative study examines three overarching questions about the influence of culture in the hiring practices of Black owned businesses: Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expressions of Black employees? Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factors within Black-owned businesses? Does the cultural identity of the business owner influence hiring practices?
The first question exists to determine if culture plays a role in the Black business environment. The researcher does not assume that culture automatically plays a role. However, if it is relevant, the research seeks to discover the ways in which it is relevant. The second question is premised on the first question and explores the presence of cultural attributes within the hiring and placement practices of Black business owners to potential Black employees. The last question is focused on the employer themselves and essentially is questioning their identity and its role in the hiring and placement of Black community members.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes Social Identity Theory (SIT) as its theoretical framework. Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests a preference for members with similar attributes as oneself (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011). This theory was proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner whereby “people favor ingroups over outgroups in order to enhance their self-esteem” (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011, p. 162). This theory was first utilized to explain ingroup favoritism (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011). An ingroup consists of those individuals with similar traits as oneself and outgroups consists of those with dissimilar traits than oneself. As the name suggests, ingroup favoritism is a preference for one’s ingroup as opposed to the outgroup. In relation to the Black community, the reader may reference the information presented in this essay dealing with segmentation of the Black community. Because there are subcategories within the Black community, it is possible that particular social groupings favor and value those groups to which they belong over others (i.e. those based upon perceptions of class, educational attainment, varying modes of behavior, etc.).

“The basic principle underlying SIT is that individuals classify themselves into social categories in ways that allow them to maintain positive self-identities. One determines his or her
social identity by categorizing himself or herself, categorizing others, and attaching value to
different social categories” (Goldberg, 2003, p. 562). It may be a gratifying feeling to see the
positive traits from one’s ingroup as also attributable to the self. However, disgrace may be felt
towards those who negate or who do not readily embody the valued traits of one’s ingroup, and
thus, they are categorized as outgroup members. "SIT further posits that when an individual is a
member of a low-status group, he or she will attempt to dissociate from it, particularly when the
group boundaries are perceived as being very permeable” (Goldberg, 2003, p. 562). There is a
history of segregation and discrimination towards Blacks within the United States and there is a
perception of inferiority of those from the African continent; yoked with this view is a drive
towards assimilation to the values of those of European descendant. Visual displays of ones’
values may manifest through such factors as dress and speech.

An important component of Social Identity Theory includes the belief that ingroup
members detach affiliation from those who do not contribute a positive, self-esteem building
image to the group: “Because people generally seek to maintain a positive self-perception, they
tend to evaluate similar in-group members more favorably than dissimilar out-group members.
Further, they tend to associate themselves with the high-status groups to which they belong and
dissociate themselves from the low-status groups to which they belong” (Goldberg, 2003, p.
561). This may be the case, for instance, of those in the Black community who speak Standard
American English gazing negatively upon those who overtly and publicly speak United States
Ebonics (USEB). Additionally, those who have conformed to Eurocentric workplace grooming
standards may gaze negatively on Black Americans who choose to construct their hair in those
styles attributed primarily to those of African descent (e.g. locks, braids, cornrows, afros, etc.).
The reality is that there are socially stratified groups within the African American community,
and this may have real world consequences for those who, say, are perceived as “ghetto”, have an ethnic name, or reside in the “wrong” zip code. These individuals may face discrimination when an employer compares and contrasts them to the image they desire for themselves and their company. The consequences could affect one’s ability to get hired as well as their placement within a business.

1.7 Assumptions

All respondents, i.e. those working within the Black professional businesses, are assumed to have middle to upper class status, however their class status is to be determined based upon qualitative methods. Initially, the work environments of the Black businesses are assumed to be of their own construction and under the complete control of the business owner. However, after reading “Radicalizing Feminisms from ‘The Movement’ Era,” there may be doubts as to the amount of power these businesses realistically hold. Patriarchy and white supremacy have a massive influence on workplace interactions, and to construct a comprehensive study, the researcher must define these professional businesses along with their political ideologies and its relationship to power. According to Joy James’ text, there is a strong link between the Black elite, capitalism, and neoliberalism, which is the “merger of the conservative with liberal politics…” (James, 1999, p. 80). Thusly, these workplaces may be compromised depending on those politics with which they align. In relation to the Black community and the workplace, dominating forces have majority control and use those under a capitalistic system to their advantage. The two are intricately linked and those protocols, policies, grooming standards, ideas of professionalism, etc. may be under the cloak of Black businesses and their owners, but are in essence controlled by the state/dominant society.
1.8 **Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations**

This study is limited to those business owners and personnel within the state of Georgia. Respondents are acquired through convenience and snowball sampling. Respondents are those that work within the Metro-Atlanta area and therefore the generalizability of the study is restricted to those areas only. This research is also limited in the sense that it cannot be generalized to all businesses, just those that are in the medical field.

1.9 **Chapter Summary**

This research seeks to gather information pertaining to the perceptions that employers or hiring personnel have about Black culture and self-identity as well as how that may manifest in the hiring and placement of African American employees. In the coming chapters readers read relevant literature about the networking and financial struggles of Black businesses as well as the unfair treatment of Black employees by mainstream America. Readers will note a commonality of discrimination placed upon both parties. In the next chapter readers will also note the nuances found within the Black community and question communalism within the African American community. The third chapter notes the methodology of the study in which six Black-owned business hiring personnel in the Metropolitan Atlanta area were contacted by the researcher and interviewed about their thoughts on ideas of African American culture and self-identity, how they arrived at certain views on this subject, and how those ideas affect their hiring and placement decisions.

The individuals a business selects are in some fashion a reflection and an extension of the business and business owner. Those hired to a business are in essence representing the businesses, and therefore business owners strategically select who is best for their business’ image. This study has the potential to identify key practices within Black-owned businesses that
have not been previously identified. It has the potential to bring about answers concerning identify affiliation that could impact one’s worldview and potentially determine job attainment within the African American community. This research examines the perceptions of African Americans within business in a manner that allot them a voice to pinpoint historical and social elements that shape their worldview, identification and affiliation, and it examines whether these elements affect hiring and placement of fellow African Americans.

The theoretical framework used within this study is Social Identity Theory, which examines intragroup dynamics pertaining to both one’s affiliation and disassociation. Individuals define themselves according to the group(s) with which they are affiliated. To preserve their self-esteem, they tend to associate themselves with their high-status groups and disassociate themselves from their low-status groups. Those hired have the potential to either bolster the image of the business person as well as the business itself, or they may be “othered” by the hiring personnel and perceived as a threat to the image of the business.

While studying the Black business owners and employees, the researcher examines the condition of the Black community as a unit. Gender is not a variable within this research (i.e. there is not an intentional examination of gender dynamics). However, there is mention to certain sources pinpointing the experiences of the Black male or the Black female. Within the context of this study, there is not an intentional mention of differentiation between genders; there is only an examination of the condition of the community as a whole.

As seen within the second chapter, topics pertinent to this study include: respectability politics, communalism, identity formation, and affiliation. In the article, “The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay,” the authors believe that “Respectability politics has been a somewhat useful strategy for improving conditions for blacks. However, because it also
employs tactics as surveillance, control, and repression – largely directed toward black women – its political gains are largely undercut, and it ultimately succeeds in reinscribing dominant systems of power, namely, white capitalist heteropatriarchy” (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 724-725). Communalism involves a responsibility to oneself and a collective group. “One acts in accordance with the notion that duty to one’s social group is more important than individual rights and privileges. Hence, one’s identity is tied to group membership rather than individual status and possessions…Self-centeredness and individual greed are frowned upon” (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997, p. 411). Varying aspects of one’s identity (both self-identity and perceived identity) and the involvement of the intersectionality of race and class are also prominent topics within this essay.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

African Americans have been forced to make adjustments since their enslavement into this country. Through their lived and historical experiences, they have constructed bicultural identities that contain both African survivals and American assimilationist elements. The ways in which these cultures meld manifests through multiple modes of expressions, behaviors, and interactions. African Americans have experienced ongoing acts of racial discrimination in social, political, and economic arenas. Therefore, the ways in which they choose to handle this reality, and thusly construct their political ideologies, also varies. Through historical writings, researchers are aware that African Americans employed multiple strategies to combat their oppression; there were those who blatantly resisted, those who assimilated, and those who fell in between the spectrum and utilized their resources to mask or reconstruct their oppression. The
hiring selections that Black business owners accept within their businesses concerning such factors as behavior, style, and language are both influenced by their worldview and it simultaneously constructs a precedence for the Black business environment.

This study focuses on workplace interactions and possible, unintentional discriminatory practices within African American businesses. This study is important because African American businesses provide financial stability for minorities with the prospect of job opportunities. African Americans are community centered, but they have also been enculturated in a Eurocentric society, and thus they may hold similar values, sentiments, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes as that of the dominant culture; this may contribute to their own identity formation and affiliation and has the potential to enhance or limit job opportunities for those within their racial group. This possibility was expressed when former Associate Justice (of the U.S. Supreme Court) Thurgood Marshall stated that “[M]embers of minority groups frequently respond to discrimination and prejudice by attempting to disassociate themselves from the group, even to the point of adopting the majority’s negative attitudes towards the minority” (Schaerer, 2010, p. 61). An awareness of these practices is important because there are real economic consequences for those individuals who are denied employment based upon expressions of African American cultural or lifestyle choices that may differ from that of the hiring personnel. These practices could potentially replicate the types of oppressive practices African Americans face by the dominant American society. This chapter outlines the necessity for such a study as there is an abundance of literature that has covered discriminatory acts against African Americans by White-owned establishments, but there is a gap in the literature concerning studies that focused on the interactions that occur in Black owned establishments (particularly concerning hiring practices). There is existing literature concerning the variation that exists
within the Black community in regard to style, language, class, etc. but the literature has yet to work in concert with Black business hiring practices. Intragroup racial discrimination is not yet recognized as a valid concern in the workforce. The focus of this research is not specifically geared towards policy change, but it aims to acknowledge that subgroups within the Black community exists, and this may lead to intragroup discrimination for those who embody and embrace a Black cultural identity within a Eurocentric society. The need for the study is supported by an article written by Enrique Schaerer, as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (the document that outlines protection against discrimination) does not currently abide by an intragroup “race plus” doctrine for race related discrimination (Schaerer, 2010). This oversight in the act leaves room for culturally-based discrimination within Black-owned businesses.

Specifically, this research focuses on the Black business world and the issues that may arise with hiring and placement of Black individuals within Black owned businesses due to physical, lifestyle, and class differences found within the Black community. This study seeks to answer three research questions: Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expressions of Black employees? Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factors within Black-owned businesses? Does the cultural identity of the business owner influence hiring practices? This chapter analyzes literature that details the historical and contemporary struggles and commonalities of both Black employees and Black employers. The chapter investigates African survivals and its relevance in the contemporary African American community. Additionally, this chapter analyzes: the working environment for Blacks in America, the variation of identities that exists in the African American community, affiliation and disassociation, intragroup dynamics and discrimination, and the operation of respectability politics and class stratification. This chapter captures the essence of the varying factors that play
into a Black/African American identity, and it provides the rationale for the need of such a study in the current body of literature. In a discriminatory nation such as the United States, Black businesses are expected to play an integral role in the financial welfare of the Black community, but varying aspects relating to their identity may cause them to unintentionally reproduce discriminatory hiring criteria within the workplace that mute elements related to African American cultural identity.

2.2 Blacks’ Historical Memory and Working Relationships in America

The Black community has had a longstanding working relationship in this country, both amongst themselves and with dominant society. Blacks in the United States have such a specific, tumultuous history as Black employers and Black employees that there would seem an expectation of relatability between the two. Later sections of this chapter will demarcate the different types of identities, strategies, and beliefs held by African Americans. However, in order to gain a proper understanding of the community that exists, this section first establishes those commonalities shared by members of the African American community on both sides of the working environment (i.e. both the employer and potential employee), as aspects of the identities of both the Black employee and the Black employer are linked by historical memory. And this section sets a precedence and rationale for a cooperative, helping relationship between those coming from the same hostile environment. This section contains general germinal literature. It establishes a basis for the cultural and historical understanding of Blacks’ standpoint in America as well as a basis for cooperation and constructive interactions within the community.

The Black world has been under scrutiny and oppression since its hostile naissance within the United States. This fact remains present in every aspect of Black life, from housing to education to the workplace. There is a commonality amongst descendants of the African diaspora
that transcends basic phenotypical features. Regardless of their class background or their political ideology, they share a historical legacy of pain, judgment, and suffering as other African Americans; they have a historical memory that links them to the African American community. Historical memory within this manuscript refers to a collective past or lineage that affects a particular group of individuals, and in this case particularly, it refers to the legacy of enslavement for African Americans. In acknowledging a historical memory for Blacks within this country, that is those of African descent who were forced into the United States, Gomez writes about Blacks aboard slavers, noting that

The recognition that all who were in chains were of dark hue was significant and had some impact, but it probably did not result in moving Africans away from their previous self-perception to any appreciable degree. The more important bonding was based on a shared experience in suffering, which led to the concept of a special tie between shipmates. That this association was crucial is evidenced by the fact that it would not only be remembered by the progeny of the shipmates but also serve as a foundation for future and enduring fictive relationships. (Gomez, 1998, p. 166)

There is a shared lineage of suffering among African Americans, a historical memory that persists into the current century. As explained by Gomez, a commonality was found in the phenotypical aspects of Blacks coming from the African continent, but more pronounced was the inhumane treatment they experienced because of their physical appearance and African heritage. Noted within this excerpt is the assumption that that anguish continues throughout the upcoming centuries, and it is inherited from generation to generation and functions as a unifying component for Blacks in America. In relation to the business world, discrimination has been stowed upon both the Black businessperson in America as well as the Black employee in
America. A component of this study involves examining the commonalities found within the Black community in terms of their general struggles being Black in America as well as differences found within the Black community.

### 2.2.1 Black Owners in the Business World

First, I critically analyze the stereotypes and myths surrounding Black businesses, and I provide counter-evidence by referencing scholars who are versed in Black businesses. Black business owners and entrepreneurs in America have endured discrimination in every sector of the business world for no reason other than their African lineage and historical linkage to American slavery. They have been marginalized through the startup and into the maintenance of their business endeavors. Their lack of progress has been attributed to a lack of business insight and a cultural deficiency rather than the acknowledgment of systemic racist factors that have created an uneven playing field, and it has barred Black businessmen from receiving the same opportunities and benefits as their White counterparts. Contrary to the previously stated belief, Blacks do not inherently lack business wisdom, rather, there is evidence that they possessed a business acumen prior to their arrival at the United States’ borders, and they have retained and utilized these skills and talents thereafter.

“As enslaved Africans became free in colonial America, they used their slave labor activities to their own economic advantage” which was “the initial step in the development of the African American Business tradition” (Walker, 2009, p. 41). However, before there was an African American business tradition, there was an African business tradition. Juliet Walker wrote of traders, ironworkers, entrepreneurs, and craftsmen in precolonial Africa: “Although seldom emphasized by scholars of the American experience, trade and marketing were economic activities in which all Africans either participated or held an interest, regardless of their societal
status or where they stood on the occupational hierarchy” (Walker, 2009, p. 1). The previous insert was used to illustrate the commonality of business endeavors within African societies. There existed business-minded individuals within differing class strata, implying that even those with the bare minimum in education and finances still were involved in the business world while on the African continent. Another takeaway from this quote is the fact that these business relations are not frequently mentioned when referencing those who have an African lineage. This indicates an inattention to the business tradition of those from the African continent. This neglect continues into the research of today – where invaluable information is omitted for lack of interest in exploration; this may account for the limited amount of information on the current research study concerning Black business hiring and placement.

In terms of precolonial business endeavors, one may refer to the example that “Few differences existed between occupations of Africans on the seventeenth century Gold Coast and those of Africans in colonial America” (Walker, 2009, p. 42). In fact, particular African cultural groups were preferred and selected because of their expertise in particular arenas. This point is included to support the fact the Black businesses are stereotyped unfairly based upon previously conceived, yet unfound, notions about those from the African continent. The stereotyping of the Black community has permeated through various areas of American society, questioning their business acumen and work ethic, where dominant society evaluates Black society as less than despite innovation and success in the business world. As stated by Robert Hill, a “…myth about blacks is their alleged lack of business tradition. Yet, the history of America reveals that blacks owned numerous businesses that catered to white or black patrons – even during slavery” (Hill, 1999, p. 99). For example, Hill noted that, “George Washington, as a military leader, often held
meetings at Fraunces Tavern, an establishment in New York City owned by Samuel Fraunces, a free black, during the 1790s” (Hill, 1999, p. 99-100).

Through written histories recorded by scholars such as Walker, Hill, and the like, the reader is granted insight on the fortitude and resourcefulness of Black Americans in business. Even under a plantocracy some enslaved persons were granted access to provision grounds in order to grow their own food. They used that window of opportunity to manufacture a way to monetize any excess provisions in their possession (Walker, 2009). According to Walker “…it was not unusual for slaves in colonial America to have extensive provision grounds, which allowed not only for food production for themselves but also for surplus production” (Walker, 2009, p. 31). This provision-ground system was permitted because it was financially advantageous for the planters as it reduced “maintenance costs of slaves” and because “Some planters purchased these commodities for resale at a profit” (Walker, 2009, p. 33-34). Despite the sale of goods to their slave owners, the enslaved

…preferred to market their own products, thus maximizing their profits by eliminating their owners as middlemen…Slave provision-ground commodities were available for sale and/or barter and trade on three levels: through sale to their owners, through sale within the internal slave community, and by marketing their products in nearby towns and villages. The last system allowed slaves to begin to operate in a cash system. (Walker, 2009, p. 34)

There was an economical strategy involved in the sale of excess provisional goods, and enslaved persons used the routes most advantageous for themselves. They employed a business mindset and discovered methods to finance their needs in the face of limited and extremely oppressive conditions. They utilized the resources at their disposal, and in a way created their own
businesses in the sale of crops from their provision grounds. This research is geared towards establishing a foundation to understanding Black businesses. The previous accounts stand as a necessary starting point to the building blocks needed to build familiarity with the business environment for Blacks in America. Through these documented histories, I analyzed literature that dispelled negative business stereotypes of idleness and inadequacy often erroneously attributed to Black businesspersons. Unfortunately, scholars are aware that history does not occur in isolation, and stereotypes can be retold, reified, and topple into subsequent generations. This has been the case for Black business owners and Black employees, which leaves them facing an uphill battle in the business world.

Next, I examine the obstacles that Black business owners have faced along their journey of business attainment, networking, and maintenance. This speaks to the inequitable journey that Black Americans in business have encountered. I acknowledge that Black businesses can have drastically different experiences and outcomes, but the following segment examines factors that have stood as barriers to Black business progress. This portion speaks to the structural business environment and the type of system in which Black individuals are encapsulated while operating in White America. Although the previous accomplishments of Black enterprise are taken into consideration, there is also an acknowledgment that Black business owners have been on the outskirts of business development within this country -i.e. they have not been granted as much economic mobility as their White counterparts.

African American business owners have struggled to maintain and operate their businesses as racial prejudice and discrimination has persisted. As a society, we are aware that “…literally from the beginning of black settlement in America, laws were constructed to discourage black business activity” (Walker, 2009, p. xx). Walker evidences the fact that
intentional efforts were made to inhibit Black business success, and this reality is woven into the fabric of the working environment for Black business owners in America. It is confirmation of the “shared experience in suffering” described earlier by Gomez (Gomez, 1998, p. 166). Struggles for African Americans have included denial of loans and subsidies, denial of government contracts, as well as blockades in competition and networking. Feagin and Imani note that “…social networks play a central role in the discrimination faced by African American businesspeople” and through their examination of Black owned construction companies, the researchers noted the ostracism those in this sector faced from the White business world (Feagin & Imani, 1994, p. 565). Feagin & Imani found discrimination in the social networks of construction workers, whereby Black business owners in this sector were excluded from social networks and were unable to build the same business connections as Whites who had preexisting relationships (Feagin & Imani, 1994). Additionally, Blacks have been strong-armed out of their businesses, sabotaged by White employees, threatened, and have endured physical and psychological violence (Walker, 2009). For instance, Free Frank was an ex-slave who owned a saltpeter enterprise but was forced to partner with a White slave owner. This slave owner owned Frank’s son and forced Frank to relinquish ownership of his entire company in order to manumit his son (Walker, 2009, p. 158). In another instance, a Black entrepreneur and businessman, Henry Boyd, invented and created a corded bedstead business, but he left his business after habitual arson (Walker, 2009, p. 159-160). And Black business owner Lunsford Lane was tarred and feathered because of his business (Walker, 2009, p. 162). These examples stand as evidence of agitation from dominant society while in pursuit of the same opportunities and success granted to Black business owners’ White counterparts. It was the case that the most successful Black businesses were those that received patronage from wealthy Whites; they were the ones that
reaped the most protection (Walker, 2009, p. 161). But this protection only existed for Blacks that knew how to “keep their place” (Walker, 2009, p. 62). Black business owners had to yield to and accommodate the White world to thrive; they were not always allowed the equal opportunity to stand on their own and prosper.

While the barriers to success are less overtly evident and accepted in today’s society and some of the previous tactics have been outlawed, current literature suggests that inequalities still exist that limit Black business success. The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) was founded in 1977 to address credit inequality and aid in serving those in designated areas that have credit needs; this includes small business minority owners located in minority neighborhoods (Bates & Robb, 2015). A study conducted in 2015 by Timothy Bates and Alicia Robb revealed an existence of “discouraged borrowers”—that is those who do not “apply for loans because they believe their applications will be denied…” (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1703). One may infer discouragement resulting from decades of loan rejections. It is a mentality rooted in historical accuracy, but it may also be symptomatic of confirmation bias. Minority businesses are dismayed and adhere to an ideology of defeat that may or may not be founded, but it ultimately places these businesses in the same predicament as if they were denied the loan—that is, they receive no financial support for their businesses.

Bates’ and Robb’s study also found that creditworthy minority owned businesses located outside of minority neighborhoods were less likely to get approved for loans by banks (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1716). The study suggests that the denial of loans is due the vagueness of the CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) that does not require adherence of the act outside of low and moderate income areas (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1716). A caveat has been found and implemented to the disadvantage of minority businesses in nonminority areas. The “…regulatory
authorities have repeatedly stated that the CRA obligations of banks entail serving the credit needs of low- and moderate-income areas *rather than* those of minority clients…” (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1716). So, this regulation does not adequately protect all minority clientele across the board, only those within minority neighborhoods. While it has proven beneficial in regulating fairness regarding the crediting needs of minorities in minority neighborhood, it does not extend to minorities in nonminority neighborhoods. In fact, Bates’ and Robb’s study has found that outside of minority neighborhoods, the trend for loan approval has consisted of business owners who are White and have “personal wealth of at least $50,000” (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1716). The authors explicitly stated that “…firms are penalised [sic] if their owners are African American, Latino or Asian American” (Bates & Robb, 2015, p. 1702). The results of this study reveal two important truths: discrimination still exists from banks for minorities, and there is an importance and sheer need to improve initiatives like the CRA for a still-hostile and discriminatory business environment. The discriminatory tactics and isolation in business practices have not been eliminated, and Black owned businesses continue to contend with that reality. It is not the case that the Black businessperson is inept in business relations or that there exists a cultural deficit, but it is clear that a hostile and discriminatory business environment makes for more of an arduous experience resulting from the historical memory mentioned previously. The barriers to business progress and success are not always evident or insurmountable, but they exist just the same.

Walker posits that

…relatively few free black businesspeople achieved success comparable to their white counterparts [which] can be attributed neither to any lack of business acumen or entrepreneurial expertise nor a failure of acculturation to the American business
community. Rather, slavery and racism precluded all but a few blacks from tapping into the business social system that existed in the colonies. (Walker, 2009, p. 42)

Walker was heavily utilized in the first half of this section to provide background information into the business world for Black employers. The reader can recognize discriminatory elements that have been utilized to inhibit Black/African American business’ success as Walker and subsequent researchers stand in conversation to make known the hardships of Black business owners in America. As this section progresses, readers may note the similarities and stereotypes that the business owner and the employer share, for no reason other than their heritage (i.e. their historical memory).

2.2.2 Black Employees in the Business World

Identically to Black business owners, Black employees too have faced discrimination within the business world. A recent example lies in the case of Ashley Davis. Davis was a woman who worked for a finance company in Missouri. She had been employed there for a couple of months when she was advised to cut her dreadlocks. Davis had been growing her locks for over a decade and she was hired sporting her strawberry-colored locks. Company representatives from her employer, Tower Loans, informed Davis that her locks were in violation of a new corporate policy mandating specific grooming requirements. Tower Loans deemed Davis’ locks as inappropriate for the firm; they grouped her hairstyle along with others such as: braids, Mohawks, mullets, etc. Davis expressed hesitation when advised to cut off her locks; she claimed that they were “part of her identity, family, and culture” (Anker, 2013, para. 2). When asked about Davis’ case, company representatives stated: “Tower [Loans] believes that a professional appearance is necessary for the success of the company” (Manuel-Logan, 2013, para. 6). Locks are a style worn by some African-derived people for a number of specified
reasons including style, cultural, spiritual, and religious reasons. By denying Davis the right to her locks, this company is muting aspects of cultural expression and labeling her hairstyle as unsuitable for the professional world. There are conflicting views on what is considered professional. This is asserted because Davis relayed to interviewers “My hair is part of me and it makes me the professional and bubbly person I am” (Anker, 2013, para. 4). Davis claimed that she was the only one in the office with locks, and she commented, "I've only been there for two months and they came up with a policy. I feel like it's degrading” (Anker, 2013, para. 4). From Davis’ testimony, the reader sees that such a policy did not exist prior to her employment there. The company drafted a policy that specifically targeted a part of Davis’ style that is frequently found within the Black community and they deemed it unprofessional for their firm. It exhibits lack of cultural sensitivity and forethought for African American employees who have not completely assimilated to a Eurocentric form of dress/style.

It seems obvious from Davis’ standpoint that her locks were in line with what she proclaims to be professional, but the company for which she works disagreed. Even through basic textual analysis, this researcher has noticed that the way in which Davis’ story was reported according to Headline News (HLN). HLN presented Davis’ dilemma as an issue that could be easily remedied. In telling her story, HLN stated, “That might not seem like too difficult a decision to make, especially in this job market, but the 24-year-old secretary says her hairstyle is part of her identity…” (Anker, 2013, para. 2). This statement by HLN is problematic because it minimizes the decision that Davis had to consider. HLN also did not take into consideration that cutting her hair would mean physical alterations for her not only within the working environment, but also as she leaves her job for the evening and returns to and interacts with members of her community. The company did not ask for her to conceal a tattoo with makeup or
even for her to dye her hair, but they required that she drastically changes her appearance by literally cutting off an extension of herself, that is, something that she claims has been part of her identity for about ten years. HLN diminished a drastic change that could prove traumatic for this individual if she were to acquiesce.

NewsOne, on the other hand, simply presented the facts of Davis’ case without assigning judgment to her dilemma. Team members of NewsOne may be able to relate to her on some account (e.g. personally or through thoughts of family members facing similar predicaments, or even on the basis of known racial discrimination within this country), and thusly treated her story more sensitively than that of HLN. There is a sense of understanding from those who belonged to the same community. However, as noted previously within the Background & Context of Study section, this type of affiliation is not ever-present. Members of the Black community do not always identify with those who experience discrimination based on lifestyle choices related to their cultural background. In Davis’ and multiple other cases, someone of the Black community is asked to deny aspects of their selfhood in order to “secure broader access to the public sphere” (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 724). They are forced to assimilate in order to retain financial stability. We learn from the experience of those in Davis’ predicament that acceptance of styles primarily adorned by those of an African heritage are not yet universally accepted. There are still negative stereotypes and associations connected with certain physical African American traits and characteristics, and judgements are formed when one exudes aspects of Black culture within the working environment of non-Black persons. There is more of an examination of hair later within this chapter, but the previous example stands as evidence of deliberate barriers to success for Black employees who embody blackness (i.e. express a Black/African America cultural identity) within White-owned establishments.
Ms. Davis’ testimony is but one of many. Numerous African Americans face difficulty maintaining a job after acquiring one, but there are many more who face difficulty getting their foot in the door. As recently as February 2019, The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that unemployment for Blacks is more than twice as high as it is for Whites, so there is no question that job disparity exists for the African American worker (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Researchers have formulated various hypotheses for the job disparity. These hypotheses include those relating to cultural deficiencies, discrimination against African Americans, and environmental/social factors.

Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff (1998) cited the cultural capital/employer preference hypothesis as one where these wage disparities are a reflection of “character deficiencies and deviant values…” (Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 1998, p. 21). The authors of this study characterize supporters of this theory as cultural capital theorists. Cultural capital theorists believe that inner city Black men choose not to work due to resentment from the history of enslavement and sharecropping (Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 1998). These theorists believe that as a result of their immorality, inner-city African American males “do not have the appropriate set of cultural capital attributes – morals, values, attitudes, and behavioral traits – to compete for jobs in the contemporary American labor market” (Johnston, Farrell, and Stoloff, 1998, p. 21). These theorists define moral poverty as a lack of positive and supporting influences who are tasked with instilling values and responsibility for African Americans at a young age. It is the belief that this lack of morality (and thus inadequacy in job attainment) also derives from being raised by those in an environment who engage in criminality (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998, p. 22) This theory plays into a stigma associated with the African American community that reflects a cultural deficiency. It implies that African Americans are inept at raising children with
the love and support needed for them to later thrive in society. The theory also explained that those who descend from slavery have an acquired distaste for work. These theorists believe that the lack of employment manifests from a conscious decision by scorned Black Americans, and thusly reduces the lack of employment to a self-sabotaging act.

This researcher prefers to refute the aforementioned theory that places blame of the lack of employment on a supposed cultural deficit, and I supplant it with the stance taken by Robert B. Hill in *The Strengths of African American Families: Twenty-Five Years Later* (1999). In speaking of their work ethic, Hill notes African Americans as a work-oriented group (Hill, 1999). It is known that even after slavery, African Americans sharecropped in order to make a living; they were cheated during this process and even relocation during times of low job opportunities or no work—moving northward during various waves in pursuit of jobs. Hill refutes the beliefs of cultural capitalist by noting that “The attitudes, values, and behavior that might seem endemic to the urban poor reflect the inevitable adaptation to blocked opportunities that characterize the lives of many who live in low-income, urban areas…Urban poverty has little to do with values, attitudes, and behavior” (Anderson, 2002, p. 75). The previously-stated hypothesis (i.e. the cultural capital/employer preference hypothesis) is based upon conjecture rather than factual information, and it is rooted in stereotypes that minimize the efforts made by African Americans. This theory does not take into account the findings of those such as Kirschenman and Neckerman, who found that negative stereotypes of Black men are integrated in the screening processes for recruitment and hiring: “...irrespective of their socioeconomic status or their human capital skills, employers will often use the type of school attended or residential address to screen out or reject African American job applicants” (Johnson, Farrell, &
Stoloff, 1998, p. 22-23). This specific example transitions perfectly into the subsequent theory, whereby systemic factors influence job attainment.

The search and destroy hypothesis: “posits that the African American male is being systematically targeted for discriminatory treatment and exploitation in at least three domains: the labor market, education and job training, and the criminal justice system” (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998, p. 22). The reader may notice that according to this theory, multiple external factors contribute to job disparity amongst African American males; it is an issue with overlapping and continued oppression. One area, for instance, is the disproportionate targeting and incarceration of Black males, and the difficulty experienced afterwards when seeking employment. Incarceration (just one of many external factors that contribute to job disparity), Johnson and Oliver stated, “breeds despair, and hopelessness, and in the employment arena, it is the ‘Scarlet Letter’ of unemployability [sic]” (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998, p. 27). The reader may note that disparity does not occur in isolation; it is a cyclical matter that can begin with opportunity gaps in education and continue into the workforce. Systemic factors in different fields (e.g. education) amalgamate to cause further despair and work to the disadvantage of African Americans.

The last ideas that I analyze are the social capital and spatial isolation hypotheses. I mention these hypotheses in tandem because they both rely on environmental/social factors as a hindrance to job acquisition. Networking is an essential factor for the job market. It was discussed earlier as an essential interaction amongst business owners, but it is also important for the employee. Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff cite the social capital hypothesis as one of lacking social interactions (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998). Supporters of this theory suggest building heterogeneous networks as a solution to this problem. As it is now, based upon theorist
observation, African American (men) have strong homogeneous networks, but they need more diversity in their environments in order to create the necessary heterogeneous networks (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998). Similarly, the spatial isolation hypothesis notes that there is hypersegregation or “concentrated poverty communities” to the extent where job access is extremely limited (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998, p. 17). Essentially, these hypotheses suggest lack of contact with those of the dominant society as a cause of unemployment for Black workers; it suggests that success in finding employment lies in expounding beyond the African American community. One may make the connection that the existence of environmental/social barriers are often a cause of the systemic factors mentioned in the previous hypothesis. And as we see, they bleed into the labor market and contribute to job disparities for African Americans.

### 2.2.3 Black Workers: Commonality of Struggle

The section above is intended to be a comprehensive explanation of the perceptions and predicaments of Black workers in America. Whether it is the Black employer or the employee, there is a commonality of struggle and despair amongst the two. Both the Black employee and employer face stigmas and discrimination in the business environment. Within the workplace, African Americans are “…perceived as lazy, inarticulate, uneducable, untrainable and most importantly, dangerous” (Johnson, Farrell, & Stoloff, 1998, p. 22). The search and destroy hypothesis latched onto the root cause of job disparity for African Americans, as it identified a system that does not provide equitable opportunities for the Black worker, but instead builds upon various factors that contribute to the marginalization of African Americans within American society.

As this manuscript progresses, the reader will see that even with all of the negative outside forces that Blacks in business have historically endured, Black businesses are in a uniquely
positive position because they have the opportunity to hire African Americans and minimize job disparity, thus, they are presumed to be an important factor to the Black community. However, whether discrimination and the beliefs of these stereotypes continues within the African American working environment is yet to be determined. And it is important to update and expand the literature and determine where these stereotypes play an underlying role in the current business environment within African American businesses.

2.3 **Communalism and the Importance of the African American Business for the African American**

“Because all members of a race are impacted by racism equally, this can create solidarity among members of that race in opposing such discrimination” (McCray, 2012, p. 163).

Blacks in America endure an arduous trek through the business world, and the call to action against injustice often includes the notion of having and supporting their own businesses. This concept is viewed as a way to avoid the workplace discrimination that Blacks in America face; communalism and a sense of responsibility/duty are assumed to come into play. It suggests an insular, separate structure from discriminatory America, and promotes one that is presumably less discriminatory based upon a similar cultural background. This research essentially examines the value in such assumptions; it examines the ways this communal mentality actually manifests on the part of the Black employer and within the Black owned workplace. Even with all the negative outside forces that Black businesses have historically endured, the owners are presumed to be in a unique position that may be advantageous to the Black community. Black business owners have the opportunity to hire African Americans and minimize job disparity. This is a possibility because literature has revealed that African Americans exhibit elements of communalism. Communalism is a concept that is thought to be embodied in the “cultural legacy”
of African Americans (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 409). It involves a mentality of interconnectedness whereby “...the good of the individual is closely interwinded with the good of the group” (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 410). This concept involves “the notion that duty to one’s social group is more important than individual rights and privileges” which is emphasized by the axiom “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am” (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 410-411). Through prior studies, this researcher is aware of a sense of interconnectedness and communalism within the Black community and within the Black business arena in particular. Communalism is an Africanism, that is, it is a remnant of the African past that was handed down to diasporic Africans and their subsequent generations. In West and Central Africa,

The production of goods and trade and marketing activities...was propelled by a high degree of both individual and communally based, profit-oriented entrepreneurial activities. The motivation to accumulate wealth was quite complex, involving the individual, his or her kinship group, and the community...The economic success of the individuals, then, were inextricably tied to the kinship group...” (Walker, 2009, p. 9)

One may notice the community ties found within a study conducted by Melvin Oliver (1988). The researcher discovered that Black residents in three research locals were densely knit and tied to large networks; each community averaged six or seven people who were tied to research respondents through social interaction and/or giving and receiving emotional and material support. Although kinship was the main source of these ties for all communities, there was an elaborate organization of personal networks that linked people together within and outside the community in bonds of support and sociality (Oliver, 1988). On the level of employment, Black business owners have exhibited communalism outside of their immediate communities and into
In other words, African Americans business owners have taken advantage of their position as hiring agents in a way that is advantageous to the Black community. Black businesses have been shown to support the Black community and the Black employee. A study conducted by Bates (1994) revealed that Black employers hire a greater percentage of African Americans and see this as a responsibility to their community. Bates (1994) examined the employment patterns of White and Black-owned small businesses in a manner that reduces uncertainty about geographic proximity of minority employees to jobs. Results reveal that nonminority owners do not often employ minorities even when their business is located in minority communities (Bates, 1994). Conversely, African American businesses heavily utilize minority workers even if their businesses are not located in minority neighborhoods (Bates, 1994). In this way, researchers see that African American businesses play a significant role in the livelihood of their community members.

Along the same vein, studies reveal the existence of philanthropy amongst large Black businesses. Edmonson & Carroll’s (1999) study acquired their sample from Black Enterprise magazine, whereby 498 firms participated in the study. The researchers found that these Black businesses favored the support of youth activities, gifts to charities like the United Negro College fund, as well as those to Black colleges (Edmonson & Carroll, 1999). The activities mentioned most by respondents were youth activities, development programs and church activities that benefitted the community. These businesses gave back to those they believed would impact the community the most. They also cooperate with other Black businesses with the goal of giving even more into the Black community. In examining their motivation for giving, researchers found that the primary factors were: protecting and improving the environment in which they
live, work and do business; practicing good citizenship; and giving back with nothing expected in return (Edmonson & Carroll, 1999).

It is important to reiterate that the current study is not a comparative study of Blacks and their White counterparts, but it is worth noting in this section that even within a study comparing Black and White women and their upwards mobility, where the women were questioned as to whether they owed their relatives for the help given to them (i.e. those who aided in their upward mobility), white women did not initially understand the question. After the question was explained, 46 % of the working-class White women answered to the affirmative, and 68 % of the middle-class White women answered to the affirmative. When Black women were asked the same question, they responded immediately and 86 % of the working-class Black women answered yes, and 74 % of the middle-class Black women answered yes (Higginbotham E., & Webber, L., 1992). Based upon the results of this study, there seems to be more acknowledgement of community effort as contributing to one’s success within the Black community; the upward mobility according to most of the Black women in Higginbotham and Webber’s study is attributed to those within their network. In relation to the communalism definition, the effort of the community contributed to the upward mobility experienced by the Black women in this study.

The purpose of this section was to illustrate the nature of communal relationships within the Black community as well as the extent to which it reaches. The members of the community included both fictive kinships and consanguineous relationships. In sum, there were cases of communalism based upon uplifting those who possessed blood relationships, and in other cases it was based simply on community ties and desiring whatever would be deemed beneficial for the Black community. This concept is important to the subject of hiring within Black businesses
because there is a presumed idea of mutual support for those in the Black community, not only because of Africanisms, but also to subvert the discrimination and suffering endured by this particular group.

2.4 Segmentation: The Multiple Facets of Identity and Affiliation/Disassociation

Thus far in this manuscript, there has been an emphasis on the ways in which Black descendants of the African diaspora, mostly descended from those who were enslaved from the Western region, are similar. There has been emphasis placed on the commonality of struggle for African Americans as both employees and employers. The reader has seen adequate examples of stereotyping, discrimination, and racism towards the Black employer and the Black employee. They have seen the ties of suffering that bind those described earlier by Gomez as well as the communal links that are forged within the Black community. Similarities aside, readers and researchers must also take into consideration the ways in which Black Americans differ and the ways in which these differences affect Black business owners and the interactions that they have with others of their racial background. When speaking generally about identity, there are multiple routes available to researchers. These routes include those such as physical appearance, spiritual/religious beliefs and practices, language and naming, class and other background considerations as well as political ideologies. These factors also influence worldview and with whom one chooses and refuses to associate. The title of this manuscript, *Embodying Blackness*, is explored in this specific section. Within this section, readers will recognize that there are multiple ways to express one’s embodiment of African American culture, as Black/African American culture is not linear nor does it fall into a cookie cutter definition. In whatever way one chooses to embody their Blackness, it is individualized, but it may also serve as a source of contention when interacting with those who define their Blackness within differing parameters.
In this portion of the literature review, some of the aforementioned variables are analyzed in order to serve as a counterbalance to the similarities that African Americans share. This portion of the manuscript is meant to allow the reader to see undulant factors that may mediate the decision-making process for hiring bodies within African American businesses; it leaves room for variance in the actions, responses, and personal characteristics of different African Americans. African Americans are not a monolith; just as African Americans differed in their reactions to oppressive systems (e.g. some fought, assimilated, or created their own communities), African Americans in their present state and situations choose differing approaches to everyday situations. Blacks in America still differ on their methods in fighting for freedom and injustice, contingent on the belief that this is a concern for particular individuals. Some African Americans may choose to assimilate, and some are dismissive of the issues and extent of discrimination and racism present within society (i.e. they may embrace a colorblind ideology). Also, the reader must take into consideration that identity is fluid; the goals and concerns of individuals at one point and time may differ over time, as noted by scholar Oba T’shaka (2004). Regardless of a collective, historical memory, individuals may allow intragroup differences to work as a divisive tool, resulting in devastating consequences (e.g. individuals may allow professional degrees to create further degrees of separation from those who lack the higher education and social conditioning that they themselves have attained). This is where social identity theory comes into play. In sum, social identity theory suggests a preference for members with similar attributes as oneself, and members detach affiliation from those who do not contribute a positive, self-esteem building image to the group (Goldberg, 2003). As expressed by law professor, Janet Ainsworth, “Sometimes social actors will consciously downplay identity attributes, especially when those aspects of their identity are devalued or
stigmatized within society” (Ainsworth, 2011, p. 3). A devastating realization of Black business ownership, for those who believe in strong community bonds and cooperation, would be to discover that those in hiring positions disassociate from traits found within the Black community in the name of professionalism and in an attempt to blend in with mainstream society.

2.4.1 Physical Appearance

Physical appearance is a factor that has been used to define people of varying races, and it has played a role in separating those within assumed racial categories. It is known that race has not only been used to readily identify groups of people, but it has also been used to place them within social hierarchies. Historians may recognize its origins as belonging to the 1740 classifying system of Carolus Linnaeus, who categorized racial groups and assigned mental and behavioral identifiers to those categories (Eller, 2009). Linnaeus not only included physical characteristics in his typology, but also assigned what he believed to be inherently negative or positive behavioral and moral traits that explicitly grant racial superiority to one group (i.e. European descendants) over others (i.e. those who are considered racial minorities today). During its time, Linnaeus’ and other related schools of thought were considered biologically sound. Subsequent theorists, and society at large “placed the White individual and his/her society at the top of a hierarchy of psychological/sociological development, and all other societies were judged deficient against this standard” (Fallace, 2012, p. 512). Ideas of beauty, worth, and competence that were based on these models have continued into the present era.

2.4.1.1 Colorism

Race in the U.S. has been largely constructed as a binary of Black and White, where the two are juxtaposed and assessed (Harrison, 2010). Related to this discussion is the topic of colorism. Colorism is an offspring of the dichotomous pair (i.e. the racial binary mentioned
above) that has seeped into the Black community, and it is utilized as an evaluative tool on everything ranging from beauty to behavior. “Historically, degrees of pigmentation in skin tone played a greater role in the determination of how black people were aesthetically viewed or moralistically judged as other and monstrous…” (Stallings, 2010, p. 363). This color-based system stems from the treatment that lighter skinned or mixed-race Blacks received during the slavery era. Those with mixed ancestry were manumitted at a greater rate and they were granted better opportunities and financial mobility than their darker skinned counterparts (Frazier, 1957). In essence, those with lighter skin inherited a better social position and life chance, and many strove to maintain that privilege by intentionally reproducing and upholding the value system of the White ruling class. Upper class Blacks perpetuated this hierarchical structure and school of thought (i.e. that lighter skin/ mixed heritage was that which topped the social hierarchy for those within the Black community) and used this criteria as the foundation for a variety of social societies/clubs. For instance, the Brown Fellowship Society excluded dark skinned Blacks, and the Blue Vein Society consisted of those whose members had skin that was light enough to view the blue veins beneath the skin (Stuckey, 1987). There was a linking of class and color within the Black community. It is the case where lighter skinned Blacks desired distinction from their darker hued counterparts as a symbol of progress, sophistication, and class.

In order to eliminate workplace discrimination, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. Title VII forbids discrimination in the workplace; discrimination on such factors as race, sex, color, and religion are included in this decree (McCray, 2012). However, “Today, most acts of color discrimination are perpetuated in the work environment” (McCray, 2012, p. 175). According to McCray (2012) “Whites tend to hire and promote those with lighter skin because they feel that light skinned individuals are more closely connected to Whiteness and have
somewhat rid themselves of certain traits that are supposedly innate in their darker-skinned counterparts” (165). In relation to hiring practices, past studies have shown that the disparities of socioeconomic status between those with light skin versus dark skin is similar to the disparities found between Whites and Blacks (Harrison, 2010). According to Harrison (2010) lighter skinned men and women are still preferred by employers than are their darker skinned counterparts. For darker skinned men, this fact holds true even if they are more qualified for the position than their lighter skinned counterparts (Harrison, 2010). And for Black women, when comparing those with the same qualifications, lighter skinned Black women often make more money than darker skinned women (Harrison 2010). The reality of workplace color discrimination is that it exists and has proven difficult to eradicate from the workplace (McCray, 2012).

An interesting proposition by McCray is that colorism has the potential to be muted when one considers racism (McCray, 2012). Due to the fact that racism negatively impacts all of those within a marginalized race, the issue of racism can overshadow colorism and force communal bonds amongst those of varying colors within that marginalized race (McCray, 2012). That assertion is relevant to this particular study as Black owned businesses are often viewed as a type of refuge from racist, mainstream society. The hope of potential employees would be that the overcast of racism and domination present in the outside world would build solidarity amongst those who are regularly targets of that discrimination and racism. “This solidarity can temper the severity of the fractionalization caused by colorism” (McCray, 2012, p. 163). Thusly, it may be reasoned by hopeful, potential employees that color and other cultural characteristics would not pose an issue. Skin color and hair texture are closely related sources of conflict as it relates to the identities of African Americans (Turner, 1995). These phenotypical traits serve as markers of
descent, and both have prompted discussion and marginalization in the personal and professional lives of African Americans. Next, the politics of Black hair is examined.

2.4.1.2 The Politics of Black Hair

Still along the lines of physical distinction, one may examine the treatment given to Black hair. However, whereas skin shade is considered an immutable characteristic, other attributes such as Black hair and one’s clothing pose a bit more difficulty to defend within the workplace because they are often considered mutable states of one’s selfhood. Referencing the above mention of Ms. Davis, the reader recalls that Tower Loans required that she cut her locks (i.e. a request that is possible to abide by because hair can be altered rather quickly). Those unfamiliar with Black hair politics or those who have assimilated to Euro-American standards may take this demand (of drastically altering one’s hair) lightly. In reality, scholars versed on this subject are aware that there is a queerness to Black hair (i.e. it deviates from what is considered to be the norm in the current society); it stems beyond a simple fashion choice for those who choose to wear natural styles (Stallings, 2010).

Black hair, typically classified as nappy or kinky, meant deep ties to African peoples. So-called good hair meant that some racial border had been transgressed through interracial sexual relationships. Eventually, black people with fine-textured hair similar to that of Europeans were valued more and seen as less abnormal. (Stallings, 2010, p. 363)

The treatment given to Black hair follows closely to that revealed earlier pertaining to skin color. Those with looser textures were more closely associated with Whites and mainstream America, and thus their hair was seen as more acceptable than kinkier textures. For African Americans who expected to pass as White (whether it was to gain social equality or upward mobility), hair was an essential component in accomplishing these goals (Stallings, 2010). The
language used to describe natural hair (e.g. kinky) has been linked with (sexual) deviance in what is otherwise a conservative society, and thus it carries negative connotations (Stallings, 2010). Kinky, natural, textured hair has attracted a great amount of attention in terms of its treatment in professional settings such as school and work, where employers and officials prefer hair and hairstyles that closely resemble those of White Americas. There have been various articles and reports written about workplace grooming standards that do not outright list natural hair styles as problematic, but these businesses have used other qualifiers in their policies to deem these styles as inappropriate for the workplace. “Workplace grooming policies generally require that hair be groomed in a manner that is professional, businesslike, conservative, not ‘too excessive,’ ‘eyecatching [sic] or different,’ or that employees cover hairstyles that are ‘unconventional,’ and so on.” (Bennett-Alexander & Harrison, 2016, p. 438). By juxtaposing Black hair against this criteria and forbidding it, it perpetuates the message that Black hair is not professional and businesslike, but rather that it is different and inappropriate for the workplace. It further emphasizes those traits of Whiteness as the standard by which all others must strive to obtain, and to lack these traits may place one’s employment in jeopardy.

The same officials placing restrictions on Black hair are also commonly unaware of the choices, thought process, and consequences and that accompany Black hair. For instance,

Straightening one’s hair can be problematic. It is expensive to maintain and can only be achieved by using strong chemicals that can sometimes cause hair breakage and skin lesions. In addition, some Black women see straightening as an act of conforming to white expectations of what all hair should be like. (Ainsworth, 2014, p. 8)

There have been cases where Black women were forced to wear wigs at their workplace to cover their natural hair, which caused them frequent headaches (Ainsworth, 2014). And for
others, the only acceptable natural hairstyle seems to be an afro. Hairstyles such as dreadlocks, braids, and cornrows have all been mentioned as unacceptable within some working environments. Bennet-Alexander and Harrison (2016) made an insightful observation when they questioned why all form of locks are inherently banned in certain workplaces instead strictly prohibiting those that are obviously unkempt. Such policies place an inherent disheveled stereotype on all dreadlocks.

By refusing to allow a black woman to wear her hair in a particular style typically worn by women with natural hair, the employer is implying that no woman who wears dreadlocks, braids, or cornrows could possibly fit within the category of neat, clean, and well-groomed. (Bennet-Alexander & Harrison, 2016, p. 452)

And in terms of the afro standing as the only acceptable hairstyle for those African Americans who choose to keep their hair in an unaltered state, I thought that this was particularly observant of the authors to mark such a distinguishing factor on this subject (Bennet-Alexander & Harrison, 2016). By stating that natural hair may be worn within a workplace, but simultaneously banning braids, locks, twists, and cornrows, the African American employee is relegated to only wearing their natural hair in an afro-textured state. When it comes to the upkeep of such a hairstyle, natural, afro hair that is exposed to the elements for extended amounts of time is prone to breakage. Whereas locks, braids, twists, etc. are considered protective styles that aid in the health of natural hair. Through the implementation of these policies, employers appear more concerned with adhering to Eurocentric societal norms and values than respecting the wellbeing and cultural background of their employees.

As with Ashley Davis’ case, the controversy with her locks involved more than just the appearance of the style. For the African diasporic community, “The care, treatment, and styling
of it [i.e. hair] often coincided with opposing agendas of patriarchy, imperialism, colonialism, heteronormativity/heterosexuality, and freedom” (Stallings, 2010, p. 366). In sum, the treatment that African Americans receive when choosing to wear natural hairstyles is a relic of a discriminatory past and it stands in opposition to what mainstream, White Americans consider to be a conventional and acceptable hairstyle. Natural hairstyles are a reminder of an African lineage and it represents nonconformity in the face of White American ideals. The African American community should not be penalized for wearing their natural hair and hairstyles in the workplace. African Americans who are victims of these policies have suffered disparate impact within mainstream America (Bennet-Alexander & Harrison, 2016). Many Black Americans have been criticized, degraded, and fired for wearing their hair in natural styles. While this has occurred in mainstream America, it should cease to be the case amongst those coming from the same or a similar background (i.e. African American employers). While it is true that hair is mutable, it seems unjust to force individuals to alter elements of their culture to fit into that of another. The current study examines the treatment of African American natural hairstyles within African American workplaces.

2.4.2 Identity Through Language and Naming

The language that individuals use to describe and identify themselves and others is reflective of their culture and the type of socialization they have experienced and internalized. Language is also an area in which the African American community creates identity affiliation or disassociation. When citing language within the confines of this manuscript, I specifically focus on the ways in which African Americans name on both individual and collective level as well as a language system that has been attributed to African Americans (i.e. Ebonics). When speaking on African Americans as a group, the reader may notice that there are instances within the
manuscript where the author interchangeably refers to African Americans as *Black* or *Black Americans*. As aliens of foreign soil, whose African cultural groups were disassembled and otherwise merged with other groups in America, Africans in America constructed, altered, refuted, and settled on a multitude of names to fit their identities. During the nineteenth century alone, some names have included: “…African, Ethiopian, Free African, Colored, Negro, Children of Africa, Sons of Africa, Colored American, people of color, free people of color, blacks, Anglo-African, Afric, African-American, Afro-American, Afmerican, Aramerican, Africo-American, and Afro-Saxon” (Stuckey, 1987, p. 200). Additionally, their selection of surnames after centuries of enslavement reflected the ways in which they desired the outside world to view them:

In accordance with the African culture that they had brought with them, many Blacks created new names for themselves to signify their new identities as free men and women. They drew from American political culture such names as ‘Jefferson’ and ‘Hamilton,’ which signified power and authority. (Robinson, 1997, p. 83)

In addition,

Many African Americans took new names to signify their freedom. They adopted surnames such as *Freedom, Liberty*, or *Justice* and dropped classical given names such as *Pompey* and *Caesar*. Some paid homage to their African ancestry and complexion by taking surnames such as *Africa* and *Guinea, Brown*, and *Coal*. Others, however, expressed their aspirations in a racially stratified society by replacing African given names like *Cuffee* and *Quash* with Anglicized biblical names and surnames of famous white people. (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2011, p. 104)
On this individual, family-level of naming, there exists a clear distinction between black and white names. Black names are those that are “relatively common among blacks and uncommon among whites” (Cook, Logan, & Parman, 2014, p. 70) and they can include those that are: unique and “belong to the race of the unique-named by default,” those that are exclusively used within the Black race, and those that are “disproportionately assigned to members of one [i.e. the Black] race” (Cook, Logan, & Parman, 2014, p. 69). This naming practice has continued today with the first names given to some Black children, whereby sociologist believe that intentional black names are given in order to solidify an identity separate from that of mainstream America (Cook, Logan, & Parman, 2014). However, these distinctly Black naming practices can negatively impact African Americans when seeking employment. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) found that job applicants with African American sounding names were less likely to receive callbacks for interviews than their White-name-sounding counterparts. Further, their study revealed that White names were twice as likely than Black names to get callbacks; having a White name carried as much weight as an applicant having eight more years of experience on their resume (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). Those with distinctly African American names do not significantly benefit from having a higher quality resume than those within their racial category with lower quality resumes (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). Bertrand and Mullainathan were interested in seeing if they could isolate race within a study to account for the disparity in unemployment between Blacks and Whites. Their study did not concentrate on discrimination within specific racial groups, but simply made note of those businesses that claimed to be equally opportunity employers.

In transitioning to language in its spoken form (i.e. speech and speech patterns), scholars are aware that “The relationship between language and identity is direct and didactic…” (Gomez,
1998, p. 169). For Africans who were captured and enslaved in the United States, there were those who chose to embrace elements of their mother language, and others who chose to use the language of their oppressors as a tool for the betterment of their lives:

Although it is obvious that some would have picked up the rudiments [of English] with ease and would have spoken the tongue with facility, others may have simply refused to speak it, or to speak it very much, out of a conscious decision to resist their oppression. (Gomez, 1998, p. 171)

Throughout time there have been mergers of language as cultures develop and mature; the language of African Americans is not immune to this reality. Today, the term used often when referring to African American speech is African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or U.S. Ebonics (USEB). Ebonics is a term that was created by Robert Williams in 1973, and it merges ebony (black) and phonics (speech) (Jones, 2008). It contains African survivals as it has a Niger-Congo grammar structure with English word borrowing (Perry, 1998). I focus on the speech of African Americans specifically because it involves: cultural remnants from Western and Central Africa, controversy surrounding the legitimacy and respectability of this language, and unspoken assumptions centering on the intelligence of those who speak the language.

This language, which is used by most African Americans in some form, is commonly stigmatized (Jones, 2008). Jones conducted a study on the perceptions of AAVE/Ebonics, and she found that speakers of Ebonics strongly spoke out against the language: “Many Blacks as well as Whites argued that it was a lazy form of English, which was inherently incorrect and spoken by the uneducated” (Jones, 2008, p. 4). This information is essential to my research as Ebonics is a misunderstood language that has the potential to inhibit occupational attainment because of its low-status perception. Jones (2008) notes that Black Americans distance
themselves from this language because they believed it to be the language of the uneducated. The participants within Jones’ study were Black Americans, and no one in the sample credited the language as a legitimate one; participants also denied that those within their economic strata use the language. Through my study, I am interested to find if this trend continues amongst those who hire African Americans. I am interested to know if their understandings and perceptions of the language affect their hiring decisions pertaining to those who speak Ebonics/AAVE.

Language and naming are mentioned within this manuscript because they are elements of oneself that can be altered to fit into societal social standards. The names that individuals give to their children, or legally change for themselves, are mutable in this way. The speech that one uses within their community or within a workplace can change at the will of the user. Many within the African American community are aware of a term called codeswitching, whereby lexicon, tone, etc. are altered when communicating between differing cultures. Codeswitching is a common tool used when interacting with those in professional and predominately White spaces. The speech patterns utilized by African Americans is a cultural signifier and is thus an essential component to the study in the current manuscript. I am also interested to see if this codeswitching tool is also employed within the Black/African American business environment.

2.4.3 The Intersection of Race and Class

There is evidence of economic stratification within the African American community. Within Thomas D. Boston’s text, which analyzes race and class, the Black community is subdivided into three strata (i.e. the Black capitalist class, the Black middle class, and the Black working class) (Boston, 1988). Further, within each of these strata exists subcategories that index definitions and characteristics that distinguishes those within the stratum. The manifestation of class stratification has appeared in such areas as the housing arena, working environments,
religion, social activities and clubs, etc. Those such as E. Franklin Frazier and Nathan Hare have described characteristics of the Black middle class/Black elite and their aspirations of Whiteness through assimilation (and concurrently, their distinctiveness and disassociation from lower class members of the Black community). Boston reaffirms portions of this argument when speaking of the assimilated Black middle class and the new Black capitalist class who are dependent on and look to White America with matters concerning economic attainment. Members of the new Black middle class are “…torn between identifying with the needs and demands of the the black masses, with whom it has close social connections, and having to pacify the anxieties of white society, which provides its means of economic livelihood” (Boston, 1988, p. 45). It is precisely this conundrum which brings into question the actions of the hiring personnel within Black owned businesses. There is a standard to which the new Black capitalist class and Black middle class are expected to uphold. From the vantage point of White America, the Black capitalist class and Black middle class are seen as being nonthreatening entities within the Black community (Boston, 1988). Thusly, condoning radical/nontraditional hairstyles (for instance) or nonstandard English may seem anathema to their position within the community, and it may threaten the aforementioned perception of them within their ascribed social categories.

According to Boston, the class definition that is commonly used within our society examines groups of individuals based upon their economic status and life chances (Boston, 1998). Those within a perceived class category are assumed to have similar economic situations, relationships to power, status, and value systems. For instance, Frazier makes note that in the past, the Black middle class received education from missionaries, who taught them practices and values that would deter them from what they termed as the emotionalism found in the Black masses; their training was meant to teach them manners, proper behavior, and a type of
respectability that they believed was lacking in African descendants (Frazier, 1957). Those versed in Black class distinctions are aware of the divide amongst Blacks who, for instance followed Baptist versus Methodist practices. There was division between class lines, where those who were upwardly mobility abandoned Baptist churches and joined Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Catholic churches (Frazier, 1957). Also, throughout the literature review, the reader has seen historical and contemporary ways that Black Americans have distinguished those in the upper class from the lower classes. As a reminder, those with lighter skin and looser hair were of a higher social status than their darker skinned, kinky-haired counterparts. And proper English has been deemed the only acceptable language for educated African Americans. In Jones’ study, respondents who resided in upper- and middle-class neighborhoods disassociate themselves from Ebonics/AAVE (Jones, 2008).

References to class are disseminated throughout this literature review. The important take away from this section is the separation that can take place because of intra-racial class differences. For instance, “With the rise in income of the Black middle class, we have witnessed a flight out of the Black community…For them, Black flight means freedom to assimilate into the white world.” (T’shaka, 2004, p. 9). This is the concern for those who are middle class Black professionals. Boston notes that the financial ties that the Black capitalist class has today is linked to corporations and enterprises outside of the Black community. Thusly, when mentioning the Black capitalist class it is important to note that “their ideological and political affiliation with the community [are]…weaker” (Boston, 1988, p. 36). Boston also states that although the ties are weaker, there is still a connection to the Black community (Boston, 1988). An unanswered question pertinent to this manuscript is whether perceived class separation creates dissonance from perceptions of Blackness (i.e. Black/African American cultural identity). If
Black flight equals assimilation, then what does the interaction look like between those who have taken the flight and those who have not yet made the same flight or those who choose to subvert those elements associated with assimilation. Are these individuals expected to follow suit, and what are the financial consequences if they refuse? These differences can affect identification and interaction amongst Blacks in America, reinforce negative stereotypes associated with Blackness, and limit job opportunities for those embrace elements of African American culture.

In the present day, class definitions are not clear cut. Because of undulating factors such as spousal’s occupation or net income within a given year, neither income nor occupation is a stable determining factor of one’s class status (Boston, 1988). However, the participants in this study are considered to have membership in either that of the middle class (i.e. those that are self-employed in a field such as medicine), or the capitalist class because they have “…ownership, control or possession of the means of production and thereby the capacity to impact the livelihood of large numbers of workers” (Boston, 1988, p. 17). According to the new capitalist class model, members include those who have ownership as well as those who manage within a business (Boston, 1988). Still, there is not a unanimous agreement on class categorization, especially pertaining to those who presumably fall between classes (such as managers) (Boston, 1988). Within the interview portion of this study, participants will identify their class standing and factors such as home ownership and their role within the Black-owned business (e.g. manager or owner) in order to gain a greater sense of their class status and its interaction with cultural identity.

2.5 Intragroup Discrimination & Respectability Politics

This manuscript exists to research Black business hiring practices and to discover if, how, and why discriminatory factors play a role within Black owned businesses. Regardless of their
sense of duty to the community, African Americans have been socialized in a society that emphasized individual attainment (i.e. a capitalistic society) and gazes unfavorably upon Blacks; therefore, Blacks are not immune to internalizing stereotypical ideologies relating to their racial group. Because they are bicultural, that is they “…function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live”, they may hold similar values, sentiments, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes as that of the dominant culture (Darder, 2012, p. 45). There have been cases of intraracial/intragroup discrimination when it comes to Black businesses. “Intragroup discrimination arises between members of the same group and is often based on assimilation” (Schaerer, 2010, p. 58). The role of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is to protect against discrimination, but the lines may become muddled when it involves those from the same racial group. There have been several cases where different complexioned employees berated and fired those from their race simply because their color differed from their own (McCray, 2012). Such cases include both *EEOC v. Applebee’s Neighborhood Grill & Bar, Inc.* and *Walker v. IRS* (McCray, 2012). In the first case, a dark-skinned employee was targeted for his dark skin. His fair skinned manager called him such names as “tar baby” and “black monkey” (McCray, 2012, p. 159). Cases such as these have not traditionally received much traction within the court system because the courts do not typically consider that varying groups and subgroups within racial categories will discriminate against one another (Schaerer, 2010). However, as mentioned previously,

As prejudice and discrimination are no less damaging when inflicted by a member of one’s own ethnic or social group, intraracial discrimination must be recognized as an
extant and impermissible form of workplace discrimination that must not be hidden by nor lost under the protective cloak of so-called racial solidarity. (Turner, 1995, p. 684)

Intragroup discrimination is possible because Blacks were enculturated under the umbrella of a society that devalues Black culture, Black values, and Black people. Traditional American values fall on the opposite end of the spectrum where they uplift and fight to preserve White, Eurocentric ideals.

Because black people in the United States would struggle for real freedom even after emancipation, freedom seemed conditionally based on tenements of assimilation. Black people subconsciously internalized the notion that for freedom to be retained, heteronormative societies must be maintained (Stallings, 2010, p. 366). Meaning that in order to have the possibility of equality, Blacks felt the need to adjust, assimilate, and integrate into the world of their White counterparts. During the education reform movement of the 1890s Black and White children alike were taught White supremacist, imperialistic ideologies (Fallace, 2012, p. 511). Referring to the Recapitulation Theory, this “approached non-White cultures and individuals through a deficit model that considered non-Whites as backward, disadvantaged, and in need of development by Westerners” (Fallace, 2012, p. 211). African Americans were placed at the bottom of this hierarchy and they were perceived as primitive. Whites believed that they were the sole proprietors of knowledge, so they presumed it their duty to educate African Americans. This education was racist and paternalistic in nature. The views of Whites as superior was disseminated throughout textbooks and it was taught to Black and White children alike (Fallace, 2012). All individuals were susceptible to the values taught by the scholars of their day, who held a now obvious bias for White culture and standards. Because of their continuous exposure to Eurocentric culture, there is an expected proclivity
towards Eurocentric culture. This is a simple component of a psychological phenomenon called mere exposure (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011). When one is exposed to a stimulus a multitude of times, that stimulus becomes more familiar and appealing (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011). Because Blacks in America have been bombarded with biased information, it is not surprising to find that they have internalized and adhere to portions of that bias. This makes it easier for Blacks to discriminate and separate themselves from those that they see as less educated, less aesthetically appealing, of a lower-class status, etc.

The reader must also engage with such subjects as respectability politics because it is a method of controlling Black bodies (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 725). According to Durham, Cooper, and Morris, what we now know as respectability politics was

Coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham [and it]…describes a range of strategies, largely regarding notions of honor, self-respect, piety, and propriety, deployed by progressive black women to promote racial uplift and women’s rights and to secure broader access to the public sphere (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 724).

Simply put within this context, respectability politics involves the policing of those within the Black community as a way to thoroughly integrate them into mainstream society. This is the reason why some mutable aspects of one’s identity is mentioned within this study. These are elements such as hair, language, etc. that can be changed to fit mainstream societal standards. And those in positions of power who adhere to respectability ideologies could potentially reinforce and deem those standards as necessities within their businesses.

2.6 Political Ideology and the Direction of African Americans

There are varying philosophies concerning the best strategy to employ for Black liberation, true freedom, and progress. Contained within the discussion of identity, affiliation,
and progress, it is important to mention the role of the American Colonization Society during the early 1800s and the thoughts of Blacks in America during that time. There was a push by the American Colonization Society (ACS) to relocate free Blacks to Liberia with the intent of upholding and strengthening slavery in the United States (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2011). A segment of Blacks wanted to maintain their homes in the United States, and therefore pushed to disassociate themselves from African and other complexional labels, organizations, and institutions. There were also those who were nationalist and embraced infrastructures that recognized their African background. According to Sterling Stuckey (1987), there were integrationist, nationalist, and those who fell along the spectrum:

And though some who thought their people should maintain their own institutions openly opposed the Colonization Society and proclaimed love of the African homeland, no doubt others, concentrating on being accepted by the larger society, kept their loyalty to Africa to themselves, the more easily to establish their right to remain in America. (Stuckey, 1987, p. 205)

When proscribing the best route for Blacks’ freedom and progress, there are those such as Oba T’shaka and Molefi Kete Asante who believe that African descendants should adopt African values for the betterment of diasporic Africans. Asante embraces Afrocentricity, which he defines as “the belief in the centrality of Africans in post-modern history” (Asante, 2003, p. 11). Permeating through Asante’s text is the idea of collective consciousness, which is not to be minimalized as simple unity. Asante’s definition of collective cognitive imperative is “the overwhelming power of a group of people thinking in the same direction…it is a full spiritual and intellectual commitment to a vision which constitutes the collective cognitive imperative” (Asante, 2003, p. 67). He proscribes naming oneself an African name in order to release the
mental bonds of the oppressor. Asante hopes that his suggestions will stand as a strategy for “social, political, and economic victory” (Asante, 2003, p. 111). T’shaka’s text concerned the author’s examination and explanation of the Black person’s gradual steps into consciousness. According to T’shaka, “Since both the Black middle class and the Black grassroots suffer from historical amnesia, both need to become disturbed about their historical conditioning so they can recover their historical memory and full identity as Africans” (T’shaka, 2004, p. 45). T’shaka’s piece spoke to external and internal ills that plague the African American community. He notes the value of cooperation between both older and younger generations and the promotion of African culture in order to rebuild the African American community. The previous scholars are but two of many who have varying ideologies for the progression of African Americans. Michael C. Dawson (2001) wrote a text entitled Black Visions, which contains information about political ideologies of African Americans. There are Black conservatives who believe in individualism, capitalism, and are Republicans. But Dawson also notes that many have unexpectedly used the spirit of Malcolm X to evoke their views (Dawson, 2001). There are Black liberals who believe that freedom can be a reality in America, and there are black disillusioned liberals who have abandoned that dream (Dawson, 2001). And this is but a portion of a myriad of political ideologies, which include: Black nationalist, Black feminist, womanist, Black Marxists, anarchist, etc. All of these Black community members are nuanced in their views and have ideas about how they believe society should function and what they envision for the future of African Americas.

Black employers and hiring personnel are members of the Black community who have formed biased opinions, visions, and projections for these businesses. And this vision includes the the types of individuals they desire working within the businesses and moving it in the
direction of their specific visions. Whether they are the hiring body or appoint someone else to hire individuals, they still have the final say on who will represent their business. Thusly, their political ideologies should be taken into account, because whether their political ideologies are implicit or explicit, they play a factor in the hiring process.

2.7 Conclusion

Irrespective of the historical memory or the concept of communalism present within the Black community, there is segmentation within the Black community based upon factors such as: political affiliation, class affiliation, ideas of Blackness, and the direction of African Americans. T’shaka notes that “…African Americans had innovated an African culture in the United States that is a culture not a sub-culture” (T’shaka, 2004, p. 29). It is important for African Americans to define their identity separate from that of the dominant culture. This may serve as a benefit for their identity as well as the Black community. Black Americans have several reasons to desire an identity separate from dominant society. Their forced residence into this country and enslavement served as a catalyst for differentiation from dominant society. Their experiences on the North American soil has also played a role in identity formation and political ideology. Rehashing Gomez’s description upon slavers, scholars are aware that it was a state of oppression and suffering that created a community of individuals based on race rather than ethnicity. This was one of the first of many arduous steps that contributed to identity formation and affiliation. African descended individuals have continued a business tradition and are in a position to better the financial lives of fellow African Americans. This study is integral in the study of Black business practices as it concerns the interactions and financial well-being of the African American community.
The reader will notice that the sections in this chapter often overlap and intermingle with one another. Even when examined in subsections, the lines of distinction can become blurred. This is allegorical to the research at hand. Because racial identity and discrimination within Black owned businesses has received little attention, there is a need to parcel out the important elements and perceptions involved in the hiring process. The business world is essentially an institution that is traditionally filled with discrimination, microaggressions, and colorblind rhetoric. There is a need to examine the Black business as an institution, and Black business owners/personnel as agents of said institution.

3 METHODS

The purpose of this study is to examine intragroup/intra-racial group dynamics within the workspaces of Black owned businesses. This research examines the ideas and concepts of Black identity (both generally and one’s self-identity) of Black business owners and hiring personnel, and whether they permit African American cultural traits and lifestyle choices to affect the hiring and placement of these individuals within their companies. This study specifically focuses on mutable elements of African American cultural and lifestyle choices that have the potential to affect hiring and placement of these individuals within Black owned businesses. This is a qualitative study that examines three overarching questions about the influence of culture in the hiring practices of Black owned businesses: Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expressions of Black employees? Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factors within Black-owned businesses? Does the cultural identity of the business owner influence hiring practices?

Social Identity Theory proposes that there is a preference amongst individuals to associate with those that are similar to themselves, it also suggests a state of association and
disassociation with and from those who have the potential to either enhance or lessen their self-esteem (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2011). Considering that employees are an extension of the business, the aforementioned theory is relevant to the probability of employees getting hired. Within this chapter, the methods utilized for this study are outlined below. This section includes the design of the study, the sample and procedure, and the type of data analysis used for this study. This is an exploratory, qualitative study that enlists African American business owners or hiring personnel in professional Black businesses to answer descriptive and reflective questions regarding themselves and their employees. The results from these answers will be used to answer the research questions.

The acceptance and treatment of African American culture within Black owned establishments was the focus of this study. Culture includes those elements that are shared by members of a particular group. According to Bolin and Whelehan (2009), culture is “The learned behavior, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and values of a particular society. These are learned by observation, imitation, and social learning” (Bolin and Whelehan, 2009, p. 520). African American culture contains certain distinctions from that of the dominant American culture in areas such as music, hair, speech patterns, attire, etc. Some of these cultural traits are examined within this study. Further, African Americans are bicultural, meaning that they function between two distinct cultures (Darder, 2012). As bicultural individuals, African Americans must reconcile those elements of each culture, which could present an issue within the business environment. The three research questions guiding this study are intended to examine the ways in which these binary cultures operate within African American businesses.

3.1 Research Questions

The three research questions guiding this study are as follows:
Research question one (RQ1): Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expressions of Black employees? The first question exists to determine if culture plays a role in the Black business environment. The researcher does not assume that culture automatically plays a role in a Black business. However, if it is relevant, the research seeks to discover the ways in which it is relevant. An example of an interview question pertaining to this research question would be as follows: Is there a presence of African American culture within the office? Explain.

Research question two (RQ2): Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factors within Black-owned businesses? The second question is contingent on the affirmation of the first question, taking it further, and questioning the presence of cultural attributes within the hiring and placement practices of Black business owners to potential Black employees. An example of an interview question used to answer the second research question would be as follows: Would you say that an expression of one’s African American culture limits their potential to be hired in your business? and Would you hire someone that spoke using Black speech patterns? Why or Why not?

Research question three (RQ3): The third research question consists of a set of questions that lead into the cultural identity of the business owner and the influence that cultural identity has on their hiring practices. The questions leading up to the aforementioned question include: How do you identify nationally and/or culturally? How culturally expressive are you (in the home, work place)? And, do you think that culture matters? This research seeks to learn if the hiring personnel’s identity, either self-defined or otherwise, (i.e. integrationist/middle class/etc.) affects their hiring selections and job placement decisions. The questions listed in this section concern the employer themselves and essentially is questioning their identity and its role in the hiring and placement of Black community members. An examples of an interview discussion
questions related to this research question is as follows: Do you feel as though you connect with your African American employees on a cultural level? If so, in what ways, or if not, why not?

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Setting

The businesses that were highlighted within this study were those located in the Metropolitan Atlanta area. This area was selected due to its unique demographic environment. Atlanta is perceived as a location of Black achievement and success, and based upon statistical data, the South is sourced as the location where most Black Americans live (Morris & Woodruff, 2015). Atlanta, specifically, is perceived as the place of Black success, and is commonly referred to as the Black Mecca (Morris & Woodruff, 2015). Interviews took place at the business owners’ place of business, via telephone interview, or wherever they express as a convenient and comfortable means of communication with the researcher; that is, the specific location and time of the interview was at the discretion of the employer. Research data was gathered from participants in Fall 2018.

3.2.2 Research Design

This is an exploratory, qualitative study that investigated Black business hiring practices with respects to aspects of African American culture. The tools used to answer the three research questions included a demographic survey and interview questions. If conducted in a responsible manner, interviews can be a valuable source for the researcher. Leary (2007) suggests that researchers take conscious steps to improve the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Suggestions from Leary (2007) include: making the respondents feel comfortable and to ensure that their answers are being thoughtfully considered. The interview format allowed participants to have a verbal interaction with the researcher and it allowed the interviewer to
gather rich, complex information that would be difficult to obtain using other designs (such as questionnaires) (Leary, 2007). This interview format allowed the interviewee to verbally express and refine their thoughts in a private, one-one-one setting (unlike that of a focus group). This design was beneficial to the research at hand as it entails a comfortable, private environment where participants were free from judgment on topics that are perceived by some African Americans to be controversial within the Black community.

3.2.3 Ethical Considerations

This study followed regulations concerning human subjects, as monitored by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia State University. Participants were over the age of 18 years and consented to participate in this study by having the researcher read them the consent form, confirming their understanding of said form, and then signing the informed consent form. For those interviews that were conducted over the phone, participants were read a Consent Form for Waiver of Document of Consent (Appendix B) as well as mailed a copy of said consent form.

3.2.4 Sample

The population for this study consisted of professional Black businesses owners or hiring personnel in Metropolitan Atlanta. As mentioned previously, Black professional businesses are used as a criterion in order to eliminate niche markets that specifically target Black consumers. Black professional businesses were also selected in an attempt to avoid influences of nepotism within the business as a potential factor in the hiring and placement of employees. This population was selected by convenient sampling, considering that the researcher resides in Metropolitan Atlanta. They were also selected through snowball sampling. The participants were recruited via email, mail, telephone, or in person. Those who were contacted through mail received the recruitment script (found in Appendix E), the consent form, and waiver of document
of consent (found in Appendices A and B). Participants were those known personally by the researcher, by affiliates of the researcher, or those found using an online search. The criteria for population selection includes: 1) business owner or personnel tasked with hiring for the business; 2) Black/ African American; 3) able to hire and designate placement of employees within the business; 4) all work in the medical field (in order to maintain consistency amongst professions); 5) they are all over the age of 18 years; and 6) they all work in Metropolitan Atlanta. Six participants were sought out for this particular study. The participants were those that are in the same field in order to increase internal validity of the study. It is entirely possible that business owners may have delegated other personnel with the duty of hiring and placing employees in their company. Therefore, in lieu of business owners, personnel responsible for hiring and placement of individuals (e.g. office managers/ hiring managers) could be used in their place. It may be reasoned that whomever is given this responsibility would have the same rationale for hiring certain individuals over others to represent the business as the business owner sees fit.

### 3.2.5 Procedure

Before conducting the research, the researcher planned to utilize participants who worked in the same field. The medical field was selected because the researcher has network connections within that specific field; snowball sampling allowed the participant to disseminate an awareness of the study within enclaves of the medical field. The researcher presented a proposal of the study to her committee members. Upon receiving approval from the thesis committee on the proposed research, the researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by submitting research methods for the study as well as a prospectus; IRB ensures that the rights of human subjects are met. Upon approval from IRB, the researcher mailed a recruitment script and both consent forms (Appendices A, B, and E) to potential participants that she found using
online sources. The researcher also called businesses and asked for the name of the hiring personnel and addressed envelopes (with forms found in Appendices A, B, and E) to the hiring personnel within each Black business. She also utilized snowball sampling. Through conversation with those in the medical profession, the researcher distributed copies of the recruitment script and asked that individuals give them to those they believe would be interested in the study. Once the participants contacted the researcher, they were selected based off the research criteria previously mentioned. Appointments were made to communicate with each participant separately and at their convenience; they were told that the interviewer could meet them at their place of business, conduct the interview over the phone, or whatever the interviewee preferred to ensure their comfort and privacy. The researcher also offered a light lunch to the participants during the interview.

3.2.5.1 Collecting Data

The researcher gave a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix A) to all participants that she met in person, and upon receiving their signature (and permission from the interviewee) the researcher audio recorded the interview. For participants that refused to be recorded, detailed field notes were taken in its place. For phone interviews, the Consent Form for Waiver of Document of Consent was read aloud and, upon giving consent, the interview commenced. During the interview, the researcher inquired about the demographic information of the office staff and clientele from the research participant in order to establish the clientele to which the business caters. The researcher also acquired demographic data of the zip codes in which each of the Black businesses were located.
3.2.5.2 Interviews

Upon arrival at the office (or on the phone, or wherever the respondent was comfortable), participants were told that they were participating in a study involving concepts of Black identity and their role in hiring and placement of Black employees in their business. The informed consent form was read out loud to each participant (i.e. Appendix A or Appendix B if over the phone) and they were asked if they were comfortable being recorded for analysis purposes. If they chose not to be recorded, the researcher took detailed notes. Participants were also informed that their information would only be viewed by the researcher, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), coders, and affiliate manuscript handlers. Information such as their names, place of business, or any other identifiers were not available to other researchers, participants, or readers of the manuscript (i.e. their identity was concealed as they choose pseudonyms, and they were referenced as their chosen pseudonyms). Only the student PI has access to raw research materials. The PI and coders only have access to typed transcripts, and any identifiable information was blacked out or omitted prior to them receiving the transcripts. Upon their consent, participants commenced the study. There were first administered a demographic survey (i.e. Appendix C).

Following the demographic survey, participants were asked interview questions related to the appearance of culture in the workplace, intragroup/intraracial relations, and hiring and placement of Black employees (i.e. Appendix D). The interview questions were open enough to invite discussions about ideas of African American culture and any follow up questions that may arise. For those who met in person and agreed to be audio recorded, their responses were audio recorded on a password protected cell phone application, and notations were placed in an envelope labeled with their chosen pseudonym and locked in a box. For those who chose to have
a phone interview and agreed to be audio recorded, their audio responses were contained in a password protected cell phone application. Any demographic and interview notes by the researcher were placed in an envelope labeled with their chosen pseudonym and placed in a locked box. For those who did not agree to be audio recorded, their answers were recorded as detailed written notes and placed in an envelope and locked box.

### 3.2.6 Measures

I conducted interviews that consisted of an 11-item demographic survey (Appendix C) and a 28-item interview questionnaire (Appendix D). I constructed the demographic survey to acquire basic information about participants’ ages, their racial identity, the racial composition of their home residence and workplace (including their clientele and employees), and any associations that they may have had with employees prior to their employment. I also inquired about their educational and class status and backgrounds within that section. A sample item from Appendix C is “What is the racial composition of your employees by race, gender, and age (you may give an estimate in percentages)?” For the interview questions, I created questions that addressed constructs such as ideas surrounding culture and mutable characteristics of cultural expression within the workplace (i.e. style/dress, hair, and speech). I asked them questions pertaining to their political ideologies and worldview, and other questions that pinpointed their national, racial, and social affiliations. The questions were as such that they indicated participants’ standpoint on relevant subject matter such as: identity, class, community, cultural expression and hiring, the operations of Social Identity Theory, political ideology and worldview, respectability politics, and views on expressions of African American culture. A sample item from Appendix D is “What are your thoughts on Black speech patterns?” Thusly, their responses were used to answer the three research questions that guided the study. I coded
responses within the NVivo software and sent samples of each code to two coders (all identifiable information was omitted from the samples prior to their delivery to the coders). This process was done to assess inter-rater reliability. The coders worked independently, noting whether they agreed with the assigned codes, and returned the coded samples, which were then totaled and averaged, yielding a score of 99% for inter-rater reliability.

3.2.7 Validity: Internal and External

In terms of internal validity for this research study, there is a need to establish if there is a causal relationship. There is a need to evaluate if the standpoint and views of Black culture on the part of the employer affects the hiring of certain employees. Internal validity may be threatened because expectations on the part of the researcher or participant may influence the outcome of the study. For instance, because the employer is aware that the researcher is a member of the Black community who is asking about hiring procedures within a Black business, the respondent may compensate by answering questions in a way they would not normally answer (e.g. answering in a way that would please the researcher). Confirmation bias is always a possibility and issue as well when conducting a study. To combat this possibility, the researcher will only utilize the information gathered from the study and suspend all other assumptions. In terms of external validity, this research only draws from a subset of the population sampled, so it may not be generalized to all Black business owners and hiring personnel. Also, it is restricted to a specific time and place, that is, Metropolitan Atlanta in the year 2018, therefore it cannot be generalized to other Black business owners/ hiring personnel in the same profession who reside in other areas of the country; also, the business makeup and climate may change throughout the coming years.
3.2.8 Analysis

Data is collected from participants and placed in an envelope marked with their chosen pseudonyms. I transcribed participants’ responses in a private location. Responses were then highlighted, and the appropriate coding technique were selected as the transcripts were imputed into NVivo. Because I am inquiring about specific factors for my research questions, that is my interest in African Americans, culture, identity, and hiring, these elements were included in the questioning of my participants and categorizing the selected codes. I employed open coding. I made note of those common responses/topics shared by my participants as I analyzed the data. For second cycle coding, I selected a coding strategy that best fit the themes found within my study, i.e. Theoretical Coding (Saldana, 2009). I attempted to organize my themes in a manner that linked my findings back to my research questions. I sent a sample(s) of each code to two coders (all participants’ identifiable information was omitted prior to sending the samples). I instructed them to work independently as they noted agreement or disagreement with each code. They then returned their notes, and my inter-rater reliability score was calculated and averaged; the score is 99%. I evaluated all results in an attempt to answer the three research questions, and I drew my conclusions.

3.2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter captures the methods used to thoroughly gather the information needed to answer the three research questions. Within this chapter, the research sample is identified, and the proper methods needed to acquire the necessary research results are outlined. The reader knows that this is a qualitative study that calls upon six professional Black/African American business owners or hiring personnel working in the medical field. These participants were administered a consent form to ensure that they knew their rights in regard to the study and that
they were of the proper age requirement and freely agreed to participate. They received a recruitment script, a demographic survey, and interview questions, which were confined to locked boxes in order to conceal their identity. The information was later coded and analyzed by the researcher and two additional coders.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to Findings

This portion of the manuscript is dedicated to the findings of the research study. This chapter discusses pertinent participant demographic information and the main topics and themes found during the interviews. Codes were codified using the NVivo program, and the main themes were constructed from the relationships found between the codes. For Second Cycle coding I selected Theoretical Coding (Saldana, 2009). Theoretical Coding condenses codes andformulates a “primary theme” or what is referred to as a “central/core category” (Saldana, 2009, p. 163). The central/core category is a fusion of words or a phrase that explains the purpose of the research (Saldana, 2009). With the use of this coding strategy, I grouped and linked the codes found using NVivo and identified themes. I explained the relationship of these themes to identity and hiring (which answers my initial inquiry). Therefore, my primary theme or central/code category is the influence of identity in the hiring process. In the final chapter of the manual I construct a theory based on what I have gathered from the study.

The major themes that I have created relate to those topics that are present in my research questions and discussions. Considering that I am interested in culture within the workplace as well as the ways in which the employers’ identities played a role in hiring, aspects of the the participant’s class status and world view/political ideology, and their relationship to community and culture were topics within the interviews. Topics included: association versus disassociation
(as it relates to Social Identity Theory), identity, culture and community, discrimination, class status, hiring, and cultural expression. The topics have been condensed and organized, and they, along with their themes, are in Table 6.

Within this chapter there is reference to Social Identity Theory as it relates to the aforementioned topics and is the underlying pulse of the research study. Within this chapter the three research questions are addressed, however, I will delve more into the interpretations and implications of the participants’ responses within the next chapter. To answer the research questions, participants were directly asked the three questions as well as additional questions to assess their values, actions, and beliefs. Direct quotes are frequently used as examples throughout this section to provide contextual evidence of the topics at hand.

4.2 Participant Demographics

Six participants were selected for this study. Participants were medical doctors and office managers (who are responsible for hiring and placement of employees) at Black owned businesses. As mentioned previously, participants selected pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity. Participants’ ages ranged from 47-64 years old (with one participant simply stating that they are fifty-plus years old); the age distribution of participants was 42, 57, 60, 61, 64, 50+ years. Age distribution is included as it is traditional demographic data (as is gender information). However, I do not link participant ages to their names in order to protect the identities of the participants. Participants, in order of interviews, were as follows: Dr. Harriett (female, pediatrician), Dr. Benita (female, pediatrician), Mrs. Felicia (female, office manager at dental office), Ms. Lee (female, office manager at internist office), Dr. Crusader (male, pediatrician), and Dr. D. (male, dentist). Demographic data is located in Table 1. All the physicians have medical degrees, and both office managers have had some college education.
Any titles that indicate specialization within participants’ fields is not included in order to protect the identities of the participants. Demographic information was also taken to establish an understanding of the environments in which the participants work and dwell; these factors were taken into consideration so that the researcher could acquire a sense of the racial composition of these locations. Within the interviews, I also asked participants to make demographic estimations regarding their clientele and employees.

Table 1 Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>County (of workplace)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harriett</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pediatrician</td>
<td>Fayette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Benita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pediatrician</td>
<td>Fayette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Felicia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Manager (at dentist office)</td>
<td>Fulton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lee</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Manager (at internist office)</td>
<td>Fulton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Crusader</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pediatrician</td>
<td>Dekalb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. D.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>Fulton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some statistical information, such as specific zip codes, is not included within the manuscript in order to protect participants’ identities. However, I provide the racial demographic information in order to establish a better sense of the cultural environment in which the participants work (Table 2) and choose to reside (Table 5); this information has larger implications when discussing Social Identity Theory as it relates to association versus disassociation. Population information was acquired by using facts provided by the United States Census Bureau (2019); according to the Census Bureau website these estimates were last updated on July 1, 2017. Both participants Dr. Harriett and Dr. Benita work within a zip code that has racial demographics that are about 46% white (non-Hispanic) and 37% black/ African American. Both Dr. D. and Ms. Felicia work within a zip code that has racial demographics that
are around 14% white (non-Hispanic) and 79% black/African American. Dr. Crusader works within a zip code with racial demographics 61% white (non-Hispanic) and 13% black/African American. Ms. Lee works within a zip code that has racial demographics that are 37% white (non-Hispanic) and 52% black/African American. In terms of racial population, this information indicates that half of the participants work in an area where the predominate racial population identifies as White (non-Hispanic) and the other half of the participants work in an area where the predominate racial population identifies as Black/African American.

Table 2 Racial Demographics of Area around Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>White (non-Hispanic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harriett</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Benita</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Felicia</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lee</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Crusader</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. D.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following paragraph consists of participants’ estimated statistical data within the office; the information contains estimated percentages of their clientele (Table 3) and employees (Table 4). It may be noted that depending on the participants, those of African descent were referred to as either Black or African American, and they referred to those of European descent as either White or Caucasian. They did not specify the race of those who they referred to as Hispanic. Dr. Harriett claimed that her clientele is around 75% Black, 5% Asian, and 10% White, and the employees’ racial distribution is 90% African American and 10% Hispanic. Dr. Benita reported her clientele as being 70-75% African American, 20% Asian or Spanish, and 10% Caucasian. In terms of her employees, Dr. Benita said that the distribution was around 95% African American and 5% Spanish. Mrs. Felicia reports that her clientele race-wise is about 60%
African American, 20% Hispanic, 10% Korean, and 10% White. In terms of her employees, Mrs. Felicia stated that it was 100% African American. Ms. Lee’s clientele is reported to be 75% African American, 15% Caucasian, and the rest (10%) she categorized as other. She stated that all of her employees are African American. Dr. Crusader estimated his clientele at about 50% Caucasian, 25% African American, and 25% other. The estimated composition of his employees by race is reported as the same as his clientele, about 50% Caucasian, 25% African American, and 25% other. Dr. D. reported that his clientele was 85% African American, 10% Hispanic, and about 5% Caucasian. He reported that his staff is 100% African American. This is an indication that the majority of participants’ clientele and employees are African American/Black, apart from Dr. Crusader, whose distribution of employees and clientele are majority White/Caucasian.

Table 3 Reported Racial Demographics of Clientele

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>White/Caucasian</th>
<th>Other (Hispanic/Spanish; Asian; Unidentified)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harriett</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Benita</td>
<td>70-75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Felicia</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lee</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Crusader</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. D.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Reported Racial Demographics of Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>White/Caucasian</th>
<th>Other (Hispanic/Spanish; Asian; Unidentified)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harriett</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Benita</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Felicia</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lee</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Crusader</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. D.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statistics pertaining to participants’ home residence is provided within this section. According to the Census Bureau website, last updated on July 1, 2017, Dr Harriett lives within a zip code that is around 17% white (non-Hispanic) and 76% black/African American. Dr Benita lives in a zip code that is around 8% white (non-Hispanic) and 55% black/African American. Mrs. Felicia lives within a zip code that is around 19% white (non-Hispanic) and 39% black/African American. Ms. Lee lives within an area that is around 37% white (non-Hispanic) and 52% black/African American. Dr. Crusader lives within a zip code that is around 57% white (non-Hispanic) and 20% black/African American. Dr. D. dwells in an area that is around 59% white (non-Hispanic) and 27% black/African American. Based upon these statistics, four of the participants dwell in predominately Black residential areas, and two participants dwell in predominately White residential areas.

**Table 5 Racial Demographics of Residential Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>White (non-Hispanic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harriett</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Benita</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Felicia</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lee</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Crusader</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. D.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3 Themes

There were several major themes discovered within this study. In total, there were around one hundred codes created using the NVivo software, and the themes were created from the relationships that were found amongst the codes. Topics within this study include: class status, association versus disassociation, identity, culture and community, discrimination, hiring, and cultural expression. Political ideology/world view is a topic that consists of a culmination of some of the previous topics. The reader will notice that the topics are not neatly contained; they
often spill into related topics and contribute to the overall subject of the manuscript. Major themes within this study include: WE ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN; BICULTURAL IDENTITY; “JUST AN AVERAGE PERSON”; MINIMIZE DIVISION; NEAT, CLEAN, AND TAME; “TIME AND PLACE”; COMFORT IS KEY; PROCEED WITH CAUTION; ARACIAL SETTING; COMPARTMENTALIZATION; USING THE “KING’S ENGLISH”; MISUNDERSTANDING OF AAVE; PRIORITIZE CODESWITCHING; EXPOSE, MENTOR, AND TEACH; COMMUNALISM; COMMONALITY; “WE’RE JUDGED”; and SETTLED. I have provided textual evidence to support each theme. However, all questions and responses are not included as not to overwhelm the reader or belabor the main themes/concepts. Topics and themes are found in Table 6.

4.3.1 Identity in the Workplace

First, I will discuss the topic of identity, and the themes that were identified under this topic (i.e. BICULTURAL IDENTITY and WE ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN). All participants view themselves as African American. As stated by Dr. Harriett (2018), “Well, you identify in whatever manner is positive for the time. It has changed from…at one point in time it was negro, then colored, then Black, and now it’s African American.” There was one instance where Dr. Benita (2018) referred to herself as simply American, but it was in defense of the English language: “I think…ok, we are…we are American, and I believe that you need to learn the English language.” This was the only time that this was mentioned amongst all the interviews. She also referred to herself as a person of color, stating “…I look at myself as a person of color…and as a person of color who has…who is primarily of African heritage” and “I’m a person of color, I’m a female, African American…” Dr. D. (2018) elaborated on his response and included a phenotypical element stating,
I believe that I am of African American…I am of African heritage. But also, I’m not only of African heritage, my skin has melanin…a high concentration of melanin. All African Americans do not have melanin. So therefore, I call myself a Black African American. Due to their position on this topic, the themes found were BICULTURAL IDENTITY and WE ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN. Other elements of participants’ identities are revealed through other topics and themes as we move throughout this section.

4.3.2 Class Status in the Workplace

This section examines the topic of class status. Participants were not asked about their income, but they were asked information such as their perceived class status and home ownership. In all, participants were asked about home ownership, residential zip code, education level, personal associations, self-defined class status, questions about their level of privilege/elite status and background, and their title; with this information I attempted to determine class status. With a characteristic such as home ownership, five out of six participants had the potential to be affiliated with the Black capitalist class; and because four out of the six participants were owners of the business, they had eligibility to belong to the Black capitalist class. If one were to determine class status from title/position with the company (i.e. doctors and managers), everyone had the potential to be categorized as at least belonging to the the Black middle class if not the capitalist class. Using subjective criteria, all participants self-identified as having middle class status; the only individuals who noted any variation were the two male participants, who said that they are upper middle class. No one wanted to identify as belonging to an elite group, and for most participants there was trepidation in identifying as privileged. For instance, Dr. Benita (2018) stated “…no I would not consider myself a person of privilege…just an average person.” I left both definitions open to interpretation (i.e. privilege and elite), but most participants did not
attribute privilege to income, but rather to immaterial factors like opportunity and advantage. For instance, Dr. D. (2018) stated,

I don’t know whether privilege and favor come into the same terms… Do I see myself above anybody else…no. I don’t look at myself above anybody else, but in the same token, I feel that I have had certain advantages in my life that many others have not. So I don’t know whether that would make me a privileged person or not. I…Elite? No, I don’t…I don’t like…when I say elite, I don’t like to say it from a perspective that I’m better than anybody else or above anybody else. I don’t want to call that elite. I will say that I am doing some things that a lot of other people aren’t doing. And if that’s what makes…if that’s the definition of elite, then I will call it elite. But if elite means that you put me…ascend me above anybody else, no. I wouldn’t put it from that perspective.

The only participant who marginally mentioned income in their response was Dr. Crusader (2018), but he also had an aversion to the term elite, stating, “I don’t like the word elite, but I’d probably consider myself privileged simply because of the benefits of extended education and my earnings, and my net wealth at this point at the latter stages of my career.” In speaking of class, and ultimately one’s position within the business, it would be negligent to omit certain advantages that accompany membership in an (upper) middle class position. Before transitioning to the next theme, which is cultural expression within the workplace, I would like to note a quote by Dr. Crusader that illustrates these advantages:

I have lots of Black art in my office…I take great pride. People come in…maybe this is kind of negative…people come in, and if a white person is interviewing for a job, you know, and there’s all kinds of Black art…a sculpture of a Black fist, you know… Again, let me be cautious about that. When I started doing stuff like that I was in a position of
authority. I was one the one making the decisions…there’s always been predominately Black art in my office at all times. Um, but if I were someone coming into a practice, say, I were an intern or entry level in a corporate environment, I would be thoughtful about my expressions and my Black culture. You know, I would choose things that truly were artistic without being offensive. And that’s very very subjective, but on a common-sense thing…like I wouldn’t have the Black fist there…you know.

There is a level of power or privilege that comes with business ownership or being in a position of authority whereby your position within the company will not penalize you as you are not subject to reprimand within the business (this may be slightly different for managers versus owners). From participants’ statements, I have created the themes: “JUST AN AVERAGE PERSON” and MINIMIZE DIVISION.

4.3.3 Cultural Expression and Hiring in the Workplace

This section delves into cultural expression within the workplace and the particular treatment of hair, style/dress, speech, and its effect on hiring. Starting with their own expression of culture within the workplace, participants’ responses varied. Dr. Harriett has Black/African American pictures and figurines throughout her personal office in the practice, but this type of cultural expression is absent in the decor of her practice. When asked about cultural expression, she said that she often talks to her patients about embracing their skin color and bolstering their self-esteem as an expression of her culture. She also mentioned that Black history month is recognized during the month of February whereby the office staff plays games and learns about African American history. Dr. Benita said that outside of seeing people of color within her office there are not really many other cultural elements:
I’m not sure how culturally expressive we are at work. Just by virtue of the fact that I’m here…you know…and kids of all backgrounds get to come and see a person of color…you know…be a doctor [chuckles]. (Dr. Benita, 2018)

Additionally, Mrs. Felicia (2018) stated,

It’s kind of open, it’s not really a necessary culture. My office is kind of set up where… if somebody came in, they would feel comfortable. You know, I don’t segregate on a certain type of music, you know. I’ll switch up the music all the time. Uh, a lot of my patients can come in and they, uh, they can listen to the music and they can relate to it. Or if I felt like it was one of those days where I had a lot of elderly people, I’m going to tone it down a little bit. But…say if my office as a whole, we’re not saying “oh, we’re African American” or this or that…

Material expressions of culture seem to be relegated to personal spaces (if it is present at all) within the offices of most participants. When they did speak about a presence of culture within the practice, it was mostly in their personal offices. For this reason, I created the themes ARACIAL SETTING and COMPARTMENTALIZATION to describe the treatment of cultural expression within these working environments as implemented by the business owner or manager. There is a separation of material expressions of culture within the practice for most participants, excluding Dr. D. (2018), who stated that “In my office, you’re going to hear Black music…” and “my culture modifies itself or…and it’s not just my culture…I would modify myself based on each individual who comes in.”

In terms of verbal cultural expression by participants, most of them (outside of Dr. D.) claim that they only slightly modify their speech in the workplace versus their homes (e.g. tone, lexicon, etc.) but they do not drastically change the way that they speak around White people:
I just don’t…I mean…well, no. Not around white people. I may change how I speak around people whether it’s here at the office versus at home…yeah because then I may be more relaxed and use more slang if I’m at home. But that’s a different story than for…being around the patients. I’m more professional when I’m around the patients. But in terms of how I speak around white people I would say no. (Dr. Benita, 2018)

Dr. D. had a different response. When asked if he modifies his speech when in the presence of White people, Dr. D. (2018) responded:

In some instances I do. Because…there’s certain ways that they expect me to speak.

There are certain ways they expect Black people to speak. So, I do tend to annunciate my words better because that’s the way they communicate. But you could also say that I change the way that I speak around Black people. And to be honest, I change the way that I speak based upon who I’m speaking with.

Most respondents followed the claims of Dr. Crusader and Ms. Lee: “I am fairly articulate just by the basis of my education so I’m articulate in both spaces” (Dr. Crusader, 2018) and “I don’t because I feel like I speak well in any situation” (Ms. Lee, 2018). This is an area where they claim consistency in terms of their identity in both spaces. However, as Dr. Crusader (2018) continued the conversation, he did mention that he codeswitches outside of the office...

…But some of the idioms that I use…I may use more…more Black idioms and more Black expressions more in conversations with other Blacks. Whereas with Whites, I may use less of them, but my communication style is pretty freewheeling. You know, I’ll use the same phrases and so forth. Things that are richly, you know, cultural…more of those come out in conversations with more homogeneous, African American, you know audiences or populations or groups.
Here is one example where self-analysis lends to complex responses. Most of the participants view their speech as consistent between spaces, but within interviews there was a notice of slight modifications, which they compared to patois or said that they use when in relaxed settings.

In terms of cultural expression from employees, Dr. Crusader explained that employees should exercise caution when it comes to cultural expression within the workplace. Recall his earlier statement about being thoughtful about one’s cultural expression in the office. Along the same topic, he noted that “…you know…you have to think about it. You have to think about things that would put people off. And that’s tough” (Dr. Crusader, 2018). Dr. D. gave the advice:

I would tell them to embrace who they are but understand what the consequences are of what you do. I believe that people should understand when they deviate from the standard what the potential consequences could be and be able to deal with them. (Dr. D., 2018)

In the general sense, all participants said that they do not have a problem with Black/African American cultural expression by their employees as long as their patients are comfortable. For instance, Dr. Harriett (2018) stated, “In certain arenas you have to communicate in a way where everyone is comfortable.” When explaining his stipulations on dreadlocks Dr. D. (2018) stated, “…there are people who come in here who are not comfortable with people who have dreadlocks, so it becomes detrimental to the business.” Additionally, Dr. Benita (2018) stated,

I think that if you’re trying to…I’m not just speaking about medicine…but if you’re trying to…again, create an environment where everyone feels comfortable…that there’s certain…you don’t use everyday slang or street talk…in a profess___…you know…in a professional setting. There’s always a place and a time for that. I don’t think that there’s anything wrong with that. And it all depends on the business that you have. If you’re in a business
where…you know, some environments are very…uhhh…are very comfortable and very relaxed. And so maybe you can sit and chit chat …you know, speak with a lot of slang. But when you’re in an environment where no one can… If I’m relating to an Asian patient or a white patient who doesn’t understand Black slang…you know…I’m creating an environment that may be a little bit frustrating for them.

Within this study, I chose to examine a few mutable aspects of cultural expression (i.e. hair, style/dress, and speech) as opposed to immutable (or not easily mutable) ones (e.g. skin color and one’s first name). Specifically speaking on dress/style, displays of cultural expression within these working environment did not seem applicable. This is because there is a standard dress code within this profession which includes scrubs or a protective covering over their clothing. Dr. Harriett (2018) said, “Well here you have to wear scrubs if you want to work here.” Ms. Lee (2018) noted,

… no, we don’t have a list of what we will and we won’t accept…not for culture, not for dress. I mean, you know, like I said…we wear uniforms. You know, we wear closed-toe shoes, so as long as you’re adhering to those policies…because of the medical field…you know, we don’t have those problems.

The only culturally-based restrictions on style/dress were non-religious headwraps (mentioned by three participants) and gold teeth (mentioned by the dentist, Dr. D.). Other guidelines and protocols were those that are commonly mentioned for interviews in middle class employment but are not necessarily and directly related to African American culture. They included: no visible tattoos, piercings (especially gauges), dangling jewelry that could pose risk/injury, etc. Dr. Harriett (2018) gave the advice that “You have to give off the perception of professionalism. How you dress conveys how or who you are. You want people to focus on you, not your dress.”
In terms of hair, most participants stated that do not have an issue with natural hair, and they do not have an issue with locks, providing they are neat, clean, and tame: “It needs to be neat and clean, not just wild” (Dr. Harriett, 2018). “Just, you know, keep yourself groomed. Keep yourself…your locks are fine. Your natural hair is fine, just groom yourself. Just make sure that you’re groomed” (Ms. Lee, 2018). “Now, there are certain things in my opinion, from a cleanliness standpoint too that have to be taken into consideration…if you’re going to wear dreads, then you’ve got to cover the dreads up” (Dr. D., 2018).

Still on the topic of hair, and expounding on an earlier excerpt, Dr. D. (2018) mentioned that, …dreadlocks, in my opinion, is not an asset, but it’s not a killer. If I had two people who were equally qualified and one had dreadlocks and one didn’t, I would take the one without them because of the fact that there are people who come in here who are not comfortable with people who have dreadlocks. So, it becomes detrimental to the business.

The topic of speech was the one that garnered the largest reaction. There was an understanding from all participants that Black speech patterns (i.e. United States Ebonics) is simply a form of slang that is inappropriate for the workplace and should be supplanted by Standard English. I received several responses along the same lines as the response from Ms. Lee (2018):

Student PI: So let’s say that they use the Black speech patterns…

Ms. Lee: Like slang?

Student PI: Like…so…Ebonics…

Ms. Lee: Ok, or slang, ok.
There was a strong preference for United States Standard English, and occasionally a strong aversion to United States Ebonics. For instance, Dr. Harriet (2018) stated, “We should use standard English. In a professional environment we should speak professionally. Do not use slang.” Ms. Lee (2018) stated:

everyone should...people should be able to understand you. You know, we have so many different backgrounds, so many different things going on in the United states...the United states has a lot of different backgrounds...a lot of different ethnicities...so, you know, I think that...I think that everyone should learn English and be able to speak it somewhat...with somewhat decent speaking.

Additionally, Dr. Crusader (2018) stated, “I really hate Ebonics. I really hate Ebonics. Ebonics is taking mangled speech and putting it in language...I just don’t believe in that.” The reason given for the aversion to Ebonics was that patients of differing cultures should be able to easily understand speech, and it would make for effective communication when speaking with hospitals, specialists outside of the office, etc. It was stated that Standard English is a professional style of speaking that gives credibility to the user, and not speaking the language of the majority diminishes credibility:

If I’m speaking on a scientific principle and I’m speaking in Ebonics, I might have all of my facts and figures totally correct, but the scientific community isn’t necessarily going to respect it; they’re not going to respect my results. (Dr. D., 2018)

Along the same lines, Dr. Crusader (2018) noted,

You got to speak...I hate to call it the King’s English...but you have to speak good English when you’re talking to a diverse crowd, because you can have a great piece of knowledge, you can have a great idea, and if people are straining to understand or
repulsed by some of the language you use, then that’s going to take away from your power or take away from your effectiveness.

And one of the most common arguments was that we are in America so we should speak proper, Standard English. However, there was an emphasis on the ability to codeswitch between languages from most participants. Dr. Benita (2018) stated, “…If you’re not able to turn it off in order to speak clear English and turn it on at lunch time and after work, then that would be a difficult thing for you to do here.” Dr. D. (2018) noted,

…Yes I would hire someone who spoke in Black speech patterns, but at the same token I would hope that they would speak in speech patterns that were not Black as well. There’s nothing wrong with speaking in Black speech patterns but you have to be able to speak in traditional speech patterns. I’m not going to even call them White speech patterns because…I will call them traditional speech patterns as opposed to White, Black, Hispanic, whatever. They would come under the auspices of…and for me now, I like the traditional speech patterns…traditional United States speech patterns…or foundational United States…we’re going to figure out a name for this…foundational United States speech patterns. The pattern of speech that most Americans are accustomed to fulfilling this standard. Non cultural, non…you know, not using different slang terms…non cultural...

There was an exception from one participant, Dr. Crusader (2018), who does not believe in using Black speech patterns under any circumstance within a professional work environment; he emphasized the need to speak Standard English when in professional settings:

…it if you are in a diverse work place and you’re talking with some friends that you think you can speak in some colloquialisms, cultural colloquialisms, I think that’s ok. I think
that’s the social…that’s the break time. I think, however, unless you have an entirely
Black firm or you have entirely minority firm or something [laughs]…Nawww, you
know, I take that back. I think that if you’re really doing business, you have to talk the
language of the majority…you really do. And it’s not talking white…that’s just
talking…and I really don’t know how you can put this, but I really want to make that
point…it’s not talking white, it’s talking the universal language of business, ok…which is
free from cursing, and it’s free from Ebonics.

From these excerpts, the reader is able to witness the sentiment that Dr. Crusader (2018) has
towards Black speech patterns/Ebonics. However, in the same token, when asked about
abandoning the language/ Black speech patterns altogether, he responded,

I think that they have a place, ok. And I’m not sure that the place is a universal
application in the business world, ok…in Black speech, or whatever you want to call it,
there’s such richness about culture that there’s no way, that I think…there’s no way that I
think that it should be abandoned. But I think that you need to learn time and place.

In terms of hiring as we consider cultural expression, we have seen the non-negotiables
for these participants, with the greatest being an inability to effectively codeswitch between
Standard English and Ebonics. Another non-negotiable for Dr. Harriett in terms of hiring is an
inability to follow direction in terms of interview attire. Typically for interviews individuals are
advised to dress business casual. However, Dr. Harriet prefers that potential employees dress for
interviews as if they are dressing for the position that they are seeking (e.g. scrubs for medical
assistants/nurses); she has denied employment for those that are unable to follow these
instructions. She stated that she wants to evaluate their sense of appropriate attire for the tasks
that they will face within her business. All employers have expressed that they are equal
opportunity employers, and that one’s ethnic background is not going to hinder employment within their company, and there was a resounding statement by at least half of the participants that “I’m not hiring you just because you are Black” (Dr. Harriett, 2018). Dr. D.’s (2018) concern in hiring is whether one will be able to adjust the current work environment that he has fostered:

…if I had a Caucasian person who came to interview, that would not eliminate them from being hired. I think the thing that…my concern is would they be able to adapt with my office and be able to blend in where they would be comfortable. Now if they couldn’t be comfortable that’s on them. If they couldn’t blend in that’s on them. But they have to be able to coalesce into what the office is and how the office operates.

Based on the excerpts within this section, I created the themes ARACIAL SETTING; COMPARTMENTALIZATION; NEAT, CLEAN, & TAME; “TIME AND PLACE”; COMFORT IS KEY; USING THE “KING’S ENGLISH”; PROCEED WITH CAUTION; MISUNDERSTANDING OF AAVE; and PRIORITIZE CODESWITCHING

4.3.4  Culture, Community, and the Operation of SIT in the Workplace

Transitioning from the last theme, I will discuss culture and community. I will also address the topic of association (versus disassociation), which directly addresses the theoretical framework of Social Identity Theory (SIT). In the previous section, the reader witnessed the treatment of cultural expression within the African American work environment. Within this section, the reader may witness how culture is shared between the participants and the individuals that they work around daily; the reader witnesses the values of belonging within the culture. For instance, when I asked about Black/African American culture from her perspective, Dr. Harriett (2018), responded
…it is a group of Black people who care about and look out for the needs of each other. This can be for healthcare, safety, banks… It’s returning to the community. It’s enhancing the African American community and inspiring children.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is used as a backdrop within this study to understand the ways that employers relate to their culture and community, as SIT’s aim is to reduce negative associations with one’s ingroup. The following illustrate participants’ responses:

We like some of the same foods, listen to some of the same music. We see some of the same tv shows, we talk about things that are common amongst each other that are very common amongst African American people. I have Caucasian friends and I don’t have the same conversations (Dr. D., 2018).

They also mentioned their relationships with the African American community in general. Dr. Harriett (2018) stated, “I can be somewhere in a White community and still be a part of the Black community.” She also mentioned, “I care about my community. I grew up in a small town where you looked out for the whole community. You make decisions based upon your neighbors, not just yourself. Community always matters.” (Dr. Harriett, 2018). This sentiment is echoed from one respondent to the next within this study.” Dr. Crusader (2018) has expressed that he uses his position as a physician to address ills that face the community:

I’ve always taken care of a diverse patient population. I focus on addressing health disparities which are disproportionate among people of color, people who are poor. So that has always been underpinning to everything that I’ve done. I maintain high professional standards, but I always had a sensitivity and a conviction to address issues of disparities which, unfortunately in this country do align with cultural distinctions.
Dr. Crusader, who works in a demographically White location and has majority White employees, also advocates for more African Americans within his business:

…I am an equal opportunity hirer. The business office manager sometimes conducts final interviews, but I don’t think my biases impact…I may be a bit more aggressive at saying that I need to see Black applicants. I would put the word out so that I got more Black applicants…So I would be aggressive about that…(Dr. Crusader, 2018)

Additionally, for half of the participants, none of the employees had prior associations to the hiring personnel prior to their employment. For the respondents who did hire someone they knew prior to their employment, the number was minimal (i.e. Dr. D. and Mrs. Felicia knew one person in their practices prior to employment, and Dr. Crusader said that he only knew about 20% of his employees prior to their employment) and none of those hired were a result of nepotism.

While all participants acknowledge that they do not discriminate and indeed converse with diverse populations, most participants (i.e. all the physicians) acknowledged their greatest associative ties as being with individuals that are similar to them in terms of class and race. Dr. Benita (2018) stated, “Probably ninety percent of the people that I associate with are African American.” Dr. Harriett (2018) said that her associations are “Racially, African American. Class wise, middle class.” Dr. D. (2018) stated

…from my social standpoint, I dealt always with…dealt with the people…and I would tend to be, more honest… the people who I’ve experienced and been to school with and have had conversations with…that are somewhat in my age range, and honestly, somewhat in my education range as well…that have had similar experiences. Now, not all people that I associate with have had my education, but these are people that I have
come through the ranks with. And you know, just had fun with over the years. Those are the people that I tend to associate with more.

Both office managers said that they do not have a preference and associate with everyone. Ms. Lee (2018) stated, “I associate with everyone. I mean, racially I associate with people of all backgrounds and all races.” Mrs. Felicia (2018) says that she’s open to all cultures with the reason being that

…I kinda grew up in a White home…you know, my god parents were White. So, that, ummm…If I go somewhere, I’m going to kinda gravitate to everybody in the room. You know, so I’m kinda …open…kinda like a free spirit.

Participants expressed commonalities with members of their racial background that they do not share with other groups; in the following excerpt the reader may notice the commonalities shared by members of associated groups versus non-associated groups. Dr. Crusader provided an example of the ways that members may interact with non-community members, and a way that community members may culturally and exclusively identify with each other:

I think like when I’m playing golf with an all-Black foursome, ok…we might use the N-word, ok? And we use it as a term of affection, this is not something I do in diverse populations…it’s certainly not something that I do in professional populations. We might use certain colloquiums…uhhh… “you my guy, you my boy.” You know, stuff like that, which I would not use…and to be terms of endearment and familiarity, in the context of being with a close-knit group of friends. Now, there are times where they may be some White people in that group who I’d either consider “woke” as my daughter would say, or they are people that are very fluid and very understanding…like one thing…I cannot…the N-word, which I may jokingly say with an all-Black crowd, that’s a third
rail. I do not use that word around White people…at all…ever. Some would say I shouldn’t use it ever anyway, but I’m sorry, I was raised saying, “Well that’s my nigger, man”…”You my nigger if you don’t get no bigger.” All of that…that’s a rich cultural thing that with a all-Black crowd and family, I am very very comfortable with. But it’s a third rail with White people. (Dr. Crusader, 2018)

In that example Dr. Crusader illustrates the way that verbal communication may differ.

Employers’ relationship to employees vary within the workplace. Within the study there has been mention of a type of mentoring or teaching that may occur. When I asked Dr. Harriett if she feels as though she connects with her African American employees on a cultural level, she responded, that they play games around Black History Month so that she can educate her staff on their history: “Yes, I try to educate them on our culture. There’s a way that you can teach without being overbearing” (Dr. Harriett, 2018). There was also mention of uplift by Dr. D. whereby he expressed that he has witnessed the system taking advantage of those that are not as fortunate or that have limited exposure and education, so he believes in uplifting the community. Specifically, he stated,

We can’t be a better community if our better people don’t help those who are unable to help themselves. And I believe that many people…Black individuals who have had help ignore the fact that they’ve had assistance and feel themselves self-made. I don’t think that anybody would’ve been able… that anybody with help didn’t get to the point where they achieved…they figure anybody ought to be able to do it too. I don’t believe that. I truly believe in uplift. (Dr. D., 2018)

When asked about the ways that she relates to her employees, Mrs. Felicia (2018) made note to the importance of maintaining a professional distance, stating,
…being in the position that I am…I can’t, umm…I try to keep a distance from my employees. But, you know, I’ll do the birthdays and so forth, but hanging after work with them…I don’t do…I don’t do. I keep a distance…you know, from that. Because I want…um…I don’t want to cross over too far.

Ideas of communalism and commonality are present in the workplace, so I constructed the themes COMMUNALISM and COMMONALITY to encapsulate these aspects of participants’ identities. I also included the theme EXPOSE, MENTOR, & TEACH within this section as an explanation of participants’ relationship to members of their racial group.

Through their accounts, the participants understand the struggles that accompany a discriminated group. It is because of this that I included the theme “WE’RE JUDGED.”

Mrs. Felicia (2018)

Mrs. Felicia: Ummm…being a Black-owned business, we have to be politically correct a lot…more than a White business per se. So a lot of times we’re judged by the way that we speak.

Student PI: Why do you feel as that you have to be more politically correct than if it were a White business?

Mrs. Felica: Because for some reason this society puts more pressure on us than they do them. One of the first things that you get when you’re called, “Well…do you…”…for instance, lets say ummm….when I first started I worked in Buckhead, and one of the dental offices did not have an autoclave, nobody ever questioned it. Then when I go to a Black office and work, the first thing you wanna know, “Do y’all have an autoclave?…Do y’all sterilize…Do y’all…”…only if you knew…

Dr. Benita (2018) also noted her experiences with discrimination:
Dr. Benita: You know, we know the ones that don’t know that we’re Black. But ummm…but we try to make everybody feel comfortable.

Student PI: When you say that some of them don’t know when they come in…

Dr. Benita: We know…

Student PI: What type of reaction…

Dr. Benita: Oh, we can tell when you walk in the room…You know, they look like…“Oh!….”and then they don’t come back

In total, the themes acquired from this topic include COMMUNALISM; COMMONALITY; EXPOSE, MENTOR, & TEACH, and “WE’RE JUDGED.”

4.3.5 Participants’ Political Ideology/Worldview

Another major topic within this study dealt with political ideology and worldview (which I combined into one topic), and this category included cultural orientation and ideas surrounding participants’ ideal working environment. While it is difficult to determine one’s political ideology and worldview without a thorough and extensive investigation or interview into one’s life and background, I attempted to gauge a sense of participants’ worldview and cultural orientation. I asked them a series of questions related to their beliefs, positions, and practices as African Americans in a Euro-dominated society. I asked them about cultural practices and patriotism, and I asked them about their beliefs on integration and preservation of Black speech patterns. I also listened to their positions concerning expressions of culture in the workplace and other related topics such as their mentorship towards other African Africans who seek employment in a business such as their own. The reader is able to gauge a sense of the participants’ beliefs and a taste of their worldview from the previous sections listed under themes. For instance, all of the participants are affiliated with African American culture, as you
recall, they all said that they are African American. To delve further into their beliefs and actions, I asked them about their patriotism and participation in a couple of African American celebrations (e.g. Kwanza and Juneteenth) and drew a slightly better picture of their worldview. For instance, Ms. Lee’s (2018) views are that:

No…no I’m not really patriotic. I mean…I don’t celebrate…I don’t do the national anthem. I don’t do the national anthem. I don’t really celebrate the fourth of July. Um, as far as work is concerned, we have those days off and I use that time to spend with family… I don’t really feel like…I don’t feel like the national anthem was meant for us… I mean, I read the words and I feel like the words are… are a little…they’re racist. So I don’t…I don’t believe in them.

And when speaking on integration, her view was:

I feel like it separated…I feel like when we integrated, we separated. Before integration we had strong businesses, we had family, we had different things going on and when it was integrated, it seems like it went away. We didn’t have those Black places that we could go to for businesses and be there as a people. (Ms. Lee, 2018)

Out of the six participants, she was the only one with this view and perspective. Most respondents (everyone excluding Ms. Lee) followed the perspectives of Dr. Harriett and Dr. Crusader. Dr. Harriett stated, “Yes, I love my country. We are a part of this country. We have fought and died for this country…our ancestors fought here. Our country is not always right by us, but it’s ours” (Dr. Harriett, 2018). Dr. Crusader (2018) stated,

I’m very patriotic. Because despite all the faults of this country I still believe that this country stands as the…as good as it gets in terms of equality. I mean, it’s just got a lot more to do. I also am a retired army veteran and I served in [blank], so I’m
very patriotic, very…support my country. And despite what some people might say I
don’t see any disconnect between that. I think that I can be very outspoken about
disparities and still very passionate about being an American.

By stating their beliefs of where we are in comparison to where they believe that we should be, I
can get a sense of the blueprints or order they desire to see within this nation and evaluate
whether it mirrors what we see in their offices. Dr. Harriett (2018), when asked about
integration, stated,

We lost some of our voice. Segregation does not allow for fairness. For instance, as
children the White children would get new books and we got the old ones. For integration
we need laws that allow for fairness. People who are in power and are selfish don’t make
laws that are fair in an integrated society…Integrated schools provide better services,
equipment, and more finances to better equip the schools. There still can be
discrimination between schools in terms of Black versus White schools. There’s
integration and then there is real integration that’s fair amongst all communities. We are
not treated the same…This occurrence snowballs everywhere…this type of inequality.
There’s a difference between what integration is supposed to do and how it is applied. If
it were applied the way that it should be…in a just, fair, and equal manner, then it would
positively impact everyone…

If the reader recalls, one of my initial inquiries concerned the pulse of the Black/African
American working environment. My assumption was that an African American office was one
that would embrace Black culture, acknowledge and appreciate the Black community, appreciate
those elements that derive from Black culture and are unique to the Black community, and are
preserved within the Black community; this assumption would arise because the business owner
or hiring personnel would assumed to be entrenched in Black culture off the basis of their
cultural/racial background. However, one must consider assimilation and enculturation into a
Eurocentric society. One way that I attempted to evaluate that immersion is by asking these
questions related to their actions and beliefs surrounding the society in which they live. From the
interviews, most participants acknowledge or at least know of African American holidays such
as Juneteenth and Kwanzaa, but most participants do not regularly participate in them as much as
they do the American holidays (like the fourth of July and Thanksgiving). Ms. Lee (2018) noted

We do not do…now we…no, we don’t do anything in particular for those things. Most of
the things we do are medical, like we do observe…we do different things for ummm…for
heart health month…we do red. For breast cancer we do pink. But no, we don’t observe
Juneteenth. Of course we all know what it is, so we may talk about it… “You know, it’s
Juneteenth.” So we don’t have the day off for that.

One thing noted by two of the participants is that they make efforts to single out and celebrate
Martin Luther King’s Day, and one participant said that she is active during Black history month.
My reasoning in asking about these holidays was to establish their actual participation in cultural
activities outside of the typical U.S. holidays so that I can get a better sense of their
involvement/immersion in both cultures; this also is related to association versus disassociation
as bicultural beings in the U.S. It would not be unreasonable to presume that the blueprint of
their ideal world would reflect the running of their offices, i.e. their political ideologies and
worldviews would be mirrored within the comfort of their businesses even if they could not be a
reality outside of the office. But first it was necessary to see how such factors such as
assimilation, integration, patriotism, separatism, etc. fit into their worldview. I desired to
establish if their likelihood of satisfaction or displeasure with the current political and social
climate would affect the blueprints of the culture within their offices; i.e. whether they are actively adhering to or subverting hegemonic forces that control societal expectations. From this section I constructed the theme SETTLED.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6 Topics and Themes</th>
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<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
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| Identity | •WE ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
•BICULTURAL IDENTITY |
| Class Status | •"JUST AN AVERAGE PERSON"  
•MINIMIZE DIVISION |
| Cultural Expression | •NEAT, CLEAN, & TAME  
•"TIME AND PLACE"  
•COMFORT IS KEY  
•PROCEED WITH CAUTION  
•ARACIAL SETTING  
•COMPARTMENTALIZATION  
•USING THE "KING'S ENGLISH"  
•PRIORITIZE CODESWITCHING  
•MISUNDERSTANDING OF AAVE |
| Culture, Community, & SIT | •EXPOSE, MENTOR, & TEACH  
•COMMUNALISM  
•COMMONALITY  
•"WE'RE JUDGED" |
| Political Ideology/Worldview | •SETTLED |

4.4 Summary of Findings: Research Questions in Review

This study addressed three research questions. For the first question, participants were asked if African-American culture and lifestyle choices play a part within Black owned businesses. All participants, except for Ms. Lee, claimed that it does. Based upon discussion of this topic, it may be argued that there is a presence of the culture within the workplace based on the mere fact that most of the participants’ offices are comprised primarily of African
Americans. From participant statements, it may be argued that wherever Blacks/African Americans are present, some elements of culture and lifestyle choices would be expected to come into play. Recall the statement by Dr. Benita (2018) “I’m not sure how culturally expressive we are at work. Just by virtue of the fact that I’m here…you know…and kids of all backgrounds get to come and see a person of color…you know…be a doctor [chuckles].” She, and other participants, also spoke about the importance of representation of people of color in the office. Also, it may be gathered that employers request/require adjustments to expressions of culture in the interest of their clientele. Based on these assessments, the themes for this question are BICULTURAL IDENTITY and MAKE ADJUSTMENTS. If the reader recalls, this first question existed merely to exclude any assumptions that culture and lifestyle automatically play a role in the African American owned business, but the second research question hinged on the affirmation of the first question. The second research question asked if hiring practices and positions are affected by the presence of these factors (i.e. the cultural expressions of Black employees) within Black-owned businesses. Based upon discussions with participants it is evident that position/placement specifically is based upon need and skill set; it was repeated by physicians that they just hire based upon their needs of their office. One physician mentioned that if someone needs training, then she can accommodate them as long as the individual has good character. With this explanation, placement within the business is not determined by cultural expression. By examining testimony from participants, I would conclude that cultural expression does affect hiring when one considers speech specifically; readers have repeatedly been reminded of the views of Black speech patterns within the workplace as well as most participants’ emphasis on codeswitching.
An argument may be made that style/dress and hair marginally play a role, depending on the particular hiring personnel/business owner, but I would say that it plays less of a role for style/dress considering that there are defined criteria outlined for those who work in the medical field. When discussing dress/style it was not a significant factor for this particular study because within the medical offices that I interviewed, the dress code requires employees to wear scrubs or a protective covering over their clothing. Ms. Lee (2018) said, “…in the medical field most people, like…umm…they wear uniforms, so…their required to wear uniforms, so here they have to wear uniforms.” When asked about cultural expression in relation to dress within the office, we are reminded of Dr. Harriett’s (2018) response “Well here you have to wear scrubs if you want to work here…You have to give off the perception of professionalism.” And when asked if there were regulations on dress Dr. D. (2018) stated, “…the way that we wear our things over the clothing that we wear tends to block most of that.” One of the only style/dress issues that was addressed pertained to head coverings. Dr. Harriett (2018) stated that an adherence with religious head coverings is acceptable, but for the most part she does not allow scarves or other forms of headdress; “…religious reasons are different. If you wear a hat or a scarf because you’re Jewish or Muslim that’s different…you can do that. But we don’t just wear hats and scarfs here if it’s not for religious purposes.” So, for instance, if one desired to wear a printed scarf that expressed African heritage, it seems as though it would not be permitted if following the parameters set within that office. Head coverings were also mentioned as an effective and acceptable way to conceal or pull back dreadlocks while working, and in terms of hair, specifically dreadlocks, participants emphasized that locks must be kept neat, clean, and tame (i.e. they meet participants’ grooming standards).
Pinpointing specific elements of African American culture was not as straightforward as one might imagine. Everything from tattoos to body piercings to headwraps was cautiously mentioned as interpretations of cultural expression (that were either not permitted within the workplace or permitted with modifications). While I was interviewing Dr. D., gold teeth were mentioned. There were conflicting interpretations of cultural expression as noted in the following: Dr. Harriett (2018) stated “Tattoos have to be covered” and Dr. D. (2018) said that “…tattoos don’t tend to…they’re not African American because everybody, White and Black, have tattoos.”

In all, it seems as though codeswitching is prioritized, and dress and hairstyles come with stipulations. Other than the cultural expressions that were mentioned within this study, it seems as though hiring criteria surrounding cultural expression may not be firmly established. Recall Ms. Lee’s (2018) statement that “…we don’t have a list of what we will and we won’t accept…not for culture, not for dress.” In addition Dr. D. (2018) stated:

It’s funny, I don’t have a specific hiring criteria. But the funny thing is it always seems that when I hire a new employee, I always try to make sure that they don’t have the attributes that I fired the old employee for [laughs]. And that seems to be the primary concern…I would say that there’s no standard template. The template always changes. For this second research question the themes PROCEED WITH CAUTION and WITH STIPULATIONS was created.

When asked if the way in which they self-identify affects their hiring selection and job placement decisions, most participants claimed that it could affect their hiring decisions. Dr. Benita (2018) gave the explanation that “when you have a business, you cannot…people would be lying if they said that they don’t…that who they are does not affect what they do…because
it’s who you are.” Additionally, Dr. Crusader (2018) stated, “I believe that in my personal and professional, you know…interactions…you know, my culture is very influential and does not shade itself in one context. I am what I am. I’m informed by cultural experiences and cultural practices…” Dr. Harriett (2018) is quoted as saying “you make decisions based upon culture.” To answer the last question, I would employ the themes “YOU MAKE DECISIONS BASED UPON CULTURE” and “YOUR CULTURE IS WHO YOU ARE.”

I would add that Social identity theory held up as a framework within this study. On the basis of their testimony alone, we are reminded that all physicians claimed that their closest associations were those who are similar to them class-wise and race-wise. All participants said that they relate to their employees culturally, and we witnessed through class classification that most of them attempt to minimize class differences. One thing that I noted was that most participants claimed that they speak the same around White individuals that they do around Black individuals, and claimed that their speech only slightly modifies between their home and work environments; recall, Dr. Crusader’s (2018) claim “I am fairly articulate just by the basis of my education so I’m articulate in both space.” But if someone who applied for a position in the office spoke using Black speech patterns, most participants would require that they codeswitch within the workplace in order to be eligible for employment. We are reminded that Dr. Benita (2018) said, “If you’re not able to turn it off in order to speak clear English and turn it on at lunch time and after work, then that would be a difficult thing for you to do here.” This was a brief overview of the findings of the research study as they relate to the three research questions, and the themes for each question are found in Table 7.

<table>
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<th>Table 7 Relating Themes to Research Questions</th>
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<td>Research Questions</td>
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Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expression of Black employees?  
BICULTURAL IDENTITY
MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factor within Black-owned businesses?  
PROCEED WITH CAUTION
WITH STIPULATIONS

Does the cultural identity of the business owner influence hiring practices?  
"YOU MAKE DECISIONS BASED UPON CULTURE"
"YOUR CULTURE IS WHO YOU ARE"

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter contained the findings of the research study. Direct quotes were used so that the reader would have a sense of the responses that occurred verbatim; using these quotes also allowed the reader to witness some of the internal and sometimes contradictory struggles that participants had while trying to explain their rational and reasoning. These excerpts from the interviews were provided in order to give contextual insight into the participants’ thoughts, values, and beliefs as it relates to identity and hiring within the Black owned business. This lends more to argument of the internal negotiations and reflections that are taking place within the responses of participants (i.e. cultural negotiation and cultural dualistic responses). This chapter presented the main themes found within the study that link to the identity of participants and their hiring decisions. Social identity theory was referenced in the section pertaining to association and disassociation in particular, but the application is present throughout the topics.
5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction to Conclusion

As I conclude this study, I attempt to make meaning from the responses of participants as it relates to the overall purpose of the study and the research questions. The following assumptions are in no way generalizations of the African American/Black owned business overall, as the sample size was small (i.e. consisting of only six participants) and it was concentrated on a certain population at a specific period of time (i.e. metropolitan Atlanta in the fall of 2018). As seen in the previous chapter, this research found that for most participants, the Black business owner is influenced by the cultural expression of the Black employee and hiring is affected by the presence of these factors within the business. The research also found that for the majority of participants, the identity of Black business owners contributes to the hiring process of individuals within their companies. The study also revealed that employees are heavily evaluated on their speech, however, their style of dress and hairstyles were marginally regulated. From this information, I discuss possible implications, limitations, and I propose future research possibilities based upon findings from the current study.

5.2 Discussion and Implications

This section contains some of the meanings that I have drawn from the responses that were acquired during the interviews. To review, bicultural individuals are those who dwell within two cultures, the one which is their primary culture as well as that of the dominant culture (Darder, 2012). Because my participants are native born African Americans, they are all considered bicultural individuals, that is, they are of African heritage and were raised in the United States. Bicultural individuals develop response patterns to address the dissonance they experience as bicultural individuals; these response patterns include cultural negotiation, cultural
dualism, cultural separatism, and cultural alienation (Darder, 2012). In sum, cultural alienation is one where the individual relates more with the dominant culture than the culture of their heritage (Darder, 2012). Cultural dualism occurs when a person “has two separate identities: one that is identified with the primary cultural community, and one tied to acceptance of mainstream institutional values” (Darder, 2012, p. 51). Cultural negotiation occurs where individuals try to contend with and balance the two cultures; they “attempt to mediate, reconcile, and integrate the reality of lived experiences in an effort to retain the primary cultural identity and orientation while also functioning within the dominant culture for social transformation of the society at large” (Darder, 2012, p. 51-52). Cultural separatism applies to those who choose to associate only with those of their cultural/primary background and shun the cultural aspects of mainstream society (Darder, 2012). Darder (2012) mentions a belief by scholars Ramirez and Castaneda that bicultural development is a way “to cope with the racism and classism that permeate American society” (p. 49). Because these response patterns are used in this manner, it makes sense that participants wavered between cultural negotiation and cultural dualism within their offices; as a reminder, all participants identified as African American, and most seem to compartmentalize/regulate material aspects of cultural expression to their personal areas. By identifying as African American, all participants have been able to successfully identify both aspects of the cultures with which they are affiliated; it is telling that they do not animatedly neglect or prioritize one label over another. This is important because it speaks to that dual identification that was mentioned earlier. As we recall, Black Americans have identified under multiple cultural and racial identities throughout this country’s history. Therefore, it is telling that they identified as African American as opposed to solely American or solely Black or terms outside of those common responses. I will say that it was expected, considering that
Black/African American are common labels used within this country to identify individuals who are of African descent. To identify otherwise would be subverting the social norm. If they had only labeled themselves as American, that could be viewed as an erasure or separation from their African descendance. If they had labeled themselves Black or African, i.e. dropping the American label, that may be interpreted as distancing themselves from their national identity (although it seems that the classification of Black is widely accepted in this country as well).

Overall, as stated by Dr. Harriett (2018) the politically correct answer seems to be African American. The label African American is an example of the negotiation that takes place for bicultural individuals, and, in this instance, participants are all employing cultural negotiation. Other than the one example by Dr. Benita, I would say that participants have yoked their racial and national identity almost without exception. This is important to note because not all African descents that live in America will recognize or readily claim direct association with the Black/African American community. Dr. D. provided an example of such a person (i.e. one of his former classmates) when discussing the topic of association versus disassociation:

Now there was one person in the dental school, of color, who did not associate with us. He associated with all of the Caucasian people…even to the point, as we got older, he was the leader of the Caucasian…or the all…the total dental society. I was the leader of the Black society. When our society had a position with the state board, he called me and asked “well, y’all need to put somebody in that position.” I’m like “what do you mean y’all [laughs].” [Laughs] you know? “I mean, aren’t you one of us [laughs].” But that’s…that’s a perception…that’s how he perceived things, and that’s who he dealt with socially, and I understand. (Dr. D., 2018)
Dr. D. acknowledged and recognized this response pattern that can occur whereby members of a community can detach their affiliation; this response is referred to as cultural alienation. In chapter four, the reader may recall that Dr. D. made note of the individuals with whom he associates, which tend to be those who are like himself (i.e. around the same age range, education range, etc.). This was the case for all of my physicians.

My participants are in the business of middle-class employment, and thusly serve as a type of intermediary for the Black/African American masses and White society. Most of the participants share the same class stratum, that is “…political consciousness and social orientation.” (Boston, 1988, p. 17). The Black middle class “…is torn between identifying with the needs and demands of the black masses, with whom it has close social connections, and having to pacify the anxieties of white society, which provides its means of economic livelihood” (Boston, 1988, p. 45). In this way, the Black masses may be unsure how to approach African American hiring personnel and business owners in middle class employment. If one considers the previous quote by Boston (1988), it may be difficult to determine with whom the Black business owners and hiring personnel are affiliated. This is where Social Identity Theory (SIT) comes into play. By asking questions about their feelings on modes of cultural expression, we are able to get a sense of their affiliations.

For instance, we have learned from Jones’ study, that her respondents, who identified as middle class, disassociate themselves from Ebonics/AAVE (Jones, 2008). Additionally, T’shaka (2004) wrote of a type of flight from the Black community for those who desire “assimilation into the white world” (T’shaka, 2004, p. 4). Although our participants identify with the Black middle (or upper middle) class, they put forth an effort to minimalize class differences and discard an elite title (even though they are medical physicians or hiring managers within
physicians’ offices). Physicians’ closest associations are with African Americans, and most participants have not taken a physical (i.e. residential) flight from Black communities. However, my examination of the acceptance of Black speech patterns within the workplace matched that of Jones’ (2008) study. Participants in my study, as in Jones’ study “…either posit AAVE as a broken form of English or slang not to be labeled as a legitimate language” even though Ebonics/AAVE has a grammar structure (Jones, 2008, p. 46). We are reminded that earlier in the manuscript it was cited that Perry (1998) stated that Ebonics has a Niger-Congo grammar structure with English word borrowing. Regardless, Ebonics is a misunderstood and stigmatized form of language. It was reported by professor of linguistics, John Rickford, to be used by over eighty percent of the African American population (Jones, 2008). However, sociolinguist, Walt Wolfram, pointed to the fact that African Americans are socialized into American society, so there is adequate reason as to why they are “some of the strongest opponents of Ebonics” (Gayles, 2015). Jones notes that with integration, “Whites…assume[d] majority control” and “Blacks became more in touch with their ‘minority’ status; they were…taught that visibility of their culture was unacceptable” (Jones, 2008, p. 32). If readers look back at the treatment of Ebonics in the workplace, especially from Dr. Crusader, I believe that they could easily make the relationship between what I found in my research to the sources previously listed.

When speaking about Black speech patterns, it may be argued that participants implement respectability politics. Respectability politics are a method of controlling/policing Black individuals on their conduct and behavior. Limiting or compartmentalizing employee’s language use could be seen as a form of control by the hiring personnel/ business owner. From what the reader has witnessed within this study, standard English seems to be the language needed for upper mobility and financial security; former mayor of Oakland, Jean Quan referred
to the English that you need in order to acquire employment as “cash English” (Gayles, 2015). And Jones noted that emulating/identification with dominant society is a “survival technique” to ensure “economic success” (Jones, 2008, p. 6). We know from the interviews that codeswitching (an example of cultural negotiation) was encouraged, but standard English took priority over Ebonics. As interview excerpts revealed, most participants advocated for the use of standard English around all clientele/patients and relegated Black speech patterns to breakrooms. Recall, “…If you’re not able to turn it off in order to speak clear English and turn it on at lunch time and after work, then that would be a difficult thing for you to do here” (Dr. Benita, 2018). We know from Wolfram that “language is simply the emblem for how we consider people” (Gayles, 2015). Thusly, it is reasonable to conclude that because Ebonics is stigmatized, so are its users. We know that testimony from a couple of participants supports literature concerning discriminatory practices towards African American businesses. African American businesses face discrimination from the outside world already, as evidenced by Dr. Benita and Mrs. Felicia, so limiting use of a stigmatized language within their workplace may be seen as a method to combat the discrimination that they face from society. In speaking of resistance for bicultural individuals, “…unfortunately, …the solutions they often select arise from the ascribed beliefs and values from the dominant society, [and] they may in fact lead themselves and others deeper into forms of domination and oppression” (Darder, 2012, p. 92). Instead of subverting a discriminatory system, Black business owners and hiring personnel may be unintentionally reinforcing the system. I believe that as evidenced by testimony within these workspaces the reader has insight into the dualism and negotiation that accompany cultural expression within a bicultural working environment, and especially when dealing with the treatment of language for African Americans. Competence and credentials may be questioned because there is
discrimination against this language variety on a broader, national scale. From testimony from Mrs. Felicia (2018) and Dr. Benita (2018) we know that these businesses are not immune to discrimination, especially when language is involved (i.e. competence and education may be called into question when one does not speak the language of the majority). Participants may feel the need to yield to the expectations of the outside world not only in speech, but including speech, because they are aware of the discrimination that exists within our society. The type of discrimination described by participants, towards African American businesses, is not unheard of. If one recalls, early in the manuscript, I outlined the types of discrimination that business owners faced in the past. To combat discrimination, an aracial or culturally muted strategy may be in place to discourage an overly expressive environment. It may be assumed that some participants desire their offices to have an aracial appearance. Recall, Mrs. Felicia (2018) stating “…my office as a whole, we’re not saying ‘oh, we’re African American’ or this or that…” And if we remember from the section on cultural expression, for the majority of participants, material expressions of culture seem relegated to participants’ personal spaces. Mrs. Felicia also included information about Black owned offices that utilize a different strategy to combat some of the discrimination that they may face as a Black owned business; although in the next example they are subverting one form of discrimination by employing another (i.e. colorism).

    Well a lot of times for…knowing a lot of Black owned businesses…a lot of times…like I know some Black offices feel like they need to have all White people in the front office because people won’t come to them. Or some Black offices feel like “Oh, I only want light skinned people working my front desk” or some people feel that they don’t want a dark assistant…or…You know, so it does play…that Black culture does play a big part in hiring unfortunately…it does. (Mrs. Felicia, 2018)
Speaking briefly on the treatment of hair, and locks in particular, this and other natural styles seemed mostly welcomed within the participants’ workplace, but with certain stipulations. When presented with the information that in September of 2016 there was a ruling which stated that an employers’ choice not to hire individuals for sporting dreadlocks is not considered discrimination, every participant stated that this was discriminatory, and that they disagreed with the ruling, and that they did not personally have anything against dreadlocks. It was mentioned by all participants that locks would be in compliance with their office guidelines as long as they were clean, neat, or tame. This sentiment was reverberated with each participant: Dr. Harriett (2018), stated that “It needs to be neat and clean, not just wild.” Ms. Lee (2018) said “Just, you know, keep yourself groomed. Keep yourself…your locks are fine. Your natural hair is fine, just groom yourself. Just make sure that you’re groomed.” Dr. D. (2018) stated “Now, there are certain things in my opinion, from a cleanliness standpoint too that have to be taken into consideration…if you’re going to wear dreads, then you’ve got to cover the dreads up.” These all seem reasonable standards and requests regarding grooming standards for the workplace, but it is interesting that these were the modifiers when referring to the hairstyle; it seems to imply that this particular style is not already perceived as neat, clean, and tame, so it requires a modifier.

This common thread amongst participants reveals that there is an implicit judgement from participants that this particular hairstyle must be evaluated a bit differently than other hairstyles.

Whether it is from society or their own history of socialization, there are expectations and regulations in place that limit African American cultural expression in the workplace. And because we were all raised within this society, it is often difficult to recognize from where these thoughts derive (i.e. from society or ourselves) or even if there is a distinguishable difference at a certain point. For instance, Dr. D. does not have some of the same ideas or practices surrounding
cultural expression within the workplace as the other participants even though he also was
socialized in this society. There was no way to take a full history of participants’ upbringing, but
it may be worth noting that Dr. D. was immersed in African American culture until college
…I’ve been in the Black culture all my life. I didn’t hit the mainstream culture which has
white and other nationalities in it until I got to dental school, so I’m firmly rooted in the
Black culture and all the things that go in the Black culture… (Dr. D., 2018)

Even with this acknowledgement, all participants have expressed adherence to some type
of assimilationist practice within their office, which is not unusually considering that they were
socialized within the United States. I would contribute these controlling elements to hegemony
(discussed later within this section).

What I found on elements of communalism within my study was mostly supported by
Bates (1994). Bates (1994) found that African American business owners heavily utilized
minority employees even if they are located outside of minority neighborhoods. Most of my
participants (five out of six) had a majority African American staff working for them. Out of the
three participants that are located in majority White neighborhoods, two of them employ a
majority African American staff. For the one participant that does not have a majority African
American staff, he explicitly stated his advocacy to employ more African Americans within his
business: “The business office manager sometimes conducts final interviews, but…I may be a bit
more aggressive at saying that I need to see black applicants…” (Dr. Crusader, 2018). Dr.
Crusader also noted that he uses his medical expertise to redress some of the inequalities that are
faced by marginalized communities; this is an aspect of communalism where one looks out for
the benefit or the betterment of the community. From the previous chapter we know that
participants did not know the majority of their employees prior to employment, and none of them
had family members working within their businesses. In this way, the participants are playing a vital role in providing employment for members of the African American community whereby their hiring selections provide jobs/careers for individuals to whom they have no sanguineous ties. Between Dr. Crusader’s statement, and the composition of most of these workplaces, it is implied by participants that there is not only identification and affiliation with the African American community, but also this duty to give back/ provide for the community.

What I found interesting in the findings of this study was that even though the majority of employees and clientele were African American/Black (within five out of six offices), the common response for limitation on any type of cultural expression was due to consideration of non-Black/African American clientele/patients. It was also reasoned that using standard English allows for better/easier communication and it illustrates a level of competence. The only individual that advocated for codeswitching with patients (i.e. depending on the comfort of the patient) was Dr. D. (2018):

If I’m speaking to a person whose grown up, somewhat uneducated, in my community, in a manner that’s totally King’s English, in a manner that they would call quote unquote proper, they may not feel comfortable with me either. So, the object of the game is to be able to communicate, not necessarily to change where you are. Because when we speak in different languages, we’re changing our speech…for the purpose of communication, and only for the purpose of communication.

Dr. D. (2018) added that, “Because the majority of our clientele are Black, …we must cater to the people who are our clientele.” I would like to make it clear that Dr. D. advocates for the use of proper English, but he does not appear hesitant to utilize USEB if he deems it necessary (i.e. it
aids in the communication between himself and his patients); he seems to advocate adjusting to meet the needs of the patient (including linguistically).

For the topic of political ideology/worldview, I asked participants about their patriotism, their thoughts on integration and what that means for the Black community, I integrated their identities, and questioned their participation in a couple of African American and traditional U.S. holidays/celebrations (e.g. Kwanza, Juneteenth, Thanksgiving, 4th of July) and drew a slightly better picture of their worldview (keeping in mind that these views and labels are my interpretation of their political ideologies and worldview, and that they are myopic in nature). For instance, from her testimony, Ms. Lee (2018) seemed to lean more towards Black nationalism and is ascribed the title of a disillusioned liberal. I analyzed the issues that she sees within the country and constructed a type of mental blueprint of the way that she believes that an ideal United States society should function. Perhaps her ideal U.S. society would be one that is racially independent (considering her mention of a loss of communalism after integration) because the integrated society that we know limits unity and strength within a racial group. However, she still labels herself as African American, so she sees herself connected to this country in a marginal manner. Additionally, she is disparaged by the treatment that is associated with African Americans because the American dream has not been realized in full for African Americans (i.e. disillusioned liberal). Through this excerpt, Ms. Lee provides an example and a pull towards cultural separatism. Conversely, from analysis of her excerpt, I am able to infer about her political ideology and worldview that Dr. Harriett noticed a shift once integration was implemented. She was for integration because the policy calls for equality, but it was not implemented the way that it promised. I can infer that the structure of her ideal society does include integration whereby everyone has equal say and input and they have access to the same
resources regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Regardless of the inequality that takes place currently, she is still patriotic and has a similar response as Dr. Crusader’s. Therefore, she still has hope for the American dream (i.e. more of a Black liberal mentality) and is an integrationist even though it has not been realized as a perfect system. She is significantly older than Ms. Lee and has witnessed both segregation and integration. While this personal experience (i.e. witnessing segregation and the implementation of integration) has not been noted specifically by other participants, I believe that this may highlight possible differences from generational perspectives.

However, Mrs. Felicia is one of the younger participants as well, who says that she did not experience segregation, however she is very patriotic and participates in all of the U.S. holidays. I believe that a larger sample size with more participants on both sides of a generational line might yield more of representative sample and further analysis may be made for generational, ideological differences.

From the interviews, as stated previously, it seems as though regardless of their political ideologies, in most cases the workplace is a space where cultural elements are accepted (with stipulations) and shared, but also compartmentalized. It is for this reason that I believe that political ideology/worldview does reflect the cultural environment in the office for most participants (i.e. a dualistic response). I used the theme SETTLED because most participants do not seem greatly unnerved by their affiliation with this country to change/alter their affiliations or deviate from hegemonic influence within the running of their offices (e.g. public displays of cultural expression or celebration of non-traditional/non-European-influenced or official U.S. holidays like Juneteenth). The next section brings in the possibility of outside controlling factors that may interfere with the African American workspace.
It is possible that the Black/African American workspace may not be in the complete control of the business owner. While the business owner may have proprietary control in the legal sense (and the office managers have control in the managerial sense), because of social norms there are societal expectations and judgments that influence our beliefs, conduct, and outlooks. It may not be obvious if one does not consider sociopolitical and sociocultural factors that regulate our beliefs and concerns in regard to professionalism, hair, speech, etc. I asked the participants an open-ended question about possible standards outside of their offices that could/would influence their hiring criteria within the office. Most participants said that there are not any outside influences. However, two of the participants accredited the outside world as having some influence within the workspace:

I think that we’re all impacted by popular culture and the standards that you have out there. I think they’re influenced. I think that you have to do some self-discovery in figuring out what’s appropriate once you get into the business environment (Dr. Crusader, 2018).

While participants were not specific about the influences, it is my belief that the tools of hegemony play a role within the workspace. In short, hegemony is a method of control whereby the dominant society disseminates regulations regarding sociological factors such as actions, values, and beliefs (Darder, 2012) Hegemony is not a system of force, but rather it is presented as a common-sense approach without really questioning the origins or implications surrounding certain beliefs and practices (Darder, 2012). More familiar term that fall under the umbrella of, or accompany, hegemony include terms such as assimilation, Eurocentrism, respectability politics, and discrimination; all of which have been alluded to in one fashion or another within the context of these interviews. These terms are markers that exert some level of control and
influence the actions and decisions within the African American workspace. These are influences that do not necessarily originate from within the business itself but are present and used against and within the business and have contributed to workplace standards and operations. For instance, the topic of Black speech patterns was one that received unanimous disapproval with certain exceptions, i.e. as long as one has the ability to codeswitch.

…everyone should…people should be able to understand you. You know, we have so many different backgrounds, so many different things going on in the United States…the United States has a lot of different backgrounds…a lot of different ethnicities…so, you know, I think that…I think that everyone should learn English and be able to speak it somewhat…with somewhat decent speaking…(Ms. Lee, 2018).

This is an example of a hegemonic ideal that is commonplace amongst the participants that I interviewed; it is perceived as normal and straightforward but has the potential to be deconstructed. English is perceived as the go-to language for all who reside in the United States because it is the language of the majority, even though the United States does not have an official language and prides itself on the diversity that exists within the population. Because the English language (spoken in its standard form) is the most accepted by the majority, those who speak differently are evaluated and treated differently. The inherent value and superiority of this language makes it Eurocentric in nature, and the enforcement of such an ideal is a good example of the operation of respectability politics

With this invisible controlling force, I would hope for eventual counterhegemony. One instance where I interpreted counterhegemony was through cultural relativism from Dr. D. Dr. D. told me about his initial perception on a dental procedure, and how he then changed his views after implementing cultural relativism.
That has been a cultural, African American cultural thing that when I first came out of dental school…it was funny…when I first came out of dental school I was presented with this part of a African American culture that was terrible. You don’t take down a natural tooth, you know, and put a gold tooth on top of it. This is what many people did when they were young. And you would find that…I would spend thirty minutes sometimes, when I was right out of dental school, trying to explain why a person shouldn’t have gold on the front of their tooth and “Why would you shave it down and put it on?” And they would go to another dentist office and get it put on. Then I had to do some self-reflection.

If such-and-such lady likes such-and-such guy and he likes women with gold teeth, ‘cus he had gold teeth, and he’s attracted to this other lady over here and she has gold teeth, but she wants him, and she wants to be attractive to him, and she wants a gold tooth placed on her tooth, who am I to tell her what’s attractive and what’s not attractive? At that particular point I’m subjecting her to my own prejudices and my own biases. And I’m not being forefront. I’m suggesting to her my culture and what I think is culturally proper and culturally improper. And I had to have a real discussion with myself about that. Just because I don’t like it doesn’t mean that it’s wrong because what we do is we look at things from a perspective of how we have been raised, how we have been brought up and what we have been told is wright and wrong. From a different sense of the word I do a procedure where, which they told me is incorrect, where we take a totally natural healthy tooth, modify them, and place something on top of the tooth that’s not natural and…for cosmetic purposes. That’s called a veneer. A porcelain veneer is that. So basically a porcelain veneer does the same thing that a gold crown does. It’s done by the same principle that the gold crown does. It’s a modification of a natural tooth that has no
decay, no problems with it for the purpose of a cosmetic result… I changed my stance. I changed my stance to the point where I explain to people what the disadvantages are and understanding that if that’s what they want, that’s what I will do and I don’t have a problem with it. I don’t have a problem with it at all because I’m trying to provide from their perspective. And we do a lot of it. If a patient wants gold put on the front, “where do you want it put?” I don’t have… because that’s what they want. That’s what their circle finds attractive. That’s what their circle finds desirable. And who am I to judge and pass my judgment along to them? So I stopped doing that. It’s not what I want… (Dr. D., 2018)

Dr. D. was able to transform his preconceived notions and assumptions about this particular cultural practice for his patients. Although he does not allow his staff to have gold teeth, he did look at the practice from another angle for his patients; he utilized cultural relativism and saw the correlation between the widely accepted implant of veneers and the gold tooth/gold cap. It is this type of self-examination and cultural relativism that one may hope to see when it comes to other aspects of Black/African American culture. If we recall, Dr. D. has also advocated for the equilibrium of an already culturally expressive workplace. That is, his staff is one hundred percent African American and his clientele is mostly Black, and he plays Black music in the office and has Black art on the walls, therefore, recall that he was quoted as saying,

So if I had a Caucasian person who came to interview, that would not eliminate them from being hired. I think the thing that… my concern is would they be able to adapt with my office and be able to blend in where they would be comfortable. Now if they couldn’t be comfortable that’s on them. If they couldn’t blend in that’s on them. But they have to be able to coalesce into what the office is and how the office operates. (Dr. D., 2018)
In this manner, instead of completely assimilating to the dominant culture, he believes that outside cultures should adjust to the culture within his office. I believe that this type of mentality can rival hegemony and may allow for greater understanding and acceptance of cultural capital and expression within the African American/Black workspace.

5.3 Limitations

In reflecting on the limitations within my study, I will note that I had a small sample size and a limited amount of time to gather the data needed for this study. There were only six participants in this study, and the study was limited to around one hour per participant. Considering the nature of their occupations, that one-hour time gap was often difficult to arrange. And because there was a limit on time, factors such as class status and political ideology and world view were concisely acquired and evaluated. I asked general questions to acquire a quick synopsis of their worldview, but my perception could be skewed because there was not a great amount of time solely dedicated to these topics. It is possible that my participants may be Black conservatives, Black feminists, Black Marxists, Black socialists, Womanist etc. or have a gamut of other or combined identity affiliations. Along this point, it is possible that my participants have very elaborate ideas and blueprints concerning the running and direction of their businesses, but there was not enough time to acquire that information. Also, because there are subsets to the aforementioned ideologies, and an individual may not subscribe to every tenet of the ideology, it was more efficient to ask them about specific beliefs such as their beliefs pertaining to integration and whether they are patriotic and participate in mainstream American holidays. It would take an enormous amount of time to place everyone within their exact ideological match, and that time was not afforded to me within the context of this study.

Additionally, during one of my interviews, the participant noted that,
…when people come in to interview, people always put forth their best effort… Most people come in and they’re on their p’s and their q’s in the interview and then you know, they get the job and then they relax later on, but you know, when you’re interviewing somebody they’re always on their best behavior. That’s why it’s hard to decipher people’s actions or their character or different things, because everybody’s always on their best behavior. Sometimes you find out later that they may not be the person for that position because, you know, most people are trying to get a job. (Ms. Lee, 2018)

This revelation struck me because I inquired about the individuals that interview at the African American workspace, but I did not take into consideration that interviewing may be a type of performance by the interviewee (and that this performance is known by the interviewer and interviewee). I did not account for codeswitching in the face of the hiring manager/business owner; it would have been interesting to see how this study would have been conducted if that was taken into account. It would have also been interesting to evaluate interviewees on their ideas and feelings surrounding codeswitching within the African American working environment. Because of a type of performance that takes place during interviews, it may have been more informative to ask about employee’s language and cultural expression after they are hired instead of during the interview process.

I wrote on hegemony and structures of control, but prior to the interview I did not consider whether these businesses are reliant on material or financial support from outside sources, and I did not consider whether that may contribute to their conduct and acceptance of cultural expression within their workplaces. That is, I have no knowledge about the affiliations / resources acquisition of these businesses and whether they are independent of or dependent on the dominant society (e.g. for vaccines, as their inventory suppliers, their relationship with the
property owners and building managers of their offices, whether they are receiving subsidies, etc.).

Because I included demographic information based off their residential and work zip codes, a valuable question would have been to ask why participants chose to work or reside in a particular area and if it were based off of the demographics, the school systems, or other factors. I did not have this idea until I started analyzing my data, but I think that it would have provided clarity when evaluating class status and elements of Social Identity Theory. It would have also been useful to know the class status of the participants’ employees. While analyzing my data I realized that I made an assumption that the employees within the offices were within a different class strata than the hiring personnel/ business owners. I did not take into account how SIT would operate if the only difference was their positions within the company (and employees met every other class qualification as their manager or the business owner).

While I acknowledge that African American business owners and managers within this study serve the same function in terms of hiring and placement of individuals within the business, there is still a clear distinction between the two positions. The manager, although second in command of the office, is still considered an employee and does not have the full range of control that the owner has in terms of the final say-so in running the office. They also have the ability to face reprimand if they venture outside of the desires of business owner (and this may subconsciously affect their cultural expression in the workplace). Managers were still included in this study because they hold a great amount of power in interviewing and hiring potential employees, but it may be taken for granted that they are second to the owner when it comes to general decision-making. These were a few of the limitations that I recognized after conducting my study and/or analyzing my data.
5.4 Future Research

This study may be beneficial to future researchers who are interested in the topics of the Black/African American business, intra-racial interactions, discrimination, hiring practices, hiring criteria, employment, and African American identity. If the reader recalls, there was a section in the literature review dedicated to the segmentation that exists within the African American community. Within this section, there were several distinguishing factors such as colorism and name discrimination that were not evaluated within the current study. All of the topics listed within that section have the potential to be studied in great detail; I was unable to measure all aspects of segmentation that exists within the African American community because that would have made for an exhaustive, drawn-out study. Future researchers may use these or other distinguishing factors as subjects within their study as they construct research around hiring within an African American working environment.

I could also see this study as an introduction to numerous research explorations. Using the data from my study may benefit future researchers that are interested in cultural expression within the African American workspace specifically, or I could see this information in conjunction with an examination of the speech patterns of African hiring personnel in Black owned businesses. A linguist conducting such a study may find elements of AAVE/Ebonics within these workplaces (from the hiring personnel) and link it to a larger conversation of one’s class status, the treatment of AAVE/Ebonics, the retention of cultural language, and middle/upper class employment.

I think that the current study would have benefited from a narrative or ethnographic approach to establish a better sense of the world view and everyday application of these cultural expressions within the Black-owned business. Within the current study, there was a limit amount
of time dedicated to each participant, therefore there was not sufficient time to delve deep into their political ideologies/worldview or to see how they interact with their employees or other members of the African American population in everyday life. Future researchers may also want to utilize a mixed methods approach for ethnographic study that includes observation; this may be valuable in collecting information for cultural expression within the workplace (e.g. art and music). Including observation over a period of time (i.e. implementing a longitudinal study) would lend a comprehensive examination of the African American working environment. Scheduling additional time with participants may be difficult with this particular demographic, but I believe that it could add to this body of literature. Future researchers may also find it useful to examine employment patterns over time to see the frequency of cultural expression from employees.

When thinking of future studies, researchers may want to examine other Black/African American owned businesses. Perhaps they could study some that do not have such stringent dress guidelines as the ones within the businesses that I studied (i.e. they were required to wear scrubs and closed-toed shoes for safety purposes). Future researchers may want to try to interview African American business owners that are in retail, for instance. This suggestion comes from an exchange with Dr. Benita (2018) whereby I asked if she sees a place for Black speech patterns in the working environment, and she responded “…it depends on what working environment you’re talking about. Not in this…working environment [chuckles].” There may be other Black owned businesses that do not feel the need to codeswitch, but rather, they feel free to use Black speech patterns. This discovery may be class-dependent, or researchers may find that “cash English” really is the only acceptable language used in business within the United States (Gayles, 2015).
As the reader may notice, there are a number of ways that the current study could be modified. My hope is that this study can add value to the literature involving African Americans, hiring, respectability politics, intra-racial interactions, bicultural studies, etc. in order to better understand the relationships that exist among members of the African American community.

5.5 The Conclusion

Throughout the study, the student principal investigator attempted to remain unassuming and neutral about the subject matter, although, as mentioned at the start of the manuscript it seems unreasonable that a piece of work would be constructed without presumption or biases. While in search of answers to the three research questions: Are Black business owners influenced by the cultural expressions of Black employees? Are hiring practices and positions affected by the presence of these factors within Black-owned businesses? And, does the cultural identity of the business owner influence hiring practices? Social Identity Theory (SIT) was utilized as an accompanying, guiding tool that gave partial speculation to the conduct of participants. That is, SIT was an essential tool in this study of professional businesses because it examines intragroup dynamics concerning association and disassociation within this bicultural community.

I intended for this to be a thought-provoking study in which the research questions lead to a greater understanding of hiring within Black owned businesses as well as an insight into the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of the business owner; it was also a study about one’s identity and the ways that we express identity. My participants were complex, and their interview responses were multifaceted and layered. I witnessed some of the struggles and negotiations that accompany a bicultural identity. In this chapter I introduced Darder’s (2012) bicultural responses of cultural alienation, cultural separatism, cultural dualism, and cultural negotiation, and I
highlighted areas that exhibited these responses. Compartmentalization of cultural expression seems to be a common thread amongst most participants. And after evaluating the workspaces and considering the treatment of codeswitching, the acceptance of Afro-textured hairstyles, and also taking in the consideration of this type the compartmentalization of material expressions of African American culture, I would conclude that most of these practices mediate between cultural dualism and cultural negotiation. When speaking on what this means for the potential applicants, I have the impression that a cultural dualistic response would be the best approach when entering the workplace.

According to Saldana (2009) “Theoretical Coding integrates and synthesizes the categories derived from coding and analysis to now create a theory” (p. 164). If I had to create a theory for this study using evidence from the findings, it would be that aspects of one’s bicultural identity has influence over the hiring choices and cultural expression within the African American workplace. Consideration for bicultural beings in African American owned workspaces includes attention to codeswitching and grooming standards for Afro-textured styles, and there is an emphasis on professionalism and consideration of the comfort of non-Black/African clientele. While my study cannot be generalized, I would say that potential job applicants seeking employment in these offices would benefit from using caution in the form of cultural dualism when interviewing for positions within these companies. I believe that acquiring a sense of the hiring personnel/business owner’s cultural orientation and views on cultural expression can lead one to determine the type of environment to which they will be applying. From the information within this study, applicants may even get a sense of the cultural environment if their interview is in the office of the hiring personnel (i.e. they may notice compartmentalization of cultural materials within hiring personnel’s personal offices versus the
rest of the practice). It is advisable to seek preliminary information on the cultural environment of the workplace prior to interviewing if factors such as codeswitching pose an issue.

Counterhegemony is not yet a reality (or it may not even be an aspiration) for the businesses that I interviewed. But, the excerpt from Dr. D. about his change in gold tooth procedures offers a glimpse of the cultural relativism that could be possible in terms of cultural expression in the workplace. More self-reflection and examination of hegemonic control may eventually alter perceptions of respectability and cultural expression within the African American/Black working environment.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of African American Studies

Informed Consent


Principle Investigator (PI): Akinyele Umoja

Student Principal Investigator (Student PI): Lauren Arrington

I. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the operations of African American owned businesses. The focus is on Black identity and hiring within these workspaces. Six participants are needed for this study. You have been asked to take part in this study because you are at least 18 years or older. You have been asked to participate because you live in Metropolitan Atlanta. You were also chosen because you are an African American business owner or African American personnel who is responsible for hiring and placement of employees within the workplace.

II. Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked questions related to ideas of Black culture. You will also be asked about hiring criteria. There will be a demographic questionnaire. The interview questions will have topics that relate to self-identity and hiring practices within Black owned businesses. The interviews will last around one hour. The interview will be at a
time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will take place in a manner that makes certain that you and your place of business remain anonymous.

III. Risks

There are no known risks if you decide to take part in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The information you give will be used to establish ideas related to Blackness. The information you give will be used to establish ideas related to hiring and placement criterion. If there are any questions that you do not want to answer, inform the Student PI and she will move on to the next question. You can also end your participation in the study at any time.

IV. Benefits

The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information gathered from this study may provide more general benefits in the future.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the interview you are acknowledging that you are 18 years or older and are agreeing to participate in the study. You are free to decline to answer any question that you do not wish to answer for any reason without penalty. And you may end your participation in this study at any time.

VI. Confidentiality

This survey is anonymous. Do not write your name on the survey. No one outside of Dr. Akinyele Umoja and Lauren Arrington will have access to your responses to the study. No one will know that you participated in the study. You will be given a pseudonym. All answers to questions will be placed in a sealed envelope. Audio recordings and field notes will be sealed in a locked box. Any interviews that are done and recorded over the phone will be kept in a
password protected phone. All information is primarily accessible to the Student PI. Individuals from the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) may request an inspection of these records in order to make sure that the study is conducted in a way that protects all participants. No individual information will be revealed if the data is published.

VII. Contact Persons

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Akinyele Umoja of Georgia State University. His email is aadaku@gsu.edu. Or contact Lauren Arrington __________________________

VIII. Is there any part of this form that you do not understand?

IX. Copy of Consent Form to Subject

You will keep a copy of this form for your records. Please sign below

___________________________________   _____________________
Participant’s Name                                                         Date

____________________________________ _____________________
Participant’s Signature                                                           Date

___________________________________   _____________________
Student PI’s Signature                                                        Date

Appendix B: Consent Form for Waiver of Document of Consent

Georgia State University

Department of African American Studies

Informed Consent

Principle Investigator (PI): Akinyele Umoja Student Principal Investigator (Student PI): Lauren Arrington

I. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the operations of African American owned businesses. The focus is on Black identity and hiring within these workspaces. Six participants are needed for this study. You have been asked to take part in this study because you are at least 18 years or older. You have been asked to participate because you live in Metropolitan Atlanta. You were asked to participate in this study because you work in the medical field. You were also chosen because you are an African American business owner or African American personnel who is responsible for hiring and placement of employees within the workplace. This study should not take more than 1 hour.

II. Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked questions related to ideas of Black culture. You will also be asked about hiring criteria. There will be a demographic questionnaire. The interview questions will have topics that relate to identity and hiring practices within Black owned businesses. The interview will last around one hour. The interview will be at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will take place in a manner that makes certain that you and your place of business remain confidential. The interview will be audio-recorded, or field notes will be taken in great detail.

III. Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than in a normal day of life. If there are any questions that you do not want to answer, inform the Student PI and she will move on to the next question. You can also end your participation in the study at any time.
IV. Benefits

The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information gathered from this study may provide more general benefits in the future for employers and job seekers.

V. Alternatives

The alternative to participating in this study is to not take part in this study.

VI. Compensation

Participants will be offered a light lunch as compensation.

VII. Voluntary

Participation and Withdrawal Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the interview you are acknowledging that you are 18 years or older and are agreeing to participate in the study. You are free to decline to answer any question that you do not wish to answer for any reason without penalty. You are free to decline being audio recorded, and field notes will be taken instead. And you may end your participation in this study at any time.

VIII. Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Dr. Akinyele Umoja and Lauren Arrington
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

We will use a pseudonym rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a sealed envelope. Audio recordings and field notes will be sealed in a locked box. Any interviews that are done and recorded over the phone will be kept in a password protected phone. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name
or other information that may identify you. All materials will be shredded and deleted immediately after the conclusion of the study.

IX. **Contact Persons**

   Contact Dr. Akinyele Umoja and Lauren Arrington at [email protected] or [email protected]

   • If you have questions about the study or your part in it
   • If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

   Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu

   • if you have questions about your rights as a research participant
   • if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

X. **Copy of Consent Form to Subject**

   You will keep a copy of this form for your records. The copy will be mailed or emailed to a destination of your choosing, however, please note that documentation sent over the internet may not be secure. If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please give verbal consent by saying “YES”. If you do not give verbal consent, please say “NO”.

**Appendix C: Demographic Survey**

   Georgia State University
   Department of African American Studies
   Demographic Survey


   Principal Investigator: Dr. Akinyele Umoja

   Student Principal Investigator: Lauren Arrington
Gender:

Age:

Occupation:

1. Do you identify racially, and if so, what is your racial category?
   Why do you identity in this manner?
   How do you think that others identify you racially?
   Why do you believe that they identify you in this manner?

2. What is the racial composition of your clientele by race, gender, and age (you may give an estimate in percentages)?

3. What is the racial composition of your employees by race, gender, and age (you may give an estimate in percentages)?

4. Of those hired in your business, how many, if any, did you know prior to their employment here, and in what capacity (e.g. through family relations and networks)?

5. How many employees do you have working in your business? (can be an estimate)

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   Grammar School       High School or Equivalent       Some College
   Bachelor’s Degree      Master’s Degree       Professional Degree

7. What would you consider to be your class status?
   Lower       Middle       Upper Class

8. Would you consider yourself as a person of privilege or of an elite status (Why or Why not?)

9. Would you say that you had a privileged background?

10. What is your current zip code?
11. Do you own property/ a home?

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Georgia State University
Department of African American Studies

Interview questions

1. How do you identify nationally and/or culturally, if at all?

2. Do you think that culture matters? Explain

3. In your own words, what comes to mind when someone mentions “Black Community”? Is there such a thing? And if so, do you consider yourself a member? Who would be considered members of this group?

4. What is Black/ African American culture to you?

5. How culturally expressive are you (in the home, workplace)?

6. Who do you tend to associate/affiliate with (racially, ethnically, class wise)?

7. Are you patriotic (e.g. singing the star-spangled banner, 4th of July, thanksgiving, etc.)? Could you elaborate?

8. Do you participate in holidays such as Kwanzaa, Juneteenth, etc.? Could you elaborate?

9. What do you believe that integration did to/for the Black community (impact negatively or positively)? Explain.

10. Do you change the way that you speak around white people? Why?

11. Is it necessary to change your speech to create a successful business?

12. What are your thoughts on Black speech patterns?

13. If you are advising an intern that does not speak standard American English, would you have any advice for them? If so, what would that advice look like?
14. Do you see a place for Black speech patterns in the working environment?

15. Do you find it necessary to change the way that you speak at work versus the way that you speak around family and friends? If so, in what way does it change?

16. Would you say that an expression of one’s African American culture limits their potential to be hired in your business?

17. Do you see Black speech patterns as a language variety that should be retained or abandoned (and in what context)? And would you hire someone that spoke using Black speech patterns? Why or Why not?

18. What are your thoughts on physical expressions of one’s African American background worn both inside and outside of the workplace?


20. If advising a potential intern who has locks down their back, would you see this as a potential detriment to their career path or would you advise them to embrace their choice of hair dress? What would your advice look like?

21. Are there any expressions of an African American cultural background that you would not allow within your place of business?

22. Do you feel as though you connect with your African American employees on a cultural level? If so, in what ways, or if not, why not?

23. In September of 2016 there was a ruling which stated that an employers’ choice not to hire individuals for sporting dreadlocks is not considered discrimination. What are your thoughts on this subject and ruling, and how would an individual sporting locks fare in an interview within your place of business?
Appendix E: Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script


Student Principal Investigator (PI): Lauren Arrington

Department of African American Studies

Georgia State University

The following recruitment script will be distributed by Lauren Arrington to individuals who meet the criteria required for this study.

I am a Georgia State University student. I am working on my Master’s thesis through the department of African American Studies. I am studying the hiring practices of African American
business owners (or personnel who hire employees). The goal of this study is to research ideas about Black culture and hiring in the workplace. Six participants are needed for this study. The interview will take around one hour. The interview will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. You will receive a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes. I will offer a light lunch to participants during the scheduled interview. If you are interested in participating, please contact me through one of the following channels:

Cell phone number: [Redacted]
Email Address: [Redacted]

Appendix F: Glossary

- Throughout this paper, the terms African American and Black are used interchangeably to describe persons of African origin. The persons sought out for this study possess a lineage of ancestors who have a history in the United States as descendants of American slavery, i.e. involuntary immigrants (as opposed to voluntary, Black immigrants who entered the United States by their own volition). Others of African descent from the Caribbean and elsewhere are excluded from this study as their “…perceptions and reactions to racism may differ from those of native American blacks” (Calmore, 2005, p. 123).

- Black-owned businesses: Within this study 100% ownership was preferred and sought out, however those who own an equal stake in the business (at least 50%) with another African American partner and have equal say in the hiring and employment of the business were eligible for participation within the study. Within the study, these individuals (i.e. business owners) may also be referred to as entrepreneurs. Both terms
refer to those who have constructed businesses, have ownership over those businesses, and work for themselves.

- According to Durham, Cooper, and Morris, what we now know as *respectability politics* was “coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham [and it]…describes a range of strategies, largely regarding notions of honor, self-respect, piety, and propriety, deployed by progressive black women to promote racial uplift and women’s rights and to secure broader access to the public sphere” (Durham, Cooper, and Morris, 2013, p. 724). Simply put within this context, respectability politics involves the policing of those within the Black community as a way to thoroughly integrate them into mainstream society.

- By utilizing the term *professional* within this study, I refer to those with high levels of education, that is, those with a professional degree such as a medical degree. These individuals are assumed to have *middle- or upper-class* status, however, their class status is ultimately determined and defined by them. By professional setting, I refer to the environments that are operated by these individuals.

- *Communalism* is a concept that is thought to be embodied in the “cultural legacy” of African Americans (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 409). It involves a mentality of interconnectedness whereby “…the good of the individual is closely interwineded with the good of the group” (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 410). This concept involves “the notion that duty to one’s social group is more important than individual rights and privileges” which is emphasized by the axiom “I am because we are and since we are therefor I am” (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, Albury, 1997, p. 410-411). This sense of duty towards the community implies association with these individuals, which leaves little space for disassociation from those who embrace African American cultural
expressions. And this concept further challenges such foundations as the middle class, capitalism, neoliberalism, and other elements that may be associated with Black professionals.

- There is a distinction between the terms: *enculturation, assimilation, and acculturation*. Enculturation is “the process by which a person learns or acquires his or her culture, usually as a child. [It is] Also known as socialization” (Eller, 2009, p. 21). The term assimilation refers to an act by minorities of “…relinquishing their culture of origin in favor of the dominant culture” (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996, p. 43). “By *acculturation*, LaFrombiose et al. (1993) refer to absorption into the dominant culture (assimilation), but with some important aspects of the culture of origin retained. The acculturation model assumes that minorities relinquish most but not all of their culture of origin” (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996, p. 44).

- The individuals involved in this study are labeled *bicultural*. Bicultural individuals are those who “learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live” (Darder, 2012, p. 45). There are varying cultural response patterns for these individuals.

- *Lifestyle Choices* in this context refers to those elements which an individual can control, such as sporting locks, a particular style of dress, or even they ways in which they attempt to control their speech (e.g. through the use of Ebonics or codeswitching) as opposed to those which they cannot control, such as inherent phenotypical characteristics.