

## SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE BLACK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AT HBCUS AND PWIS

Jordan Moody, Howard University, School of Business, Washington, DC, U.S.A.  
Michael N. Ogbolu, Howard University, School of Business, Washington, DC, U.S.A.

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### ABSTRACT

*The primary mechanism through which the organizational structure and culture are inculcated on members of an organization is socialization. Educational and socialization experiences are quite different between African American students who attend predominately white institutions (PWIs) and their Caucasian counterparts. The implementation of desegregation seemed to predict that black students would be successful at PWIs and graduate from those institutions at an equal or greater rate than they did at HBCUs. However, this has not been the case, for instance, according to research, although the enrollment of African Americans at majority white schools increased, students who attended black universities graduated at a much higher rate than black students at PWIs. The causes, immediate or remote can be attributed to the extent of socialization and the social identity of black students in PWIs and HBCUs.*

**Keywords:** Social Identity, Socialization, HBCUs, PWIs, Performance

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social identity theory describes a person's sense of who they are, on the basis of the group in which he or she believes they belong. The goal of the theory is to predict the experiences and situations under which individuals think of themselves as individuals or as a part of a group. African American students in predominately white institutions (PWIs) have significantly different experiences compared to Caucasian students in the same institutions. This results from feeling that they do not belong or are not fully welcome in these institutions. The effects of these discomforting feelings are often unknown or overlooked by leaders and administrators of PWIs. The unintended consequences of this feeling of not belonging are low self-esteem, anxiety, inability to concentrate, depression, and poor academic performance.

Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954 kicked off the desegregation of public schools in the United States. The decision of the court granted blacks access to white schools of higher education. Before 1954, the majority of black students in higher education were students at HBCUs, but by the year 1973, 75% of black students attended PWIs. Proponents of desegregation seemed to predict that black students would be successful at PWIs and graduate from those institutions at an equal or greater rate than they did at HBCUs. However, this has not been the case, for instance, according to research, although the enrollment of African Americans at majority white schools increased, students who attended black universities graduated at a higher rate than black students at PWIs.

Most majority white schools were perceived to be superior to black schools. Invariably, black students who attended PWIs were directly or indirectly forced to accept the notion that PWIs were not required to accommodate their specific needs. In addition, the administration PWIs did not engage in creating new standards that supported the diversity of the institutions (Taylor, 1989). Therefore, black students in PWIs have continued to experience these feelings of hostility, lack of support, and that of not being welcome (Saddlemire, 1996).

The overall college experience such as the curricula, student services, and pedagogy appears to be designed for white students only (Taylor, 1989). For example, history, math, and even grammar instructions are strongly influenced by parochial and monocultural perspectives. Even though the curriculum reflects the dominant (white) culture's perspective and usually doesn't include nonwhites' cultures and perspectives (Taylor, 1989), it is not an indictment of racism on PWIs, because this has been the standard for a long time.