Translanguaging as a Gateway to Black Immigrant Collegians' Leadership Literacies

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Background/Context: *Previous research suggested that first- or second-generation African immigrants comprised nearly a third of Black students attending selective U.S. colleges. While research frames the involvement of Black immigrant collegians as distinctly different from African American peers as it pertains to family goals, relationships, ethnic identity, and academic achievement, little is known about the ways in which Black immigrant collegians experience the perceptions of others about their literacy achievement in the academy.*

Purpose and Research Design: *This qualitative narrative inquiry applies CRiT walking in concert with translanguaging to examine the epistemological perspectives of six second-generation immigrant African male collegians experiencing structural placism and using academic literacies as they traverse a Hispanic-serving institution in rural Texas.*

Conclusion: *Structural racism excludes students of color from learning and leadership opportunities at predominantly White institutions. Our findings show that participants who used translanguaging by invoking two specific forms of linguistic repertoires, English standardized and cultural nonstandardized, to proactively respond to structural placism. Furthermore, participants associated being multilingual with race and leadership positionality in academic, organizational and cultural spaces. Moreover, African immigrant male collegians spoke of utilizing racially homogenous academic (e.g., study groups) and historically Black cocurricular organizations as spaces to engage in culturally safe ways that validated their intellectual and ethnic identities.*

Previous research suggested that first- or second- generation African immigrants comprised nearly a third of Black students attending selective U.S. colleges (Massey et al., 2007). According to Anderson (2015), the American Black immigrant population has grown nearly 56% since the turn of the century, with most immigrants originating from the Caribbean and a variety of African countries where similar Black racial experiences are shared yet nuanced by cultural circumstances. Concerning Black collegians who attend highly selective universities, approximately 39% of those undergraduates are immigrants (Massey et al., 2007) and of Black children

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10 years of age and younger, nearly 12% have a Black immigrant parent (Hernandez, 2012). Comparatively, the lived experiences of African immigrants and native-born African American collegians has been researched concerning educational attainment, choice, and academic outcomes (Foster, 2005; Hagy & Staniec, 2002; Massey et al., 2007; Tauriac & Liem, 2012); and how being Black is defined while interacting within higher educational spaces, predominantly White or otherwise (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Burrell, Fleming, Fredericks & Moore, 2015; Byrd et al., 2014; O. N. Thomas et al., 2009). Furthermore, when disaggregated to focus on Black immigrant educational experiences across K–20, we understand that college enrollment and academic achievements are influenced by cultural differences and adjustment (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Warikoo, 2004), which ultimately informs retention and graduation (Constantine et al., 2005; Sanchez, 2013) per continued matriculation.

Previous studies have shown that Black student college matriculation, immigrant or native born, directly influences how, to what extent and why they practice positive cultural engagement within university settings in order to become global citizens, achieve academic success, engage in community activism and to disrupt an overarching postracial discourse (Gassman et al., 2017; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hotchkins, 2017a; Lee & Hopson, 2019). Specifically, Black student involvement is central to the development of self-agency, racial resilience, peer-to-peer bonding for men, and an ability to respond to the effects of cumulative racial stressors while employing buffered and holistic leadership for women (Brooms et al., 2018; Hotchkins, 2017b; Jones, 2019). These types of outcomes unfurl within leadership environments, whether organizational or communal, where Black students directly benefit from program planning, community service endeavors, joining Black Greek letter organizations and forming academic enclaves where scholarly persistence takes place. To illustrate, identity-based organizations serve as ethnic enclaves where African and African American student collaboration takes place about a range of topics to include collegiate navigation and cultural advocacy for racially pertinent issues on their campuses and abroad (Karikari & Brown, 2018). Furthermore, the practice of being a leader yields positive communal outcomes for Black students in elected, appointed and volunteer leadership roles where they learn to construct and communicate an organizational vision, fulfill the group mission, and even how to avoid blatant racism and microaggressions when interacting with White peers at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (Harper, 2015; Lee & Hopson, 2019; D. Solorzano et al., 2000; Watkins et al., 2010).

While research frames the involvement of Black immigrant collegians as distinctly different from African American peers as it pertains to family

goals, relationships, ethnic identity, and academic achievement (Benson, 2006; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994), little is known about the ways in which these Black immigrant youth experience the perceptions of others about their literacy achievement, institutional fit, and leadership participation as they navigate student roles in the academy (Charles et al., 2015; De Walt, 2011; Griffin et al., 2012; Smith, 2019a). Yet, there is evidence that speaks to how African immigrants use literacy to develop their leadership skills (Drobner, 2001) within educational settings. Particularly, it is clear that there are opportunities to be gained from examining how these Black immigrant youth, many of whom use multiple languages and language varieties, engage in the process of negotiating their roles (Oropeza et al., 2010), leadership and otherwise, in institutions of higher education.

In acknowledging the literature to be lacking concerning the aforementioned yet replete with research pertaining to monolithic Black student experiences in both PWI and Historically Black College and University (HBCU) environments (Domingue, 2015; Hays, 2018; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Jones, 2016), we situate this study within the gap between the abovementioned to establish a firm understanding about the ways in which literacy serves as an avenue for Black immigrant youth to become agentive with leadership while attending a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). While translanguaging (O. García, 2009) has been extended beyond the classroom to include a range of social contexts where "bilingualism without diglossic functional separation" (O. García, 2006, p. xiii) occurs, we acknowledge that for some members of bilingual and multilingual communities the practice of translanguaging is a communicative norm. Participants in this qualitative three-dimensional composite narrative inquiry purposefully used translanguaging to engage in academic and leadership spaces while being members of cocurricular organizations where they learned about scholastic content and how to participate in culturally relevant campus involvement. Findings allow for an understanding of how the straddling of college spaces, places and people take place within academic and leadership organizations on an HSI campus where African immigrant students are in pursuit of degree attainment.

By using the ethnographic method of a three-dimensional composite narrative inquiry, we present the collegiate life stories of six first- and second-generation African immigrant male student leaders who experienced structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009). The composite narrative of M'Baku Killmonger is used to restory participants' centered narratives to understand how they used literacies to lead while averting being excluded from learning spaces. It is important that the perspectives of African men are communicated in varied yet captivating ways that allow for their holistic identities to be significant, but also foregrounded. In conclusion, this

composite restorying magnifies the experiences of Black men in familiar ways that elucidates how their meaning-making about translanguaging is helpful to purposefully owning their education in predominantly White educational environments that historically have proven to be nearly exclusive to Black people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

African immigrant population growth increased from 881,300 to approximately 1,606,914 between 2000 and 2010, which elevated the number of Black students within the American educational pipeline. To this point, Black students currently represent the second largest population of K–12 learners in the U. S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and as of 2010, non-Hispanic Black students in the United States constituted approximately 7.5 million; 14% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In 2015, Black students accounted for 7.7 million of the total 50.1 million K–12 students in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015) and of these non-Hispanic Blacks, over 3 million were Caribbean and African immigrants (McCabe, 2011; K. J. Thomas, 2012). Subsequently, African immigrant students are among the fastest growing number of immigrant children in the U.S. and the population of African immigrant students continues to increase at a rapid rate. These levels of growth speak to speak to the diversification of types of Black students across the African Diaspora, not within schools, but also throughout North America.

Growth of the Black immigrant student population in the U.S. is primarily accompanied by research focused on academic achievement. Increasingly, studies pertain to acculturation and educational experiences, racial and cultural identities across socioeconomic status, differences in generational and ethnic identities, and mental health in order to provide clarity about demographic experiences in and beyond U.S. schools. Primarily, the focus on Black immigrant achievement suggests that these students tend to perform significantly higher academically than their Black American peers (Freeman, 2016; Wilson-Akubude, 2016). Ogbu and Simmons (1998) attributed the difference to the former's "immigrant minority" status and ability to project a *cultural frame of reference* and *identity* that allows them to navigate academic dominant-group norms in school while maintaining their own, different norms and identities outside of school. Extending beyond such research, which highlights prevailing and typical notions about Black immigrants' status, high-achieving studies increasingly reflect the role of culture, race, identity, language, nationality, socioeconomic status (SES) and generational differences on Black immigrant youth's academic achievement

(Anekwe, 2009; Duong et al., 2016; Freeman, 2016; Kumi-Yeboah, 2016; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2016; Smith, 2019b; Smith et al. 2019; O. N. Thomas et al., 2009; Wilson-Akubude, 2016). To illustrate, the social constructs of parents, extended family, and community are critical to Black students' immigrant socialization, motivation and academic achievement despite challenges faced from peer teasing, underpreparation for college, and African cultural pressures of excellence (Anekwe, 2009; Farah, 2015; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2017; Mogaka, 2013; Nderu, 2005).

To further the aforementioned understanding about African students, emerging research concerning the literacies of Black immigrant youth in relation to their linguistic backgrounds points to the possibility of buffers, which, when leveraged by these youth as they navigate challenges faced in the novel context of the U.S., allow them to adopt approaches that in turn enhance their academic success (Smith, 2019b; Smith et al., 2019). For instance, drawing from the raciolinguistic perspective (Rosa & Flores, 2017) and positionality theory (Harré et al., 2009), Smith (2019b) described how a Black immigrant youth, relied on a transraciolinguistic approach, using metalinguistic, metaracial, and metacultural understandings of her past and current experiences with race, language, and culture "to determine how to function effectively within non/academic settings in ways that do not completely sacrifice her personhood" (pp. 299-300). This transraciolinguistic approach was reflected in the flexibility adopted by the Black immigrant youth as a young student and in the duality developed by this youth as she retained her personhood as an adolescent student (Smith, 2019b). In using this approach, Smith described how this student made sense of her experiences as an African immigrant while remaining agentive as she progressed through school. Concerning how native-born Black male students navigate high school learning environments to be successful academically, Hotchkins (2016) found participants adjusted behaviors and integrated with students of varying racial backgrounds to avoid monolithic targeting of White teachers.

When examining the literacy performance of Black immigrant students in relation to their native-born Black American peers, Smith et al. (2019) found that although a strong work ethic coupled with their desire to sometimes distance themselves from "(under)performing" Black Americans while seeking White approval (Rong & Fitchett, 2008) could explain the high academic achievement of Black immigrant youth, there seemed to be other factors, which, when leveraged in the lives of Black immigrant youth, and "which are inadequately accounted for on achievement measures," could explain their ability to overcome challenges with academic performance that seem to persist among Black American youth. Further findings noted that the linguistic background of Black immigrant

youth, which tends to predict literacy performance (Abedi, 2017; Bauer et al., 2017; Siegel, 2006), should not create such disparity between Black immigrants and Black American's literacy performance considering the fact that students from both of these populations often speak languages and dialects that tend not to be the official language of school. Given these indications, it is fitting that the literacies of Black immigrants, in relation to their language backgrounds, be examined further to identify the ways in which they leverage language during enactment of leadership roles to persist academically regardless of and beyond challenges faced. The research on how linguistically minoritized students in higher education navigate challenges to their success remains scarce despite the potential for explaining how students "use, resist, and negotiate labels in attempts to access resources and services" in institutions of higher education (Oropeza et al., 2010, p. 216). Moreover, while the research on leadership of Black immigrant youth remains scarce and little research is present on the role of literacy in leadership for (immigrant) youth, there is evidence of adult immigrants who have used leadership and language to develop literary skills (Drobner, 2001).

Through applying the aforementioned literacies immigrants developed the "act of knowing the world," and had "more choices for change and power," that opened their "mind[s] to look at reasons and things in different ways," which allowed them to "develop citizenship, get involved in civil society and get involved in their own community" (Drobner, 2001, p. 10). Beyond this, evidence from research on leadership with Black youth who were not immigrants, but native-born Black collegians, has similarly shown that a desire to participate in communal giveback is central to academic endeavors that involve a social justice component (Smith et al., 2019). To this point, Smith et al. (2019) found that Black collegians who took classes taught by same-race professors, where they experienced belongingness intellectually and culturally, developed meaningful friendship bonds as ethnic enclaves that informed how to successfully navigate an unwelcoming predominantly White campus. Despite averting racial hostilities in this study, the ways in which students' linguistic diversity plays a role in the navigational process is less explored. In fact, how students of African descent negotiate their literacies, languages and identities within college contexts has rarely been broached within the field (Fries-Britt, 2002; Onyenekwu, 2017; Strayhorn, 2013), which allows for scholars to approach the topic.

It has been recently observed that Black immigrant youth, much like their bilingual peers who speak European-based languages, appear to engage in translanguaging practices as they position themselves and their literacy practices (or "literacies") across their home and school contexts (Smith, 2019a). Despite being defined in relation to bilingual or multilingual speakers who largely reflect European-based languages (e.g., English,

Spanish, French, German) opposed to non-European-based language varieties (e.g., African American Vernacular English), translanguaging functions as a way to conceptualize the ways in which Black immigrant bidialectal youth (as do other multilingual groups) operate as individuals who reflect their Englishes as well as other languages and dialects that they possess through leadership. Grounding our examination of Black immigrants' language practices for leadership in the notion of translanguaging will fill a gap in the field by allowing us to explain if and how the element of leadership serves as a buffer that allows Black immigrant students to reflect academic success. More importantly, it provides us with practical insights about the ways in which the literacy practices of Black immigrant youth with language can be used as a basis for supporting this student population as they navigate numerous obstacles in their educational progress. By using translanguaging to better understand the literacies of Black male collegians who are often multilingual and multidialectal, this study also helps to extend theory and to advance the field of literacy concerning how spatial exclusion occurs within and outside of learning spaces.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This composite narrative inquiry study is part of a six-month research exploration where we understand that qualitative methodology, CRiT walking, critical race theory (CRT) and translanguaging theoretical frameworks have been acknowledged in previous research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Corbin et al., 2018; Czarniawska, 2004; O. García, 2006, 2009; O. García & Sylvan, 2011; Giles & Hughes, 2009; Huber & Whelan, 1999; Hughes & Giles, 2010; Lewis et al., 2019; Matsuda et al., 1993). Various researchers have postulated about the use of CRT to challenge majoritarian false deficit notions of people and students of color as framed as valueless to society at large and specifically within higher education (N. García et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker, 2019; G. Solorzano et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Specifically, we applied CRiT walking as an extension of CRT in concert with translanguaging (O. García, 2009; O. García & Wei, 2014; Hughes & Giles, 2010; Wei, 2018) to examine the composite epistemological perspectives of six first- and second-generation African immigrant male collegians experiencing structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009) while using academic literacies (Wingate, 2015) at an HSI. In doing so, we are mindful that CRT tenets undergird (Howard, 2008; Matsuda et al., 1993) this work and provide a historic context for the application of CRiT walking as essential to informing our data analysis by centering the experiential knowledges of participants who attend HSIs. Furthermore, we present these narratives a composite, with the namesake

of M'Baku Killmonger, in effort to disrupt majoritarian perspectives about how the valid literacies of Black immigrant male collegians unfurl juxtaposed to how "English" is supposed to be spoken and performed.

CRiT walking is "a constructivist and metaphorical tool that offers education scholars and practitioners a framework to use genre driven writing, autobiography, auto-ethnography, social justice principles, and radical perspectives to analyze, re-interpret, deconstruct, and reform educational settings" (Hughes & Giles, 2010, p. 41). We understand the academic literacies and leadership trajectories of African immigrant male collegians within and outside of classroom environments are bound by CRT: (1) CRT acknowledges racism is endemic; (2) CRT challenges legal notions of meritocracy, objectivity, neutrality and colorblindness; (3) CRT insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law while being in opposition to ahistoricism; (4) CRT foregrounds experiential knowledge of people of color when analyzing society and law through counterstorytelling; (5) CRT is interdisciplinary; and (6) CRT seeks to eliminate racial oppression by ending oppression (Howard, 2008; Matsuda et al., 1993). Our understanding of CRT served to parse out race and gendered occurrences of structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009), which is defined as "those compulsory restrictions, duplicity, and complicity simply due to where one is located in an academic space. It is described by a historical metanarrative that defines a particular institution, the people who work or study at those institutions, and an academic space" (Giles & Hughes, 2009, p. 693) to the exclusion of people of color. To this point, Cotton University (CU), our study site, historically represents the aforementioned metanarrative as a PWIs that was segregated until 1961, prior to educational access being granted to Black collegians, where less than 6% of the current student body is comprises students of African descent (Data USA, n. d.).

The structural placism definition provides spatial framing about how participants in this study used translanguaging (O. García, 2006, 2009) in academic and leadership contexts to better navigate their HSI while achieving holistic outcomes. O. García (2009) defined translanguaging as "complex languaging practices of actual bilinguals in communicative settings" (p. 45) while Wei (2018) acknowledged translanguaging "emphasizes the interconnectedness between traditionally and conventionally understood languages and other human communication systems" (p. 24). Each of these explanations expands on the limited framing of Williams' (1994) *trawsieithu* that described the pedagogical process of teacher attempts to teach students Welsh students in Welsh despite their desire to offer English responses. In this study, translanguaging is recognized as the exchange of instructional language by African students to coconstruct knowledge multimodally (e.g. textual, aural, linguistic) to arrive at varied

ways of participating in the educational learning of academic or leadership endeavors by teaching others and when speaking to each other. Upon selecting narrative inquiry, CRiT walking situated data within the bounds of translanguaging to elucidate two points: (a) why racial systemic impediments impact African male collegians navigation of academic learning spaces, due to the dearth of studies published (Griffin, Cunningham, & Mwangi, 2016; Griffin & McIntosh, 2015; Sanchez & Gilbert, 2016); and (b) how African male collegians used translanguaging to overcome these racial systemic impediments (Charles et al., 2015; Hudley, 2016; Mwangi & English, 2017; Thelamour et al., 2019) particularly in leadership roles juxtaposed to developing strategic academic practices around racial integration tactics that lead to successful navigation of HSI campuses.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This composite narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) study uses personal experiences as a method of ethnographic research among first- and second-generation African immigrant male collegians. The collegiate life stories of these six participants, who experienced structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009), are described and analyzed. Participants' individual interview narratives about family gendered and racial socialization, negotiating language and literacies, and how they practice leadership in academic spaces are presented to understand the process of navigating academic and leadership spaces within varied contexts on campus. A three-dimensional narrative inquiry process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was utilized to focus on participants' leadership and academic interactions; continuity allowed for lived experiences to be captured as past, present and future; and to restory narratives in chronological sequence situational contexts were considered (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) coupled with researcher field notes, journaling and three observations of collegians during organizational meetings. In this instance, a composite narrative inquiry is applied to demonstrate how participants used translanguaging to respond to the effects of structural placism in inclusive ways. Subsequently, we interrogate the dichotomies (Czarniawska, 2004) of participants' narratives to deconstruct then apply analytical strategies to capture emergent themes that provided subjective meanings to the stories shared (Huber & Whelan, 1999). Subsequently, the narratives provided unpack what it means to navigate structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009) while using translanguaging (O. García, 2009) to negotiate an HSI campus as first- and second-generation African immigrant male student leaders.

DATA SOURCES

STUDY CONTEXT

Participants attended a public, recently designated HSI, which previously held the Carnegie categorization of PWI for the previous 20 years. Cotton University (CU) is situated in the western region of the United States and comprises of 31,906 students, where less than 6% of whom are of African descent.

PARTICIPANTS

Six first- and second-generation African immigrant male collegians participated in this study. Each participant was involved in a leadership position at CU. Purposeful sampling criteria were utilized and consisted of the following three categories: (1) self-identifying first- or second-generation African male immigrant; (2) HSI college attendee; and (3) held leadership positions in at least one cocurricular organization.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Students participated in three open-ended interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes; each was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were asked to keep a journal about how they experienced being a first- or second-generation African male immigrant collegian attending CU. In order to understand participants' claims about the meaning of life as they understood it (Polkinghorne, 2007) we first listened to the voices within each narrative (Riessman, 2008) captured during interviews and read students' journals about the intersection of leadership and literacy Using a progressive-regressive method (Denzin, 2001), we began with the key defining event participants experienced that informed how they defined leadership and made sense of being multilingual before describing the larger college context and telescoping out again (Czarniawska, 2004) to provide a panoramic restorying (Huber & Whelan, 1999). Subsequently, values coding was applied to reflect "participant's values, attitudes and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or world view" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 131) to allow for coded units to then be categorized to reflect the collective meanings, interactions and interplay of not only interview and journaling data, but also observations, which were clarified through member checking. Finally, per Clandinin and Connelly (2000), data were reduced downward to identify common salient themes across participants' leadership experiences through applying constant comparative, open-ended, line-by-line coding that was cross-case analyzed (Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017).

LIMITATIONS

Two study limitations exist: (1) institutional transferability is limited since this research is grounded in a contextual and historical situation with a conceptual structure, usage, and contextual problems (Stake, 2005); and (2) due the researchers also being persons of African descent participants may have described their lived experiences in ways they perceived would be similar to our perspectives about being Black.

POSITIONALITY

As a first-generation college graduate of African descent who is a Christian, heterosexual native-born Black male professor who researches the identity development of Black collegians, I (Hotchkins) spent the last five years interrogating my privileges within academe. Recent interactions with African students served to dismantle personal preconceived notions about how they view African Americans juxtaposed with the ways White Supremacy simultaneously oppresses both racialized groups; therefore, when analyzing the data, I acknowledged participants' ontological, epistemological and axiological differences as African immigrants who had differing experiences with racism than me. Finally, as a monolingual person, I now better understand the benefits of speaking and dreaming in ethnic languages as it pertains to how doing so informs what it means to be a Black global citizen.

In keeping with my desire to interrogate my privilege and given the focus of this study on literacy and translanguaging, I invited a literacy and language professor (Smith), who is a multilingual immigrant to the U.S., to provide an "emic" lens to our process of drafting the manuscript and analyzing data. Her background as an advocate for Black immigrant youth as part of her scholarly endeavors combined with being an individual with linguistically diverse experiences allowed us to have a broad understanding of what it means to be Black. Since she had lived both beyond and within the American context, we thought it useful to bring her perspective to bear on this study and to draw from her insights with Black immigrant literacies and Englishes as a means of examining the translanguaging practices of Black immigrant youth during leadership. Her examination of the complexities arising from literacy and language practices across Black subpopulations further proved useful as we were both aware of how stereotypes are perpetuated against native-born Black Americans and immigrants. Given the open and honest scholarly discussions we conducted about these complexities prior to undertaking the study, we were confident that we would both bring credibility and verisimilitude to the research to make certain our findings are relevant to similar populations and contexts.

M'BAKU'S UNDERSTANDING OF UTILIZING LITERACIES

M'Baku Killmonger was the eleventh person in his family to graduate from college. His desire to be a chemical engineer stemmed from participating in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). His father who is an electrical engineer at Texas Instruments who always told M'Baku, "never allow yourself to be caught up in the conquest of wealth as it does not define you and only exists to sustain your being." These words have a special nuanced meaning, one that is predicated on elevating and owning culture self-identity above the conquest of financial wealth in order to avoid being lost in superficial pursuits. M'Baku's most salient identity is ethnicity, being Nigerian, which is comprised of several attributes that include mastering of linguistic proficiency and perpetual communal responsibility. Moreover, this perspective is directly informed by family members, specifically his parents who often articulate "respect the many tongues you learn, know and share" as a reminder about his generational ties and expectations to be culturally authentic. M'Baku completely embraces the aforementioned and is mindful of how important it is to his bourgeoning legacy to fulfill the wishes of tribal elders.

M'Baku appreciates the value of organizational spaces where academic and leadership excellence is taught, expected and performed often, which is why he joined the NBSE at CU. M'Baku's "Black peers" in his words, were "often exasperated about being members in organizations where they were unable to be themselves, which basically means Black without having to explain it." Similar experiences shared by Black students led them to join historic Black-centric organizations like NSBE and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. to find cultural congruence and unfettered racial belonging, which M'Baku found to be fulfilling. He defined being authentically Black in these terms: "thinking, doing and leading in ways that my [Black] people understand. Whether I am speaking in Swahili, Pidgin English, Hausa or slang they get it without viewing me as foreign. I am only 100% comfortable around Black people." M'Baku learned what it means to be authentically Nigerian opposed to being a native-born African American from family members and through friendships with Black youth while being raised in the states.

M'Baku's desire to be a multilingual leader comes from both African Student Organization (ASO) and Association of Black Students (ABS) where he actively participates and has learned the value of utilizing the spoken language to his advantage. He recalls "If I know the president of an organization is from Benin, I may speak in Yoruba to connect and let them know I understand what I am talking about. Language is a tool to be used at your disposal." In fact, frequent exposure to cultural

congruence in organizations like ASO and NSBE has afforded M'Baku opportunities to directly speak in varied languages within historically Black organizations. Linguistic navigation in leadership contexts has allowed M'Baku to believe that the ability to traverse various languages serves as a direct benefit:

> There are few hinderances when there is no language barrier. I think power and leadership comes from being able to resonate with the people that you're leading, people that you're leading with. So I think you're able to switch back and forth in ways that that builds bonds between you and other leaders and you and the people that you're leading, I think it can only benefit you. For example, a lot of African students that come here, their command of English might not be that good, but their command of whatever another language, maybe French because we have a lot of French-speaking people in West Africa, for example, maybe that's what they're most comfortable communicating in. The simple fact that you make an attempt to maybe have a conversation with them in French works. I think it does wonders for whoever you're leading and those that you're leading with at the same time, so I think it's like a superpower almost.

M'Baku also understood that the attempt to speak different languages to organizational members was a leadership act that showed appreciation for culturally difference and was interpreted as a purposeful attempt to reach a humanistic commonality; furthermore this insight about the role race and language plays in leading benefited M'Baku throughout his time at CU and was the main reason for his college success.

As an African male immigrant collegian who understands how to lead in cocurricular organizations while being multilingual, M'Baku divulged his concerns about interacting in spaces where his peers are neither African nor African American. M'Baku explained: "although it is rare that I speak Igbo in mixed company I make certain that when I do the purpose is to communicate with another Nigerian so outsiders do not understand because their spaces are different than ours." He elaborated:

> The other day a friend of mine and I were in a CU presidential ambassador meeting, side talking about a strategy to secure resources for Black students and people were ear hustling so I spoke used a few [Igbo] terms. Igbo is more idiomatic. So there's a lot of sayings and parables and idioms that are in the language is literally so nobody understands it if you are unfamiliar. This way our conversation can be hidden in public!

As a study participant, M'Baku journaled about his interactional perceptions in cocurricular organizations, during class and within peer study sessions concerning the intersection of leadership and literacy. Despite the narrative of M'Baku not being in chronological sequence, it serves to problematize how he constructs the benefits and detriments of being a multilingual leader and scholar who associates the depth of institutional access with spaces, places and people who either empower or limit his mobility to successfully navigate CU. His literacy framing was layered yet simple because it focused on identity, context and location: "As a Nigerian college student who is an immigrant, I know what it means to be Black on a predominantly White campus. I am a visitor under constant surveillance so how I am perceived as a communicator is key." Clarifications like these specifically describe, identify, and state instances when the application and mindfulness of literacies were not only situational, but also informed the linguistic behavior of M'Baku based on with whom he interacted and the context.

He spoke to the important of linguistic proficiency "I wish I could speak more languages so if somebody doesn't understand something in one way, I could explain it or convey it in another way. Being able to do so is important and helps me as a leader." Pointedly, while explaining his interactions in cocurricular organizations, the classroom and social situations, M'Baku mentioned a "White male -Anti" named Dorian who lives in the residency hall—M'Baku defined an "-Anti" as "a White male who is against the immigration of African people to the United States and as a result they are emphatically for the preservation of White normalcy globally." He and Dorian have rarely found a place of common ground the Cotton University Student Engineering Council (CUSEC) to the point where M'Baku described their affiliation as "consciously eroding." When asked about an example of how they interact during CUSEC meetings he was specific with his response: "he definitely has a problem with my accent or any person who does not sound like they speak proper English, plus he has mentioned a few times the STEM is for and ran by Americans [Whites], not others [outsiders]." Despite M'Baku appreciating CUSEC meetings as a space where he learned about chemical engineering, he definitely viewed CUSEC as White-centric and Americanized. Unlike NSBE, he thought the majority White membership expected participants to assimilate, to be less concerned with philanthropy and giving back, and to focus only on science, which he said "stifled my growth" as a leader due to feeling like he was unable to be authentically Black in that particular organizational space.

M'BAKU'S UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP LITERACIES AS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

As a Black male collegian who led in both predominantly White and historically Black organizations, M'Baku's ability to navigate the CU campus hinged on his involvement in leadership and academic pursuits that were informed by interactions with peers. To illustrate, when explaining an in-class exchange with Dorian he communicated angst about their exchanges, which often escalated to an impasse. In this particular class, M'Baku is one of few engineering scholars of color in attendance who regularly contributes to discussions about thermodynamics and heat transference. Upon M'Baku answering Professor Knox with the correct answer, Janice, a White woman student, repeatedly asked "are you sure his answer is correct?" This "double checking" behavior was interpreted by M'Baku as a disrespectful attempt to position him as intellectually inept and therefore needing professorial clarification because "Dr. Knox always lets the class know I am right, no matter how -Anti interrupts. I see it as being presumed wrong. It makes me feel as if my intellectual contributions are not warranted in the class." These "White, Black confrontations" (M'Baku) were experienced frequently by participants and perceived as a reminder that the classroom learning space was expected to be exclusively for White students' contributions.

Dorian is not the only White peer with whom M'Baku experiences apprehension as he also has problems with Janice who too is a chemical engineering major. Their courses overlap, which provides numerous opportunities for them to interact concerning learning content within and even outside of class. For instance, M'Baku lamented about the following exchange:

> Once we were in a group study session where I was attempting to explain to the members about how to arrive at the answer of an assignment and she repeatedly interrupted by essentially saying my explanation was difficult to understand due to my accent. I am Nigerian American so I do have an accent, but it is not unintelligible and I always speak to accommodate listeners to make sure I am understood. I often feel like my American intellect is appreciated, but my Nigerian body can be discarded. Sometimes it feels like "Whites Only" when learning, meaning that as long as I sound or act like them my words are accepted, but it has to be to their standard, norms and taste.

M'Baku clarified that in this instance none of the other study group students made comments to confirm what Janice claimed, but none of them interjected on the behalf of M'Baku. In fact, Janice's usurping of

M'Baku's intellectual contributions in an effort to center her own is never challenged despite his frequently showing a mastery of course content, and it is often representative of moments where White women affirmations are expected. M'Baku stated:

> it is like even when they know she is out of pocket no one ever says anything about it and if I address it, I don't want it to turn into I am going to retaliate because my Black is Nigerian.

M'Baku's sense of frustration seemed to be perpetual since variations of the abovementioned experiences have occurred during the past three past years and well into his senior first semester.

Throughout the numerous discussions we had, M'Baku described a specific perspective of his lived experiences that particularly resonated across every study participant about the multidimensionality of leadership as inclusive of race, gender, and scholarship. To elaborate, he offered the following: "I see being a leader as not confined to a particular student organization since the entire university is an organization of sorts. I lead in classes by helping students better understand the lessons." He continued "I make a difference in the learning space whether speaking English in class or Pidgin in NSBE, regardless the charge is to teach complex concepts that sometimes help people better when explained in their native tongue." Although M'Baku experienced trepidation in response to continually being challenged by Dorian and Janice, he was mindful that to allow himself to remain angry was counterproductive, which is why he used friendships, nearly heterogenous Black study groups, and historically Black organizations as "unpacking spaces" where holistically contributions were made toward the advancement of students who looked and spoke like him. He then provided a metaphor:

> Using language while leading often has blind moments when you are uncertain as to whether people understand the messages you communicate. It is like when the curtain of night falls upon us, you are unable to see, but if you are familiar with the terrain you can still navigate in the darkness. Cotton University is that terrain and as long as I know the path, whether in class or in organizations, I can achieve my academic and leadership outcomes. In STEM the students and professors are overwhelming White students so my being Nigerian American sometimes dims my vision, which is why I purposefully pursue guiding lights to make the journey easier and those lights are race and language rooted.

M'Baku's metaphor framed his multidimensional leadership experiences as tantamount to wandering through darkness or English language and Whiteness as juxtaposed to his racial and linguistic identities, which engulf him in every aspect of college. When clarifying he explained that being multilingual served as his greatest leadership quality because it allowed him to think in expansive ways about how to transcend exclusionary White spaces on campus while navigating academic or organizational places to reshape who is seen as "smart enough to participate in learning and teaching STEM subject matter mixed with cultural knowledge."

The mindfulness of M'Baku to view leadership as organizational and academic often benefited him during professorial instruction where he engaged in a range of problem-solving linguistic exchanges to aid in the process of understanding course content and to ease what he referred to as "intellectual displacement" due to being Black. To illustrate, he explained:

> When a teacher says something, I say the answer in my head in Pidgin because it takes fewer words to say than in English. So I might just be like, if it is this in Pidgin then it is that in English. So I think just being able to answer more quickly, even though I would never say the answer out loud in Pidgin, gives me a greater advantage than if I first attempt to approach the problem in English. Afterwards, I confidently state the answer to let them [White students] know that I belong in the classroom and do contribute.

Other than participating in White and multiracial study groups outside of class and taking advantage of professor office hours with multilingual instructors or teaching assistants to further gain an understanding of course content, participants in this study also focused on developing specific academic leadership literacies around the "function of learning" (M'Baku) as it pertains to writing articulation (e.g., accurate grammar, spelling), reading comprehension (e.g., understanding content) and performance of intellect on tests, during presentations, and when speaking publicly (Wingate, 2015). Specifically, study participants constructed themselves as deserved members of varied academic, organizational, or cultural groups, which meant "I have to be multidimensional and able to switch how I communicate based on who is present in the room, how they view me, the extent to which they understand my words and why they are listening." Ultimately, M'Baku understood that in order to thrive at CU, he had to contribute, especially in spaces and places where he perceived his entire being was not necessarily welcome.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

STUDY GENERALITIES

We problematize structural placism (Giles & Hughes, 2009) as harmful to African immigrant male collegians because historically and presently the CU STEM college is drastically normalized as Eurocentric and numerically lacks racial diversity among students and professors. In doing so, we also acknowledge that Giles and Hughes (2009) framed structural placism as eliciting "an unhealthy psychological need for white male affirmation . . . and affords unearned benefits to groups based solely on race; structural placism affords unearned benefits for groups who are located in one academic space as opposed to another" (p. 693), which adequately explains the limited spatial access of our study participants. We acknowledge structural racism excludes students of color from learning and leadership opportunities at HSIs and our findings show that participants who used translanguaging (O. García, 2009) did so as a response to structural placism. Finally, participants associated being multilingual with race and leadership positionality in academic, organizational and cultural spaces. Participants spoke of utilizing racially homogenous academic (e.g., study groups) and cocurricular organizations as spaces to engage in culturally safe ways that validated their intellectual and ethnic identities.

STRUCTURAL PLACISM EFFECTS

This section explores linkages between acts of structural placism acts like soliciting professorial intellectual clarifications and better English articulations of Africans within in academic and organizational contexts. Despite participants' realization that their academic and leadership literacies needed to be fluid in order to better navigate college, they also discussed the individual ways intellectual silencing, a function of structural placism, played a part in their educational exclusion. To elaborate, participants described classrooms as spaces of angst where their intellectual contributions were frequently questioned, which confirms Giles and Hughes' (2009) and Hughes and Giles' (2010) postulations that PWIs academic spaces were not only historically created to privilege White students, but also exist as places where intellectualism by people of color is challenged. In this study, structural placism encompassed academic and organizational spaces where culturally limiting responses by White peers contributed to participants enacting translanguaging (O. García, 2009; Wei, 2018) practices in order to create spaces for their unfettered intellect and leadership to unfurl. Furthermore, these enactments

confirmed that translanguaging "creates a social space for the language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitude, belief, and ideology; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance" (Wei, 2018, p. 23) by which participants used to traverse Cotton University.

Participants viewed structural placism as restrictive to engaging in both academic and organizational roles since it acted to exclude first- and second-generation African male collegians from holistic participation in scholastic and leadership activities. To illustrate, M'Baku experienced both intellectual race-based (e.g., Dorian repeatedly asking professors to repeatedly confirm his work) and cultural ethnicity-based (e.g., Janice contesting his accent when collaborating in study sessions) interactions that were perceived as not only xenophobic, but also ethnocentric in order to purposefully center White student ontologies, epistemologies and axiology, which speaks to how "structural placism affords unearned benefits for groups who are located in one academic space as opposed to another" (Giles & Hughes, 2009, p. 693). Acknowledging these xenophobic and ethnocentric behaviors as aggressively exclusionary advances Lee and Hopson's (2019) framing about the intentionality of academic aggressions that not only position students of color as inferior based on not only stereotypes about academic merit, but also challenge them to perform English literacies to match White cultural preferences. These xenophobic and ethnocentric aggressive acts further contribute to structural placism by reinforcing our understanding that hyper-White learning spaces on campus do constitute disproportionality by creating differential access that lacks for Black students and confirms the perspective that there are "two ends of a wide spectrum—at one end is an honored space for the intellectual elite, at the other end of the spectrum is a special space for the intellectually inept" (Giles & Hughes, 2009, p. 693). This particular spectrum positions White students as the former and Black collegians as the latter.

Participants responded to the aforementioned xenophobic and ethnocentric aggressive acts by: (a) reminding perpetrators that the professor confirmed answers as accurate by saying "thank you Dorian for wanting clarification, but I got this, right Dr. Knox?"; and (b) attempting to exercise mastery of the context through patiently explaining concepts in a reinforced African accent to further establish that no matter how frequent the request, the performance of authentic Blackness would not be diminished as a form of appeasement. Similar to participants in Lee and Hopson's (2019) study, our students viewed racism as perpetual, but experienced aggressions as nuanced xenophobic and ethnocentric due

to participants being African immigrants who were also Black American. Furthermore, although they did not perceive themselves as constructed as criminal by White peers there was a prevailing sense that in predominantly White academic and organization spaces Black students were "stealing space and time that inherently belonged to White students because CU is their school, the White school in southwest Texas" (M'Baku).

STRUCTURAL PLACISM RESPONSES

As those who CRiT walk do, they look for the "least Colonized" spaces on predominantly White campuses in order to locate prime real estate for the thriving, success and progression of students of color otherwise known as ethnic enclaves where Black collegians learn to lead, give back to their communities and perform well academically (Brooms et al., 2018; Gassman et al., 2017; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hotchkins, 2017a; Jones, 2019). The structural placism responses of participants in this study manifested in two specific forms of linguistic repertoires as translanguaging: (a) English standardized; and (b) cultural nonstandardized. Participants used English standardized to comply with normalized performances, expectations and presentations when in close proximity to White peers. Participants purposefully enunciated and spoke English in academic and organizational settings in order to be "better understood" and to have their perspectives "accepted" when engaging in intellectual pursuits. Contrarily, male African immigrant collegians preferred applying cultural nonstandardized linguistic repertoires when participating in conversations with Black peers to build rapport with other polyglots as an act of gaining trust and to explain academic assignments to make learning easier by switching languages. This confirms previous research by Wingate (2018) that situates academic literacy as "the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community; this encompasses reading, evaluating information, as well as presenting, debating and creating knowledge through both speaking and writing" (p. 350) except that it adds to this construction by also considering these attributes as able to be mastered in both English and native dialects fluidly—on command.

The application of English standardized and cultural non-standardized linguistic repertoires speaks to what it means to engage in CRiT walking (Hughes & Giles, 2010) since "CRiT walking is both a conceptual and practice-oriented process of observing the underlying essence of how race and racism plays out in our daily lives and across educational settings" (p. 45). Participants used linguistic repertoires as translanguaging to describe nuanced ways they engaged White peers and African

immigrant or African Americans students and professors to successfully locate culturally congruent spaces and places within the CU campus. These acts of linguistic vacillation represent how participants create translanguaging spaces where "students can go *between* and *beyond* socially constructed language and education systems, structures and practices to engage diverse multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities, to generate new configurations of language and education practices to challenge and transform" (Wei, 2018, p. 24). Doing so constitutes an ability to proactively apply linguistic repertoires in academic and cultural spaces as a practice of leadership to avert acts of structural placism within classrooms and organizations to engage in unfettered intellectualism. Participants invariably practiced a multidimensional leadership with the purpose of presenting both their racial and ethnic identities as coupled with literacy, which resulted in an application of language and thought as culturally actionable.

POLICY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study is representative of the value of composite narrative inquiry when used to restory the impact of structural placism on how translanguaging is coupled with ethnicity, race and linguistic proficiencies of African immigrant male collegians. For this reason, it is important to specify that the act of translanguaging (O. García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018) allows for a repositioning of Englishes and English literacies (Smith, 2019b) as decentered and peripheral as it pertains to accessing educational spaces where African immigrant male collegians can successfully traverse HSIs. Faculty and cocurricular advisors must consider how HSI STEM environments contribute to the silencing and exclusion of multilingual Black students and respond by embracing literal teaching moments to educate White students about how their normalized cultural expectations stifle the learning processes of students of color. Consequently, the ways in which HSIs support African immigrant male collegians must be reimagined in global terms in order to fundamentally change how success is measured, valued and facilitated in holistic ways. Doing so is the responsibility of administrators, organization advisors and White students who interact with the participants' demographic.

CONCLUSION

Our interactions with first- and second-generation African immigrant male collegians elucidated their constructions about applying translanguaging as a form of academic and leadership literacy in response to experiencing structural placism. Preoccupation with a need to apply

English standardized and cultural non-standardized linguistic repertoires was central not only to how participants utilized English, but also to how frequently they vacillated across varied languages. Considering how race, ethnicity, and linguistic performance is interwoven within academic and organizational environments, it becomes pressing to further understand the difficulty involved in overcoming spatialized racial detriments that are grounded in both peer ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Participants' ability to apply linguistic repertoires suggests that structural placism can be navigated, if only momentarily, when interacting within homogenous ethnic enclaves where cultural congruity is encouraged and embraced.

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