

MANUSCRIPT

Knowing Myself for Real: Exploring the Self-Care Strategies of Residential Undergraduate HBCU Black Men Implemented During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, residence halls at colleges and universities were emptied except for a few lone students. While research has documented how these students experienced isolation and stress, this paper specifically explores how five undergraduate Black men living in residence halls spent their time and engaged in self-care as well as psychosocial development. In this qualitative paper, we use Chickering and Reisser's third vector of identity development, "moving through autonomy towards interdependence," as a conceptual framework to understand how our study sample created independent spaces and engaged in self-discovery as a response to the isolation. Implications are relevant to researchers and housing practitioners.

When colleges and universities pivoted to remote instruction to protect students from COVID-19, their normal lives were disrupted: Classes were held on Zoom, internships were canceled, and social lives were moved online (Smalley, 2021). As a result, students were constantly navigating isolation, canceled plans, and changing safety protocols (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Because of extenuating circumstances, a small percentage of students continued to live on campus, residing in partially full residence halls with only a skeleton crew of professional staff (Firozi et al., 2020). The extenuating circumstances that led students to apply to live in residence halls included housing and internet insecurity, university athletic obligations, and concerns about spreading the COVID-19 virus to vulnerable family members (Svrluga, 2020). In this paper, we present findings from an exploratory study of five undergraduate Black male residential students and how they managed their mental health and well-being during the pandemic. Our work specifically addresses how these men moved through Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector of identity development—"moving through autonomy toward interdependence" (p. 117)—while engaging in self-care as a response to the isolation and loneliness of living alone in campus residence halls.

Our work is situated at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the Mid-Atlantic U.S. This context allows us to hear and amplify the voices of undergraduate Black men, a population often silenced and ignored in higher education mental health research (Sun, 2021). By amplifying the voices of Black men, we contribute to the higher education research regarding the well-being needs of undergraduate Black men and demonstrate how student affairs practitioners and housing professionals can support them. Our paper answers the question, *How did these five undergraduate Black men living in residence halls at an HBCU during the COVID-19 pandemic practice self-care and psychosocial development?* We conclude by offering recommendations to residence life professionals on how to support Black men's psychosocial development during future crises.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

Our work is framed using the psychosocial identity development theory of Chickering and Reisser (1993), who conceived seven theoretical vectors that were “major highways for journeying toward individuation” (p. 35) and understanding identity development in students. Our study focuses on the third vector: “moving through autonomy toward interdependence” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117).

In this phase of identity development, students begin to strengthen their emotional independence by being self-directed and prioritizing their personal interests above their relationships with others. As they construct boundaries within their personal relationships to intentionally create separation, they then experience personal freedom and flexibility and develop problem-solving skills (Patton et al., 2016). Students move through autonomy toward interdependence in three ways: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, p. 117). These three components (as defined below in the results section) include students rejecting the need to be reaffirmed by others, developing confidence in their decision-making ability, and being mindful of their role and existence in the broader community (Patton et al., 2016).

For our study, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector, “moving through autonomy toward interdependence” (p. 117), allowed us to analyze why Black men opted into living in residence halls as a way to create an independent space while still maintaining relationships as a form of support and affirmation. This vector also provided a framework to analyze how these five Black men adopted self-care techniques to navigate the stressors of the pandemic through heightened self-awareness, accountability, and self-discovery.

RESEARCH ON BLACK UNDERGRADUATE MEN'S SELF-CARE

Self-care is the practice of engaging in acts to enhance one's own well-being and functioning often during periods of stress, with the intent to prevent burnout (Barnett & Cooper, 2009; Coster & Schwebel, 1997). Self-care includes “behaviors such as health maintenance, illness prevention, symptom

evaluation, self-diagnosis, self-treatment (both non-medication practices and self-medication), and consultation with a variety of non-medical (alternative) healthcare practitioners” (Segall & Goldstein, 1989, p. 154). Examples of self-care include taking leisurely walks, practicing good sleep patterns, reading, praying, and meditating (Greaves & Campbell, 2007). During the onset of the pandemic, self-care became increasingly important and gained noticeable public attention. Many health professionals recognized that the public struggled to maintain their mental health, and they encouraged individuals to engage in self-care by continuing to stay physically active and maintain healthy diets despite the isolation and the social distancing protocols (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Students’ Self-Care Routines During the Pandemic

The pandemic presented new challenges for students that left many in emotional, physical, and financial distress (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). As scholars continue to unpack the impact of the pandemic, it is evident that many people have suffered (and continue to suffer) from trauma (e.g., Cénat & Dalexis, 2020); in response to the challenges and trauma experienced as a result of the pandemic, many students began to cope by engaging in forms of self-care (Sun, 2021).

In 2020, as students maneuvered through the pandemic—adapting to the constant changes in their physical environment and campus protocols—their primary stressors were money, educational achievement, and post-graduation employment (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020; Sun, 2021). While the research is still nascent, many Black undergraduate students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities navigated this stress by adopting both healthy (i.e., exercising) and unhealthy (i.e., drinking alcohol) coping strategies and tried to strike a balance between self-reliance and the need for social support. They managed their stress primarily in isolation and felt alone in their struggle despite recognizing that everyone was dealing with similar stressors. These students independently sought out new skills and strategies for coping with stress, such as listening to music that improved their mood. The loneliness and isolation caused by the pandemic led students to reach out more to family, friends, faculty, and staff for emotional and social support, and these relationships (specifically those with friends) allowed them to discuss their worries and share their concerns with someone rather than to suppress their anxiety (Sun, 2021).

Masculinity and Black Manhood

Our work draws from and contributes to the larger literature on masculinity and Black manhood, particularly as it pertains to the collegiate experience. In U.S. society, manhood and masculinity are centered around two dominant socially constructed identities and concepts: White men and femininity (Lohan, 2007). Studies on manhood in the U.S. assert that men are characterized by accountability, strength, and their role as providers and protectors (Allen, 2016; Bharmal et al., 2012; Courtenay, 2000; Hunter

& Davis, 1994). Furthermore, according to Harper (2004), “Society has historically suggested that boys should play sports, suppress outward displays of emotion, and compete rigorously against each other” (p. 102) in such activities as competitive sports and video games.

The narrative of Black manhood and masculinity is different, however, considering that it has historically been compared to and framed by the norms of White men (Majors & Billson, 1992). The underpinning of White manhood and masculinity influencing Black manhood and masculinity has “led to a lack of understanding of what manhood means for Black men” (Roper, 2019, p. 10). Furthermore, “racism, societal institutions, and Black male emasculation add another layer of complexity to the societal notion of normative manhood” (Roper, 2019, p. 3). U.S. standards of masculinity are unhealthy for Black men because concepts such as emotional control, material success, and individualism are not congruent with Black community values (Mincey et al., 2014).

As researchers have explored what manhood means for Black men, they have found that “Black men define manhood as a sense of responsibility for self and others, relationships with family, spirituality, and humanism, and having a sense of self” (Hunter & Davis, 1994, p. 25). In one study on how they seek help, young Black men conveyed that it was more culturally acceptable to show signs of strength than signs of weakness; specifically, they felt that seeking help was subtly rejected within their culture and challenged the toughness that was expected as a part of their manhood (Roper, 2019). The social construction of masculinity and manhood that is shaped by cultural expectations, femininity, and White privilege creates a unique challenge for Black men’s help-seeking and self-care strategies (Roper, 2019).

Black Men’s Help-Seeking Behaviors

As with other groups, cultural and societal norms influence young Black men’s perspectives and applications of well-being and self-care behaviors (Roper, 2019). There is a complex history between Black men and the helping professions that has been well documented (Hammond et al., 2010; Rich, 2000); a perceived safe environment is essential for Black men to feel comfortable about asking for support from helping professionals, and Black men categorize a safe and caring environment as a space that allows them “to express their needs in a nonjudgmental way or non-stereotypical, non-racist, or culturally insensitive way” (Plowden et al., 2006, p. 154).

When studying Black men’s self-care, we adopt an anti-deficit approach (Harper, 2010) by recognizing that the men in our sample already practice wellness and have adopted self-care strategies (Ravenell et al., 2006) such as “maintaining personal hygiene, engaging in physical activity, having healthy eating choices, and establishing balance in their lives such as taking time for self” (Roper, 2019, p. 74). The Black male participants in this study also noted that physical self-care activities like jogging were more socially and personally acceptable.

In a separate study, Ravenell and colleagues (2006) found that Black men use prayer and spirituality as a form of self-care, with the notion that spiritual grounding is essential in taking care of one's physical and mental needs. Self-empowerment and social support were also noted as helpful strategies for self-care, which demonstrates that Black men are actively engaging in self-education, learning about their body, and cultivating social support from family, friends, and community groups (Ravenell et al., 2006).

It is evident that Black men have an interest in being active participants in maintaining their health, though research on the self-care and health choices of Black undergraduate men is still nascent. This paper further explores the self-care and wellness priorities of Black undergraduate men during the COVID-19 pandemic. By exploring their experiences, we provide guidance to student affairs practitioners and housing professionals on ways to effectively offer support to Black male residential students at any time.

METHODS

The data presented in this paper represent a subsample of Black undergraduate men from a larger Institutional Review Board-approved study of undergraduate students' residential life experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic at a public HBCU in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S.

Context and Data Collection

In the fall of 2020, approximately 350 students moved into university-managed residence halls at a public HBCU in the Mid-Atlantic region. These students applied to live on campus because of extenuating circumstances such as unsafe or distracting home situations that involved such factors as overcrowded homes and lack of Internet access. In October and November of 2020, the research team recruited these students to complete a one-hour Zoom-based interview. During these semi-structured interviews, 21 students were asked how they felt about the sudden change to remote instruction and how they had been coping with the circumstances. Questions included "How has the pandemic impacted you socially?" and "How has the pandemic impacted your mental and physical health?" Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Students were paid \$25 for their participation.

Participants

For this paper, we focus on the five interviewed students who identified as Black men. As presented in [Table 1](#), these men were undergraduates (one first-year student, four seniors), with a range of academic majors, who applied and were invited to live on campus during the 2020–21 academic year.

Data Analysis

We used both an inductive and a deductive coding approach guided by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector. The first two researchers reviewed the interview transcripts and developed an initial codebook with three emergent codes: self-discovery, pastime exploration, and creating

Table 1.
Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Race	Gender	Academic program	Classification
Tyler	Black	Man	Computer science	First-year
Andrew	Black	Man	Political science	Senior
Adio	Black	Man	Business	Senior
Elijah	Black	Man	Business	Senior
Matthew	Black	Man	Multiplatform production	Senior

independent spaces. We then each coded the transcripts with this initial codebook and discussed our emergent themes. We met and rectified the inductive coding and clarified the inductive themes. After discussing these initial ideas, we developed a codebook (see [Table 2](#)) which categorized the initial three inductive codes (self-discovery, pastime exploration, and creating independent spaces) as subcodes in relation to the three components of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector of identity development: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence (p. 117). These three components are also explained in detail in the results section. We then each deductively coded the transcripts using emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence as primary codes. We present quotations and findings using pseudonyms.

Table 2.
Codebook

Component	Component definition (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117)	Themes
Emotional independence	"Freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection or approval from others"	Living alone; creating boundaries
Instrumental independence	"The ability to carry on activities and solve problems in a self-directed manner, and the freedom and confidence to pursue opportunity or adventure"	Self-reliance; managing free time; major exploration; professional development
Interdependence	"An awareness of one's place in and commitment to the welfare of the larger community"	Spiritual exploration; self-identity exploration; personal reflection; meditation and wellness

Positionality

Before we present our findings, we find it important to reflect on our positionality as researchers and how it has impacted our interpretations. Our research team consists of two graduate students and several faculty members, all of whom work at an HBCU. The first author led the analysis for this paper.

As the first author, I understand the stigmas associated with Black men and mental health. Growing up as a Black queer man, the idea of masculinity and being a man was forced upon me and the young Black men around me

by adults in our schools and families. Those experiences influenced this study to some degree. Additionally, I was a student during the pandemic, during which my academic plans were canceled or altered. I felt isolated and lonely, causing me to develop my own self-care practices and empathize with the men in our student sample.

RESULTS

We present our findings by first analyzing the three components of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector, "moving through autonomy toward interdependence" (p. 117).

Emotional Independence

Emotional independence is indicated by a separation from previously established traditional forms of emotional support (such as family) to instead explore one's own emotional confidence and ability (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). When navigating emotional independence, students seek a new environment to prioritize their self-reliance and self-reflection about their individual values and beliefs. The participants in our study shared a common decision to leave their family homes in order to have a space of their own and minimize distractions to their academic success. For example, Adio, a senior business major, noted that he moved to campus after reflecting on the environment that would best help him prioritize his goals. "I did not want to be in the house at all with [my brother] since we normally play a lot. So, I decided to get out of the house to focus." Despite his desire to have his own space, Adio acknowledged that he still needed to maintain emotional closeness to his brother. Whenever he felt lonely or isolated, "I got somebody to talk to, and when I need to go spend time with [someone], it's [my brother]." Adio's story demonstrates the need to create boundaries in personal relationships in order to allocate time for oneself and set aside time for others.

Andrew, a senior political science major, expressed a similar desire to have his own space apart from his family. "No one wants to go home for multiple reasons" such as "your parents nagging you." He explained that his family home "was not a place where I knew I was going to be able to study with family," and when he talked about his decision to stay in university housing, he said, "I just need to be in a space I am familiar with and actually work and not be distracted by anything in regards to that."

Similarly, Tyler, a first-year computer science major, mentioned how resources in his home life were limited. "My sister was coming into high school, which meant she would have to be online. And so that sort of cut off the resources because her and I shared a laptop." Tyler viewed his residence hall room as a space where he would "be able to focus with not as much going on."

These men wanted their own space due to concerns with "staying focused" (Elijah) and being in a space where they would not get "distracted" (Andrew), even by their family and friends who supported them. These comments

demonstrate how these men, despite the pandemic and isolation, sought an environment where they could succeed academically, access campus resources, and explore their independence.

Instrumental Independence

Instrumental independence refers to the skills needed to formulate solutions independently in order to overcome difficulty. As it relates to this study, instrumental independence refers to how participants productively utilized their isolation and free time during the pandemic. While being in their independent spaces, these men explored different pastimes such as cooking, financial investing, and professional development.

Adio's new independence in the residence halls afforded him the space and time to teach himself how to cook his favorite foods like "burgers, rice, chicken, pizza, and pancakes." Reflecting further, Adio acknowledged engaging in activities that were unusual for him. "I do not like reading at all, but I [had] so much free time, so I started reading. I started doing all these other things that I would not think I would be doing." Adio used his free time to learn new skills and practice his independence.

Elijah's newfound solitude, on the other hand, led him to develop an interest in financial investing. As a senior business major, he spent his free time learning about the foreign exchange market, which quickly became his passion. Midway through this semester, he quit his part-time job and became "a full-time day trader in the foreign exchange market" and came to realize that this "is a direction that [I want] to go into" professionally.

Matthew, a senior multiplatform production major, used his time to further explore his academic major. "I began doing more Photoshop. I began doing more Premier Pro, making designs, making custom art, and making posters." This recent professional skill development led him to assist with his friend's clothing brand. "We help each other with designs that he's now sell[ing] for his clothing brand and everything." Along with exploring his major, Matthew explored music production. "I got into a music group. It is like a music management group. It is kind of like . . . starting a record label." While the pandemic forced him to be isolated inside his residence hall room, his solution to staying indoors was to explore different facets of his majors and other professional interests.

Similarly, Andrew mentioned using his time to explore more within his political science major by "reading more into [my] major" and doing "extensive work within anything that [was] given" by his faculty. Though he may not have had the time or inclination to explore other facets of his major before the pandemic, he made good use of his free time during the pandemic by delving into his major. Unlike Matthew, who spoke about using his free time productively almost as soon as the pandemic started, Andrew went through a period when he didn't know what to do with his free time. During this period, his mental health declined and forced him to reevaluate his time distribution.

Okay so I'm sitting in this apartment on a daily basis, just doing tasks. And it was kind of like, okay, this is not healthy for my mental [health] or my psyche. And it's just like, you try to really utilize what you have and trying to make the best out of your day. Well, I found it to be very exhausting. And I was like, umm, you know what? This isn't working. So, what I did was I became more active; I would go out to the lake and go for a walk. I would always see what events we [have] going on within student organizations.

In their isolated spaces, these men used their instrumental independence to teach themselves new skills and redefine old skills. The development of these proficiencies during their free time led to significant clarity about their professional interests, new professional opportunities, and the skills needed to live independently.

Interdependence

Interdependence refers to the mindfulness one possesses of their role and connection to the broader society. As students enter new environments and create independent identities separate from their familial systems, these circumstances contribute to the evolution of their paradigms. The newfound independent living environment and free time during the pandemic prompted these Black men to engage in mindfulness through activities of self-discovery.

Andrew mentioned that the isolation caused by the pandemic gave him time to “pause” and “realign” his efforts with his ambitions. He stated that he was “getting in tune with [myself], like on a spiritual note . . . how do we move from this?” and discussed the possibility of improving his time management skills and adding meditation to his schedule. “Being able to start Monday off, knowing I have an assignment where I could still work around then, I could have a whole-time where I meditate.” This form of self-care allowed him to ground himself as he was experiencing isolation.

In describing his experience with meditation, Andrew noted the importance of deep breathing in reducing stress, inducing calmness, and eliciting inner peace. “With so many things happening at once . . . just breathe.” While he did not mention the murder of George Floyd, we recognize that less than six months prior to our interviews his murder was widely televised and included Floyd’s last words: “I can’t breathe.” We also acknowledge Eric Garner, another Black man who died at the hands of police, in 2014, whose last words were “I can’t breathe.” While we do not claim a causal connection between these incidents and Andrew’s words, his reflection illustrates the potential importance of “just breathing” for Black men as they navigate the pressures of life and tensions of the larger society.

Matthew revealed that he engaged in self-discovery specifically in response to the civil unrest of 2020 resulting from the police killings of unarmed Black people. He had been “trying to learn more . . . about [myself], more about

[my] history, especially with this whole racial equality thing that is going on. It is just bringing me to, just, knowing myself for real.” These men engaged in self-discovery for different reasons, but the common theme was finding something to serve as a solid center while the world was experiencing so much personal, social, and political unrest during the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

Manifestations of Self-Care

We found that the five Black undergraduate men living in residential spaces at an HBCU during the COVID-19 pandemic practiced self-care to support their mental health and demonstrated movement across Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) third vector of psychosocial development. Although the experience of the pandemic was isolating, these men were able to view solitude as an opportunity to focus on themselves and their academic studies without distractions. More importantly, they emphasized that on-campus housing helped them focus on their own growth and maturity. While being in their own space, they began to utilize their free time in healthy and productive ways by adopting new hobbies and skills that could benefit them in the long term, such as cooking, developing professional skills, and starting their own businesses. These newly learned skills also improved their sense of self and sense of responsibility. They began to engage in an exploration of their own spirituality, cultural identity, and mental health needs. As Ravenell and colleagues (2006) confirmed, spirituality is important for Black men and for how they practice self-care because this spiritual grounding gives them the opportunity to clear their minds and tune in with their spirits. As a whole, our findings show that these men were proactive in their self-care journey, which confirms Ravenell and colleagues’ findings that Black men are interested in their wellness and believe they must empower themselves to address and proactively manage their wellness.

Connection to the Conceptual Foundation

These men leaned into their emotional responses to the pandemic, rather than suppressing them. Recognizing that Black men are often taught that displays of weakness challenge their manhood and that expressing their emotions is feminine and fragile (Mincey et al., 2014; Roper, 2019), we found that these men contradict the norms of masculinity and Black manhood by openly sharing their emotions. They revealed that their decision to move into residence halls was a result of how their home life hindered and distracted them from their academic journey. Their display of emotional independence differed slightly from that described by Chickering and Reisser (1993), who define emotional independence as “freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others” (p. 117). We do not see these men pursuing their own personal interests because of conflicts with their families. We see that they have the strong support of their families and

that they themselves recognized that separation from their family was difficult and anxiety-ridden. However, their need for independent spaces trumped their hesitancy and was a compelling sign of emotional independence.

Instrumental independence was displayed by the participants teaching themselves new skills and hobbies, such as navigating the foreign exchange market and taking part in professional development. Instrumental independence allows us to solve problems on our own and to be self-reliant (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), which was demonstrated in the participants' problem-solving skills and self-reliance. Adio, for example, learned how to cook because of the limited food options available on campus as a result of decreased campus operations during the pandemic. The participants displayed interdependence by reflecting on their cultural identity, learning about their cultural history, and exploring their spirituality. Instrumental independence is also revealed in how we are connected to others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993); we see these men take their newfound independence, solitude, and free time not only to learn more about themselves culturally and spiritually, but also to discover how they are interconnected to others.

LIMITATIONS

We recognize that our small sample and limited interview time inhibited our ability to fully understand the students' coping experience or make claims that are generalizable to all Black undergraduate men. Future work should examine the value of providing online spaces and opportunities for students to engage at a distance when necessary, specifically in sharing a hobby or learning a new skill together. We understand that our sample is situated within a unique social-historical context (an HBCU during a pandemic), but we believe our findings offer insights to both practitioners and researchers that can be useful beyond this specific moment and site.

IMPLICATIONS

Residence life professionals and paraprofessionals must be committed to supporting students who might be struggling to balance the need for independent space and time with the need for friendship and community, especially during traumatic experiences such as the pandemic. Considering prior research on the stigma of weakness associated with Black men seeking help, residential professionals should understand the likelihood that Black male students may not reach out for help when they are struggling. They may be in distress yet display no signs and instead will appear resilient and engaged in their regular activity. We recommend that residential professionals check in with Black male students using a more targeted approach, such as asking, "How are your assignments going?" or "Tell me how your day went" rather than the generic question of "How are things going?"

A study of Black male students involved in a Black Male Initiative (BMI) program found that when they were in a shared community space with other Black male students, they felt that they were being seen and heard and that these spaces highlighted their racialized and gendered identities as

both Black and male (Brooms, 2018). Additionally, we concur with Harper and Kuykendall's (2012) suggestion that practitioners prioritize engaging programs that also focus on academics such as study sessions or career preparation and life skills such as time management.

Confirming findings by Sun (2021), we found that undergraduate Black men partially relied on music and other forms of art to cope during the pandemic. For this reason, we suggest that residential staff integrate culturally relevant art and music to connect with Black male residents and make space for these students to channel their stress into creativity. For example, hip-hop can be healing for many Black men (Washington, 2018) and is something that can be integrated into movie nights, karaoke, and visibility during craft events. However, we caution professionals to avoid using a one-size-fits-all approach or adopting a monolithic paradigm of this group.

Our findings align with Roper's (2019) assertion that some Black men preferred physical movement such as walks to engage in self-care. Residential staff should consider inviting Black male residents to accompany them on a walk around campus to converse rather than facilitating one-on-one meetings in a traditional office setting. Our findings accentuate the importance of integrating counseling service auxiliaries to offer well-being workshops in building meditation skills and focusing on health and wellness that specifically target and are marketed to Black men. For example, Appalachian State University created a Black Male Excellence residential learning community offering culturally relevant support and resources that fostered a space where Black men could grow academically and spiritually (Hoffman & Slade, 2023). These learning communities can be used to provide different opportunities for Black men: for instance, collaborating with academic departments to create a first-year seminar, with career services to create a career readiness program, and with a global education office to offer study abroad opportunities. Finally, researchers should consider how self-care in the form of skill building and professional development is reflected in populations of men who feel invisible and who have been pushed away from traditional self-care language and best practices.

We also wish to call attention to what we did not find in our study: video games. It is important to note that the Black men in our study did not identify video games or online gaming communities as outlets, which conflicts with the majority narrative about undergraduate men's interests and self-care practices during the pandemic (Barr & Copeland-Stewart, 2021; Kelly, 2021). Future research is needed to explore this anomaly, but we can conclude that this video-gaming narrative does not adequately reflect the lived experience of the Black men in our sample.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how undergraduate Black men at an HBCU engaged in psychosocial development while coping with the stress and isolation of living in residential housing during the fall 2020 pandemic semester. Despite

our small sample size, our findings revealed trends such as Black men's need for independent spaces for development and learning, their decision to spend leisure time on skill building and hobby development, and their interest in personal development and self-discovery. Our study draws attention to Black undergraduate men's interest in both personal development and exploration, which deviates from some of the more negative and harmful narratives about undergraduate men and Black men in particular. Understanding how Black undergraduate men navigate crises and cope with stress would benefit residence life practitioners and researchers interested in disrupting the systematic racism and anti-Blackness entrenched in U.S. higher education and in mental health counseling systems.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some potential impacts on the workforce for Black men in the post-COVID era? How do these impacts relate to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) third vector of identity development, and why is understanding this connection critical to shaping both the personal and professional identities of Black men?
2. What exploration strategies have you used to build emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence? How did you approach this process? Did you encounter any regrets, learning curves, or moments of doubt? How did you handle changes or obstacles to reach the personal growth you were aiming for in these areas?
3. Although the data from this study is from a specific period of time, what efforts or initiatives are housing professionals using to support the development of other minority communities today? How much of the progress or challenges reflected in the study's data are still present, and what changes have been made since then? What additional strategies or innovations could be implemented to better advocate for underserved communities in residential settings?
4. Considering the cultural and societal differences between Black men and their White counterparts, is it necessary to develop different methods or approaches to well-being, self-care behaviors, and the development of interdependence specifically for Black men? How can we adapt or bridge existing self-care tools and help-seeking resources to better meet their unique needs? What strategies could be used to make current resources more accessible, relevant, and effective for supporting their growth and well-being?
5. Many of the men in the study expressed a desire to physically separate from their household in order to focus on school without distractions. How might physically detaching from personal relationships negatively impact students' well-being or development? How can students manage the unintended challenges in maintaining emotional support systems?
6. Balancing U.S. standards of masculinity with Black community values can create challenges in academic and developmental environments. Do you think self-care practices, particularly those focused on skills-building, can

sometimes feel limiting or misaligned with how Black men view themselves and their cultural identity? What strategies could be used to reframe self-care in a way that aligns more closely with Black community values and their cultural strengths?

Discussion questions were developed by Jessika Howard and Quindon Jefferson-Bowers, The University of Texas at Dallas.