Dual Deviants: The Balancing Act of Black Graduate Students[1]

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Abstract

The study of deviant behavior was designed to focus on departure from a *group'*s normative expectations; however, the primary focus of deviance research has been the departure from the *dominant* group's norms. What happens when one is stigmatized by the dominant group and their minority group?   Making use of interview data, this study investigates the life of black graduate students as they manage two spoiled identities, one in the academic world and the other in the black community. There were three major strategies used to manage their identities: (1) passing and covering via language manipulation; (2) fronting via professionalism and realism; and (3) own and wise via a black niche and mentorship.

Introduction

Human behavior is deviant to the extent that it comes to be viewed as involving a personally discreditable departure from a group's normative expectations, and it elicits interpersonal or collective reactions that serve to 'isolate,' 'treat,' 'correct,' or 'punish' individuals engaged in such behavior (Schur 1971: 24).

According to this definition, the study of deviant behavior is designed to focus on departure from a *group's* normative expectations. This *discreditable* departure mars the individual's character and brings about a *collective reaction* from the group that possesses sanctioning powers. However, the primary focus of deviance research has not been departure from *any* group's normative expectations, but more so the dominant group's expectations, creating an effect of the dominant group having a condescending attitude toward the subordinate group (Oyserman and Swim 2001).

Becker (1963) discusses deviant behavior by stating:
…social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders (9).

Once again, the definition includes concepts such as social groups, rules (normative expectations), and infraction of those rules (departure). It is very rare to find a study that researches deviance from the in-group's (subordinate) normative expectations. For example, a study focusing on homosexuals would typically be based on their violation of norms from a group who are heterosexuals (i.e., the dominant group). It is unlikely to find a study on homosexuals as a deviant group from the normative perspectives of homosexuals. Each group has its norms, and deviance is based on the breaking of norms within that particular group. If homosexuals, who are stigmatized by the larger society due to sexual orientation, break a rule within the homosexual subculture that results in sanctions, how are they viewed? Where is their place in society? How do they simultaneously deal with the stigma placed on them by the greater society and the stigma from their own rule breaking subculture (homosexual) because they broke a norm within the group? More importantly, since they are already stigmatized and labeled deviant by the dominant society, how do they survive in a world where they are stigmatized by the dominant group and their in-group? I refer to people in these particular situations as "dual-deviants" because they have to balance two worlds in which they are stigmatized.

The group used to illustrate dual deviancy in this paper will be Blacks in higher education. This paper seeks to explore the balancing of the two worlds that include lower class Blacks in higher education, specifically graduate school, who are stigmatized. The goal of this paper is to investigate the lives of dual deviants, individuals stigmatized by the dominant society (i.e., Whites) as well as their in-group (i.e., Blacks).

Simultaneous Deviant Statuses

Blacks in Higher Education Institutions

There is a plethora of contemporary research that illustrates how Blacks are stigmatized in academic settings because of their race (Hodge 1994; Van Tyle 1996; Prantkanis and Turner 1996; Jabbra 2001; Bergin and Cooks 2002; Dovidio et al. 2001). Van Tyle (1996) writes about the court of law finding that a stigma of inferiority, meaning that they are non-deserving, was attached to applicants admitted to an institution due to their race. This common finding, Blacks being stigmatized, is largely based on Whites' views that affirmative action is racial preference or "reverse racism" and minorities are lacking in merit (Jabbra 2001).

Since the 1950's many African-Americans have taken advantage of different educational opportunities targeted towards the academic and scholarly growth of minorities in the United States. The educational opportunity mostly associated with Blacks is affirmative action (Hodge 1994), however, many Blacks also took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights of 1944 (Ebony 1992). Despite the educational opportunities affirmative action created, many feel that is has failed in its approach to help eliminate discrimination. Blacks have to deal with the stigma attached to them by Whites, who perceive them as getting into college only because of their skin color and not their intellect. There is a sense of inferiority that Blacks feel in scholarly and academic stature due to the stigma attached to them because of affirmative action (Hodge 1994; Van Tyle 1996; Prantkanis and Turner 1996). Black students who are accepted into higher education institutions based on their own merit still have a stigma attached to them because Black Americans are viewed as a homogenous group, regardless of class or educational attainment (Mcdermott 2001; Payne 1998).

Educated Blacks in their Communities

McWhorter (2001) has presented the issue of Blacks being anti-intellectual. He presents the common views on education in contemporary Black culture, and the major perception is that Black youths are raised

to believe that scholastic success, and applying oneself academically are "White," and real Blacks are not suppose to enjoy school. It is as if Blacks feel that they should do the opposite of whatever Whites do. Hence, being an educated Black can be seen as deviant in Black culture.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986), discuss how the academic success of Black Students is undermined by accusations and the fear of "acting white." Through ethnographic data, they describe how unsuccessful Black students react to Black students who are academically successful. They suggest that successful students have developed strategies to avoid the "acting White" stigma, such as not boasting about their academic achievement; misbehaving; or even having a bully protect them in exchange for helping the bully with his schoolwork.

Bryan's (2001) study examined the identity issue for Black professionals in welfare organizations and Black students in higher education. She highlighted some of the fears Black students have becoming professional and losing their "Black identity." Upon becoming a professional, some feel they will have to sacrifice their Black identity. She also discusses the stigma that can be attached to the educated Blacks by other Blacks. She refers to labels placed on the educated Blacks such as 'coconut' and 'oreo.' These terms imply blackness (skin color) on the outside, but whiteness (views and behaviors) on the inside.

Dual Deviants

The research mentioned illustrates the simultaneous deviant statuses that Black graduate students must manage. They are stigmatized because of their race in educational institutions and because of their education in black communities. This dual deviant status is a position that needs to be acknowledged in the sociology of deviance. It extends the ideology of deviance beyond dominant cultural norms into sub-cultural norms. Theoretical perspectives commonly utilized in the sociology of deviance do not limit what constitutes deviant behavior to dominant cultural norms. *Researchers* limit the focus to dominant cultural norms, and consequently neglect sub-cultural deviants who also face social consequences because of their status. A familiar perspective will be used to examine the dual deviant discussed in the paper, Goffman's stigma.

Theoretical Foundation: Stigma

Schur's definition of deviance, as previously discussed, includes the term "discreditable," which provides a natural passageway to a complementary concept used in this study, "stigma." Goffman (1963:3) defines stigma as

"an attribute that is deeply discrediting." He identifies three major types of stigma: (1) abominations of the body; (2) blemish of a character; and (3) tribal stigma. The first refers to physical deformities that a person might possess and these can include, but are not limited to the handicap, obesity, or even something as common as male baldness. The second is based on an individual possessing certain acts, beliefs, and behaviors that can cause them to be stigmatized. Persons to whom this type of stigma might be applied include, but are not limited to, homosexuals, drug addicts, or alcoholics. The third contaminates all members of a specific group. The groups can be categorized by a: family, race, nation, or religion. Racial and religious minorities can be stigmatized due to their known beliefs or a previous stigma passed down through lineages.

There are two other important concepts associated with the general concept stigma; they are the "discredited" and the "discreditable." A "discredited" person is someone whose discrediting attribute is known before hand or apparent upon meeting. Examples of a discredited person can be a blind man with sunglasses and a cane or an extremely obese person. A "discreditable" person is someone whose discrediting attribute is not known before hand and is not apparent. A senator who is an alcoholic possesses a discreditable attribute because it is not apparent when you see him, but he is at risk of it becoming revealed if he is constantly caught drunk in public settings.

A great portion of Goffman's work also deals with the reaction to being stigmatized. One way one deals with being stigmatized is by receiving moral support from the "own" and "wise" (19). The "own" are individuals who share the same stigma. The "wise" are individuals who are "normal," but sympathetic with the life of the stigmatized and have a "courtesy membership" in the group. A wise person can be a relative (i.e., a spouse) or someone who caters to the stigmatized (i.e., nurses).

Another strategy that the stigmatized use in reaction to their discreditable behavior is "managing of identity." Goffman focuses on two techniques that deal with managing one's identity, *passing* and *covering*. Passing is "management of undisclosed discrediting information about self" (42). There are four common strategies used in "passing": (1) "conceal" signs that are associated with the stigma; (2) use "disidentifiers"; (3) "present" signs of their discreditable behavior as signs of another less stigmatizing attribute; and (4) "divide" their world into two groups, one that knows nothing and the other that knows all (92-95).

Covering refers to "an effort to keep the stigma from looming large" (102). The common techniques used in "covering" are to: (1) "restrict the

display of those failing most centrally identified with the stigma" (103); and (2) learn about the structure of interaction in order to know how much they need to change their behavior in order to minimize the stigma (102-104). An obese person at a party would utilize the covering strategies by: (1) "restrict the display…" by not eating a lot of food; and (2) learn about the people in the party so he will know how much to eat or not to eat. Through passing and covering, deviants manage their identity.

A review of *Stigma* can leave one asking the question: "Who is stigmatizing?" Research has commonly focused on the consequences individuals face from the dominant society; however, Goffman does not specify who has the power to stigmatize. This project illustrates the power of the subculture to stigmatize, in addition to the dominant culture's power. Goffman's discussion of stigma, will serve as an invaluable theoretical foundation in this study. This study will use these concepts and terms to ascertain how Blacks in graduate school, as dual deviants, balance their two worlds.

Methodology

The data for this study were gathered from 20 interviews with Black graduate students working toward an advanced degree at a large Midwestern state university. The racial/ethnic composition of the graduate student body is 68.8 percent White, 14.9 percent Black, 3.2 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian American, 5.62 percent foreign, and 4.73 percent unknown. Approximately, 46.2 percent of the graduate student body is male and 53.8 percent female. Interviews were used as a source of data collection because:

> attention to personal statements by individuals who deviate
> from dominant norms …provide more direct indications
> than do other kids of "data" of just how such deviators view
> and feel about their activities and situations (Schur 1971:3).

The insider's perspective is a research agenda that is based on: (1) insiders' experiences and perceptions, (2) connects the theoretical basis of research into the larger social psychological literature (3) and provides a mean to unravel the process by which outgroup stereotypes and prejudices and ingroup behavior, attitudes, and coping strategies are intertwined (Oyserman and Swim 2001).

The respondents were located through a list serve that included all Black graduate students registered with a Black graduate student organization recognized at the university. An email was sent to these

students, informing them of the study and seeking their participation. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour and were audio taped. Each participant was given a consent form and guaranteed confidentiality. All interviews were conducted by the researcher in the researcher's office, the graduate student's office, or a quiet section of the school's student center. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to assure anonymity.

Description of Members

Twenty Black graduate students working toward an advanced degree in graduate school were chosen because of their lack of economic mobility. Unlike successful Blacks who have already become professional, these Blacks who are in the process of becoming professionals do not have as many options to live outside the Black community. However, simultaneously they have to work and study in a professional environment such as that existing in an academic institution. They are stuck "between a rock and a hard place." Since they are not yet professional and do not possesses the income to move out of the Black community, they are still forced to communicate and live in the community. Common forms of compensation for graduate students include federal loans, graduate assistantships and research assistantships, which are insufficient forms for relocation.

Thirteen of the respondents were female and seven were male. Their ages ranged from 23 to 40, with a mean age of 26. Three of the students (two females and one male) had children and two female subjects were married. Fourteen out of the twenty have had two or more years of graduate school. Ten students were working toward master's degrees and ten toward a doctorate of philosophy (Ph.D.). There were a diverse group of majors: two English (one master's and one Ph.D.); four educational psychology (two master's and two Ph.D.); five rehabilitation counseling (two master's and three Ph.D.); two administrative justice (all master's); two anatomy/ physiology (all master's); one music (master's); one educational administration (Ph.D.); and three sociology (all Ph. D.). All of the informants were from Black families and came from predominantly lower middle or lower class Black communities.

Interview Schedule

The respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions about their backgrounds (e.g., place of origin, description of community etc.) and current academic and social life. The interviews were subsequently coded in relation to the research question and theoretical perspective and concepts. The data were sorted into emerging themes.

The interview schedule allowed the Black graduate students to supply as much or as little information about their lives as Black graduate students. Many of the items included in the interview schedule are taken from existing literature on Blacks and education. Additional items were included because the existing literature did not pursue the areas crucial to understanding Blacks in graduate school, such as marital status or their views on the Black professionals they will soon be.

The schedule included a number of background/ demographic questions such as age and education level. Also included were questions concerning their views about life as a Black in graduate school, their family and communal backgrounds, how they (i.e., family and community) view their educational accomplishments, and questions about their feeling towards the Black professionals' role and place in society.

Findings

This research on dual deviants resulted in findings that can contribute to research in the sociology of deviance. The results of the study clearly indicate that students were aware of their stigma and used a combination of techniques to manage their identity. There were three major themes and managing techniques that emerged from the interview and coding process: (1) passing and covering via language manipulation; (2) fronting via professionalism and realism; and (3) the own and wise via a black niche and mentorship.

Passing and Covering: Language Manipulation

Language manipulation is defined as the ability to manipulate and modify one's language so that it is appropriate for a specific social context. This concept is similar to a concept called "code switching." Code switching is "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction" (Flowers 2000). Language manipulation differs from code switching in that it does not occur in the same conversation or interaction. It is more likely to occur in different conversations or interactions. This appeared to be an important skill for the Black graduate student in this study. Fourteen of the twenty interviewees, 70%, noted that the ability to change the way one talked based on the social context was important to them.

Lisa, in her late 30's, had accomplished a great deal in her life. After marrying and having three children, and earning her nursing license, she decided to pursue her Ph.D. in rehabilitation counseling. Lisa was very straightforward about the way she would manipulate her wording to fit her environment. She said:

> When I'm at home around my family, I tend to be more
> relaxed and I'll talk like you know, some street talk,
> some slang and you know stuff like that, I'm not very
> pretentious at all**.**

Lisa makes her conscious decision to speak a certain way very clear when
she states and uses words such as: "I tend…" and "pretentious." She is
aware of her environment, and more importantly aware of the way she
needs to speak in that environment. This is a clear example of Goffman's
passing. The strategy employed here is the concealing of signs associated
with the stigma. Lisa is not "pretentious"; by not being pretentious, she is
able to conceal her education level.

This skill was obtained by either observation of someone who
already possesses the ability or through the social reaction of speaking
inappropriately in an environment. If the skill is obtained through
observation of someone who already possesses the ability (i.e., parent),
it is an indication of certain values being passed from generation to
generation. Martin, a Ph.D. student in English, came from a lower class
Black family in a Midwestern urban environment. Through observation,
he learned when it was appropriate to speak a certain way, and when other
choices were more acceptable. He recalled:

> My mother would be on the phone in a professional voice
> [enunciating] "I am just calling to confirm…." and then
> she would look at me and be like [relaxed, urban slang]
> "boy, if you don't sit your butt down." So, I learned how
> to do it at a young age.

Martin's quote is a clear illustration of how values, and more importantly,
techniques for identity management, can be transmitted from generation to
generation as part of the socialization process. He learned how to structure
his language style according to his audience by observing his mother's
behavior.

Terry, a young Black female in her early twenties, is working toward
her master's degree in Administrative of Justice. Terry learned from others'
reactions when it is appropriate to speak a particular way. She noted:

> When the stuff with the sniper was going on we were
> talking about it, I'll be talking all professional, using the
> AJ [administrative justice] terms, they'll [her friends] be
> like "girl stop playing, why you talking like that?" So I
> just laughed it off and watched the way I spoke.

The audience's reaction was an informal sanction due to the way Terry spoke, she noticed it, and she made the appropriate changes. In this instance, Terry learned from the reaction of others what style of language was appropriate in a given context. Even if she already knew the appropriate style, her audience was there to remind her if she had somehow forgotten. Her reaction to her audience was just as important as their reaction to her. Terry "laughed it off," implying that she did her best to fix her mistake and move on with the conversation. This is also an example of Goffman's passing. Terry presented her discreditable attribute as being part of something less stigmatizing, a comedian. As her friends laughed, she laughed along. Another Goffman strategy is evident in Terry's quote, the second covering strategy. She learned about the structure of the interaction and modified her language appropriately.

Others expressed similar views as Lisa, Martin, and Terry. For example, Sarah stated:

> I use big words, they come out when I'm with my friends and they're go like "what?" Like I just bust out with a word, I talk with slang and vocabularies. I'll come out with a word and be like "oh, don't worry about it."

James stated:
> I don't know….it's tough. The big words might slip out sometimes, and then you get called Carlton [laughing]. But it's aight…. I mean you're going to find something to laugh about at each other with your peeps anyway…. so it might as well be you be laughing at 'cuz you sound smart [laughing].

James' situation is an example of passing; more specifically, he is using the strategy of making the discreditable behavior part of another less stigmatizing attribute, humor. James refers to Carlton, who is a character from a popular syndicated T.V. show about a rich, educated Black family living in Bel Air, California. Carlton attends a preparatory school, wears khakis and polo shirts, and is viewed as a "nerd." Hence, Carlton's character is an example of a deviant in the lower class Black community.

The ability to master this skill, language manipulation, tends to be extremely valuable when college educated Blacks return to the Black community. Through language manipulation, blacks are able to avoid the possible stigma of "being a sell out" or "oreo" (Bryan 2001), as James' comment referring to being called "Carlton" implies. The respondents

revealed their awareness of "sounding educated" as a discreditable attribute by manipulating their speaking style to sound appropriate in a non-educational setting.

In addition to the changes they made to be accepted in their home communities, they were also aware of the changes they needed to make to facilitate their adaptation to an academic setting.

> James:
>
> I know people look at me funny when I'm talking in the classroom. I can feel it. It's like they're surprised to hear a brother sounding educated…. but I kinda like it… you know? It's like I'm proving them wrong, and it keeps me on my toes. Hey, it makes it that much better….excuse me, gratifying [laughing].

James shows his awareness of what is expected from him (a Black male) when he states, "they're surprised" or "proving them wrong." He finds motivation and encouragement from proving the stereotypes wrong. This is an example of Goffman's covering, more specifically his strategy of learning the structure of interaction in order to know how much to change to minimize his stigma. James knows he is in a classroom, and makes the appropriate changes to minimize his stigma.

Terry takes another approach to the idea of language manipulation when she said

> I don't like talking in class, but I know have to because I don't want the professor and the others [students] to think I don't know anything or I didn't read. So I get an answer ready before class, and [will] be ready to sound smart.

Terry, as James did above, displays her awareness of what is expected of her and counteracts it through preparation before class. It is clear that Black graduate students are aware of the necessity to alter their verbiage in given situations. As Terry, for example, indicates above, she prepares an answer before class and works to "sound smart." James on the other hand, sees it as opportunity to prove people's stereotypes about young blacks males wrong. When in the classroom, amongst professors, or even in conversation with their scholarly peers, these students did not feel that it was appropriate to talk in a relaxed fashion. They are using Goffman's covering, as previously discussed, by learning the structure of interaction to alter their behavior appropriately to minimize the stigma. Simultaneously, the students recognized the importance of relating to their ethnic peers

by speaking in urban slang when in their non-academic community. This usually resulted in a more relaxed talk that is often influenced by contemporary cultural slang. According to these respondents, language manipulation is used to avoid isolation in both the student's academic environment and social, ethnic, and familial environments. Passing and covering via language manipulation proved an invaluable identity management technique for dual deviants.

Fronting: Professionalism and Realism

    The second major theme discovered in this study was the idea of "fronting." "Fronting" is the ability to change one's demeanor so that it is appropriate in a given social context. Goffman (1959) in, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* defines a front as "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (p. 23). This is similar to language manipulation, but the differences exist in public presentation. Goffman also discusses how individuals display particular regional behavior in order to maintain the standards and expectations of a particular region.

    The first major type of fronting identified was "professionalism." Many students felt it was necessary in academia to act professional. Rhonda, a soon to be graduate in educational psychology, felt that this was an important skill that the Black graduate student needed to acquire in order to be successful in graduate school. Rhonda said:

> A lot of African American students feel that 'as long as I get the grades that's enough,' nobody is there to say you need to be professional, that's just as important as your research paper… a professor can stop you from getting your degree just because… because they don't think you're ready. You have to represent the school, and they don't feel you can represent them.

Rhonda, having two years of graduate school experience stresses the importance of behavior. Rhonda's quote illustrates it is more than what the student does, but how they do it. The professional attitude and demeanor is just as important as the grades.

    Lisa, a Ph.D. student in rehabilitation counseling, was very adamant about her professionalism around her professors. She stated:

> I'm around say three or four professors at one time, like

> when we are in the department and a lot of them are
> around, I tend to be more you know, I tend to be more
> professional. I act more professional. They say it's ok for
> me to call them by their first name, but I don't.

Lisa set clear boundaries between her and her professors. She did this to
remind herself of the environment that she was in, and simultaneously
prevents the professors from seeing the non-academic/ ethnic side she
presents in her Black community. This approach can help her stay focused,
and more importantly, lets her professors know that she is focused. She
does not cross the line. This is a clear example of Goffman's passing
strategy. Lisa clearly has divided her worlds.

   In contrast, a second major fronting type that emerged focused on the
students' perceived need to present a "keeping it real" type of attitude
within their ethnic communities. The Black students, in this study, feel that
the academic institutional setting has certain expectations for behavior, and
Black students need to demonstrate their understanding and acceptance
of these norms. However, the academic setting is not the only region in
which the students feel they need to "front" in. This attitude of "keeping it
real" refers to the strategy students use to validate their ethnic authenticity
within their community. Students displayed realism not only by the way
they spoke, via language manipulation, but also in the style of dress and
physical demeanor. James said:

> I don't change when I'm home or around my boys,
> I just…. You know, I just keep it real... if you go back
> around your blocks and you act the same way you do here
> [the university], you might get punked out, and you know
> that ain't happening.

James illustrates the importance of separating his two worlds. More
importantly, he makes it clear that he is aware of the sanctions attached for
acting a certain way. He does not want to be "punked out," a slang term
commonly used in some Black communities to indicate worthlessness.

   The fronting acts of both "professionalism" and the "keeping it real"
attitude were common amongst these Black graduate students. It is also
clear that the particular act of fronting appeared to be almost innate; verbal
feedback from a particular audience was not always needed for the student
to know which mode to work in. The "professionalism" and "keeping
it real" are clear examples of separating two worlds. As with language
manipulation, the students recognized the appropriateness of behavior

based upon the given environment. The context of the situation is important in determining the appropriate behavior for dual deviants, especially since presenting professionalism or realism in the wrong environment can result in negative consequences.

Own and the Wise: Black Niche and Mentorship

The third major theme that emerged was the idea of a Black niche and mentorship. Through analysis of the interviews, a niche was presented as a group of members with similar traits who are available for support and encouragement. This Black niche can also be viewed as "fictive kinship," an anthropological term used by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) to demonstrate a reciprocal social relationship that exist between persons of similar backgrounds who are not related through the institution of family. This idea of a Black graduate student support group arose in the conversation in a couple of different ways. It was first noted that some of the research participants had already created their niche or had a previous niche that had been sustained. Martin stated:

> I feel like you create your own niche in society. You don't wait for other people to accept you or bring you within their realm… especially if they're not accepting anyway. But in today's society a lot of times people are accepting, you know even though you are an African American, most different levels of society, be it um like on corporate boards, or what ever, there areas that blacks have broken barriers and they do work within those areas.

This need for a niche is well illustrated in Martin's quote, in his emphasis on not waiting for one, but going to make your own. He suggested that the individual take on personal responsibility. He also demonstrated his knowledge of what is currently happening in the professional world regarding Blacks and acceptance. Martin, just as the other Black graduate students in this study, demonstrates awareness, not just of expectations, but also of accomplishments by Black Americans. This niche, in Goffman's terms, can be seen as the own, the ones who share the same stigma.

Secondly, these students felt that it was important to have a sense of community. Their need for a community niche was deemed important due to the sparse number of Black graduate students. Dovidio et al. (2001) conducted a series of studies that demonstrated "the development of a common group identity can diffuse the effects of stigmatization… among college students and faculty." Other friends of the research participants

from their various communities might have ventured down much different paths that offered minimal opportunity. The difference in paths taken makes it harder for them to relate to those previous friends. Due to the loss of that peer level cultural camaraderie, a group with similar characteristics is needed to help diffuse the stigma.

Although the majority of these Black graduate students stressed the importance of having or creating niches, other students held a different view. These participants did not de-emphasize the value of niches, but rather sought out groups and organizations that they either had belonged to or were familiar with. These groups are used as their surrogate niche. Note how Rebecca, a master's student in anatomy, stresses the importance of her Black sorority:

> I'd be lying if I said I didn't want more [Black graduate students] around. I have my sorority, which is very respected, and we have a lot of sisters in school [graduate] nationwide. We come together for our meetings and conferences and show each other support. It's really motivating.

Rebecca shows that the Black niche not only serves as support, but can also serve as a networking group that is available nationwide in the Black sorority.

The benefit of having a group to belong to, inferred from these interviews, that shares the burden of this stigma was deemed invaluable. It was particularly invaluable, as some of the participants noted, due to the sparse numbers of Black graduate students. These niches not only aided the participants in their scholarly growth, but also allowed them a chance to interact socially as kinsmen. Goffman's "own" is visible throughout their quotes, but also "passing," more specifically the strategy when the stigmatized divide their world into two groups, the all knowing and the not knowing. This group, the black niche, knows all because they are the "own" and experience the same stigma.

Mentorship also serves as a form of support; however, it was discussed by the Black graduate students in this study in a much different manner than peer support. Mentorship is more than mere support; it embodies a conglomerate of support and guidance on both a professional and personal level by one already established in a particular area. Mentorship has proven to be a very powerful positive device in the guidance and growth of a Black student (Cropper 2000). Leslie states:

> You're in grad. school and most people connect with a mentor, when you're in an environment when there are

no black mentors, either you become an official network
together and try to connect with other black students
….or you kind of out there on a limb…. You don't have
someone to guide you, someone to connect with……
They [black professors] have some understanding of what
the situation is going to be like as a black student and how
that differs from a white student's experience.

Many of the respondents have come to recognize and accept that there
are very few Black mentors available at predominantly White institutions.
The lack of Black mentors empowers the students to be creative and use
whoever is willing and available to them. This is stated by a few of the
respondents, as Lisa points out:

… coming here to this university, there are no Black
female professors within my department, so I got a white
man, you don't have to have someone with the same
racial identity as you in order to learn and grow. You can
use someone else as a mentor.

Lisa felt that it was not necessary to have someone of the same ethnicity
to mentor you, especially if you are looking to grow academically within
your substantive area.

The mentor is someone who has succeeded and is knowledgeable to
advise upcoming students on many of the responsibilities of graduate
school. The mentor can be viewed as Goffman's "wise," they are normal,
but sympathize with the life of the stigmatized. These mentors are another
key component in the balancing of worlds, especially the academic.

One of the interviewees expressed her passion to become a professor
in her field, but was aware of the lack of Black graduate students and
professors in her area. A professor's lab assistant (an employee of the
school) helped her in validating her feelings and need for mentorship, and
the possibility of her being a future mentor. Rebecca stated:

She was just talking about how there aren't any Black professors in our
department, forget that…. there aren't many [Blacks] nationwide in the
natural sciences. Even in our department, it's just me and another guy.
She was letting me know how it can offer me more leverage, me getting
my Ph.D. … I can be a mentor to the other few Blacks in natural sciences.
It's funny here she was trying to help me out, and she ain't even Black!
….more importantly the fact that I was listening showed how much I
valued what she was saying.

Rebecca stressed the issue that the professor's assistant she was receiving advice from was not even Black. More importantly, by Rebecca listening, she still realized that the assistant has valuable knowledge that can prove to be beneficial in Rebecca's scholarly growth.

The research participants viewed mentorship in a different light than that of the value of the Black niche. Mentorship was needed not only for support but also for the invaluable guidance that it offered. The participants also recognized that having a mentor is relevant irrespective of the race or ethnicity of the professor. Some of the participants who received mentoring from non-Black professors used the lack of Black mentors in their fields to encourage them to complete their respective programs successfully. While mentorship is sought out in whatever form, it was also noted that the need for more Black mentorship exists. The Black niche and mentors served as support groups to provide the dual deviants with peer support and guidance.

Despite the three major themes that emerged there were other themes that occasionally appeared throughout the interviews. It was common that stress relief activities were mentioned to help lighten the burden of living in two worlds. One of the respondents stated: "I like to cook and watch the food network, it helps get mind off of the stress of school." Another stated, "Spiritually is important, whatever your preference is, you need to become one with yourself." Other themes that occasionally came up focused around parents (their influence or lack thereof), grades, and relationships.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lives of dual deviants, Black graduate students. The Black graduate students experience two types of stigma. One, their involvement in higher educational institutions is seen as a blemish of character when they are back in their community. Two, their race is a tribal stigma in the educational institution. These Blacks in graduate school balance their two communities, ethnic and academic. Both forms of stigma are reported in the literature on Blacks in education. Their tribal stigma is a discredited attribute due to the fact their race is apparent in the educational institution. Their education level is a discreditable attribute in the Black community because it is not always apparent upon initial contact. They are at risk of being discredited by each group because of their affiliation with the other. More importantly, they are aware of both types of stigma and consequently develop strategies to deal with them.

Three major themes emerged in this research including: 1) passing

and covering via language manipulation; (2) fronting via professionalism and realism; (3) and the own and wise via black niche and mentorship. The data revealed that these Black graduate students spent a great amount of their time managing their identity in their academic and social life. The strategies they used for managing their dual deviant identities were consistent with Goffman's techniques of "covering" and "passing." The first two themes of "language manipulation" and "fronting" clearly fall within the Goffman scheme.

Using language manipulation, Goffman's concept of "passing" was very apparent when these Blacks were in their ethnic communities. They had a discreditable attribute, their education level, but they concealed associated signs with the stigma by not "talking White." They used disidentifiers when in the Black community by using contemporary ethnic slang so people would not identify them as being Black and educated, a devalued status to some minority group members. During their time in the academic institution, they used covering to help prevent their tribal stigma from looming large. They downplayed their stigma by talking more educated and showing their scholarly peers that they also possess the knowledge to be successful in their respected areas, contrary to the stereotypical images of Blacks held by some dominant members in the academy.

This covering and passing was also evident in the "fronting" theme. One technique for covering is to learn about the structure of interaction in order to know how to modify their behavior in order to minimize the stigma. As illustrated in their accounts, they learned about interaction and norms in the academic institution. Acting professional was a key component in the way they presented themselves in their department. The presentation of the self was an important factor in helping reduce the stigma of race to these Black graduate students. Since they are already discredited due to tribal stigma, covering becomes an important strategy in the managing of their identity.

Passing was once again a technique used when the Blacks were back home in their ethnic community. The discreditable attribute of educational accomplishments is not always apparent, so they use a front of "keeping it real" as a mechanism designed to earn the respect of their ethnic peers in their community.

The first two themes, language manipulation and fronting, clearly displays the dual deviancy that exists in Blacks in graduate school. They are caught between two worlds, and in each, they are stigmatized because of their affiliation with the other world. The context of the interaction was a major factor in determining which "normal" behavior to portray.

The last theme that emerged in this research, Black niche and mentorship, is reflective of Goffman's "own" and "wise." As previously mentioned, the "own" are individuals who share the same "stigma," and the "wise" are normal, but sympathetic with the life of the stigmatized and have courtesy membership in the group. These two types of relationships also prove to be invaluable strategies to graduate students in the balancing of the two worlds. The own and the wise provide moral support to help lighten the load of being dual deviants. The own, in this study, are clearly identified as other Blacks in higher education. The wise are identified as non-Black professors who provide moral support. By using the Black niche and non-Black professors, the students had the moral support needed to balance their two worlds.

These dual deviants have developed normalizing techniques that enable them with not only balancing, but also separating their two unique worlds. A combination of passing, covering, and moral support, are the tools they use to survive as dual deviants. It is particularly interesting that these dual deviants spend very little time discussing how they are stigmatized, but more so how they avoid or downplay the stigma. This gives evidence of their awareness of the deviant life they live and the need to normalize based on the context they find themselves.

The results differed from previous research findings on stigma and blacks. It differed because the respondents spent very little time actually discussing the stigma, but focused more on how they deal with the stigma. Despite that difference, there were similar findings in regards to support group and mentorship (Cropper 2000; Dovidio et al. 2001).

The data discovered in this study suggest that the concept of dual deviancy is real and therefore should be acknowledged and further explored in future studies. The previous literature clearly illustrates how Blacks are deviant in the dominant group and their in-group, and the results are dual deviants. Black Americans are not a homogenous group although often they are seen as such (McDermott 2001; Payne 1998). This study cannot represent all Black Americans but can give a clue of the ones from predominantly lower class black communities working toward a validated degree in graduate studies, and can be used to help assess Black graduate students in future studies. This study is limited due to the small sample, the school's region of the country, and the interviews being based from one university's population.

Future studies on dual deviants need to focus on normative expectations of the in-group. There needs to be a clear understanding of how in-group expectations compare and conflict with that of the dominant group and

how outsiders adapt to their devalued status. Our studies need to evolve just as different forms of deviance continue to emerge in our society.

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