RACIO-ETHNIC COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL

ASSIMILATION: AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE


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Patricia Catherine Phillips, B. A.


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CHAPTER I


STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM


One of the principle tenets of the critical studies approach is that organizations are

not simply neutral sites of meaning formation; rather, they are produced and reproduced

in the context of struggles between competing interest groups and systems of

representation (Mumby, 1993). Organizations are thus political. The complex system of

discursive and nondiscursive practices that reflect organizations as political formations

represent the struggle to fix and institutionalize the dominance of certain groups and

meaning structures over others (Mumby, 1993).

Expanding on the critical studies perspective, critical theorists suggest studying

language as the expression of social and cultural identity. Decisions about what kind of

talk will be tolerated or privileged in organizational settings are decisions about whose

reality will prevail (Sprague, 1992). Not widely considered in organizational literature

are those nonverbal communication behaviors specific to cultural groups that may or may

not be appropriate in the contexts of organizations and how the appropriateness impacts

communication behavior between cultural groups displaying different rules for both

verbal and nonverbal communication. Recently, with the implementation of various diversity initiatives, organizations have tried to address this struggle in ways that do not reflect a dominance of one group over the other. Rather, organizations are attempting to incorporate an awareness and general acceptance of the variety of communication behaviors shared by members of different cultures. By examining how dominant group members socialize traditionally marginalized members to the organization, we can assess if diversity initiatives have been able to avoid the reproduction of existing social arrangements favoring the interests of the White male.

In the last few years, a promising, yet incomplete attempt to address current trends of diversity within organizations has pervaded organizational literature (Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Alderfer, 1982). Although race, a salient issue related to diversity, has been investigated in the past, the investigation has been limited strictly to a narrow identification of race. This narrow identification of race typically addresses the issue in such a way that prohibits a discussion of how organizational members react to the existing organizational environment. Few studies, for example, address how the implementation of an institutionalized organizational practice such as assimilation affects its African-American organizational members (Dickens & Dickens, 1991). It is the goal of this research to address communication practices, which are designed to integrate newcomers to the organization, as evidenced in the assimilation phase of socialization, and their impact on African-American assimilation.

Increased attention to diversity stems partially from a report (funded by the U.S. Department of labor) which predicts that, by the turn of the century, five-sixths of new workers in the United states will be women, African Americans, Hispanics, and

immigrants (Johnston & Packer 1987). The changes in the composition of society and the workforce will introduce a variety of tensions because "differences in cultural norms and values among ethnic groups in the United States will manifest themselves in different work related behaviors" ( Cox, Lobel, & McCleod 1991). Both theoretical and practical implications emerge as they relate to increased diversity within the structure of organizations. For the practitioner, there is a need to determine exactly how communication contributes to the effective integration of a diverse workforce and to develop communication strategies that promote the successful integration and assimilation of African-Americans to the workplace. Theoretically, there is a need to investigate further inter-racioethnic communication by creating new knowledge about communication practices between cultural groups. With the generation of new knowledge, scholars may then be able to explain the communication practices between certain groups of people by erecting theoretical frameworks particular to interracioethnic communication practices.

The concept of diversity in the workplace encompasses a variety of personal and social bases of identity, including race-ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, etc. The research included in this study, however, focuses exclusively on African-Americans. While concentrating specifically on African Americans throughout this research, it should be noted that no single factor accounts for communication attitudes and behavior. Rather, various individual and personal orientations related to culture reflect the multidimensionality of such relationships. For instance, several factors accounting for communication attitudes and behavior can include an individuals' field of experience, perceived costs and rewards, preferred

outcome, and the situational context in which the communication event is taking place (Orbe, 1998).

The changing racioethnic landscape within organizations provides critical theorists a wide range of opportunities for investigating the impact cultures have on communication practices within organizational settings. In the last few years, research has focused on the impact of culture and its relationship to communication within organizational settings (Cheney, 1983; Cheney, 1995; Alvesson, 1993; Schein, 1994; Huber & Draft, 1988; Tompkins, 1988; Nicotera & Cushman, 1992; Mumby, 1993; Knights & Willmott 1987; Gregory, 1983; Fontaine & Greenlee, 1993; Allen,1995; Nadler, Nadler, & Broome, 1985). Research has also studied the impact of culture on communication in organizations from an inter-racioethnic perspective ( Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Thomas, 1993; Dace, 1994; Kochman, 1981; Foeman & Pressly, 1987; Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991). However, very few studies have systematically examined specific communicative practices as they occur at the most mundane level in organizational settings (Foeman & Pressley,1987; Tripp,1991). A clear example of examining specific communication practices would be to analyze the process of assimilation in the socialization of African-Americans into organizations.

Definitions

### Inter-racioethnic communication

Racioethnicity is defined as the interrelationship between biologically and/or culturally distinct groups (Cox, 1990). Inter-racioethnicity will be defined for the purpose of this study by incorporating both biologically and culturally bound communication behaviors expressed by African-American and White group members

within the context of organizations. Specifically, inter-racioethnic communication refers to the communication practices exhibited by African-Americans as those members traditionally marginalized in society socially and politically with those communication practices and expectations exhibited by Whites as socially and politically dominant group members. Inter-racioethnicity focuses on the dynamic communication process and exchange between African-Americans in dominant white societal structures regulated by both the biological and cultural factors.

Racial identification

Racial identification refers to the degree of African-American commitment to the ideas, rules, and norms exhibited by African-American group members. Levels of racial identification function to explain African-American overt communicative practices within and outside of their group (Myers & Thompson, 1994). Levels of racial identification to the African-American group signify which communication orientation will be expressed depending upon the cultural commitment to group members (Tripp, 1991). The higher the level of racial identification expressed by African-Americans, the higher their commitment to their cultural group.

Communication orientation

Communication orientation is "a concept referring to a specific stance that co-cultural group members assume during their interactions in dominant societal structures" (Orbe, 1998). In addition, communication orientation refers to the conscious or unconscious process of exhibiting particular communication behaviors in a given context (Bell, 1990). Nine basic communication orientations which emerge according to the co-cultural framework provided by Orbe (1998) include nonassertive assimilation, assertive

assimilation, aggressive assimilation, nonassertive accommodation, assertive accommodation, aggressive accommodation, nonassertive separation, assertive separation, and aggressive separation. A complete description of each communication orientation is provided in Chapter Two.

### Co-cultural communication

Co-cultural communication is the interaction between African-Americans as a diverse collection of people who call the United States home with those individuals representative of the White cultural group. "The word co-cultural has been embraced recently by communication scholars in a conscious attempt to avoid the problematic nature of existing terms that frame marginalized group members as secondary in importance and submissive to the powers of dominant society" (Orbe, 1998).

### Organizational assimilation

Organizational assimilation can be thought of as the process by which an individual becomes integrated into the "reality" or culture of an organization (Jablin, 1987). Van Maanen (1975) asserts that there are two dimensions: (1) the deliberate and unintentional efforts by the organization to socialize employees, and (2) the workers' attempts to "individualize or modify their roles and organizational environments to better satisfy their needs, values, and ideas. Socialization through assimilation is achieved by aligning the set of expectations and beliefs shared by newcomers, concerning how people communicate in particular occupations and work settings, with those expectations and beliefs shared by the organization .

### Inter-disciplinary Research on Race

Across disciplines, a collection of many useful concepts, theories, and research findings addressing racioethnic communication within organizations has emerged. Recently, however, the communication discipline has shown a strong trend toward an interdisciplinary synthesis of perspectives in formulating theories and models designed to explain racioethnic phenomena. Increasingly, efforts have been made with an emphasis on developing multidimensional conceptualizations that incorporate explanatory factors drawn from more than one discipline (Davenport, Applegate, & Sypher, 1985; Carbaugh, 1985; Casmir, 1985; Cushman, & Sanderson-King,1985; Donohue, 1985; Gudykunst, 1985; Stewart, 1985; Stewart, 1985). A significant integrative approach was taken by Tajfel and his associates in developing his theory of social identity and intergroup relations by taking into account the structural conditions of the society as its minority-majority status (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel& Turner, 1986). In addition, theoretical developments have emerged incorporating the structural/situational and psychological conditions of group identity emphasizing the importance of interpersonal and intergroup interactions based on communication accommodation theory (Gallois, Franklyn, Giles, & Coupland, 1988).

The available research attempting to integrate approaches, in order to gain a clearer conceptualization and understanding of the way racioethnicity is played out in human interaction, is a good start. Through an analysis of organizational socialization and assimilation practices, an attempt can then be made to discover the impact organizational socialization may have on racioethnic communication behaviors within the organizational setting by using the co-cultural theoretical framework provided by Orbe (1998). This study will focus specifically on the socialization practices of organizations

and how racial identification impacts organizational socialization from an African-American perspective.

Although a significant amount of racioethnic organizational communication research has focused on differences between White and Asian cultural communication (Becker, 1986; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1981; Okabe, 1983; Singelis, 1991; Sogon & Masutani, 1989), little research has been conducted which examines cultural communication behaviors between African-Americans and Whites in the organizational setting. Taylor Cox (1990) offers his comment concerning problems with research by organizational scholars on race and ethnicity. He states, "Despite a growing need for knowledge about the effects of race and ethnicity in organizations, relatively little research on these issues has been performed and few research reports have been published in the major management journals" (p. 5).

In his study Cox (1990) provides several factors related to problems with research on issues of race and ethnicity based on his survey of scholars. As an example, Cox found that White Americans do not consider racioethnicity a topic of universal importance (p.7); the belief that issues addressing "African-American" concerns are limited to an African-American audience. Another important factor restricting research on race is that individuals are discouraged from actually performing the research. Cox (1990) found that 41% of the respondents had been directly discouraged from performing research on race. The reasons for discouraging such research vary. For example, one respondent said that a faculty member asked her, "why have you chosen to put yourself in a research ghetto?" (p.8). Another respondent was offered this explanation, "research on minorities is alleged to be inferior and only published in second-rate journals and no

established person has expertise or interest in this area" (p.8). Related to the lack of perceived universality and direct discouragement to performing research on issues related to race, Cox quoted a respondent synthesizing the lack of support for conducting research on issues of race. She stated, "If one is a minority researcher, one is assumed to be biased, but if one is a nonminority, one's legitimacy is questioned" (p.10).

The significance of research on issues of race and ethnicity become more apparent as the landscape of organizations change to include a more diverse membership. Ironically, based on the culmination of issues related to race, the motivation for reasons given opposing research on issues of race may be ill founded and lack scholarly insight. Issues concerning race, particularly in organizations today, offer great potential to those who wish to understand inter-racioethnic communication and its impact on organizational socialization practices.

Past research has suggested that in order for African-Americans to succeed in dominant organizational structures they must learn to adopt those communication behaviors and orientations reflected in the dominant culture (Dace,1994; Baker,1995; Thomas, 1993; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). The extent to which an individual is capable of acquiring communication orientations representative of existing organizational cultures results in successful individual socialization. In turn, a positive relationship is said to exist between successful socialization and organizational identification (Cheney, 1983;Collier & Thomas, 1988; Cook & Wall, 1980; Downs, 1977). In other words, organizational identification is a result of the successful socialization of a newcomer to the organization and vice versa. Of particular interest in this research is the relationship between organizational socialization and how African-American communication and

culture impact the process of successful socialization. Based on these assumptions, the following research questions are proposed in order that a relationship between organizational socialization and African-American identity with the organization can be investigated further.

Proposed Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between racial identification and successful African-American organizational assimilation.

RQ2: How effective are dominant group organizational practices in socializing African-Americans to the organization?


Chapter One includes the background, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter Two includes a review of relevant literature addressing organizational socialization and culture. Chapter Three includes a discussion of methodology and procedures of the study including subjects, setting, and procedures of administering each of the questionnaires. Chapter Four includes the results section. The final chapter is the discussion section providing summative information, conclusions, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II


REVIEW OF LITERATURE


One of the major concerns shared by researchers addressing the implications of

race in U. S. society as a whole and in organizations specifically is methodology. It has

been argued by those interested in conducting research on race that traditional, scientific,

and objective methods used by those in the communication field are inadequate (Cox,

1990). Reasons for questioning the ability of traditional methods to capture and explain

the reality of inter-racioethnic communication are said to be due to traditional research's

inability to capture the complex relationships and multidimensionality of such

relationships inherent in issues concerning race. Therefore, it is believed that studies

using such perspectives should be approached with caution. This is not to suggest,

however, that all research on race using traditional methods of investigation are without

merit. While many of the limitations inherent in traditional approaches to understanding

the process of communication and assimilation among African-Americans exist,

traditional approaches may be useful in helping to create a foundation for future research

to build upon. This may be accomplished by incorporating new knowledge found in

such perspectives as muted group theory and in the recent attempts to theorize from a co-

cultural framework.

Although the bulk of research does not specifically address organizational

assimilation from a African-American perspective, existing research does set the stage

and create a framework applicable to this specific group. This review presents an

integrated approach to studying the communication processes of those African-Americans who are traditionally marginalized members as they enter into an organization. The integrated approach in this review draws from a variety of perspectives in order to outline the communication practices used by African-Americans as marginalized members in the organization to communicate with the traditionally dominant members.

The review is presented under two headings. The headings include sections discussing the socialization processes within organizations, and sections discussing culture. Each heading describes certain concepts as they relate to racioethnic communication from an African-American perspective. The following section describes the function of communication as it relates to the elements of the socialization process experienced by newcomers as they enter the organization.

<u>Organizational Socialization Practices</u>

<u>Anticipatory socialization</u>

Anticipatory socialization is a set of expectations and beliefs concerning how people communicate in particular occupations and work settings. These expectations and beliefs are developed from early childhood before organizational entry. During anticipatory socialization, individuals are receiving information and developing beliefs about the communication styles (ways of communicating, e.g., friendly, relaxed, contentious, dominant, animated) associated with occupations and work relationships. It also seems clear that one of the stylistic attributes of work-related communication that we learn about early in life is that power is an integral element of interpersonal communication in organizational relationships (Jablin, 1987). Recent literature

addressing the socialization of newcomers to the organization creates a foundation for understanding those socialization practices experienced by newcomers. Part of the review concentrates specifically on the implications of organizational socialization as it relates to the experiences of African-Americans entering the organization.

Certain traditional methods of investigation have proven to be quite useful in developing additional theoretical foundations for understanding inter-racioethnic communication. For instance, research examining the vocational anticipatory socialization process states that as an individual matures from childhood to young adulthood she or he is intentionally and unintentionally gathering occupational information from the environment, comparing this information against her or his self concept, "weighing the factors and alternatives involved in choosing an occupation and finally making a series of conscious choices which determine the direction of his [her] career" (Van Maanen, 1975). Jablin (1987) in explaining anticipatory socialization lists several antecedents by which perceptions are shaped by individuals in the organization. These sources of information include (1) family members, (2) educational institutions, (3) part-time job experiences, (4) peers and friends, and (5) the media (Jablin, 1987).

As examples, Eccles (1994) reported that by the age of five children have clearly defined gender role stereotypes regarding appropriate behaviors and traits. In addition, children appear to monitor their behaviors and aspirations in terms of these stereotypes. Relatedly, reports of research findings assert that peers and friends function to confirm or disconfirm the desirability of certain occupations over others (Jablin, 1987). Implications of the findings as they relate to race is discussed later in the chapter.

Research has also been conducted studying the relationship between media and its influence on human perception and decision making. In determining the role of television in the formation of children's social attitudes, Christenson & Roberts (1983) assert that the distorted occupational images that television creates for children persist into adulthood. The following literature asserts that job satisfaction, job identification, and organizational commitment are indicators of effective integration and assimilation of newcomers to organizations. For example, Snyder & Morris' (1984) study, while providing initial data regarding overall organization performance and perceived communication characteristics, found that the quality of supervisory communication and information exchange within the peer workgroup, were strongly related to critical revenue and workload measures of overall organization performance. Jones (1986) investigated the relationship between the socialization tactics employed by organizations and a series of role and personal outcomes. He also measured the effects of self efficacy on role orientation discovering that different patterns of socialization lead to different forms of newcomer adjustment to organizations.

Not one of the studies cited at this point discusses specifically the impact of race during the socialization process of newcomers. It follows that the communication system operating within the boundaries of the socialization process of newcomers is largely a reflection of the dominant group members' perception of the process. This has resulted in a limited conceptualization of the experiences that are possible during this phase of socialization. Excluded in the theorizing of anticipatory socialization are the perceptions of those members who do not share the same experiences as the dominant group. African-American perceptions and communication behaviors during the anticipatory

phase of socialization differ from those of the dominant group because African-Americans as traditionally marginal members in society, experience life differently.

<u>Muted group theory</u>

An introduction to muted group theory helps to illustrate the significance of the socialization process from an African-American perspective. Because white men are the dominant group members in many areas of public life, the discussion of the mutedness of African-Americans is of particular concern. The basic assumptions of muted group theory pertaining to the relationship of women to men are provided by Kramarae (1981). Although several of the relationships investigating dominant and non-dominant groups in America originate from a predominantly feminist perspective, it has been argued that muted group theory is applicable to relationships concerning race ( Buzzanell, 1994; 'Collins, 1989; Johnson, 1989; Kramarae, 1978, Smith, 1987). The conclusions drawn from such research using feminist epistemology to draw knowledge claims about race is insightful and illuminating. Because African-Americans, like women, are traditionally marginalized in this society, the basic assumptions of muted group theory can apply to African-Americans as a group. According to Kramarae (1981) there are three conditions inherent in the relationship between socially marginal groups and their White counterparts. Kramarae (1981) states:

(1) African-Americans perceive the world differently from Whites because of African-American's and White's different experiences and activities rooted in the division of labor, (2) because of their political dominance, the White men's system of perception is dominant, impeding the free expression of the African-American's alternative models

of the world, and that (3) in order to participate in society African-Americans must transform their own models in terms of the received white system of expression.

According to muted group theory the values and assumptions encoded in our language are primarily those of the white male. Therefore, the difficulties many African-Americans experience in expressing their concerns and values in the workplace can be explained by using this theory.

Organizational socialization and mentoring

During the socialization phase for African-American newcomers to an organization, difficulties are usually experienced in mentor/protégé type relationships. In an attempt to function and make sense of the organizational experience as a newcomer, research asserts that mentoring provides an individual with a communication support system designed to enhance both the newcomers and the organization's success. Hill, Dobos, Bahniuk, & Rouner, (1989) designed the Mentoring and Communication Support Scale. The scale investigates various types of mentoring and communication support behaviors that serve to aid newcomers in the process of organizational assimilation. In addition, the scale has proven to be quite useful for studies involving non-whites and women (Hill et al., 1989).

Individuals can and do benefit from having supportive working relationships (Kram, 1985; Thomas & Kram, 1987). Kram's (1985) mentor role theory involves two sets of mentor roles: psychosocial and career development. Psychosocial roles have been identified as those roles which address the interpersonal relationship between mentor and protégé. The career development roles are those which provide the protégé with advancement within the organization in the form of exposure, through coaching, by

providing the protégé with career challenging assignments, and the like. As examples, research during early organizational socialization experiences of newcomers, by Ostroff & Kozlowski (1993), reveal that acquisition of information (task, role, group) was greatly influenced by whether or not the individual had access to a mentoring relationship. Results showed those with mentors were able to learn more about organizational issues and practices compared to nonmentored newcomers. Kalbfleisch & Davies (1993) found that individuals with higher degrees of communication competence and self esteem, who perceive less risk in intimacy, are more likely to participate in mentoring relationships than those with reduced communication competence and self esteem, and perceptions of greater risk in intimacy.

Thomas (1990) examined the influence of race specifically on protégés' experiences of forming developmental relationships. Several results emerged. First, he found that white protégé's have almost no developmental relationships with those of another race. African-American proteges, however, form 63% of their developmental relationships with Whites. Further, African-Americans were also more likely than Whites to form relationships with those outside the formal lines of authority and outside their departments. Lastly, same-race relationships were found to provide significantly more psychosocial support than cross-race relationships. Interestingly, and related to Thomas' finding that African-Americans were more likely than Whites to form relationships with those outside the formal lines of authority and outside their department, Katz (1980) reported that a newcomer's relationship with her or his initial supervisor can have long-term consequences on the success of the individual's organizational and professional career.

The above research findings serve to illustrate how complex organizational assimilation can be. Perceptions and expectations of African-Americans about organizational life formed during the anticipatory phase of socialization, understanding the concepts bound in muted group theory, and understanding how mentoring relationships function in organizational settings all help to illustrate how differences in racioethnicity impact organizational assimilation. The traditional approach to research investigating the relationship between communication practices of organizations and newcomer socialization has provided valuable insights. However, these concepts have been broadened to include research on the impact culture has on the communication behaviors expressed in the organizational setting. As a result, several theoretical foundations have been proposed in order to better understand the relationship between culture and communication. The following section under the heading of culture addresses cultural identity, individualism vs. collectivism, culture and communication from an African-American perspective, cultural interaction and social marginality in organizations, and concludes with a discussion of the most recent theoretical applications used to explain African-American communication with dominant group members.

Culture

Generally, culture is defined as an historically transmitted system of symbols and meanings, identifiable through norms and beliefs shared by a people (Collier & Thomas, 1988). The "patterned system" within a culture refers to orderliness, stability, and self regulation. The term "symbols" within this definition refers to the representational images, signs, words, and any nonverbal depictions of reality. Finally, the term "meanings" functions to describe the human reflexive process of interpretation and

perception (Ting-Toomey, 1985). In other words, this conceptualization of culture allows one to view culture as a shared set of values, attitudes, and beliefs, that interact in such a way to shape communication behaviors and strategies. Taken a step further, as introduced by Collier & Thomas (1988), cultural identity becomes an integral part of culture as it relates to the specific communication practices and strategies used by cultural group members.

Cultural identity

Cultural identity can refer to the interpretation of conduct in which a claim is made about personhood, the origins of which are attributed to a cultural group. Cultural identity can also refer to an interpretation of self that includes core values, major affiliations, and life roles. Identity also consists of those inner resources or characteristics that contribute to a person being a unique and developing human being. Taken together, ethnic identity becomes the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group with shared heritage and culture with an emphasis on the past heritage and roots over present or future orientations (Collier & Thomas, 1988). It follows that the concept of cultural identity may influence how racial identification impacts the socialization experience of African-Americans to predominantly White institutions.

Important and often neglected in inter-racioethnic communication theories are the levels of cultural identity formation that change from context to context within a given culture over time. From this cultural perspective, we may begin to understand what determines the strategic choice of various communicative practices used by African-Americans to communicate with dominant group members in the organizational setting.

Individualism vs. collectivism

A widely used explanation to describe cultural orientation has been Hofstede's (1981) distinction between collectivist cultures and individualist cultures. Hofstede found that individualism-collectivism accounted for the greatest variance in work related priorities of the four dimensions studied. Compared to individualist cultures, collectivist cultures place greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group, social norms and duty, shared beliefs, and cooperation with group members (Triandis et al., 1990). Conclusions have been drawn describing collectivists as more likely than individualists to sacrifice personal interests for the attainment of group goals (Bond & Wang, 1983) and are more likely to enjoy doing what the group expects of them (Bontempo, Lobel, & Triandis, 1990). Values linked to definitions of collectivism-individualism show that the African-American community derives its value systems from collectivist cultural traditions (Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Kochman, 1981; Washington, 1987).

From this tradition several contradictions emerge in the literature addressing culture from an individualist-collectivist perspective. As examples, Nadler, Nadler, & Broome (1985) assert that African-American and white cultural influence on conflict and negotiation strategies differ in their perspectives toward conflict, their personal constructs, and use of message strategies. It was found that white orientations toward conflict value competing styles exhibiting high assertiveness coupled with low cooperation. African-American orientations toward conflict were shown to value more collaborative styles exhibiting high assertiveness and high cooperation. Similarly, Ting-Toomey (1985) observed differences in African-American and White cultures and their choice of conflict strategies. Individuals in low context cultures, (Whites), were more

likely to assume a confrontational, direct attitude toward conflict. Conversely, individuals in high context cultures, (African-Americans), were more likely to assume a non-confrontational, indirect attitude toward conflict. Using the same framework, Cox, Loebel, & Mcleod (1991) found differences between African-American and White participants and their use of competitive versus collaborative strategies in decision making. It was found that groups composed of people from collectivist cultural traditions displayed more cooperative behavior than groups composed of people from individualistic traditions. Those studied from collectivist cultural traditions were African-American. Those studied from individualistic traditions were White.

Some researchers attempting to identify differences in communication strategies between African-Americans and Whites reveal communication strategies that contradict the traditional individualist-collectivist approach to understanding inter-racioethnic communication. For example, Foeman and Pressley (1987) did find differences in conflict strategies used by African-Americans and Whites. However, their results showed that African-Americans felt comfortable using a straight forward approach to problem solving. African-American managers when faced with a conflict, for example, tended to confront the individual immediately, or if it was more appropriate, later in private. Researchers express concern that Whites were more likely to deal with conflict indirectly by talking around the problem. To that end, White managers were found to value the appearance of tranquility in the workplace. Interestingly and in direct conflict with previously cited individualist-collectivist literature, African-American managers were more likely to value the ability to identify the issues and bring them into the open by asking direct and confronting questions.

Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts (1989) also found differences in preferred choice of conflict strategy used by African-Americans and Whites. Asserting a point of view, open mindedness, treating as an equal, avoidance, interaction management, and other-orientation were all conflict improvement strategies desired by African-Americans when discussing a variety of issues with Whites. The most salient conflict improvement strategies were open mindedness and avoidance.

Finally, Dace (1994) found that an African-American individuals' willingness to be assimilated to the White culture dictated her or his use of strategy choice. For example, Dace found that "telling Whites what they want to hear" was a strategy used by those willing to assimilate. Confrontation and expressed avoidance of the White participant was used by those high in African-American consciousness, thereby, expressing a lack of willingness to assimilate to White culture.

An explanation for the contradictions found in the individualist/collectivist approach to understanding inter-racioethnic communication could be that by using this approach researchers are forcing themselves to view African- Americans as a group who all communicate similarly. Consequently, research has promoted the illusion that all African-Americans are essentially the same and communicate in a similar manner. Just as there is no one particular style of communicating in White cultures, African-Americans use a variety of communication strategies when interacting with Whites. Alternative approaches used in order to understand the relationship between culture and communication serve to broaden the possibilities for explaining a variety of communicative strategies expressed by particular group members. For example, studies have demonstrated that non-white members of the United States tend to be bicultural,

having knowledge of White norms as well as the norms of their own racioethnic group (Cox, Lobel, & Mcleod, 1991; Triandis, et al., 1984). The bicultural assumptions made by these scholars express how this factor alone can greatly influence the communication strategies used in order to survive and to be successfully socialized to the existing dominant culture.

As an example, Bell (1990) explores the bicultural life experiences of career oriented African-American women in which the findings reveal that the women perceive themselves as living in two distinct cultural contexts, one African-American and the other White. Given that resources typically belong to the dominant group members, those outside the dominant group creatively develop a variety of communication strategies that allow them to function within the dominant group without sacrificing or abandoning their own cultural group norms. In this respect, culture according to Korzenny (1991), becomes a "social product which allows humans to function and strive in the pursuit of social order and survival".

In order to understand the way certain socialization practices in the context of organizations might affect African-Americans, a discussion of culture from an African-American perspective could prove to be invaluable. Those studying culture and communication assert that culture shapes perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs, and as a consequence, greatly influences the way individuals communicate. Understanding communication processes among a variety of cultures could be especially helpful when applied to the existing research investigating the socialization practices experienced by newcomers and organizations. The following section describes in detail communication practices as they relate to culture from a African-American perspective.

Culture and communication: An African-American perspective

Literature asserts that culture greatly influences communication (Carbaugh, 1990; Collier & Thomas, 1988; Cushman & King, 1985; Dillard,1972). Strategies highlighted in this section address those behaviors and concepts that are viewed as important communication features between African-Americans and whites from a African-American perspective. Of great concern to the African-American community are the degrees to which each strategy affects effective communication between African-Americans and Whites. In an organizational setting, where African-American mobility and inclusion require a balance between individuality and cultural adaptation, many African-Americans have had to learn how to creatively bridge cultural adaptation without endangering their individuality. Literature addressing this dilemma often refers to levels of African-American consciousness or Afrocentrism as characteristic of many of the communication behaviors used (Tripp, 1991; Sanders-Thompson, 1991; Myers & Thompson, 1994). Generally, distinctions are made between those African-Americans who are either high in African-American consciousness and those who are low in African-American consciousness. The communication strategies used by either group show a direct relationship between communication strategy used and levels of cultural affiliation when interacting with Whites. For example, a rise in African-American consciousness/racial identification in response to organizational success would require an expression of those communication behaviors that support a collective world-view among group members, rather than an individualistic world view (Tripp, 1990).

Compartmentalization, one strategy used by African-Americans in predominantly White settings, occurs when African-Americans establish rigid boundaries between the

African-American and White life contexts. African-Americans strive to retain allegiance to their own culture while participating in their workplace culture. As a traditionally marginalized group, African-Americans are often forced to surrender their cultural identity of African-Americanness. By surrendering their cultural identity African-Americans risk splitting off a critical part of their personal identity (Bell 1990).

Relating to language use, Dillard (1972) investigated the use of African-American English which he concluded served as a symbolic rejection of standard English. "Since the speaking of standard English by African-Americans can be interpreted to mean that African-Americans agree with or identify with the norms of Whites, African-Americans often deliberately reject standard English out of a type of psychological consciousness and also out of peer group pressure" (Pennington, 1979). African-Americans who reject the use of "standard" English do so because using the language embraced and understood by the African-American community communicates a strong cultural commitment to African-American group members. Consciously rejecting the use of standard English is a form of communication that expresses higher levels of African-American racial identity.

Stanback and Pearce (1981) examined communication strategies used by African-Americans when interacting with Whites. Four ways of 'talking to the man' had been described in the literature: passing, tomming, shucking, and dissembling. Important to note is that the communication strategies have in common the feature that they do not attempt to change the existing relationship among social groups. From the perspective of the dominant group, the behaviors in each form of communication are appropriate. However, the meaning of these behaviors to the African-American members are quite

different, making them different forms of communication with different implications for the relations between the participants. Stanback and Pearce (1981) assert:

(1) "Tomming" occurs when a member of the African-American group accepts the way they are perceived and expected to act as valid, and communicates with members of the dominant group as they expect them to, (2) "passing" occurs when a member of the African-American group acts as if they were actually a member of the dominant group, (3) "shucking" is a term used by African-Americans to identify a form of communication in which they behaviorally conform to racial stereotypes while cognitively rejecting the meanings associated with those behaviors and stereotypes. This is to produce whatever appearance would be acceptable to the white man, and (4) "dissembling" occurs when a person of the African-American group conforms to the behavioral expectations but disregards the meanings associated with those behaviors held by the white group.

These communicative descriptions illustrate that behavioral compliance with expectations of the White group is common to three forms of communication (tomming, shucking, and dissembling) which imply very different perceptions on the relationships between the groups, as associated with different concepts of self, and have different values for the communicators.

In 1989, Hecht, Ribeau, and Alberts presented an African-American perspective on racio-ethnic communication. Several issues (stereotyping, acceptance, emotional expressiveness, authenticity, understanding, goal attainment, powerlessness) and possible improvement strategies (asserting a point of view, open-mindedness, equal treatment, avoidance, interaction management, and other-orientation) were all identified as

important when interacting with Whites in particular contexts. Orbe (1994), extends this phenomenological investigation attempting to understand African-American communication by outlining six common themes which depict their lived experiences in this society. The six themes with regard to African-American communication include:

(1) The importance of communicating with other African-Americans.

(2) Learning how to interact with non-African-Americans.

(3) Playing the part (SNAP!). Playing the part is a communication strategy that an African-American adopts that reflects those communication behaviors characteristic of the dominant group member. It is also referred to as "acting White". SNAP is communicated nonverbally by a snapping of the fingers. This gesture is used to signify when an African-American changes communication behaviors representative of African-Americans to those communication behaviors representative of the White culture.

(4) Keeping a safe distance.

(5) Testing the sincerity of non-African-Americans.

(6) An intense social responsibility to other African-American group members.

Referring to Hecht, Ribeau, and Alberts (1989) study, Orbe (1994) used his six themes to clarify and compliment issues and strategies offered by Hecht et al. For instance, Orbe (1994) found that the assimilation communication strategy of "playing the part" offers African-Americans one technique that (1) avoids negative stereotyping, (2) allows for goal attainment, and (3) regulates their emotional expressiveness. Orbe (1994) also found that testing the sincerity of non-African-Americans is closely aligned with the issue of authenticity. Finally, keeping a safe distance appears to overlap with the improvement strategies which communicate avoidance. Under closer examination and

subsequent research studies, other similarities are likely to emerge. The research presented here simply represents the continuation of a lengthy process to gain insight into the complex processes of African-American communication. The following section presents literature describing cultural interaction between whites and non-whites in organizational settings.

### Cultural interaction and social marginality in organizations

The communication processes and negotiation strategies used by African-American newcomers entering an organization become important to the study of organizational assimilation when we consider those practices from an African-American perspective. Applicable to this African-American experience emerges the concept of social marginality. Social marginality is the pattern of interactions that are the exclusive characteristics within a group. Included are the cultural norms, values, beliefs and behavior patterns belonging to a given group. Distinctive cultural patterns dictate rules for membership, inclusion, and cognitive formulations, and govern the holders of power. Social marginality also can define the pattern of interaction between two groups in terms of group boundaries, power dynamics, and patterns of social interactions (Bell, 1990). According to Bell (1990), two salient assumptions operate in the concept of social marginality:

(1) Only one cultural group-the dominant one-possesses the rewards to attract people from subordinate groups, and (2) the dominant group members are not attracted to the subordinate members. This explicit assumption implies that the dominant group has superior cultural characteristics (norms, values, traditions, cognitive and affective patterns), and thus a greater capacity to offer resources, rewards, and opportunities. An

implicit assumption is that members of the subordinate group are not only inferior, but deviant in comparison to members of the dominant group. The distinction between biculturality and social marginality is made clear since biculturality asserts that no particular group (dominant/subordinate) is considered racially or culturally superior or inferior.

Alderfer (1982) explains in his study of the relationship between White males and racism that one critical factor in intergroup relations is that membership in identity groups is not independent from membership in organizational groups. Certain organizational groups tend to be filled by members of particular identity groups. In the United States, for example, positions in upper management tend to be held by older white males; African-Americans tend to hold lower ranking, less powerful positions. Alderfer also explains that Whites have fewer opportunities to interact with African-Americans while African-Americans have no choice but to find themselves in racially mixed settings, learning about White culture in order to survive. Because White males continue to dominate major organizations, the problem of changing White males is closely tied to the nature of racism.

To illustrate the effect of social marginality between group members, Tsui, Egan, and O'Reilly (1992) used the self categorization theory, which proposes that people may use social characteristics such as race or organizational membership to promote a positive self identity. They found that the effect on organizational attachment of being different in race was greater for Whites than for non-whites. For example, one reaction expressed by a White male to a non-white member in a social unit was physical or psychological

withdrawal in order to preserve a positive self identity and status apart from those non-whites of perceived lower status.

Schein (1990) asserts that units of organizations are more likely to develop their own cultures (implying different languages and different assumptions about reality) because of their different learning experiences. He goes on to argue that organizational effectiveness is therefore increasingly dependent on valid communication across culture boundaries. Integration across cultures, which is the essential coordination problem within organizations, will increasingly depend on the ability to develop a common language and mental model. Any form of organizational learning will require the evolution of shared mental models that cut across the cultures of the organization. Schein (1990) argues that the evolution of shared mental models is inhibited by current cultural rules about interaction and communication, making dialogue a necessary first step in learning. Besides effective interaction being inhibited by current cultural rules, a gap in the literature surfaces when, from an African-American perspective, many of the rules have yet to be acknowledged and understood. Organizational cultures - large scale, hierarchical, white, and male dominated - have their own set of norms, traditions, and values. Circumstances often dictate that, in order for an African-American person to be successful in an organization, they must adopt a "corporate" identity that could be characterized as masculine and White (Bell, 1990). Assimilation typically requires African-Americans to conform to the traditions, values, and norms of the dominant White culture.

Orbe makes it possible, by combining previous literature, to address the specific communication practices used by African-Americans to integrate themselves to the

organization for the purpose of organizational survival and success. The following section of the review highlights Orbe's (1998) framework by addressing the communication orientations used by African-Americans when interacting in predominantly White settings.

Constructing Co-cultural Theory

To support such knowledge claims concerning race, several researchers rely heavily on concrete experience and the use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims inherent within the particular race under investigation. Such a humanistic approach is evidenced in a variety of research performed by scholars interested in the relationship between dominant and non-dominant groups in society (Collins, 1989; Buzzanell, 1994; Johnson, 1989; Pennington, 1979; Baker 1995; Stanback & Pearce, 1981; Orbe, 1994; Orbe, 1995; Orbe, 1998; Bell, 1990; Alderfer, 1982; Fontaine & Greenlee, 1993; Tripp, 1991; Thompson, 1991; Dace, 1994; Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995;Kramarae, 1978; Smith, 1987).

The inability for communication scholars to produce theoretical frameworks capable of explaining inter-racioethnic communication between African-Americans and Whites rests on the research's inability to explain and understand the communication behaviors of African-Americans. Orbe (1998) makes it possible for those interested in inter-racioethnic communication studies to use his theory of co-cultural communication to answer a variety of questions concerning the interaction between different cultural groups in a variety of contexts. While the purpose of this study is to investigate, from an African-American perspective, whether or not African-American racial identification impacts African-American socialization to predominantly White institutions, Orbe's

(1998) framework makes it possible for those who wish expand the present inquiry to examine more closely the interaction between group members from the perspective of both or all groups.

Out of his review, Orbe (1998) introduces his conceptualization of communication from an African-American perspective and its relationship to dominant ideological practices within a variety of settings. Orbe's framework indicates that different co-cultural group members developed specific communication orientations when interacting with dominant group members. The orientations identified clarify the communicative experiences of African-Americans. Each communication orientation can be explained by describing advantages and disadvantages African-Americans face when they choose to adopt an orientation when interacting in predominantly White institutions. Following are descriptions of each communication orientation as illustrated by Orbe (1998).

(1) "Nonassertive assimilation" communication orientations enable African-Americans to blend unobtrusively into dominant society in order to avoid conflict. Such communication practices include emphasizing commonalties, and censoring self (see Figure 1). An advantage to taking a nonassertive assimilation communication stance is that it may enhance the group members ability to participate within the confines of dominant structures. A disadvantage may be that nonassertive assimilation communication functions to reinforce the dominant group's institutional and social power.

(2) "Assertive assimilation" communication orientations ( extensive preparation, over compensating, and bargaining), like nonassertive assimilation, allows African-

Americans to downplay cultural differences by attempting to converge into existing

dominant structures but in a less passive voice. "Bargaining, for instance, relates to

instances when co-cultural [African-American] and dominant group members negotiate

an arrangement by which neither party will make an issue of co-cultural differences" (p.

111). An advantage of this particular orientation is that it enables the African-American

group member to focus on being productive " team players". However, making extreme

efforts to suppress African-American identity often results in a significant increase in

levels of stress and burnout.

(3) "Aggressive assimilation" communication orientations occur when an African-

American takes a determined, sometimes belligerent, stance in her or his efforts to be

seen as one of the dominant group members (see Figure 1). African-Americans who

adopt aggressive assimilation orientations place great value on fitting into dominant

structures to the extent that those who adopt this orientation often engage in self ridicule.

The benefits associated with adopting this communication orientation is that it allows the

African-American group member to be regarded as an individual rather than another

member of the African-American group. The disadvantage associated with an African-

American adopting this communication orientation is that an African-American risks

isolating her or himself from other African-American group members who regard those

who adopt aggressive assimilation communication orientations as "self-hating sellouts".

(4) "Nonassertive accommodation" communication orientations, like all

accommodation orientations, reflect a desire on the part of African-Americans to change

dominant institutional and societal structures to include the experiences of African-

Americans. The nonassertive approach delicately challenges mainstream practices, (see

Figure 1) so as not to generate a defensive communication climate between dominant group members. "In this regard, a nonassertive accommodation orientation allows co-cultural group members [African-Americans] to influence in-group decision-making processes while simultaneously demonstrating their commitment to the larger group goals" (p. 113). A disadvantage, however, of adopting this communication orientation is that other African-American group members often criticize this approach as being too passive, thereby, making it difficult for an African-American adopting this communication orientation to promote major change.

(5) "Assertive accommodation" communication orientations are those orientations adopted by African-Americans in order to create a cooperative balance between African-Americans and dominant group members. By adopting such communication orientations (see Figure 1) African-Americans work together with dominant group members to promote change. An advantage of using this particular orientation is that it allows African-Americans to use a variety of resources to change the marginal group experiences within the dominant institutional structure. One of the disadvantages for African-Americans who adopt this communication orientation is that they run the risk of opposition from both group members. African-Americans are criticized by other African-Americans who accuse them of working with, rather than working against the status quo. Dominant group members may perceive assertive accommodation as more aggressive than assertive. This may cause dominant group members to react in a more resistent and defensive fashion.

(6) "Aggressive accommodation" communication orientations adopted by African-Americans demonstrate that they are not overly concerned with dominant group

perceptions. The goal of using aggressive accommodation orientations is to change existing dominant institutional structures. As examples, confronting and gaining an advantage (see Figure 1) offers potential benefits to include positive perceptions of African-American honesty, persistence, and commitment to promoting social change. Some disadvantages of using this communication orientation include African-Americans being labeled as overly sensitive, extreme, and radical. Those who adopt this communication orientation also run the risk of being isolated from both group members. African-American group members may choose not to be associated with this more aggressive group so as to protect one's own relationship with dominant group members. Dominant group members often perceive aggressive accommodation communication orientations as being too aggressive.

(7) "Nonassertive separation" communication orientations are those communication orientations used by African-Americans in order to communicate physical avoidance (see Figure 1) whenever possible with dominant group members. When physical separation is unavoidable, African-American members find themselves reinforcing the rule of separation by fulfilling existing expectations placed on them by dominant members. In other words, African-American group members as traditionally marginal members of society reinforce the ideal that certain spaces are reserved for dominant group members. Advantages of nonassertive separation communication orientations include intra-group unity, and independence. A disadvantage of nonassertive separation communication is that those who adopt this communication orientation run the risk of losing resources that could aid in changing existing dominant structures.

(8) "Assertive separation" communication orientations allow African-Americans to actively counter messages that support the ideas related to "natural separation" as a product of cultural superiority/inferiority differences. Assertive separation communication orientations result in a conscious choice to maintain space between them and dominant group members. In addition to the advantages found in nonassertive separation communication orientations, assertive separation communication orientations allow for group role models to emerge. Similar to the disadvantages found in the nonassertive separation orientations, African-American group members are without access to most of the resources controlled by the dominant group members.

(9) "Aggressive separation" communication orientations are adopted by African-Americans who place a significant priority on separation between the groups by whatever means necessary. Members adopting an aggressive separation communication orientation seek personal growth by attacking and sabotaging others (see Figure 1). A benefit associated with adopting aggressive separation communication orientations include the ability for African-Americans to demonstrate intra-group solidarity while maintaining a strong voice in confronting existing dominant structures that traditionally marginalize African-American members of their group. The disadvantages associated with adopting this communication orientation include those found in the assertive and accommodation orientations with the potential for greater resistance from dominant group members.

# Figure 1

| | Separation | Accommodation | Assimilation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nonassertive** | • Avoiding<br>• Maintaining interpersonal barriers | • Increasing Visibility<br>• Dispelling Stereotypes | • Emphasizing commonalities<br>• Developing positive face<br>• Censoring Self<br>• Averting controversy |
| **Assertive** | • Communicat-ing self<br>• Intragroup networking<br>• Exemplifying strengths<br>• Embracing stereotypes | • Communicating self<br>• Intragroup networking<br>• Using liaisons<br>• Educating others | • Extensive preparation<br>• Overcompensating<br>• Manipulating stereotypes<br>• Bargaining |
| **Aggressive** | • Attacking<br>• Sabotaging others | • Confronting<br>• Gaining advantage | • Dissociating<br>• Mirroring<br>• Strategic distancing<br>• Ridiculing self |

Co-cultural Communication Orientations (Orbe, 1998) .

Each communication orientation used by African-Americans vary in the type of interaction and choice of communicative practices used with members of the dominant group. The orientations adopted by African-American group members at any particular point in time depends largely on what constitutes individual African-American racial identity in relation to dominant group members. Certain orientations may be used in concert with other communication orientations. What determines which orientation or combination of orientations used depends on the individuals' "particular field of experience that governs their perceptions of the costs and rewards associated with, as well as their ability to engage in, various communication practices. Co-cultural group members will strategically select communication orientations-based on their preferred outcomes and communication approaches - to fit the circumstances of a specific situation" (Orbe, 1998).

This review of literature highlights the need for research to recognize those communication orientations used by African-Americans with their White counterparts. Knowledge about the communication orientations used by African-Americans may not only help researchers to fill the gap in inter-racio-ethnic communication literature from the perspective of those members traditionally marginalized but those orientations may serve to highlight future directions in understanding more thoroughly inter-racioethnic communication relationships. It is not enough to recognize the values, history, rules, norms, and traditions of White group members and their subsequent communication practices with African-Americans. More meaning can be assigned to each inter-racioethnic interaction by understanding how such values, history, rules, norms, and traditions impact and are interpreted by African-American group members in which the

communication event takes place. The research illustrates the variety of communication orientations available to the African-American when in a communication situation with White group members.

Identity plays a pivotal role in the way an individual communicates and interprets events around them. African-Americans, as with other members of all racial groups, choose either to identify or not to identify themselves in relation to their race. Whether or not an individual chooses to create an identity in connection to their race should reveal some valuable insight into how individual choices made in connection to one's race impacts their communication with members of different racial/cultural groups in a variety of contexts. An analysis of how African-American racial identification impacts African-American socialization and subsequent assimilation to predominantly White organizations could provide future research with a more thorough understanding of how White culture interacts with and determines African-American communication behavior. To that end, the following hypothesis is proposed:


H1 : There is a negative relationship between African-American racial identification and successful organizational assimilation to predominantly White institutions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Research addressing the communication behaviors of African-Americans has relied heavily on phenomenological inquiry (Orbe, 1994,1995, 1998; Dace, 1994; Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Collins, 1979). Results in these studies have found that African-Americans do express a variety of communication behaviors representative of their culture when interacting in predominantly White environments. This study is designed in a way that combines past literature using extensive phenomenological inquiry with the use of self report scales. The approach used in this research is largely quantitative, with the exception of an analysis of two open-ended questions using Orbe's (1998) co-cultural theoretical framework. The collection of data using the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, the Organizational Identification Questionnaire, and the Internal-External Control scales is designed to assess the successful socialization of African-Americans to predominantly White institutions. The first section describes the subjects and setting. The second section describes the research design and variables. The final section provides information about data collection and instrumentation.

Subjects and Setting

Questionnaires were administered to 250 African-Americans, from the Southwestern part of the United States, who work in predominantly White institutions. Members were recruited from a major university, a community college, and several

institutions to include academic, corporate, and non-profit organizations. Members were

approached and asked to participate in the study by responding to a questionnaire.

Questionnaires were left with each respondent along with a self addressed and stamped

envelope to be mailed back to the researcher. In some cases respondents agreed to

respond to the questionnaire over the telephone. It was briefly explained to all

respondents that the goal of the study was to generate an understanding of interethnic

communication.

Research Design and Variables

Organizational assimilation

The dependent variable examined in this study was organizational assimilation.

Successful organizational assimilation is defined as an individual's level of commitment,

and identification with the values of the organization (Jablin, 1987). The closer the

alignment between shared values of the individual to those shared by the organization the

more successful the process of assimilation. Conceptually, assimilation can be thought of

as the process by which an individual becomes integrated into the existing culture of an

organization. Assimilation is achieved to the extent an individual identifies and commits

to the practices and culture of the organization. Organizational assimilation was

operationally defined by having participants complete the Organizational Identification

Questionnaire (Cheney, 1983) and the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (

Downs & Hazen, 1977).

Racial identification

The independent variable examined in this study was racial identification. As a

concept, racial identification refers to an African-American's awareness of racial barriers

and her/his belief that African Americans should commit themselves to collective action to overcome racial obstacles (Tripp, 1991). Racial identification was operationalized by having participants complete the questions included in the Internal-External Control Scale (Gurin, Gurin, & Beattie, 1969). High levels of racial identification are characterized by such overt communication behaviors reflecting an attitude that " the attempt to 'fit in' and do what is proper has not paid off for African-Americans. It does not matter how 'proper' you are, you will still meet serious discrimination if you are African-American." An example of low levels of racial identification are reflected in statements like "the problem for many African-Americans is that they are not really acceptable by American standards. Any African-American who is educated and does what is considered proper will be accepted and get ahead." Several communication studies have been conducted analyzing how levels of racial identification impact African-American communication by using the Internal-External Control Scale to measure African-American racial identification (Tripp, 1991; Thompson, 1991; Sanders and Thompson, 1994).

Analysis of results

The hypothesis tests the degree of relationship between two variables. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation procedures and a linear multiple regression analysis was used to explain other variables. Since the direction of the hypothesis is predicted, the tests were one-tailed; significance level was set at .05. SPSS/PC + procedure CORRELATIONS was used to compute the Pearson product-moment correlations and test for significance.

Description of the Data Collection Instruments

## Organizational identification questionnaire

Participants were asked to complete the Organizational Identification

Questionnaire (questions 1-12) (see Appendix ). Identification is understood as "an

active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene"

(Cheney, 1983). This link has also been described as organizational commitment (Cook

& Wall, 1980). The scale was designed to measure an individual's involvement and

commitment to the organization using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from very strong

agreement (7) to very strong disagreement (1). This questionnaire was helpful in

assessing and understanding the extent to which the individual was integrated and

assimilated to the organization in question. Cheney (1983) found the Organizational

Identification Questionnaire to be both valid and reliable (Cronbach's reliability

coefficient = .94).

## Communication satisfaction questionnaire

Communication satisfaction questions ( 13-28) (see Appendix) were included

among the questions measuring organizational identification. The questionnaire was

designed by Downs & Hazen (1977) in order to discover the relationship between

communication and job satisfaction. Dimensions dealing with communication

satisfaction include communication climate, organizational integration, relationship to

superiors, and horizontal and informal questions. Questions referring to communication

climate include questions about whether or not the organization's communication

encourages employee identification. Organizational integration questions contain

information employees receive about their job and related items which make employees

feel integrated to the organization. Questions analyzing the relationship to superiors

dimension measures the openness of superiors to subordinates as well as measuring superiors' perceived trust of the employees. A 7-point Likert- type scale was used ranging from very strong agreement (7) to very strong disagreement (1). After developing and testing the scale, Downs & Hazen (1977) found the scale to be both valid and reliable (coefficient alpha reliabilities = .72 to .96).

### Internal-external control questionnaire

To measure racial identification, questions (29-37) (see Appendix), participants completed the Internal-External Control Questionnaire developed by Gurin, Gurin, & Beattie (1969). Several researchers have discovered that there exists a relationship between racial identification and the emergence of corresponding communication orientations (Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Kochman, 1981; Thompson, 1991; Myers & Thompson, 1994; Tripp, 1991; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilley, 1992). Participants were asked to respond to each question by marking either a. or b. The scale has been used to relate racial identification to occupational and educational aspirations, planning and activity oriented toward reaching goals, attempts at mastering the environment, participation in social action, and resistance to suggestion and exertion of influence over others (Gurin, Gurin, & Beattie, 1969).

### Demographic variables/open-ended questions

Demographic questions were included to determine participant's age, sex, work status, and length of employment with the organization in question. Finally, each participant was asked two open-ended questions (see Appendix). The first question asked each participant to recall and describe how race affected their communication with white members in the organization during their first year on the job. The second question

asked each participant to then recall, describe, and explain a communication event

between a white member(s) in the organization that was either satisfying or dissatisfying.

The response to each question was analyzed using the Co-cultural communication-

orientation framework (see Figure) provided by Orbe (1998).

Summary

This section has reviewed the methods and procedures used in this study. The

next section will report the research findings of the procedures used.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presented in this chapter are the results of the test of the research hypothesis. A
Pearson Correlation Coefficient and a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis were used to
test the hypothesis. Both procedures returned similar results. The research hypothesis
was supported. In order to further examine the quantitative data, several demographic
variables and the two scales (the Organizational Identification Questionnaire and the
Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire) that operationally defined organizational
assimilation were included in the analysis. The responses to the open-ended questions
were examined using Orbe's (1998) Co-cultural theoretical framework. That examination
is presented in the discussion chapter.

Two hundred fifty surveys were distributed and 46 usable surveys were returned
yielding a return rate of 21%. The Cronbach's alpha for organizational assimilation was
.95 and for racial identification was .77. The Cronbach's alpha for the entire
questionnaire, excluding the demographic, items was .93.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 1) supported the research hypothesis as
well as showing significant relationships between several of the demographic variables.
Organizational assimilation showed the predicted negative relationship with racial
identification (-.3898) / ($p<.01$). The same negative relationship was discovered between
age and racial identification (-.3497) / ($p<.05$) and sex and racial identification (-.3163) /

(p<.05). Because of the way the data for sex was encoded, a negative relationship means that men had higher levels of racial identification than did women.

There was a positive correlation (.9609 / (p<.01) between the two subscales of organizational assimilation.

TABLE 1  Pearson Correlation Coefficients

| TABLE 1 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Organizational Assimilation (1) | 1.000 | -.409 ** | .961 ** | .98 ** | .369 * | .057 | -.140 | .278 |
| Racial Identification (2) | | 1.000 | -.389 ** | -.405 ** | -.349 * | -.316 * | -.065 | .026 |
| Organizational Identification (3) | | | 1.000 | .900 ** | .335 * | .051 | -.114 | .224 |
| Organizational Satisfaction (4) | | | | 1.000 | .376 ** | .057 | -.151 | .300 * |
| Age (5) | | | | | 1.000 | .260 | -.204 | .440 ** |
| Sex (6) | | | | | | 1.000 | -.151 | .066 |
| Work (7) | | | | | | | 1.000 | -.306 * |
| Tenure (8) | | | | | | | | 1.000 |
| *-Significance LE .05  **-Significance LE .01 | | | | | | | | |

## Multiple Regression

The multiple regression yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R=.4091) between organizational assimilation and racial identification (Table 2) that supports the research hypothesis. The amount of variance in organizational assimilation that can be explained by racial identification is approximately 17% ($R2 = .1674$). None of the other variables added to the predictability of organizational assimilation.

TABLE 2 Multiple Regression

| TABLE 2 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dependent variable = Organizational Assimilation | | |
| Racial Identification | t = -.2974     p = .0048<br>Multiple R<br>R squared<br>Adjusted R squared<br>Std Error | <br>.40915<br>.16740<br>.14848<br>3.6945 |
| Variables not entered | Beta | t / p |
| Age | .2581 | 1.8 / .07 |
| Sex | -.0808 | -.55 / .59 |
| Work | -.1681 | -1.2 / .22 |
| Tenure | .2892 | 1.2 / .34 |

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis. Chapter V will discuss the implications of these results and will include a discussion of the responses to the two open ended questions. Finally, implications and suggestions for future research will be presented.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The beginning of this study posed two research questions. Research question one

(RQ1) asked about the relationship between racial identification and successful African-

American organizational assimilation. Research question two (RQ2) asked how effective

dominant group organizational socialization practices were in socializing African-

Americans to the organization. From the two research questions emerged one hypothesis.

Hypothesis number one was supported. The results of the hypothesis tested indicate a

significant negative relationship between African-American racial identification and

successful organizational assimilation. This chapter focuses on a discussion of the

research findings and their implications. Suggestions concerning directions for future

research are also presented.

Research Findings and Implications

Racial discrimination and communication

Research question number one investigated the relationship between racial

identification and successful African-American organizational assimilation. It was

concluded that both organizational identification and communication satisfaction, which

operationalized organizational assimilation by using both the Organizational

Identification Questionnaire and the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire,

indicated that it was difficult for African-Americans to be assimilated to predominantly

White institutions.

50

Several implications surface as they relate to the negative relationship found between organizational assimilation and racial identification. Alderfer (1982) argued, that because White males tend to form identity groups with other White males by consciously rejecting those members who are African-American, the relationship between the groups is motivated by racism on the part of the White male. He goes on to argue that these relationships are reinforced in organizational settings. Integration on the part of the African-American to predominantly White institutions through organizational assimilation practices is therefore difficult to achieve under such conditions. Because group membership is greatly influenced by history and experience, these relationships do not go unnoticed by African-American group members.

Inter-racioethnic communication processes in organizations are largely a product of issues as they relate to racism between African-American and White group members. The relationship between Whites and African-Americans supports the concept of social marginality inherent in Muted Group Theory proposed by Kramrae (1981). African-Americans, as those traditionally marginalized and most often negatively affected by racial differences, have developed communication behaviors in order to function among dominant group members. The communication behaviors and attitudes on the part of African-Americans toward inter-racioethnic communication can be understood in terms of racial identification. To illustrate this point further, Tripp (1991) found that levels of African-American identification were high in the 80's and attributed that trend to Reaganism. Tripp (1991) concluded that African-Americans were responding to the administrations "economic and structural changes that greatly undermined the economic stability of the African-American family and community" (p. 160). "Perhaps the most

obvious display of the Reagan Administration's hostility toward the African-American community was the actions it took to discredit and eliminate policies and programs which were designed to provide equal opportunity" (p.160).

The current communication climate evolving around issues of racial discrimination is filled with shifts in ideology espousing "reverse discrimination" and growing negative perceptions of "political correctness". Reactions to equal opportunity initiatives have been contaminated by those members who cling to dominant structure ideological practices. To African-Americans there seems to be little change in the advancement to end racial discrimination among White members of society. To the African-American racial discrimination is here to stay. Therefore, the reaction on the part of African-Americans to believe little in the modifiability of racial discrimination has been to incorporate communication orientations which allow them to function in what they perceive as a difficult environment. One such environment is that which is predominantly White.

According to Dace (1994) five communication strategies are used that deal with issues of racial discrimination by Whites when interacting with African-Americans. African-American communication responses to the strategies used result in a variety of communication behaviors related to the communication experience. Each strategy serves to explain why African-Americans tend to be less satisfied in communication situations involving Whites and why levels of racial identification tend to be high. When interacting with Whites Dace (1994) found that African-Americans were: (1) expected to tell White people what they wanted to hear, (2) were to disclose personal information about racism in America and to trust Whites to be able to analyze the complex problem,

(3) to believe that what African-Americans perceived as racial discrimination was not reality and that there must be some other explanation, (4) to believe that, although African-Americans may experience some levels of discrimination, Whites were also discriminated against in the same capacity, and (5) African-Americans found that when a White person agreed that there could be no trust because of White attitudes surrounding racism, that person no longer remains a member of the White group and is systematically excommunicated from group membership.

Implications of these findings as they relate to organizational assimilation suggest that, because African-Americans share the communication experiences, provided by Dace (1994), when interacting with Whites, communication satisfaction and organizational identification for the African-American in a predominantly White organization is difficult to achieve. As Schein (1990) asserts, the values shared by Whites are the same values which tend to be embedded in organizational practices.

Racial identification and sex

Women tended to rate lower in racial identification than did the men. An explanation for this finding might be in what Bell (1990) found to be true in her study of career-oriented Black women. Bell (1990) found that career oriented African-American women perceive themselves as living in two distinct cultural contexts, one African-American and the other White. She found that "the women compartmentalize the various components of their lives in order to manage the bicultural dimensions. In addition, they tend to have highly complex life structures to embrace both cultural contexts" (p. 459). Unfortunately, her study also revealed that African-American women have a difficult time trying to keep the lived experiences separate. African-American women trying to

hold onto their African-American cultural identity run the risk of isolating themselves from those in powerful positions with access to abundant resources within organizations. African-American women trying to succeed in predominantly White environments by incorporating White communication orientations or those orientations seen as appropriate to the White culture run a high risk of isolating themselves from an African-American cultural identity. Maintaining a balance between the two cultural contexts results in high levels of stress, burnout, and a loss in a sense of self brought on by juggling two very separate realities. Referring to Orbe's (1998) co-cultural framework, the communication orientation used (non assertive assimilation) results in high levels of stress and burnout. Those communication behaviors are those that emphasize commonalities, a development of positive face, a censoring of self, and those that avert controversy. An analysis of the open-ended questions reveal that women tended to use non assertive assimilation communication orientations.

### Racial identification and age/tenure

Results of the study also indicated a significant negative relationship between age and racial identification (-.3497) / (p<.05), and tenure and racial identification (-.306) / (p<.05) An explanation for this relationship could be that older the individual is the longer she or he has been employed in predominantly White institutions. The longer an individual is employed in an institution, the more time the individual has to adjust to and incorporate the values of the organization.

### Implications of effective assimilation practices

Research question number two investigating the effectiveness of dominant group organizational socialization practices in socializing African-Americans to the

organization is answered by analyzing the two open-ended questions. The limitations inherent in this study do not allow for an explanation of those African-Americans who may exhibit high racial identification but who are also able to function in the predominantly White institutions without necessarily integrating their cultural identity with the identity of the organization. An example of an African-American high in racial identification functioning in a predominantly White environment without necessarily having to integrate themselves with the values of the organization can be explained by referring to Orbe's (1994) categorization of the six African-American communication behaviors used with Whites that do not serve to threaten or compromise African-American cultural identity and social positioning.

The only indication that organizations may not effectively assimilate African-Americans to the organization was evidenced in some responses to the open-ended questions where the respondents disclosed that they felt much more comfortable working in predominantly African-American institutions than in predominantly White institutions. These African-Americans made a conscious choice to make the transition from working in predominantly White institutions to working in predominantly African-American institutions. However, for a variety of reasons, not every African-American makes a conscious choice to avoid working in inter-racioethnic situations. Not every African-American should be expected to work exclusively with other African-American group members in order to feel a commitment to or to feel appreciated by the organization. For example, while some African-Americans may feel grateful that they work with a team made up of other African-Americans exclusively in a predominantly White institution (comment provided by an African-American female), other African-Americans may

interpret the make-up of the group as a deliberate attempt by the organization to exclude African-American group members from other members in the organization. Such isolation/separation tactics do little to encourage communication between group members. This type of relationship between African-Americans and Whites, in terms of integration, does not appear to be effective. Unfortunately, the study did reveal that there exists an obvious strain on the part of the African-American to communicate with White group members. An appreciation of what African-American newcomers typically experience during the transition period to predominantly White settings and how they cope with their experiences is fundamental to designing entry practices that facilitate both African-American newcomers' and Whites' adaptation in the new setting to the African-American presence.

A Co-cultural Perspective

Two open-ended questions were designed in order to reveal specific communication strategies used by African-Americans when interacting in predominantly White institutions. This section interprets responses using Orbe's (1998) Co-cultural theoretical framework (see Figure). Orbe's model is useful in explaining, in terms of racial identification, communication orientations expressed by African-Americans when interacting with Whites in a variety of situations.

The co-cultural theoretical framework provided by Orbe (1998) outlines nine communication orientations used by African-Americans when interacting with Whites (see Figure 1). Each communication orientation is marked by specific communication behaviors particular to each category. The following analysis of each response attempts to explain and categorize each response in terms of racial identification by using the co-

cultural theoretical framework. A visual representation can be used to understand the communication process as it relates to the framework (see Figure 2). The communication orientations on the far left of the continuum, which fall into the category of assimilation, are those communication orientations which reflect lower levels of racial identification. The communication orientations further right on the continuum, which fall into the category of separation, are those communication orientations which reflect higher levels of racial identification. Each of the responses are preceded by the communication orientation used. Following each response, provided by the subject, is an explanation of the communication orientation used according to Orbe's (1998) framework.

Response to open-ended questions

In the following example, an African-American female respondent used a nonassertive assimilation approach when functioning in a predominantly White institution. She stated:

I have a satisfying situation involving communication. Earlier in my working years   there was a White male who didn't really speak to anyone. I didn't speak to anyone, but because we had one brief conversation about music, he is now my best friend. All of this would not have happened without communication.

According to Orbe (1998) the communication orientation used by this respondent would fall into the category of nonassertive assimilation because the respondent was able to emphasize commonalties (see Figure 1) between herself and the White male, which in turn lead to a satisfying communication relationship.

In the following example, An African-American female respondent used a nonassertive assimilation approach in combination with an aggressive assimilation approach when functioning in a predominantly White institution. She stated:

"I have no problem in communication with Whites. I try to be intelligent at all times and control my temper."

According to Orbe (1998) the communication orientation used would fall into the category of nonassertive assimilation because she asserts that she controls her temper in communication situations involving whites. Controlling her temper functions as a censoring of self (see Figure 1) when interacting with Whites. When the respondent states that she "tries to be intelligent at all times", Orbe would make the argument that the approach used here falls into the category of aggressive assimilation because she is actually making a conscious effort to dissociate (see Figure 1) those behaviors seen as typical of African-Americans so that she may blend in with White group members.

The following two examples illustrate a nonassertive accommodation approach used by African-Americans when functioning in a predominantly White institution. They stated:

When White people at work tell me that I'm not like other Black people or that I'm not even Black makes me very uncomfortable. They think that I am really their friend and that when they say things like that it is not negative because they think that telling me I sound educated and articulate is a compliment.

People at work who try to be-friend me always talk about sports and music. They assume that these are the things I am supposed to like and know a lot about

because I am Black. They do not even ask what my interests are, they just assume

they already know. When I tell them I have never played basketball and that I

spend my free time writing they just laugh nervously and say things like, "well,

you are not really Black then".


According to Orbe (1998), the communication orientation used by each

respondent would fall into the category nonassertive accommodation because unlike

dissociating, each of the individuals in the above examples unconsciously and naturally

dispelled certain stereotypes (see Figure 1) held by White members concerning African-

Americans. According to Orbe (1998) dispelling stereotypes "does not refer to instances

when individuals go out of their way to contradict cultural stereotypes" (p. 64).

In the following example, an African-American male respondent used an

aggressive accommodation approach when functioning in a predominantly White

institution. He stated:

> Do you know that this White man from Alabama would not work on a campaign
>
> for my company because we wanted to feature Black basketball players on the
>
> packaging of one of our products. He did not want "Black people" on the
>
> packaging. That was what he said. He said it was also because he had to work
>
> with me. When he told management he would not work with me they said he had
>
> to. I didn't mind. I enjoyed his aggravation.

According to Orbe (1998) the communication orientation used by this respondent

would fall into the category aggressive accommodation by confronting and gaining and

advantage (see Figure 1) because the African-American enjoyed the White member's

apparent aggravation and discomfort with having to participate in a project representing African-Americans with an African-American co-worker. The reaction enabled the African-American to take on an "in your face" confronting approach to the situation. At the same time, the African-American was able to gain an advantage in the communication situation by capitalizing on the White members apparent feeling of awkwardness and remorse by just being present to enjoy in his aggravation.

The following example is another that illustrates the aggressive accommodation approach used by an African-American male when functioning in a predominantly White environment. He stated:

The coordinator at my job, a 28 year old White woman, stated "I cannot understand you because you have a Black accent." I was very disturbed by this. After she made the statement, future communication was difficult with her. She "tuned" me out, and told me to communicate with my peers who would in turn pass the message on to her. "That way", she said, "she could understand me and know where I was coming from." I filed a racial discrimination complaint with the organization. The organizations response was that I was "being difficult".

Several inter-racioethnic implications are evident in this particular statement. Before addressing the young woman's comments and subsequent resolution tactics for dealing with a "Black" accent I will focus first on the respondent filing a racial discrimination suit against the company.

According to the co-cultural theoretical framework, the communication orientation used by this respondent would fall into the category aggressive accommodation because the act of filing a racial discrimination suit against the company

is seen as an effort to confront (see Figure 1) an issue in order to create societal change. The act of confronting dominant group members in order that they may be able to strike a balance between the two groups is referred to as the aggressive accommodation approach. The African-American in this case felt that in order to work in a predominantly White institution some changes had to be made so that he and others like him might be able to function in predominantly White contexts.

The aggressive accommodation approach does have a negative side, however. Looking back at the example, we notice that the reaction to the suit was not well received. At an even closer glance, we notice that the organization's response to the suit was to dismiss it entirely by shifting the issue from racial discrimination to the person filing the suit. The issue then became someone just being "difficult". According to Orbe (1998) aggressive accomodationists do run the risk of being labeled as "overly sensitive", a radical, or someone "crying wolf" by White group members. In this particular instance the African-American was just being "difficult". Organizational socialization and assimilation for the African-American who uses the aggressive accommodation approach in order to create change in predominantly White institutions becomes extremely difficult. Not only are they risking social isolation from White group members but they also risk the same type of isolation from other African-Americans who don't want to be perceived as being "difficult".

Racial identification and language

The example immediately above does a good job at illustrating how unsuccessful and complicated inter-racioethnic communication can be. Unfortunately, White's do not always recognize when their communication behaviors reflect racist

attitudes. White's do not always realize when their communication sets the "standard" by which other communication should and is expected to follow. In this particular instance the young white woman says, "I can't understand you because you have a Black accent." To an African-American, not only is she dismissing the way African-Americans speak as inferior because "she" cannot understand them but to physically tune someone out and to suggest they use an interpreter in order that they might be able to communicate is down right offensive. Other examples among the responses reflecting the same trend that Whites tend to reject and/or discredit the language used by African-Americans are included in the following statements:

"There were many situations in those years, but basically describing any projects at work verbally was hindered because some of the vernacular I used they didn't understand. So I had to describe them again in more 'standard' terms."

I was told that I had to work on my communication skills because no one could understand me. They told me to work on my grammar, punctuation, and to articulate my words, because [Whites said] "in this business communication is vital, if you can't talk properly you won't succeed".

"I was accused of being in a gang because I was 'over heard' talking street language with a peer of mine."

In each of these examples, the African-American was made aware of how inappropriate and unskilled their use of the English language was perceived by a white

member in their organization. Further research should be conducted analyzing the extent by which respondents consciously rejected the use of "standard" English because they did not want to be seen or identified as accepting the norms and values often imposed on them and shared by Whites.

Often African-Americans are not always conscious of the effect their communication behavior has on Whites. For instance, Neulip (1995) found that in one particular learning situation African-Americans were quite verbal, interactive, and expressive with the professor giving a lecture. What African-Americans did not realize was that their communication behavior made the White students feel quite uncomfortable. To the White students, the African-Americans were behaving quite inappropriately. Whites claimed that in the classroom situation and in most public situations such enthusiastic and emotional behavior reflected poorly on an individual. The communication behaviors were therefore perceived as being disruptive and socially unacceptable . Unfortunately, this study was not designed to answer specifically the communication behaviors perceived as inappropriate to Whites in the inter-racioethnic situations investigated here. It could be, according to previous literature addressing African-American communication behaviors, (Kochman, 1981; Pennington,1979; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Foeman & Pressley, 1987) that it is not just what African-Americans say in an inter-racioethnic interaction but also how they say it that makes the communication choice seem inappropriate to Whites.

Overall, several of the comments given by the respondents to open-ended question number one and open-ended question number two can be understood in terms of Orbe's co-cultural theoretical framework. Each of the comments provided yielded

enormous insight into the communication relationships between African-Americans and Whites in predominantly White institutions. Whether or not participants claimed to be satisfied or dissatisfied with inter-racioethnic communication situations in the workplace, the fact remains that we have much to accomplish in the area of inter-racioethnic communication. The following section addresses areas of research that need to be amended, elaborated, and/or investigated in the future.

Figure 2

LOW RACIAL IDENTIFICATION                    HIGH RACIAL IDENTIFICATION

| ASSIMILATION | ACCOMODATION | SEPARATION |
|---|---|---|
| NON-ASSERTIVE, ASSERTIVE, AGGRESSIVE | NON-ASSERTIVE, ASSERTIVE, AGGRESSIVE | NON-ASSERTIVE, ASSERTIVE, AGGRESSIVE |
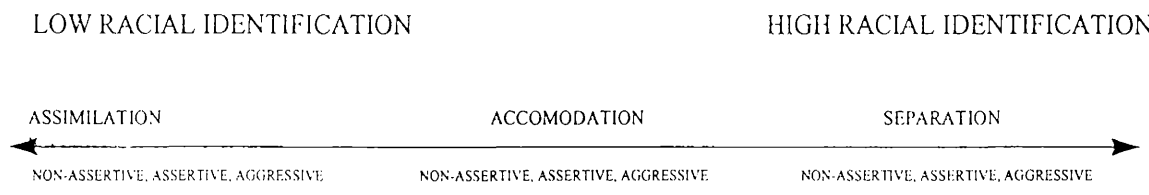
Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings and observations of past research identifying the same type of relationship between cultures (Orbe, 1998; Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Bell, 1990; Dace, 1994; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Kochman, 1981; Thomas, 1993) there emerges some confusion based on conclusions drawn in past research explaining the relationship between individualist cultures and collectivist cultures. While some groups exhibit more of an individualistic cultural context and some groups exhibit more of a collectivistic cultural context, the distinction between groups from a communication perspective is unclear. A gap in the literature surfaces when communication scholars address the communication behaviors between two groups in the United States with such

an interdependent historical relationship as if those cultural communication behaviors were not influenced by the relationship of one culture to the other.

Too many instances are published in the communication journals that contradict the assertions made about which cultures represent the individualism/collectivism dichotomy between African-Americans and Whites (Triandis, McCusker, & Hue, 1990;Ting-Toomey,1988;Okabe, 1983; Kochman, 1981; Foeman & Pressley, 1987). It may be necessary to erect a new inter-racioethnic theoretical framework in order to explain communication differences between groups. Developing a new theoretical framework would require researchers to adjust their lenses so that they may focus more clearly on the interrelationship between groups and how that relationship influences communication behaviors particular to each group.

Based on the conclusions drawn about communication relationships between African-Americans and Whites from a predominantly African-American perspective, researchers are encouraged to investigate further these relationships in a variety of contexts. Further areas of investigation could include explanations for why African-Americans choose certain communication orientations over others. A more conclusive explanation for why and how age and tenure might impact racial identification could also be investigated. Other areas for discussion could include how external factors such as economical influences and education determine African-American communication orientation and racial identification, and how often and under what circumstances racial identification and communication in predominantly White environments are negotiated by African-Americans.

Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate the relationship between African-American communication behaviors in predominantly White institutions. As the literature review has indicated, levels of racial identification are related to the assimilation of African-Americans to predominantly White organizations. The study also illustrated that from an African-American perspective, communication with Whites is quite difficult and requires African-Americans to deal with inter-racioethnic situations by using a variety of communication orientations or strategies in order to function in what they perceive as a difficult environment.

Based on the information provided by open-ended questions number one and two, a trend emerges describing inter-racioethnic communication as less than satisfying for African-Americans. The consequences may be staggering if researchers and practitioners alike refuse to recognize the negative impact inter-racioethnic communication has on African-American group members.

There still seems to be some resistance on the part of researchers to address communication between races because of its historical significance and researchers' inability to deal scientifically with such an emotional topic. Some communication scholars have gone so far as to devalue its significance by softening their approach to racial essentialism in communication. For example, in her attempt to sell a culture based approach to teaching African-American public address Pennington (1998) states that "this article is not to be construed as one that advances the notion of cultural or racial essentialism...".

It may be that in order to publish in the major communication journals, as suggested by Cox (1990), that Pennington softened her approach from racial essentialism

to non-essentialism. Whatever the reason, inter-racioethnic communication remains essential no matter the rhetorical trickery used to soften the approach in order that the readers may feel more comfortable. Human communication is essentially tied to individual experiences, historical events, and the socially learned behaviors that influence communication between groups. It remains up to the communication scholar to examine and explain how each of these factors influence the communication behaviors and perceptions expressed between group members from the perspective of each of the groups involved.

This study demonstrated that is not enough to use theoretical frameworks such as Hofstede's distinction between individualist and collectivist cultures, designed to analyze international communication relationships, to explain those communication behaviors expressed by two separate but interrelated American cultural group members. From an African-American perspective on communication with dominant group members it seems Orbe (1998) provides a more comprehensive explanation between two distinctive cultural group members. What remains to be explored is the relationship between the co-cultural theoretical framework and the development of a similar type of framework from the perspective of dominant group members' communication interaction with African-Americans.

# APPENDIX

# ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

# COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

# INTERNAL- EXTERNAL CONTROL SCALE

# OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

# Communication Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this project. Your voluntary cooperation in completing this survey is greatly appreciated. This research is sponsored by the Communication Research Center of the Speech Communication Department at Southwest Texas State University and is part of my graduate thesis project for a Master of Arts degree. I hope my research will provide insight into how African-Americans are assimilated as newcomers into organizations.

Please do not put your name anywhere on this survey; your participation and your responses will be anonymous and confidential. I will not identify you as an individual or link you to any of your responses and I will report the information I gather in aggregate so that no one will be able to link you with a particular response. If you would like to review the findings of this project please let me know and I will provide you with a copy of the findings. Dr. Frank J. Flauto is the Chair of the committee directing me in this project.

Patricia C. Phillips

The Communication Research Center
Department of Speech Communication
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas  78666
(512)  245-2165

Think of your role as an employee of your organization. For each item below, select the answer that best represents your belief about or attitude toward your organization, the people in it, and its procedures. Please respond to all items.

1 = Disagree very strongly    2 = Disagree strongly    3 = Disagree    4 = Undecided
5 = Agree    6 = Agree strongly    7 = Agree very strongly

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The organization's image in the community represents me as well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I find it difficult to agree with the organization's policies on important matters relating to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I have warm feelings toward the organization as a place to work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. I would be quite willing to spend the rest of my career with this organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I feel that the organization cares about me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. I have a lot in common with others employed by the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. I am glad I chose to work for this organization rather than any other company. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. My association with the organization is only a small part of who I am. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. I find that my values and the values of my organization are very similar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. I would describe the organization as a large "family" in which most members feel a sense of belonging. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. I find it easy to identify with the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. I am satisfied with my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. I am satisfied with the extent to which my superiors know and understand the problems faced by subordinates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. I am satisfied with the extent to which my organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. I am satisfied with the extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. I am satisfied with the extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. I am satisfied with the extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job related problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. I am satisfied with the extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. I am satisfied with the extent to which my supervisor trusts me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. I am satisfied with the extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. I am satisfied with the extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. I am satisfied with the extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Continued.
1 = Disagree very strongly    2 = Disagree strongly    3 = Disagree    4 = Undecided
5 = Agree   6 = Agree strongly    7 = Agree very strongly

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. I am satisfied with the extent to which communication across departments with other organizational members is accurate and free flowing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. I am satisfied with the extent to which the amount of supervision given me is about right. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. I am satisfied with the extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are healthy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. I am satisfied with the extent to which informal communication is active and accurate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28. I am satisfied with the extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Please mark the response (a. or b.) which most nearly matches your reaction to the statements.**

| 29. | a. | Racial discrimination is here to stay. |
|---|---|---|
| | b. | People may be prejudiced but it is possible for American society to completely rid itself of discrimination |
| 30. | a. | "Reverse discrimination" shows once again that whites are so opposed to African-Americans getting their rights that it is practically impossible to end discrimination in America |
| | b. | "Reverse discrimination" has been exaggerated. Certainly enough whites support the goals of the African-American to see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination. |
| 31. | a. | The racial situation in America may be very complex, but with enough effort it is possible to get rid of racial discrimination. |
| | b. | We will never completely get rid of discrimination. It is part of human nature |
| 32. | a. | It is the lack of skill and abilities that keeps many African-Americans from getting a job. It is not just because they are African-Americans. When an African-American is trained to do something, she/he is able to get a job. |
| | b. | Many qualified African-Americans can not get a job. White people with the same skills would not have any trouble. |
| 33. | a. | Many African-Americans who do not do well in life do have good training, but the opportunities just always go to whites. |
| | b. | African-Americans may not have the same opportunities as whites, but many African-Americans have not prepared themselves enough to make use of the opportunities that come their way. |
| 34. | a. | Many African-Americans have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life. If they tried harder, they would do better. |
| | b. | When two qualified people, one African-American and one white, are considered for the same job, the African-American will not get the job no matter how hard they try. |
| 35. | a. | The attempt to "fit in" and do what is proper has not paid off for African-Americans. It does not matter how "proper" you are, you will still meet serious discrimination if you are African-American. |
| | b. | The problem for many African-Americans is that they are not really acceptable by American standards. Any African-American who is educated and does what is considered proper will be accepted and get ahead. |
| 36. | a. | Depending on bi-racial committees is just a dodge. Talking and understanding without constant protest and pressure will never solve problems of discrimination.. |
| | b. | Talking and understanding as opposed to protest and pressure is the best way to solve racial discrimination |
| 37. | a. | Discrimination affects all African-Americans. The only way to handle it is for all African-Americans to organize together and demand rights for all African-Americans. |
| | b. | Discrimination may affect all African-Americans but the best way to handle it is for each individual African-American to act like any other American—to work hard, get a good education, and mind her/his own business |

| My age is. . . | 18-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| My sex is. . . | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|

| I work . . . | Full time | Part time |
|---|---|---|

| I have worked in this organization . . . | 0-11 months | 1-4 years | 5-15 years | 15 years+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

During your first year on the job, can you think of a situation in which race affected your communication with a white member of your organization? Please describe that situation.

Can you think of a situation in which communication between you and a white member (or white members) of your organization that was particularly satisfying or unsatisfying? Please describe that situation.

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<u>Bureaucrat, 16,</u> 29-34.

# VITA

Patricia Catherine Phillips was born in Bedfordshire, England, on March 12, 1972, the

daughter of Angela Mary-Theresa Phillips and Curtis (Bro) Phillips. In 1990 she

attended Southwest Texas State University San Marcos, Texas and received her Bachelor

of Arts in Political Science, 1994. In 1996 she entered the Graduate School of Southwest

Texas State University where she taught as a lab instructor for the Department of Speech

Communication. While completing her studies, she also assisted in the development and

design of instructional material used in the Leadership and Organizational Development

Program headed by USAA, a Fortune 500 Insurance Company based in San

Antonio,Texas.


Permanent address:          564 South Hill Avenue

                            New Braunfels, Texas 78130


This thesis was typed by Patricia Catherine Phillips.