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This qualitative research delves into the perspectives of Black students regarding how predominantly white institutions (PWIs) respond to their racialized experiences and how these responses influence their sense of belonging. The study employs a critical race perspective within a bioecological systems theory framework to explore Black students' racialized experiences and their sense of belonging at a PWI. Ten Black undergraduate students from the same institution, representing diverse demographics, participated in this research, aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize are present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting the Black campus community members?
4. How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

The study's findings indicate that Black students tend to hold unfavorable opinions about institutional actions that impacting both their social and academic experiences and belonging is a shared responsibility between students and the institution. The insights from this study led to the development of a conceptual framework, utilizing a bioecological systems perspective, a systems-based inquiry inventory, that can be utilized by higher education practitioners at PWIs to be responsive to elements of their institutional culture, and a series of recommendations for higher education practioners to better support Black students.

BLACK STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES ON SENSE OF BELONGING

by

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Dr. Beverly Faircloth
Committee Chair

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this dissertation first to the Black students who made this possible. Without their vulnerability and their courage, this would not have been possible. To my friends, thank you. Through each of my moments, you have been there. To my committee, thank you for standing by, pushing, and believing me.

To my family. You are everything. Mom and Dad, you love me unconditionally and prove that time and time again. I am lucky to have the parents that many Black boys dream of. I am thankful you helped your Black boy grow into a Black man. You told me to "do the best I can" and "I love you." I love you, too. To my brothers, one taught me to drive, and the other taught me grit. To my sister, you taught me to honor my journey, no matter how tough.

And on the day of my defense, I honored my Uncle Robert, who passed away the day prior. I am blessed to have been loved, embraced, and taught the lessons that likely seemed small to him.

So, thank you to the family left before me for guiding my path and watching over me. It is a privilege to honor you all by achieving our impossible dream.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Detric Elijah Robinson, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Radical simply means 'grasping things at the root.'" – Angela Davis

Colleges and universities in the United States' higher education system have experienced a trend of increased diversity among students enrolling in higher education (Komives & Woodward, Jr., 2003). "Diversity" encompasses characteristics related to a student's background, social identities, and situations, such as enrollment or transfer status (Komives & Woodward, Jr., 2003). An increase in the diverse student populations aligns with the racial diversification of United States society, where 50 percent of students come from communities of color in public K-12 schools, and this demographic is expected to make up a significant portion of the U.S. adult population in the future (Espinosa et al., 2019). Recognizing that "diversity" can describe various populations depending on the context, this dissertation focused on Black racial identity within a United States higher education context at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

An increase in racial diversity at PWIs, historically White spaces, has also resulted in racial exclusion and racially biased incidents occurring on campuses (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Johnston-Guerro, 2016). Hinrichs adds that racial segregation in United States higher education continues to persist, with the Southern United States remaining more segregated than any other region (2022). Colleges and universities, including one used as the research setting for this dissertation, may have student populations that look drastically different from the surrounding communities. With an increase in diverse student populations at PWIs, "raising awareness about promoting the inclusion of historically oppressed groups" and "developing an appreciation for cultural differences" have been used as critical factors in ensuring the success of marginalized student populations (Watt, 2007, p. 115). Historically, Black students have been marginalized

within higher education in the United States. To ensure Black students' success, higher education practitioners must allocate attention, resources, and research to explore and be responsive to this important topic.

This dissertation study aimed to increase our understanding of Black student experiences at PWIs by exploring their racialized experiences, institutional actions, and perceptions of belonging. My dissertation approaches this research from a position that Black students navigate racialized experiences at PWIs that are the systemic manifestation of White dominance and influence on the sociopolitical structure and history of the United States higher education ("whiteness"). The results of this dissertation will further comprehension and inform recommendations that may contribute to more positive Black student experiences at PWIs.

Higher education practitioners committed to fostering more equitable and inclusive campus environments where Black students feel belonging must be intentional in their approaches. At PWIs, this requires intentionally exploring Black students' racialized experiences, identifying policies, practices, or people that influence PWI actions, and using this new knowledge to institutional strategy. This study helps higher education practitioners conceptualize racialized experience as more than isolated incidents through a bioecological systems lens within the broader systemic sociopolitical climate of the United States. Its results can be used to help higher education practitioners better under Black student experiences and guide strategies aimed at increasing Black students' perceptions of belonging and mattering while safeguarding their ability to thrive at PWIs.

A Systemic Racialized Experience

A racialized experience describes a lived experience constrained by institutional racism and cultural biases (Asante et al., 2016, p. 368). Within the context of Black students' racialized

experiences, this includes, but is not limited to, instances or responses to racially biased incidents on campus, the disparate impact of policy or practice on Black students, and Black representation or visibility. All can negatively affect the campus climate, including Black students' perceptions of their experiences while in attendance (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Black racialized experiences can be conceptualized to be shaped by and able to influence various interconnected layers of our sociopolitical environment.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995) can be a foundation for understanding these interconnections and factors contributing to Black racialized campus experiences. The processes, practices, and ecosystems described by Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bioecological systems theory suggest that a Black student's racialized experience can be understood as an interaction between multiple layers, or systems, that a Black student encounters on campus. This includes the systematic relationships between campus policies, climate, physical spaces, and the individual. These racialized experiences are situated within the broader context of higher education, shaped by the sociopolitical history of the United States and the present-day manifestations that history birthed. Because PWIs in the United States have historically been designed around White students' access and education, institutional history, policy, and practice must be examined to ensure that our policies and practices lead to all students enjoying the privileges of higher education, including student populations that have been historically excluded.

Sense of Belonging

My dissertation focuses on Black students' sense of belonging at primarily White institutions (PWIs). Hagerty et al. (1992) defined a sense of belonging as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that individuals feel themselves to be an

integral part of that system or environment" (pg. 173). In a subsequent “extensive” literature review on belonging, Strayhorn described "sense of belonging" as a term with various meanings that includes a student's experiences related to belongingness, membership, and support (2019). Sense of belonging is often integrated into models of college student persistence. Failing to establish an adequate sense of belonging can have adverse consequences for students because it is a crucial factor in student persistence (Hausmann et al., 2007; Hausmann et al., 2009; Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; Booker, 2016). A strong sense of belonging is consistently associated with positive retention outcomes for college students (Hoffman et al., 2002; Freeman et al., 2010; Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hausmann et al., 2007; Museus et al., 2018; Strayhorn, 2012). Existing literature supports various but relatively consistent themes around what belonging is and how it can be used within a college context; there is a gap in research exploring if a sense of belonging can be conceptualized using a bioecological systems lens.

I assert that “belonging” is tied to student experiences and that those perceptions of experiences are impacted through systemic means. This area of research can be further expanded by investigating potential additional factors of belonging that have not been extensively explored in existing literature, absent a bioecological systems theory framework. My dissertation explores this gap to build on the growing body of knowledge related to a sense of belonging in college students, specifically regarding Black student experiences at PWIs.

Being Responsive to the History of Black Exclusion

As higher education practitioners recognize belonging as a factor related to college student persistence, emerging research must critically examine historically excluded experiences,

such as those of Black students, when exploring the concept of belonging. Faircloth shares the following as it relates to critical models of belonging (2022):

> Even given the most socioculturally aware notions of belonging, the harsh reality of abuse against minoritized individuals rampant in the US society (invisibility and dispossession of every description) argues for continued sharpening of our tools for the most powerful enactments of belonging as well as the dismantling of barriers to belonging. (pg. 18)

In Chapter 2 of this proposal, I will review the history of Black student access to higher education in the United States, including the impact of whiteness. This review will highlight factors that resulted in past and present inequitable or exclusionary outcomes for Black students and reinforce a need for higher education practitioners to be intentional in how they seek to support Black students at PWIs.

Higher education practitioners must reframe what "Black student belonging" means and how it is assessed at PWIs. Faircloth presented the notion that every student has a right to experience belonging on their campus and that belonging "requires the ability to foster positive cultural identity, empower individuals and groups to negotiate oppressive social structures and promote social change by altering institutional processes that contribute to marginalization" (pg. 22). As such, higher education practitioners committed to Black students must internalize the same philosophy when seeking to ensure Black students have equitable access to and success at PWIs. This position relinquishes the responsibility of finding belonging from Black students—instead, institutions must create and maintain environments of belonging through inclusive policy and practice.

Purpose Statement

Higher education practitioners are responsible for shaping their students' experiences and must hold themselves accountable for examining policies, practices, or individuals contributing

to the cultures within their respective institutions. My study sought to expand the existing body of knowledge on Black students' sense of belonging by examining the potential impact of institutional responses to racialized experiences on the sense of belonging of Black undergraduate students attending PWIs. My exploration of this topic strives to center the voices of Black students, aiming to gain a better understanding of their racialized experiences and generate actionable strategies that higher education practitioners at PWIs could use when seeking to enhance a culture of belonging for Black students—this consequently could contribute to greater Black student persistence to degree attainment at PWIs.

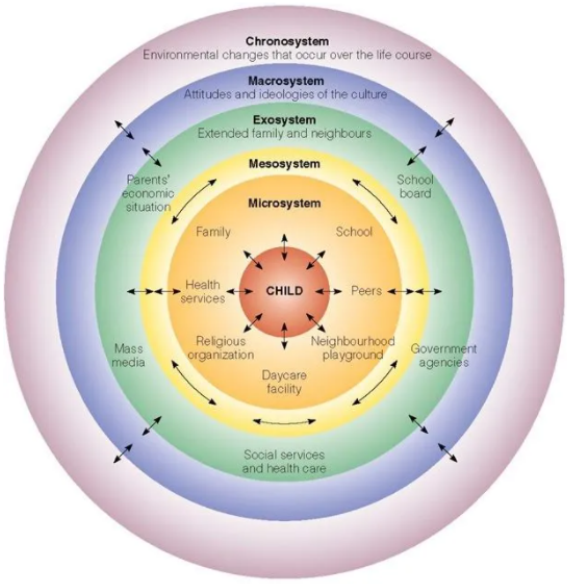
Theoretical Frameworks

Investigation of my research questions is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bioecological systems theory, Yosso's (2006) theory of cultural wealth, and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a framework for exploring Black students' racialized experiences across interconnected systems, Yosso's theory helps us understand how Black identity might influence how students navigate an institutional environment, and critical race theory allows us to analyze how sociopolitical structures are informed by systemic racism (i.e., "whiteness").

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, later renamed the 'bioecological systems theory' (1995), posits that the active person is a central force in their development, situations are phenomenological, and different environments are navigated differently depending on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Darling, 2007; Guy-Evans, 2020).

Figure 1. Bioecological Systems Theory



This model places the person at the center of concentric circles representing various systems theorized to impact development. This model describes the following systems affecting the individual (Cassells & Evans, 2020; Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013; Guy-Evans, 2020):

1. Microsystem – the immediate environment with which an individual closely interacts.
2. Mesosystem – the interrelations among microsystems and connections.
3. Exosystem – the links between social settings where an individual does not have an active role and their immediate context.
4. Macrosystem – the larger cultural context that surrounds an individual.
5. Chronosystem – all environmental changes that occur over time.

This model emphasizes the interrelationship of different processes and their contextual variations (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Darling, 2007). Applying bioecological systems theory allows for exploring how multiple systems (present within micro- and macro-communities) impact Black students' perceptions of their racialized experience, how their perceptions of institutional actions affect their sense of belonging, and what institutional actions should look like.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model

Black students are not passive participants in their racialized experiences, and scholars have often taken a deficit perspective. Race-based educational inequality is frequently described as the result of "deficits" within the focal minoritized community (Valencia, 2002; Nolan, 2019). This perspective can lead to institutional actions heavily favoring white ways of being, with marginalized racial groups being expected to assimilate into dominant ideologies (Sólorzano & Yosso, 2001). One example of how this might manifest is an unspoken expectation that Black students should be able to successfully integrate and feel a sense of belonging at PWIs, even though these institutions were created during the history of the United States when their ancestors were enslaved. With this in mind, additional frameworks are required to emphasize that marginalized populations bring a wealth of strengths and skills to their campus communities. Yosso's community cultural wealth model (2006) uses a CRT lens to theorize that communities of color nurture cultural wealth capital. This model describes cultural wealth as the variety of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and used by Communities of Color to survive oppression (Yosso, 2006). Yosso (2006) details six forms of cultural capital:

1. Aspirational capital – maintaining hopes and dreams of the future while facing real and perceived barriers.
2. Linguistic capital – intellectual and social skills gained through communication experiences.
3. Familial capital – developed cultural knowledge with a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.
4. Social capital – resource networks of people and community.
5. Navigational capital – skills for navigating social institutions.
6. Resistant capital – knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that confronts inequality.

Cultural capital will be used as a lens in this research to explore or identify multiple strengths that Black students recognize they bring to PWIs that positively impact their persistence and

result in student success. For this dissertation study, community cultural wealth is integrated to take a strengths-based approach to understanding the strengths Black students bring to help navigate their racialized experiences.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race perspectives prompt us to consider how race impacts the perceptions and experiences of Black students attending PWIs. From a critical race perspective, existing systems and structures in the United States, including higher education, are inherently inequitable and contribute to a racialized experience for Black students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). To address a racialized experience effectively, higher education practitioners at PWIs must hold themselves accountable for thoroughly understanding the nuances of the Black student experience and campus environments and intentionally engage with policies and practices that better support Black student belonging.

Critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) will be used to analyze the systemic nature of the racialized experiences of Black students, specifically within the context of primarily white institutions. Because Black students' racialized experiences stem from historical marginalization and exclusion from higher education spaces in the United States, institutional action is required to both comprehend and respond to these experiences to foster environments of belonging. Utilizing a critical race lens to examine this phenomenon allows higher education practitioners at PWIs to transform their campus cultures through intentional actions informed by the narratives of the Black students who chose to participate in this dissertation study. This research paradigm will be further detailed in Chapter 3.

Critical Race Theory and Bioecological Systems Theory as Exploratory Frameworks

Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) suggests that institutional history, policies, and practices are influenced by systemic racism within the United States. This theory can be used to underpin Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995) when trying to understand a phenomenon, such as a Black racialized experience at a PWI. A critical race perspective requires that we consider the ways systemic racism may manifest and interact with Black students in the bioecological systems that Bronfenbrenner proposed. Higher education practitioners at PWIs would need to not only acknowledge that Black students have racialized experiences unique from their White peers but also be committed to advocating for the political, practical, and structural changes required to cultivate a more equitable and inclusive space for Black students.

Initial Conceptual Framework

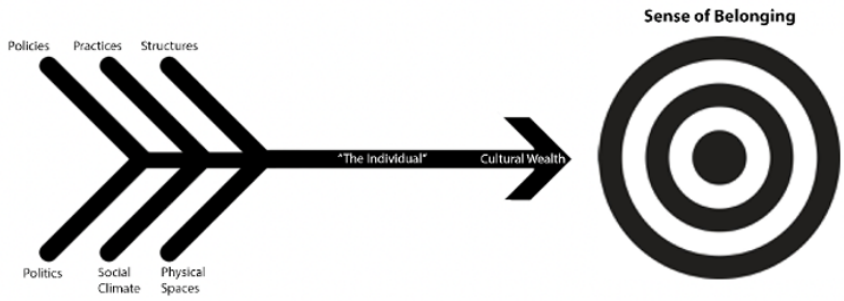
Black students should feel supported, embraced, and comfortable when attending their college or university. The conceptual framework initially proposed in my dissertation study was primarily grounded in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1997) and Yosso's community cultural wealth model to illustrate how a sense of belonging may relate to various influences on Black racialized experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Yosso, 2006). While this proposed conceptual framework was constructed using existing literature, data analysis resulted in a significant redesign to better integrate systemic and individual elements of belongingness on college campuses—this will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Integrating Bioecological Systems and Cultural Community Wealth

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory suggests that human development results from the interaction between a person and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Härkönen,

2007; Darling, 2007). This initial conceptual framework depicts the relationship between the racialized experience of Black students who attend primarily White institutions (PWIs) and their sense of belonging as an arrow representing them as individuals, potentially influential environmental factors, and a target that represents the institutional goal of fostering a campus culture where Black students feel like they belong.

Figure 2. Initial Conceptual Framework



The representation of the bow and arrow draws upon real-world dynamics related to archery performance, the bow's components, the tool athletes use, and the target that archery athletes aim for. There are three parts of the arrow that my initial conceptual framework focused on:

1. the arrowhead (cultural wealth)
2. the shaft (the individual)
3. the fletching (the environment).

From a critical race perspective, the arrow and the target cannot exist without consideration of the impacts of history, policies, or practices of systemic racism that continue to shape our present-day sociopolitical environment. Similar to how wind can influence the direction of an arrow and make it more challenging for archers to hit their target, CRT requires us to consider how systemic racism might act similarly to wind and make it more difficult for individuals to feel a sense of belonging in their environment (Solórzano, 1997).

The Individual (the Shaft)

The arrow's shaft represents the student and the multiple dimensions of identity a student brings. Black students attending PWIs may have a more challenging experience because of their intersectional identities, including their Black racial identity, due to institutional and historical systems of oppression (Crawford & Miami University, 2009; Moore & University of Alabama, 2016). In this conceptual framework, dimensions of identity are primarily outside of Black students' or an institution's ability to change but serve as a foundation for cultural wealth.

Cultural Wealth (the Arrowhead)

The arrowhead represents the community cultural wealth that Black students bring—these are informed by their intersectional identities and their lived experiences. Similar to how different arrowheads may be more or less effective in archery, cultural wealth may impact the ease at which Black students experience belonging while on campus. This conceptual framework considers cultural wealth as part of the individual ("shaft"). These strengths that a Black student brings to campus help them better navigate its sociopolitical culture.

Environment (the Fletching)

In this conceptual framework, the fletching represents elements of the campus environment that interact with the student. In archery, the fletching helps stabilize the trajectory of the arrow. I propose that institutional responses to the racialized experiences of Black students may act similarly to an arrow's fletching by directing a student toward a sense of belonging. Without intentional actions by PWIs to support a trajectory towards a sense of belonging (i.e., lack of fletching), it may be more challenging for Black students to experience a sense of belonging. This conceptual model does not assume that a Black student will not experience a

sense of belonging without intentional actions but that experiencing a sense of belonging may be more difficult.

Sense of Belonging (the Target)

In this conceptual framework, a sense of belonging for Black students is represented by a target, such as one used in archery. Similar to archery, the goal of an institution should not only be to strike the target but also to hit the center. This indicates that all aspects of student belonging are acquired. This conceptual framework posits that meeting this goal would be intentional and, like archery, takes strategy and practice. The final conceptual framework will be further detailed using the participant narratives of this dissertation study. While the literature has regularly explored complex factors of belonging for college students, the elements referenced in this study will intentionally draw from the participant voices with insight gained from existing literature.

Assumptions

This conceptual framework assumes that institutions and Black students have some agency and responsibility toward facilitating a sense of belonging. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1997) suggests that Black students influence their PWI environments, and the PWI environments influence Black students in attendance. This indicates that facilitating belonging for Black students requires the investment of multiple campus stakeholders at PWIs, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators. To successfully meet this goal, a level of shared responsibility between PWI leadership and Black students must be created to gain meaningful insights that will inform institutional policy, practice, and structure. This dissertation study aims to contribute to those efforts and better advance Black students' belonging at PWIs.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge in the literature related to institutional actions and Black students' racialized experiences at PWIs. Adding to this body of knowledge will provide insights that higher education practitioners could use at PWIs to inform actionable strategies to better support Black students toward degree attainment and enhance the quality of their living and learning experiences at PWIs. As higher education practitioners at PWIs strategize ways to advance campus cultures where Black students feel like they belong and matter, insights gained from this dissertation study could be utilized to inform their efforts.

Black students continue to be marginalized at PWIs despite the hope for campus environments that are inclusive places of belonging. This dissertation study emphasizes the importance of engaging in research that critiques current approaches at PWIs to improve the institution from a sincere place of care for Black students. By capturing Black students' thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on belonging, this dissertation aimed to create a conceptual framework that explores the links between Black student experiences at PWIs. Chapter 5 presents a series of insights and potential next steps for higher education practitioners to consider at PWIs.

Research Questions

This dissertation study aims to highlight experiences related to Black student racialized experiences and produce insights that could inform strategies to enhance Black student belonging at PWIs. Higher education practitioners at PWIs and Black students in attendance share responsibility for facilitating a more inclusive campus, and there are significant factors that PWIs must hold themselves accountable for to meet inclusivity goals. This study will primarily seek to

explore in what ways, if at all, Black student perceptions of PWI responses to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. The following sub-questions explore this dissertation study's primary research question:

1. What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize are present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting Black campus community members?
4. How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

Key Terminology

There are several key terms that I believe are important to establish a shared understanding between the researcher and the reader regarding their definitions and their use for this study:

- **Accountability: Accountability in this study refers to an institution's practices to respond to racially biased experiences. It is "an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).**
- **Black: Throughout this study, "Black" is used for those identifying as Black or African American. It is "a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).**
- **Belonging: Belonging encompasses systemic structures and individual experiences that reinforce students' rightful presence and inclusion.**
- **Primarily White Institutions (PWI): These are institutions of higher learning where White-identified students make up 50% or more of the enrollment (Lomotey, 2010).**
- **Racialized Experience: A racialized experience is a lived experience "constrained by institutional racism and cultural bias" (Asante et al., 2016, pg. 368). This dissertation study posits that a racialized experience includes events or exposures related to places, people, policies, or practices within a broader bioecological system.**

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

I wanted to send a powerful message, or what I hope to be a powerful message, that we're often treated like we should be lucky that these institutions let us in, but we don't have to go to those institutions if we don't want to." – Nikole Hannah-Jones

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore in what ways, if at all, Black student perceptions of PWI responses to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. The following sub-questions explore this dissertation study's primary research question:

1. What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize are present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting the Black campus community members?
4. How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

Existing research (LePeau et al., 2015; Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2001; Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016; Komives & Woodward, Jr., 2003; Hughes, 2013; Engberg, 2004; Farrell & Jones, 1998; Midgette & Mulvey, 2022; Boysen et al., 2009; Davis & Harris, 2015; Garibey et al., 2020; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005) has explored how institutions of the United States higher education have approached responding to individual incidents of racial bias on campuses, and others (Hoffman et al., 2002; Freeman et al., 2010; Gapalan & Brady, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hausmann et al., 2007; Museus et al., 2018; Strayhorn, 2012) have explored factors that impact the sense of belonging for students. However, there exists a gap in research that aims to connect institutional action, and Black racialized experiences as a potential factor in Black students' sense of belonging at PWIs. This research aims to produce data related to current

strategies used by PWIs and inform future strategies that higher education practitioners at PWIs could consider to support better Black belonging on campus. This chapter will review the foundational literature that informs this study and identify gaps that this study aims to address.

History of Black Students in Higher Education in the United States

The United States has a deep history of racism fueled by white supremacist views of the founding political leaders in the country, who believed that Black people were less intelligent than their white counterparts (Anderson, 2012). Race became the foundation of the United States' sociopolitical structure—non-White people became fundamental to maintaining the United States society (Dancy et al., 2018).

Barriers to Black student's access to higher education in the United States have existed since the founding of Harvard in 1636, the oldest institution in the United States (Anderson, 2012). Anderson describes the following (2012, pg. 4):

> American higher education virtually excluded African-American students until after the Civil War. From the founding of Harvard College in 1636 to the 1830s, no American institution of higher education opened its doors to African-American students. A powerful structure of racial exclusion was constructed in slave states by state governments and legal mandates and in the free states by practices of institutionalized racism.

While the period after the Civil War until World War I saw unprecedented growth in the number of institutions of higher education in the United States, Black students did not experience equitable opportunities for higher education, especially in the southern states. Not only did many state governments oppose higher education for the Black population, but when education was provided, Black students were also subjected to both separate and subordinate education compared to their white peers (Anderson, 2012). Historically, Black students were primarily enrolled in private Black colleges and universities (Anderson, 2012). Post-Civil War, Black students were intentionally subjected to significantly marginalized systems of public higher

education (Anderson, 2012). The southern states are described to have three distinct periods related to the creation of race and the imposition of racial separation (Inwood & Martin, 2009, pg. 376):

> The first period, commonly referred to as the Ante-Bellum period, occurred while slavery was legally sanctioned and protected as both a social and national institution (early 1600s –1865) (Tyner, 2002). The second period is known as 'Jim Crow Segregation' when blacks and whites were legally and socially segregated (1865 –1960s). The final period covers the Civil Rights era to the present, a time of official non-discrimination. Each of these periods is evident in historical markers on the UGA campus, and they serve as referents in a national and campus discourse about 'racial progress' and integration (as in Marable 2002).

For a significant portion of the history of higher education in the United States, racial marginalization was legally justified and created barriers to both access and an understanding of college as a potential site of belonging for Black students.

While the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision upheld a 'separate but equal' educational standard in the United States, it was not until 1938 that the Gaines decision forced the southern states to improve public higher education for the Black population to comply with the Plessy decision (Anderson, 2012). However, due to this marginalized treatment of Black students in public higher education, 99 percent of Black students were enrolled in private schools for the first two decades of the twentieth century, indicating a dependence on the private sector to educate Black students in higher education (Anderson, 2012). The legal basis that enabled Black students to pursue attendance at all-white colleges and universities in the South could not occur until the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 (Anderson, 2012). While this decision provided the opportunity for Black students to seek admission to historically White colleges and universities, Black students were still primarily denied entry, and until the 1970s, historically Black colleges and universities were mainly the only institutions that provided higher education for Black students (Anderson, 2012). This pattern highlights that higher education, as an

institution, was not created to serve Black students, and historically, White colleges and universities took significant steps to prevent Black students from attending for much of their history. Racial exclusion was prominent in United States higher education until civil rights activists pressured society to change in the past 40-50 years.

Through the momentum of the civil rights movement, the United States government and educational institutions faced increasing social unrest due to the longstanding policies and practices that kept people of color from adequate representation in the United States educational, political, economic, and social institutions (Anderson, 2012). It is essential to highlight that before these legislative victories, the Black population had little to no influence on the policies and practices that guided the United States' institutions. This resulted in President Lyndon Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law and the Voting Rights Act the year after (Anderson, 2012). Due to the efforts above, the number and percentages of students of color enrolled in and graduating from colleges and universities in the United States grew significantly. This formalized access, however, did not come without challenges to perceived legitimacy or belonging arising from increases in campus diversity.

The historical context of United States higher education establishes that education was not a privilege intended to be expanded to include or consider the presence of Black students. Instead, the historical context highlights over three centuries of exclusionary policies and practices aimed at preventing Black students from receiving education comparable to their white peers. This suggests that the policies, practices, and structures were not intended to support Black students while in attendance, and those aspects need to be critically examined. Black students' access to higher education today was founded on sustained activist efforts and legislative victories that provided a potential opportunity for Black students to enter

postsecondary education. If primary access to higher education is the floor, there is still much room to grow toward the ceiling (belonging, successful completion, mattering, and validation). With this said, Black students continue to remain underrepresented, and there is growing opposition to civil-rights-era policies that provide access and support services for Black students (Bowman & Smith, 2007). While this literature review will not explore other factors that may impact Black students' access to higher education, such as class or affordability, it does explore challenges related to their experiences while attending primarily White institutions (understood as socio-ecological systems) from a critical race perspective (Solórzano, 1997).

Relationship Between Campus Diversity, National Climate, and Racial Bias

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1995) provides a framework to explore the relationship between the increase of campus diversity and the national, racial climate of the United States in the existing literature. Additionally, a critical race perspective (Solórzano, 1997) requires us to engage with the literature by examining manifestations of systemic racism within those ecological levels in higher education. Researchers have established that the presence of racially biased incidents appears to be related to campus diversity and the national climate, among other elements of ecosystemic influence. A review of the literature supports that racial bias on college campuses mirrors the national environment in the United States, hate, violence, and bullying (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus et al., 2015; Bowman & Smith, 2007). Aguirre & Messineo (1997) suggest that minoritized (non-White) populations on college campuses are more likely to be impacted by bias-motivated behavior. Minoritized student populations are at more risk of being affected when the campus environment is connected to majority-population (White) beliefs and values (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997). Hurtado & Alvarado (2015) made a similar claim, suggesting that discrimination and bias exist even in moderately diverse

institutions. The Hurtado & Alvarado (2015) study uses data related to the experiences of 8,887 underrepresented students at 58 institutions that participated in the Diverse Learning Environment (DLE) survey between 2010 – 2015. On average, 20% of Black students reported a bias incident to a campus authority, and at the most diverse institution, 12.2% of Black students reported a bias incident. These experiences decrease a sense of belonging and retention, even for high-achieving Black students (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015). Garibay, Herrera, Johnston

Guerrero & Garcia (2015) suggest that White students on more racially diverse campuses are less likely to engage in racially biased behavior. One significant limitation of this study is that attitudes were self-reported by White students. While an increase in campus diversity may reduce the prevalence of White students engaging in racially biased behavior, the study by Hurtado & Alvarado (2015) highlights that a significant number of students continue to be impacted by bias incidents. White students may not recognize their actions as racially biased if their efforts were not intentional (Cabrera, 2012). While this is a reason for why actions may occur, it is not an excuse when we consider that these actions are representative of a culture that allows them to exist. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1997) bioecological systems theory as a lens, individual incidents of bias represent layers of individual actions within multiple ecological systems with historically ingrained exclusion and prejudice. As such, institutions must not only critically examine racial climates to determine the extent of the racialized experiences of their Black students but also how White students, staff, faculty, administrators, and systems contribute to these experiences.

Primarily White Institution (PWI) campuses are defined as campus environments in which White students comprise a majority (>50%) of the student population. Racialized experiences can be defined as having a lived experience "constrained by institutional racism and

cultural bias" (Asante et al., 2016, p. 368). Black students in the United States, by being perceived as Black, experience institutional racism and cultural bias in environments grounded in a white-dominant ideology. Racialized experiences (understood through the lenses of critical race theory and ecological systems theory) can encompass both individual incidents of racism and the broader racism and cultural biases that manifest as those separate incidents within the United States. These racialized experiences are present on college campuses and manifest systemically and individually.

The literature has established that higher education in the United States was founded and exists within a white-dominant ideology (Wilder, 2013). This represents a systemic influence in how colleges and universities operationalize policy and practice on their campuses and influence the overall culture of the institution. The diversification of historically white institutions reinforces that higher education must explore race and ethnicity as fundamental factors in ongoing strategies to monitor, understand, and promote diversity in higher education (Bowman & Smith, 2007). From a systemic perspective, this would mean examining how elements of the institution are influenced by a history of racial exclusion and resistance to the presence of students of color on historically White campuses and understanding the ways that systemic racism affects the biases and actions of members of a campus community.

Many white-identified people and a significant number of racially minoritized people support subtle race-related beliefs that reinforce discriminatory institutional practices and individual behaviors, especially those aimed toward the Black population (Bowman & Smith, 2007; Sears et al., 2000). Bowman & Smith (2007) describe the following (p. 106):

> Contemporary racism is characterized by a rather complex combination of resentment at Black demands that are perceived as unfair, feelings that Whites are unfairly losing ground to Blacks, denial that racial discrimination remains a thorny problem for Blacks, and a conservative assumption that Blacks generally do not share American values of

> hard work, self-reliance, and individualism. This complex belief system is considered to be a product of socialization into the contemporary American racial system and has been shown to reinforce opposition to race-targeted policies designed to reduce the persistent inequalities that African Americans face.

This suggests the pervasive existence of systemic anti-Black policies, structures, and practices that impact Black students who attend primarily White institutions. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1997) and Critical Race Theory (Solórzano, 1997) can help contextualize how systemic racism is present and manifests across multiple ecological systems.

Racialized Landscapes on the PWI Campus

The landscapes of college campuses can also contribute to a racialized experience for college students. A study by Inwood and Martin (2009) explored the elements of the University of Georgia's campus to understand better how whiteness and white privilege are situated in and use landscapes on the campus. Inwood and Martin articulate the following regarding the University of Georgia, a historically White institution's campus (2009, p. 375):

> The UGA's North Campus landscape, particularly its historical markers, makes and normalizes a racialized past in ways that simplify a complex story, erasing some elements of racial conflict and their possible links to ongoing struggles of racialized identities on campus.

Considering Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1997), the racialized experience created by a campus's landscape can impact the students existing within that environment. We must also consider the impact of the geographical location of the institution. They are creating race and imposing racial separation historically predominated in the southern states (Inwood and Martin, 2009). While it is unrealistic for primarily White campuses to change the location of their institution, higher education practitioners need to consider the impact that geographical location may have on their racially minoritized population, particularly Black students, many of

whose ancestors were primarily enslaved in the southern states, and explore how to mitigate harm.

Racial Microaggressions, Battle Fatigue, and Racism-Related Stress

Racial microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and racism-related stress are all racialized experiences that may impact Black students who attend PWIs. These terms will be defined here as they relate to the experience of a sense of belonging on campus. Racial microaggressions, regardless of intent, reinforce a message that the targeted students are not welcome on their campus (Franklin, 2016). Racialized experiences, such as racial microaggressions, negatively impact the psychological, physiological, and academic success of students of color (Smith, 2004; Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). While Black students have experienced racial microaggressions most of their lives, a higher education environment with a hostile racial climate may become overwhelming (Franklin, 2016). These experiences may contribute to racial battle fatigue, described as “a response to the distressing mental/emotional conditions that result from facing racism daily” (Smith, 2004, p. 180).

Wei et al. (2011) suggest that the university environment significantly impacts the association between stress and persistent attitudes of Black students among their Asian American and Latino peers. This study used the concept of minority status stress, defined by Smedley et al. (2003) as unique stresses experienced by minority students that impact their college adjustment and integration. This definition is very similar to Harrell’s (2000) definition of racism-related stress, which is "the race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism and that tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being" (p. 44). Minority- or racism-related stress can

contribute to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness for affected students (Harrell, 2000; Wei et al., 2011).

In a quantitative study of 160 Asian American, African American, and Latino students attending primarily White institutions, the study examined whether perceptions of the university environment impacted minority status stress and persistence attitudes (Wei et al., 2011). This study frames the experience of being a racially minoritized student on a primarily White campus as causing stress separate from general stressors (Wei et al., 2011). Wei et al.'s (2011) study attempted to address the gap in Tinto's (1993) integration theory, criticized for its applicability to racially minoritized students and for not considering the contextual environment as a persistence factor. While their research found no significant differences between the three racially minoritized groups, contributing to the generalization of the study, the researchers purposefully did not investigate each group individually, limiting their ability to explore unique experiences not shared among the racial groups. This limitation adds to the shortcomings of this qualitative study by not allowing for the exploration of the experiences that led to participants' scores, a gap that my research intends to contribute to.

Wei et al.'s (2011) research supports the idea that the experiences of racially minoritized students can hurt persistence, with this correlation being more significant if the participant identified as African American. My study will focus exclusively on understanding the experiences of Black students who attend PWIs, providing narratives that may help scholars better understand how perceptions of institutional responses may impact their experiences. This reality underscores the presence of a negative impact of racialized experiences for Black students on PWI campuses and calls for further exploration of this topic. As institutional leaders consider their role in fostering a favorable climate for Black students, they must be open to exploring the

ways that racism manifests in the policies, practices, and structures of their campus community. This requires a level of awareness that may differ depending on the racial identities of community members.

Race and Awareness of Racialized Experiences

Racial identity plays a vital role in individuals' perceptions of interactions, policies, and practices rooted in racial bias (Garibay et al., 2019; Gin et al., 2017). However, recognizing racialized experiences and understanding them as harmful may be one of the challenges that prevent primarily White institutions from effectively responding to racially biased incidents. Garibay, Herrera, Johnston-Guerrero, and Garcia (2019) found that White men perceived racially discriminatory incidents as more isolated and, therefore, not a manifestation of systemic racism. This may create challenges for primarily White campus leaders who want to examine and understand the racial climate of their campus critically but lack some critical skills to do so.

A study by Bowman and Smith (2007) concluded that while Black students typically scored lower on negative race-related beliefs about campus diversity policy (reactionary racism, individual-deficit attributions, cultural pathology stereotypes, conservative policy values, race-targeted program attitudes, and curriculum diversity attitudes), White and Asian students were consistently the most negative across all six indicators of racial ideology (2007). This highlights that systemic racism impacting Black students who attend PWIs is not constrained only to the beliefs of White members of a campus community but potentially includes other racially minoritized members, underlining the importance of a systematic exploration of the racialized experiences of Black students attending PWIs. A systemic inquiry would consist of not only examining the lived experiences of Black students attending PWIs but also a careful examination

of the policies, structures, and practices that contribute to their racialized lived experiences. These racialized experiences can have a detrimental impact on Black students.

The traditional college or university president in United States higher education is typically a White man (Waring, 2003). Considering that college and university leadership may leverage positional and political power to enact institutional change around policy and practice, it is crucial that these leaders fully grasp the nuances of racism on their campuses. This may prove to be challenging if their racial identities and life experiences make them less sensitive to the experiences of racial minorities on campus. While Black students navigate a racialized experience, many White community members on college campuses may not see or fully grasp the harm that these experiences cause to Black students. The lack of shared understanding may impact campus community members' ability to build the appropriate coalitions and effectively engage in conversations about intersections of race, policy, practice, and structures. This may suggest to Black students that their campus community does not see their experiences on campus as valid or harmful and may reinforce messages that they do not belong on their campuses.

While individual incidents of racial bias may be easier to recognize, rather than racial discrimination appearing overt and blatant, acts of bigotry may manifest more subtly (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015). This may include, for example, racial microaggressions explored earlier in this chapter. While microaggressions may seem more subtle and less harmful, they contribute to adverse outcomes for Black students. White students may not recognize these more subtle incidents as racially biased due to a limited understanding of racism (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Additionally, campus leaders who are White and seek to lead a response to a racialized experience may not fully grasp the nuances that are important to understand to support Black students better. This lack of leadership, informed by minoritized

racial experiences, may lead to a depressing cycle of adverse outcomes for Black students, including a lack of a sense of belonging or decisions to leave the institution.

Racialized Experiences Harm Black Students

While students might be engaged in college, they may not be 'accepted as equals, recognized, respected, and empowered as learners in a diverse community,' several indicators of inclusivity (Hurtado et al., 2015, p. 60). These indicators of inclusivity are also consistent with factors described by Strayhorn (2012) as contributing to a positive sense of belonging for college students, including perceived social support, a sensation of connectedness, and feeling cared about, respected, valued, and important in the campus community. Strayhorn (2012) additionally shared seven core elements of a sense of belonging informed by his constructive review of existing literature:

1. A sense of belonging is a basic human need (p. 29).
2. A sense of belonging is a fundamental motive that drives human behavior (p. 32).
3. Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance in specific contexts, at certain times, and among certain populations (p. 33).
4. Sense of belonging is related to, seemingly a consequence of, mattering (p. 36).
5. Social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging (p. 37).
6. A sense of belonging engenders other positive outcomes (p. 38).
7. Sense of belonging must be satisfied continually, and likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change (p. 39).

These core elements help frame both the importance of a sense of belonging for college students and the critical contexts that inform how belonging is experienced and how it should be explored. The core elements presented by Strayhorn are additionally crucial because, like Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1997), they emphasize that the context of an environment impacts a sense of belonging, and student identities matter when conceptualizing belonging on college campuses.

Because Black students are racially minoritized on college campuses and considering the historical exclusion of Black students on historically White campuses, the racialized experiences demand a heightened sense of importance by college and university leaders to ensure that policies, structures, and practices reinforce their positive sense of belonging. Additionally, this must all occur within bioecological systems considering Black students' racially minoritized status within the campus and the country relating to the social and political climate of the United States. Even though access to higher education has increased for students of color, this has not necessarily translated to equitable social settings (Franklin, 2016). For example, racially biased incidents hurt the campus climate for racially minoritized students socially and academically (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Beyond individual incidents that may negatively impact a sense of belonging, Black students must also navigate racialized experiences more broadly, and responses by colleges and universities operate within the broader context of the United States' culture and policy.

Regulation and Freedom of Expression

The United States legislation systematically impacts how campuses implement policy and practice. This can be particularly salient when harmful actions, such as hate speech, do not conflict with laws, and efforts by institutions could trigger litigation. Much of the previously explored research in this chapter focused on actions and behaviors that are objectively harmful or offensive but are often classified as broadly as 'expression' within the context of United States law. Entrenched within the Constitution of the United States is the First Amendment, which protects the right to freedom of expression, even if those expressions are hateful or otherwise harmful to targeted communities. While protected words like hate speech often cause adverse

outcomes for impacted students, the actions are primarily protected, adding additional nuance to strategies to support campus equity and inclusion initiatives.

The First Amendment often provides structural support and protection for perpetrators engaging in individual racially biased behavior. Institutional responses to incidents often do not provide accountability that addresses the harm caused (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997). When institutions do not effectively challenge biased behavior, students are deprived of an opportunity to analyze how they have impacted others critically. This may be related to the institutional preservation of a majority culture and the systemic reproduction of racism. Chang (2002) describes institutional efforts to respond to racially biased incidents as actions centering on conservation rather than social transformation. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1997) suggests that these responses would impact the student across various ecological systems. Critical Race Theory (Solórzano, 1997) would tell that racism is ingrained in the inadequate responses to racial bias. Institutions must prioritize changing campus culture systemically through every bioecological system, where racial discrimination propagates and reinforces environments that respond to the racialized experiences of their minoritized populations. Current policies and practices used by colleges and universities exemplify approaches that do not fully address the systemic and individual elements that contribute to negative racialized experiences on college campuses.

Responding to Racialized Experiences on College Campuses

While individual incidents are a manifestation of the systemic racism that exists within the United States, there is a gap in the literature concerning the structures that encourage the prevalence of those incidents. Existing literature has regularly focused on institutional responses to specific incidents of racial bias, which this section of the literature review also focuses on

(Hughes, 2013; Engberg, 2004; Farrell & Jones, 1998; Midgette & Mulvey, 2022; Boysen et al., 2009; Davis & Harris, 2015; Garibay et al., 2020; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). A review of the literature highlights a significant body of knowledge that speaks to the presence of and responses to racially biased incidents on college campuses (Cole & Harper, 2017; Swim et al., 2003; Davis & Harris, 2015; Jackson & Heckman, 2002; Farrell & Jones, 1988; Hughes, 2013; Coon & Parker, 2020). Literature suggests that even as demographics on college campuses shift, strategies used to respond to racially biased incidents remain unchanged (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997). Aguirre & Messineo (1997) describe institutional structures as 'rooted in a belief system that protects White interests and facilitates the expression of racial bigotry' (pg. 29). Colleges and universities must be positioned to address this reality through approaches informed by the experiences of students impacted by this racially dominant-identity culture. That is, moving beyond framing individual acts of racism and towards understanding a systemic structure of racism (Solórzano, 1997) would require campus leaders to recognize individual acts of racial bias as a manifestation of structural racism.

The literature describes increases in racially biased incidents across decades. College campuses have reported racial exclusion, discrimination, and increases in racial bias as demographics shifted when racially minoritized students gained access to American higher education (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Aguirre & Messineo (1997) referenced 175 reports of racially biased incidents, including hate speech, during the 1986-1987 academic year. Decades later, Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero (2015) found similar numbers, reporting that there were 205 racially biased incidents across college campuses from September 1, 2005, to May 1, 2010. Ninety-one of those incidents were referenced as 'racial slurs/comments,' and the remainder were other forms of expression. Both studies relied on self-

reporting or notable events, which likely underrepresents the actual number of racially biased incidents. The continued prevalence of racial bias on college campuses highlights that institutions have not yet effectively employed strategies that successfully contribute to a more inclusive campus culture for racially minoritized student populations.

While studies have primarily focused on institutional responses to individual incidents of racial bias, this study would expand existing knowledge through a more holistic examination of the lived experiences of Black students about institutional responses to their racialized experiences, including but not limited to incidents of racism. This study may also produce knowledge that helps institutions respond to impacted students. Students affected by racial bias articulate concerns and demand appropriate responses from colleges and universities (Komives & Woodward, Jr., 2003). These concerns and demands suggest that minoritized identity students have a negative perception of their experiences and may feel that their campuses need to be more effectively holding their community accountable for establishing a culture of belonging. This experience goes beyond a single incident and speaks to understanding and responding using an ecosystemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). Currently, there is a gap in the literature that explores how perceptions of campus responses to racialized experiences impact Black students. This study aims to explore beyond individual incidents by considering the multiple facets that may inform a Black student's racialized experiences. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1997) conceptualizes these multi-system interactions between individuals and their environments and can be used as a model to contextualize the Black student experience.

Behavioral Accountability on College Campuses

Colleges and universities traditionally have student disciplinary systems that aid in responding to behavior on their campuses. These disciplinary systems provide accountability and

moral development for students engaging in behavior contrary to an institution's mission (Stimpson, 2015; Lancaster, 2012). While student conduct and bias response teams (discussed later in this section) are a strategy for responding to the individual behavior of racial bias, these systems do not address the overall designs and structures that contribute to these incidents.

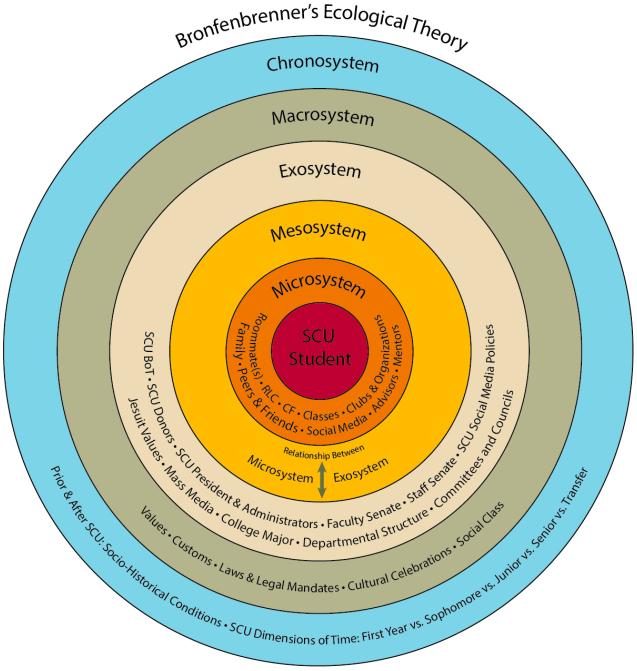
The practice of responding to student behavior on campuses in the United States has been present since the formation of American higher education (Lancaster, 2012). The philosophy of student conduct requires educational institutions to 'consider the student as a whole—his [sic] intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional makeup, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values' (American Council on Higher Education, 1936, pg. 1). This philosophy articulates the grounding principles of moral development in responding to individual student behavior. However, this approach needs to be expanded to include institutions responding to their systemic structures that create environments where these racialized incidents occur. Despite the established purpose of disciplinary systems, responding effectively to the racialized experiences of Black students requires a more holistic approach and an understanding of current practices to respond to incidents that occur on college campuses.

Within the context of primarily White institutions, Black students not only are directly or indirectly impacted by individual actions of racial bias but also make meaning of a lived experience informed by the intersections of their racial identity and existence within a White-dominant culture, such as those inherently present at PWIs. As colleges and universities aim to support Black student populations better, they must hold themselves accountable for adequately responding to not only individual incidents that occur on their campuses but also to reconstruct

racist systems that exist within campus communities that impact the living and learning experiences of these student populations.

Bronfenbrenner's (1997) bioecological systems theory allows us to conceptualize these intersections on college campuses. The Office of Multicultural Learning at Santa Clara University utilizes Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to conceptualize how their students and environment interact (Santa Clara University, n.d.).

Figure 3. Santa Clara University's Application of Bioecological Systems Theory



Because some white campus leaders may not be adequately prepared to see or identify those structures, the voices of Black students can be powerful guides or sources of wisdom and perspective. While disciplinary and accountability systems serve as significant tools available to college campuses to respond to student behavior, supporting Black students through their racialized experiences on PWI campuses must expand beyond responding to individual incidents. Disciplinary systems do not address the systemic culture of historically White campuses, informed by their history and position within the greater United States' culture, that negatively

impacts the experiences of Black students. One example is using Bias Response Teams (BRTs) to respond to bias incidents.

Bias Response Teams (BRTs)

Some campuses use Bias Response Teams (BRTs) as an alternative resolution process to support the campus community when bias incidents occur. While incidents may cause the affected party to feel physically and psychologically unsafe, there may not be formal student conduct processes available to respond to an incident of bias (LePeau et al., 2015). This may be because bias incidents may intersect with freedom of speech and expression protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution or if a formal policy, as defined by an institution's Code of Conduct, was not potentially violated. When institutional thresholds to trigger a formal disciplinary response to racially biased incidents are not reached, responding to bias incidents on college campuses varies depending on the institutions and interpretations of the severity of the behavior. While a formal disciplinary response may not occur, these incidents may be recognized as harmful or impactful to affected parties, prompting institutions to respond from a community support framework. These community support frameworks may focus on those affected by the harmful actions of others but do not necessarily address the individual actions of the student alleged to engage in the action or systemic issues that create the environment where those actions are more prevalent.

BRT responses are typically affected party or complainant-driven processes that provide resources and opportunities for these individuals to give insight into what they want to see done (LePeau et al., 2015). Schlosser & Sedlacek (2001) describe a three-pronged approach to BRT response:

1. putting the incident into context;
2. gathering information about the incident, and

3. providing opportunities for dialogue and education in the campus community.

BRTs are not necessarily designed to hold perpetrators of biased incidents accountable but instead provide a network of support and guidance for those impacted. Formal disciplinary procedures, such as those in a student conduct office, may be explored when a potential policy violation occurs. Considering this reality, BRTs can only be as effective as the educators on the response team.

A lack of research focuses on how educators on BRTs consider their identities, negotiate team dynamics, and strive for organizational change (LePeau et al., 2015). Educators supporting bias responses may not be able to critically examine how personal identities influence the effectiveness of BRT response, their willingness to advocate for affected parties, or their ability to implement policies and practices that comprehensively address students' racialized experiences. This, then, is a manifestation of a systemic issue of racism present on college campuses. Critical race theory insists that racism is everywhere, including the policies and procedures that institutions use to respond to student behavior (Solórzano, 1997). An approach that does not recognize the systemic nature of racism in the work will leave racialized experiences untouched and the racist structures that contribute to those experiences in place. Not only are BRT teams functionally unable to readily engage in a systemic response to racially biased incidents, but their effectiveness in reducing racially biased incidents that impact student experiences on college campuses is also not being assessed, leaving the systems and structures in place that create opportunities for bias incidents to continue to manifest. Institutions may not have a goal to reduce the number of bias incidents on their campuses or address systemic structures that contribute to the racialized experiences of their students, and there are additional barriers that complicate campus responses to student racialized experiences.

Institutional Barriers to Responding to Racialized Experiences

Institutions in the United States have made significant efforts to articulate their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses. These efforts are most notable in the diversity statements many institutions have crafted to serve as visions for their campuses. Diversity statements formally communicate the institution's commitment to these areas to external stakeholders, current and prospective students, families, faculty, and staff. However, there needs to be a consistent definition aligned across higher education institutions (Foste et al., 2022). This reality can be challenging because while institutional statements convey a vision, they may not translate into actions. Initial actions that institutions take include the employment of Chief Diversity Officers, the establishment diversity and inclusion officers, and educational workshops, training, and institutes that build knowledge and skills related to these topics (Foste et al., 2022). While these actions are a good step in educating the community and allocating resources to support equity and inclusion for diverse populations, they may need to address overarching structures and systems contributing to negative racialized college campus experiences. A critical race lens suggests that barriers to addressing systemic structures of racism may be tied to our larger societal structures of whiteness and white supremacy that influence policy and practice on college campuses, specifically those identified as historically or predominantly white institutions.

Structure, Organization, and Leadership of Higher Education

The structure, organization, and leadership positions in higher education remain predominantly white (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). This may lead to institutional decisions and priorities excluding critical voices from populations of color that provide a more holistic understanding of the needs of a college campus. Structural diversity can also be essential in how

students perceive the campus climate and their experiences with racism (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Black students who attend primarily White institutions will not experience organizational leadership reflective of their racial identities and have to consider whether predominantly white leadership understands their racialized experiences enough to pursue systemic cultural change at the institution that might contribute to more positive living and learning experiences. Scholars suggest that one action that a PWI should explore to address hostile campus racial climates and the resulting racial battle fatigue would be to focus on hiring and enrolling faculty, staff, and administrators from historically underrepresented groups (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Black Student Belonging on College Campuses

Historically, research on belonging has been approached primarily through dominant, whiteness-centered lenses and contexts despite campus populations increasingly representing intersectionality of identities, cultures, and perspectives (Faircloth et al., 2022). This research aims to explore Black student belonging dynamics present within a United States cultural context of white supremacy and racism. I define belonging as the systemic structures and individual experiences reinforcing students' rightful presence and inclusion. My proposed definition of belonging considers Strayhorn's (2012) definition of a sense of belonging, informed by his extensive literature review, but also expands belonging to consider how existing systems and structures may also impact Black students' sense of belonging, especially related to the impact of systemic racism in the United States and its manifestations on college campuses. I imagine belonging as a broad systemic goal, similar to inclusion and equity, informed not just by individual experiences but by a broader campus culture evidenced by policies, practices, and structures that demonstrate rightful presence on college campuses. Faircloth et al. share the

following related to an increased need to expand the focus of emerging research related to belonging (2022, pg. 2):

> Not only are diverse perspectives not drawn on frequently, but marginalized communities often find themselves blamed for their lack of belonging, and the onus is put on them to assimilate. We attempt here to highlight the responsibilities of systems—and those who wield power in them—to intentionally make space for belonging for all, by supporting the inclusion and preservation of culture, identity, and agency, and drawing on the strengths of all.

The conceptual framework introduced in Chapter I attempts to integrate this emerging perspective by incorporating Bronfenbrenner's (1997) bioecological systems theory, critical race theory (Solórzano, 1997), and the community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2007) to envision how the racialized experiences of Black students on primarily White campuses (PWIs), perceptions of institutional responses, and the strengths Black students bring to campus may impact their sense of belonging. Belonging is critical to well-being and is simultaneously exposed to systemic factors that may decrease a sense of belongingness (Faircloth et al., 2022). This requires campus leaders to take a critical stance that students have the right to feel a sense of belonging on their college campuses.

College campuses are situated within the broader sociopolitical context of the United States, a culture where "disparities and power differentials with regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability/disability, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, or religion/spirituality remain deeply entrenched, marginalizing and oppressing many individuals and groups" (Faircloth, 2022, pg. 13). This dissertation takes the stance that this is present on college campuses, specifically primarily White campuses, for Black students. The concept of Black student belonging must be critically explored to deconstruct how systemic disparity and power manifest with the hope of constructing a better system.

The concept of belonging for college students has been explored in many ways, with literature primarily focusing on better understanding factors that impact belonging in postsecondary education (Hoffman et al., 2002; Freeman et al., 2007; Gapalan & Brady, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hausmann et al., 2007; Museus et al., 2018). These studies found that a sense of belonging was essential for facilitating positive social and academic student outcomes, such as persistence and academic motivation. In addition, the populations surveyed in those studies reflected majoritized identities in that they were predominantly White and male. While these studies provide a valuable foundation for the current research, only some use a critical lens to examine racialized systems and structures that may contribute to belonging on the college campus.

Literature by Strayhorn (2019) explores the concept of the sense of belonging for college students, including students of racially minoritized backgrounds. Strayhorn describes "sense of belonging" as a term with many meanings, such as a student's experiences with belongingness, membership, and support. For this study, I propose broadly defining belonging as systemic structures and individual experiences that reinforce students' rightful presence and inclusion. Each definition related to belonging deals with the psychological experiences of college students and their perception of their level of integration into a specific context (Strayhorn, 2019). The proposed definition for the current study recognizes the complex interactions between individuals and systems and structures in their environment within the broad sociopolitical context of the institution and the United States. Notably, while organizations can strive to facilitate a culture that increases their community members' sense of belonging, they cannot externally assume that a community member is experiencing a sense of belonging. As college

and university leadership consider what belonging looks like on their campuses, it is crucial to consider that the sense of belonging may differ depending on a student's minoritized identity.

Much of the reviewed literature overrepresents white students when exploring the sense of belonging in research or analysis. More recent research has begun to address this gap more consistently by focusing their studies specifically on minoritized populations, such as racially minoritized students and by gender (Rainey et al., 2018; Duran et al., 2020; Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Hunter et al., 2019; Strayhorn, 2019). This study will add to an existing body of knowledge by both explicitly focusing on the experiences of Black students, a racially minoritized student population on PWI campuses, and additionally exploring whether their perceptions of institutional responses to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging, an area not yet explored in research through a critical race and bioecological systems theoretical lens. Recent high school graduates enrolling in college in the United States experience what Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes as an ecological transition, where they learn how to navigate their new academic environment (Freeman et al., 2007). A sense of belonging in the first year can significantly impact whether students return to an institution during their second year.

Belonging to First-Year College Students Across Racial Groups

According to data collected from 2016 to 2019 by the U.S. News & World Report (2022), one-third of first-year students will not return for their sophomore year. This statistic is slightly worse than that presented by the American College Testing Program (1999). It indicated that one-quarter of first-year students do not return for their sophomore year, suggesting that U.S. higher education may be faring worse at retaining first-year students (Hoffman et al., 2002). Hoffman et al. (2002) performed a mixed-methods study of first-year students taking a first-year

seminar course to develop, test, and refine a "sense of belonging" instrument, theorizing that a sense of belonging predicts first-year student retention. While this study focused on learning communities present in the classroom, perceptions of institutional commitment emerged as a central theme related to student intention to persist. This shift in the literature suggests that the institution plays a significant role in creating an environment where students are retained. Hoffman et al.'s (2002) study highlighted essential factors related to perceived "quality" by students, including student/peer relationships and student/faculty relationships.

Hoffman et al.'s (2002) study found that developing "interpersonal ties," where students could be provided aid, guidance, and feedback about academics. This provided a sense of being cared for and being a community member. This increased personal comfort around social and academic matters. Freeman et al.'s (2007) quantitative study also suggests that a sense of belonging in the classroom positively motivated students academically. A study by Hausmann et al. (2007) did not identify significant differences between White and Black students' perceptions of belonging, intentions to persist, or institutional commitment. However, it did identify peer support as a positive factor in a sense of belonging over time for Black students. Hausman et al.'s (2007) and Freeman et al.'s (2007) were completed at primarily White institutions. They included a marginal percentage of Black students in its population sample compared to White student participants. The lack of significant differences between student populations may result from the institution where the study was completed or quantitative limitations due to the small sample sizes of Black students. Notably, Hausman et al.'s (2007) study focuses on incentivizing belonging for college students and recommends targeted "programming" to increase the sense of belonging. This approach ignores systemic elements of a college or university campus that may impact the sense of belonging for students.

Black Student Identity and Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging has the potential to impact many facets of a college student's academic and social experiences. A significant body of research links the sense of belonging as an essential factor in predicting student persistence (Booker, 2016; Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Hausmann et al., 2007; Hausmann et al., 2009; Duran et al., 2020; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; Murphy and Zirkel, 2015). Racially ethnically minoritized students report a lower sense of belonging than their peers at 4-year institutions (Gapalan & Brady, 2019). A critical quantitative study by Duran et al. (2020) supported that, on average, Black students experienced a lower sense of belonging than their White peers. Colleges and universities may be inherently privileging those from dominant groups and not creating a welcoming environment for Black students (Duran et al., 2020). Murphy and Zirkel (2015) found that as more students of color were enrolled in a major, their sense of belonging increased, while the sense of belonging for White students decreased. This is consistent with how critical race theory asks us to think about racialized experiences in college and university environments, intentional or unintentional, and privilege racially dominant groups over racially minoritized groups. Murphy and Zirkel's study asks us to interpret the decreasing sense of belonging for White students when students of color enter a space. A critical race perspective would emphasize that race impacts student experiences, and we cannot overlook the presence of students of color, which may cause discomfort for White students. Often, colleges and universities have prioritized the comfort of White students at the expense of the comfort and experience of racially minoritized students. This is a manifestation of systemic racism within the United States' higher education, and college and university leadership needs to contextualize how it may impact student sense of belonging.

Rainey et al.'s (2018) study explored the intersections of students' race and gender on their sense of belonging in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Their study found that (a) students who remained in STEM experienced a greater sense of belonging, (b) underrepresented students were less likely to experience a sense of belonging in STEM, and (c) the structural and cultural elements of the university continue to privilege White men (Rainey et al., 2018). Similarly to Hoffman et al.'s (2002) study and Hausmann et al.'s (2007) study, Rainey et al. (2018) found that interpersonal relationships were necessary, such that demographic isolation was associated with a lower sense of belonging in STEM fields. This is an important finding because it may suggest that when representation is low, such as Black students at a predominantly White institution, Black students may be more likely to experience a lower sense of belonging. This again emphasizes the need for primarily White institutions to pay more attention to the experiences of Black students.

Conclusion

Literature has established that a sense of belonging is essential to positive social and academic outcomes for students. Unfortunately, a significant body of research relies on data gained from overwhelmingly White populations to understand a sense of belonging. As college and university campuses see an increase in the representation of historically racially minoritized students, it becomes increasingly important to consider how race may lead to different experiences related to belonging. Additionally, much of the literature relating to belonging focuses on research that studies belonging with relationships between students, peers, faculty, and staff. While positive relationships are unquestionably meaningful, a significant gap in existing research must consider systemic policies, practices, and structures that reinforce critical messages related to belonging. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1997) and critical

race theory (Solórzano, 1997) would ask us to consider that racialized elements are inherently present on predominantly White campuses that may be reinforcing exclusionary messages to Black students. My research aims to expand how we think about belonging in the context of colleges and universities by 1) recognizing that when students are invited to participate in a campus community, they have a right to be fully present and 2) belonging must be supported on the individual and systemic levels to reinforce rightful presence for all students on college campuses.

Black students participating in this study will serve as essential voices to help us understand the experiences of a population that has been historically underrepresented in research. As predominantly White institutional leadership seeks to support Black student experiences better, accompanying narratives will help leaders understand individual and systemic elements that should be considered when building cultures of belonging. Because much of the research has focused on the experiences of White students and higher education was constructed from a perspective of whiteness, these additional perspectives will help highlight policies, practices, and structures present on primarily White campuses that will need to be (re)constructed to meet goals of belonging. The current racialized climate of United States higher education demands that we give appropriate attention to a population that has been historically excluded, ignored, and marginalized systemically within the country and the colleges and university campuses within it.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with purpose." – Zora Neale Hurston

This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate the central research questions that guide this dissertation study. As a reminder, the purpose of this qualitative dissertation study was to examine whether the perceptions of Black students about the responses of primarily White institutions (PWIs) to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. The following sub-questions explore the primary research question of this dissertation study:

1. What factors do Black undergraduate students believe contribute to or threaten the sense of belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize as present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures that impact Black campus community members?
4. In what ways would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

Qualitative data from this dissertation study were analyzed using thematic coding (Eatough & Smith, 2017) from a critical race paradigm (Solórzano, 1997). This chosen methodology aimed to emphasize the voices of Black students within the various ecological systems they encounter on campus. Higher education leaders could utilize the data and insights gained from this dissertation study to inform future strategies for supporting the experiences of Black students at PWIs.

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, the establishment of thematic data analysis as the methodology for this study, and details considerations related to human subjects, research integrity, and study limitations. Interview protocol questions will be linked to

each sub-question and further detailed in this methodology chapter's protocol section (see Appendix A). Sub-questions are also connected to this dissertation study's theoretical and philosophical frameworks.

Research Design

This dissertation study is grounded in qualitative methodology. Qualitative research designs allow the researcher to explore and understand the meanings people assign to their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Hennick, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). As a researcher who describes themselves as curious about others' stories, qualitative inquiry allows me to learn how others perceive the world around them. This research design anchors qualitative inquiry to discerning themes that Black students from diverse backgrounds may share. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, seeking to speak more broadly to the various lived experiences of the broader Black student population at PWIs, which could be used to inform institutional strategy better.

Epistemology

Epistemology relates to how the researcher views the world and comes to uncover and understand knowledge (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Existing research has consistently supported that there are factors that impact students' sense of belonging on college campuses (Hoffman et al., 2002; Huasman et al., 2007; Hurtado & Ruiz Alvarado, 2015; Hurtado et al., 2015). As a Black researcher who attended a PWI interested in the experiences of other Black students, I need to acknowledge that perceptions of the Black student experience at a PWI may differ from student to student. This position means that while students may identify as Black, their experiences are still unique, reflect individual ways of knowing and understanding, and represent

diverse worldviews. A thematic approach allows the researcher to consider the uniqueness of these experiences grounded in specific contexts and worldviews.

Critical Race Theory

A critical race perspective theorizes that current inequalities are connected to historical practices of racial exclusion (Taylor, 1998). Critical race theory (Solórzano, 1997) frames these experiences as informed by the overall sociopolitical culture of the United States, which is shaped by systemic racism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be defined as "a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges how race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (Solórzano, 1997). CRT emerged in the 1970s in response to the slow progress in producing meaningful racial reform. It is grounded in its conceptual framework by the experiences of people of color, theorizing that current inequalities are connected to historical practices of racial exclusion (Taylor, 1998). In a higher education context, the application of CRT suggests that racialized experiences are a product of historical racial exclusion in academia and in the systems that govern the United States.

For the field of education, Solórzano suggests that five tenets of CRT should inform theory, research, and pedagogy (1997):

1. Intercentricity of race and racism.
2. Challenge dominant ideology.
3. Commitment to social justice.
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge.
5. Utilization of interdisciplinary approaches.

Race and racism cannot be considered independently when exploring the racialized experiences of Black students attending PWIs. Their experiences on campus are informed by their race, and the backdrop of those experiences consists of policies and practices grounded in a white-dominance power structure (racism). CRT asks us to challenge this dominant racial ideology

(whiteness). Whiteness is a multidimensional construct that includes attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and experiences related to White people and the positional privileges they embody in a racially hierarchical society, such as the United States (Schooley et al., 2019). This dissertation study aims to challenge whiteness in two ways: 1) by elevating the voices of Black students historically impacted by whiteness and 2) by challenging the existing structures on PWI campuses largely informed by whiteness.

CRT suggests that racism's integration within our society will influence institutional cultures, policies, and practices. For example, when racist behaviors occur (whether on campus or not), they are not isolated instances but rather manifestations of the larger structural and systemic white hegemony (Taylor, 1998). These manifestations contribute to Black students' racialized experiences while attending, resulting in further marginalization of a minoritized population. This dissertation study calls upon PWI leadership to challenge their historical approaches that have often negatively impacted minoritized populations.

Connecting Critical Race Theory & Bioecological Systems Theory

Solórzano suggests that educational institutions navigate in a conflict when dealing with issues of race; schools most often oppress and marginalize but maintain the potential to emancipate and empower (Solórzano, 1997). PWIs may have missions and visions that articulate a commitment to values such as belonging, equity, and inclusion, but they often have policies or practices that contribute to the opposite. Campus leaders at PWIs may only be partially aware of when policies and practices marginalize students. However, they must commit to gaining a complete understanding to inform more equitable and inclusive cultures. Critical race theory is crucial during data analysis to explore best how racism present in multiple systems contributes to the racialized experiences of Black students. The existing structures at PWIs are not independent,

and this dissertation study utilizes CRT as a philosophical approach alongside Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1997) to examine how racism manifests in interrelated systems more holistically.

Setting and Participants

This section outlines the research setting, population, sampling, inclusion criteria, and participant eligibility for this dissertation study. The participants in this study will be Black students who attend primarily White institutions (PWIs). The research site selection was intentionally designed to ensure greater access to potential participants due to existing relationships. The institution chosen is primarily a White institution, and its institutional profile aligns with the researcher's interests.

Research Setting

This dissertation study assigned a pseudonym for the research site to mitigate potential harm to research participants and the site. "William University" is a 4-year, private, primarily White institution (PWI) in North Carolina. Primarily White Institutions (PWIs) is the term used to describe higher education institutions where students who identify as White account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Lomotey, 2010). The institution has approximately 6,300 undergraduate students, with Black students representing 5% of the undergraduate student population compared to an 80% representation of White undergraduate student peers. This institution was chosen because its institutional profile matches the criteria relevant to this study (a 4-year, primarily White institution). North Carolina was chosen as the geographical location due to prior established professional connections that will provide greater access to potential research participants. The United States South also has a deeply rooted connection to whiteness and oppression that provides a powerful context to explore. William University shares a history

with many institutions in the United States South, including not welcoming their first Black student for decades after they were established. These institutions were not created with consideration for Black students. This demands a responsibility to research their experiences navigating an environment not made for them to belong.

Population, Sampling, & Inclusion Criteria

This dissertation study explores the experiences of students who identify as 1) Black and 2) attending a primarily White institution (PWI). The participants in this dissertation study represent a sample of Black students who attend PWIs. Gay and Airasian (1996) describe sampling as selecting individuals for a study who can represent the larger group from which they were selected. Sampled populations provide an opportunity to articulate more generalizable findings to the larger population (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Population

Recruiting and selecting Black students were essential for conducting this dissertation study, which explores perceptions of responses to racialized experiences. A racialized experience is described as a lived experience that is 'constrained by institutional racism and cultural bias' (Asante et al., 2016, pg. 368). Black students who attend PWIs share racialized experiences due to being Black and attending a PWI, which one can assume is informed by the institutional racism and cultural biases that have shaped the sociopolitical structure of the United States. However, this dissertation study does not assume that Black students perceive their racialized experiences similarly, if at all, nor that Black students hold similar perceptions regarding responses to their racialized experiences. The participants were recruited by Black staff and students attending the research site during this dissertation study, using purposeful and snowball sampling methodologies.

Sampling

This dissertation study utilized purposeful sampling to recruit potential participants. As Patton (2002) described, purposeful sampling involves effectively identifying and selecting information-rich cases using limited resources. Wilmot further details this approach (2005, pg. 221):

> With purposive non-random sampling, the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them. The characteristics of individuals are used as the basis of selection, most often chosen to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population.

Black students who attend primarily White institutions (PWIs) constitute a particular sample for this dissertation study, aligning with the primary research question's focus. The demographic questionnaire served as an additional tool to be intentional about the research population relevant to this study. This dissertation study recognizes that students are the ultimate gatekeepers of their knowledge and lived experiences. Black students were the primary recruiters, sharing information in their student organizations and social networks. This resulted in the inclusion of ten research participants, which is a small but appropriate number given the research design of this dissertation study.

Sample Size. Qualitative investigations typically involve small samples, with the sample size being an important consideration when determining the extent to which a researcher can make generalizations from their study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Formalized methods of phenomenological research rarely specify exact sample sizes but require that the researcher ensure that each participant's voice is respected (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Alase (2007) suggested that the appropriate sample size for phenomenological research falls between 2 to 25 research participants, which is a relatively wide range, necessitating the researcher to articulate a rationale supporting their chosen sample size. In a mixed methods review of sample size and

research quality, predominantly in psychological research, Onwuegbuzie & Leech found no correlations between sample sizes and research quality for interpretive phenomenological analysis, such as the approach used in this dissertation study (2007). Researchers must be cautious not to include too many participants in their research studies. Bartholomew et al. describe that having too much data in phenomenological methods 'risks suffocating or blurring the voices of the participants' (2021, pg. 2). As honoring the voices and experiences of Black student participants is of particular interest in this dissertation study, the study aimed to include data resulting from 10 semi-structured interviews with Black undergraduate students who attend a primarily White institution (PWI) or until data saturation was believed to be achieved. Data saturation for this dissertation study was determined when the researcher believed that no new data, themes, or coding related to the constraints of the study were possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Recruitment

The recruitment of Black students interested in participating in this dissertation study was accomplished through individual outreach to Black students and staff at the research site. These gatekeepers had connections with Black students attending the research site at the time of this dissertation study. Gatekeepers included staff in the research site's multicultural student center, including one focusing on Black community initiatives, and current students, including one particularly interested in this research study. As part of the demographic survey, potential participants were additionally asked, 'Given my interest in exploring the perceptions of Black students who attend PWIs, are you able to refer at least one potential participant to my study by sharing my student and contact information with them (see Appendix C). This allowed Black students to continue to be gatekeepers and reduce the potential impact of perceived power

structures on a Black student's decision to participate. Potential participants who shared that they were willing to forward dissertation study information to others were provided a sample referral script (see Appendix D). All participants and gatekeepers were provided with this dissertation study's recruitment script to help familiarize themselves with the purpose of this dissertation study (see Appendix B).

Inclusion Criteria

The U.S. Census (2022) describes Black or African-American populations as those having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. For this dissertation study, 'Black' will be used interchangeably with 'African-American' when referencing. Potential participants were asked to complete an electronic demographic survey and consent form before participating in this study to ensure that they met the qualifications for participation. To qualify to participate in this study, potential participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. Self-identify as a Black or African-American undergraduate student.
2. Currently attending a 4-year Primarily White Institution.
3. Providing parent/guardian consent to participate in this dissertation study if they are under 18.

Potential participants recruited for this dissertation study were asked to complete a demographic survey as part of an electronic demographic survey and consent form (see Appendix C). Qualtrics, an online survey tool, was used to review potential participants. The demographic survey and consent forms were combined to streamline review and invitation protocols. Informed consent documents are further detailed later in this chapter.

The demographic survey was shared with potential participants with a personal invitation to each of them. Data collected through Qualtrics was uploaded to UNCG Box and Google Drive and then deleted from the researcher's personal computer and Qualtrics account after being securely stored. In addition to demographic information, potential participants were also asked

whether they or someone they know has been impacted by a racialized experience while attending their PWI. Potential participants whom a racialized experience has not impacted may be excluded as they may have yet to encounter such an experience at their institution or may not be able to contribute to the research questions of this study effectively.

Communication Protocol

Email was the preferred method of communication throughout this dissertation study to ensure accurate record-keeping. After distributing the electronic demographic survey and informed consent document, potential participants were updated regarding their status in the research study. Eighteen participants fully completed the electronic demographic survey and informed consent document; potential participants were allowed to participate in this dissertation study based on inclusion criteria. Of the 18 participants who received outreach, ten participated in the semi-structured interview as part of this dissertation study.

Black students selected to participate in the research study based on the inclusion criteria were asked to sign up for a 90-minute individual interview via email using an online scheduler powered by Microsoft Bookings. Participants in the individual interviews could only see available times and the time they selected. A private calendar was created that blocked off busy times, preventing potential participants from viewing other participant sign-ups, and provided participants with the flexibility to reschedule as needed. Participants were also informed of a $20 gift card compensation for participating in this dissertation study. Once individual interview times were confirmed, participants were emailed a unique Zoom link. As an additional layer of security, the Zoom waiting room was enabled to prevent unauthorized access. The day before the individual interview, participants were automatically emailed a reminder by Microsoft Bookings.

Before conducting the interview, the researcher provided participants with a detailed overview of the next steps in the research process, shared responsibilities between the participant and the researcher, and a reminder that they could withdraw from this dissertation study at anytime. After conducting individual interviews with eight participants, an update was shared with all participants, including a final recruitment call for any students who had yet to confirm an interview time. Following this update, two additional students confirmed and participated in individual interviews to conclude data gathering as part of this dissertation study.

Research Ethics and Human Subjects Protection

To protect human participants, qualitative research design must adhere to principles of 'informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, social justice, and practitioner research' (Shaw, 2008, pg. 408). Qualitative research presents a risk of involuntary disclosure due to the lack of clarity to participants in informed settings (Shaw, 2008). As such, this dissertation study included multiple strategies to maintain research integrity and protect Black students participating in this study. Potential participants provided a detailed informed consent document that outlines the purpose of this study, researcher and participant responsibilities, compensation, and minimal risks that Black students may encounter by participating in this study. Additionally, the researcher completed training to conduct ethical research and integrate practices that protect participants to the greatest extent possible.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is a responsibility that participants in research studies must be informed or made knowledgeable meaningfully for studies to be considered legal or of moral significance (Schuck, 1994). Informed consent is a particularly salient topic when working with participants who identify as Black, given historical atrocities in United States research. One such example is

the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, in which the United States Public Health Service studied the course of untreated syphilis using Black men as their research sample; these men did not give permission, were not told they had syphilis, and when a cure became available, a control sample of 201 of 399 Black men was left untreated—some of whom died (Freimuth et al., 2001). This egregious example highlights the significance of informed consent in research studies and how failing to respect the humanity of a research subject can lead to significant harm. While this dissertation study expected minimal risk for harm to research participants, maintaining research and researcher integrity requires a clear understanding of the roles of the researcher and their participants.

Informed consent attempts to capture and communicate the appropriate relationship between the researcher and research participants (Miller & Boulton, 2007). As part of this research study, potential participants were provided an electronic informed consent document modeled from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's informed consent template (see Appendix E). The informed consent document outlines the researcher's responsibilities and provides relevant information for potential research participants. Potential research participants had to review and sign the informed document online before participating in an interview as part of this dissertation study. Additionally, before conducting all activities or protocols for this study, the researcher reminded participants of the informed consent they signed and their right to withdraw at any point.

Researcher Training and Certification

Before this study, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). The CITI Program is an online training certification that includes courses in 'ethics, research, meeting regulatory requirements, responsible conduct of research,

and research administration' (CITI, n.d.). Participation in this certification provides additional knowledge and credibility to the researcher. It better ensures that this dissertation study considers appropriate steps to protect participants and increase practice equity.

Protecting Human Subjects

This dissertation study focuses on the lived experiences of Black undergraduate students who attend primarily White institutions (PWIs). As part of this research, participants are asked to share narratives in a semi-structured individual setting. This more intimate conversation encourages participants to share their stories but recognizes that as participants share and become characters in their stories, they are at risk of changing those stories (Shaw, 2008). Shaw describes that this risk of betrayal increases due to 'the greater closeness and consequent trust that may develop between the researcher and the participant during qualitative research, further exacerbated when sample sizes are smaller, and the details of how people live their lives are emphasized' (2008, pg. 409). While this dissertation study includes a smaller sample size and asks Black students to share narratives of their lived experiences, their salient moments are critical to understanding diverse perspectives. This dissertation study ensures that participants' lived experiences are honored and their narratives are protected—the following sections detail how this dissertation keeps information confidential.

Confidentiality

To ensure the confidentiality of research participants, all participants were allowed to self-select a pseudonym (i.e., alias) after their interview, which is used to reference them throughout this dissertation study. Participants who did not identify a pseudonym were assigned one as part of this dissertation study. All participants were informed that if they self-select a pseudonym, they should not use a name that may be easily connected to them, such as a middle

name, nickname, commonly used pen name, etc. Pseudonyms are kept confidential between the researcher and the participant. Because this research study also identified participants from one primarily White institution (PWI), the research site is also provided a pseudonym to protect institutional integrity and participants in attendance. Only necessary demographic data relevant to this study were collected, and no personal or health information was requested as part of this dissertation study.

Data Storage and Security

Data collected as part of this research study will be stored in UNCG Box ("Box"), an online storage service for all University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) users. Access to the Box is password-protected and will be maintained per UNCG's Access to and Retention of Research Data policy (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). As the Principal Investigator (PI), I bear primary responsibility for the collection, retention, and (when appropriate) archiving of Research Data and Materials (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). Per this policy, the following practices were adopted as part of this dissertation study:

1. Data collected as part of this research will be maintained for five years after the publication of my dissertation. After five years, all data will be disposed of after confirming that no circumstances dictate otherwise.
2. Data collected was stored in UNCG Box and password-protected. Only the PI and the faculty advisor (where appropriate) would have access to the primary data sources.
3. Participants in this research study will not be provided with the names of other participants.

The above measures aim to protect the confidentiality of all research participants and mitigate the potential harm caused by participation in this research study related to the data gathering and analysis phases of this dissertation study.

COVID-19 Pandemic Precautions

The ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic at the time of this study required additional measures to protect the health and wellness of all research participants. While in-person individual interviews would be the preferred method, in-person interviews would pose a significant risk to the health of the researcher and research participants. In-person interviews place the researcher and research participants at risk of spreading or contracting the virus that causes COVID-19. Additionally, safety precautions to mitigate risk may only sometimes be successful in preventing the spread of the virus. Considering these concerns, all interviews will occur virtually using the Zoom platform to protect the health and wellness of the researcher and research participants.

Data Collection & Analysis

The primary research question to be explored in this dissertation study is, 'In what ways, if at all, do Black student perceptions of institutional responses to racialized experiences impact the sense of belonging for Black students who attend a Primarily White Institution (PWI)?' Appendix B details the protocol questions and the rationale for their inclusion. Because this dissertation methodology uses semi-structured individual interviews, additional questions may be asked in the interview process to gain additional clarity between the researcher and the participant and to explore significant statements made during the individual interview by the research participants.

Participants in this study will be asked to complete one 60- to 90-minute, semi-structured individual interview over Zoom with the researcher. Interviews will be recorded using Zoom and transcribed by the researcher. The interview will focus on questions generated by the researcher. During the individual interview, participants will be asked clarifying questions, as needed, to

understand better what was shared during their narratives. Audio from the interviews was initially transcribed using Otter, a cloud-based transcription service. These transcripts were then edited for accuracy by comparing the transcripts produced by the program to the audio file produced by Zoom. These transcripts were also reviewed to remove identifying information by replacing names with pseudonyms or descriptive terms, as appropriate.

Thematic Data Analysis

In this study, I was interested in understanding how Black students' perceptions of institutional responses to racialized experiences impacted their sense of belonging. Thematic data analysis was used to accomplish this goal. This qualitative methodology identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During my initial review of these transcripts, I identified significant phrases related to my research questions; it was essential to capture all thoughts provided by my participants to provide as much context to their perspectives as possible. These phrases were compared across participants to identify shared perspectives contributing to primary and subordinate themes.

Credibility and Dependability

Study participants were informed that their narratives would identify potential themes that highlight their perceptions related to my research questions. To increase internal validity, participants were asked to clarify any statements the researcher could interpret in multiple ways during their interviews. Participants were also allowed to engage in member checks after preliminary data analysis to review my initial conclusions, allowing me to be more confident in my conclusion and increase the trustworthiness of my study (Birt et al., 2016).

Positionality

I played a role in interpreting the data about my salient identities and perceptions of my experiences while attending a PWI as an undergraduate student (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). I identified as a first-generation Black man who attended a primarily White institution (PWI) in the South as a student and worked for one for much of my professional career. As I thought about the implications of identity in my dissertation research, I acknowledged that I considered persisting as a Black man from the South through degree attainment to be an achievement. The South historically dominated the United States' culture as a flagship for racism. My parents did not have the opportunity to attend postsecondary education, and as a first-generation student, I could not draw upon their experiences while attending college. Instead, I had to learn during my tenure as an undergraduate and professional about what it means to be a Black man in higher education.

As an undergraduate student, I had a racialized experience. I was impacted by racial bias and was disappointed by institutional responses aimed at supporting my experience. As a professional, I served as a part of the institutional responses to racial bias and continue to believe that we should be doing more to support Black students through their racialized experiences. When racial bias occurred, I observed institutional responses focusing on providing support and resources for those impacted while simultaneously lacking accountability for those who contributed to this harm, whether individual or institutional. I believe that Black students should expect to experience a sense of belonging at their institution of choice and that we must intentionally design institutional responses to their racialized experiences if we were to achieve this goal.

Reflexivity

Before engaging in this research, I acknowledged that 1) my identities drove my interest in this research, and 2) while I did hold several minoritized and marginalized identities, I held power and privilege that might have surfaced in my role as a researcher. A racialized experience had impacted me, and I hoped that my research would contribute to informing how PWIs support Black students. However, as a researcher, I was also conscious that this research carried the risk of data in my research, leading to implications that I did not expect or a biased analysis of data. However, I believed that to be an ethical researcher; I had to safeguard the integrity of the academic field by ensuring that my praxis anticipated and accounted for any potential research bias. As a Black researcher investigating a phenomenon experienced by Black students at PWIs, I was also conscious of where power and privilege could surface.

I anticipated conducting this research as an administrator at a PWI (although not at the same campus). I held the privileges of education and the power that came with being affiliated with an institution that my research participants may have considered as racist. Participants in this study may have felt that the information gathered may not be valued, while others may have felt that the research could have been a better use of their time. Additionally, I believed there was always a professional and personal risk that came with research that might challenge systemic racism. To address this concern, it was vital for me to name the power that came with my position as an administrator at a PWI, recognize how educational privilege might show up in my research, and reaffirm the value of each participant's contributions to a body of knowledge while defining how I would do my best to protect us from harm.

Conclusion

This section provided an overview of my proposed research methodology and the strategies taken to increase confidence in the conclusions drawn from this study. This research methodology was chosen to center the voices and experiences of Black students who attended primarily White institutions (PWIs) using a methodology that does not associate value with the number of participants in my dissertation study. This approach is consistent with the values outlined in my researcher's positionality and reflexivity. I believe the voices of the Black students who participated in this dissertation study would provide a deeper understanding of how leaders of PWIs can better support them while in attendance.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

"You are your best thing." – Toni Morrison

This chapter presents the findings of this dissertation study, organized by the sub-questions used to explore the primary research question. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore in what ways, if at all, Black student perceptions of PWI responses to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. The following sub-questions explore this dissertation study's primary research question:

1. What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize are present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting Black campus community members?
4. How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

The findings of this dissertation study aim to contribute to the body of literature that focuses on Black student experiences at primarily White institutions (PWIs). Research questions organize the findings of this dissertation. Chapter 5 of this dissertation study will engage in a discussion about the findings presented in this chapter, including revising the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 1, contextualizing these findings using a critical race theory & bioecological systems theory framework, and applying core conclusions to recommendations that higher education practitioners could consider at PWIs.

Participant Profiles

I aimed to highlight the voices of Black students who attended primarily White institutions (PWIs). Black students participated in 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interviews to better understand their perspectives. These student participants held diverse identities across the

Black diaspora, including varying backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and nationalities, which were particularly salient in shaping their lived experiences. Each student identifies as Black and has shared rich backgrounds that help us better understand who they are. These profiles are meant to honor, as best possible, the salient identities that the students used to describe themselves. They are also meant to provide context and humanize each Black student participant when reading their contributions to this dissertation study.

To protect the participants' identities, pseudonyms were either selected or assigned to each student. However, to fully encompass the nuances of their experiences related to this research, it was essential to provide an overview of the Black students who participated in this dissertation study so readers could later reference them for additional context. In this chapter, significant quotes from these students will be shared. Their profiles will occasionally be referred to with significant experiences highlighted in this section.

Karina

Karina described themselves as a very extroverted and hardworking college student. They considered education important in their life and found working with people amazing. Karina identified as "colored" and a part of the LGBT community. They also used "Black" to describe the wider community. Karina grew up in a predominantly Black area and experienced "culture shock" when they first arrived on campus. They felt that sometimes it was challenging to stay motivated because they felt that "there is no place for [them]." Karina shared that they often found themselves changing their mind and needing to figure out what they wanted to do.

Itumeleng

Itumeleng identified first with her home country, a West African country. College was one of the first experiences where she had to be around White people; she was used to being

around Black people in Africa, where White people were hard to come across. Itumeleng had a passion for singing and anything related to criminal justice. She shared that she was still getting used to college and had a long way to go.

Jamal

Jamal studied music theater and business. They identified with a historically Black Greek-letter organization. They described themselves as an active campus community member, including holding leadership positions in student government and being an upcoming leader within the NPHC Greek council. They believed that people good at their craft must be good people first, and being a good person helped them deepen what they did. Jamal believed in storytelling, emphasizing that stories should be told "authentically, truthfully, and most accurately.

Kiah

Kiah was a Black female leader on campus who wanted to lead her community and impact the campus and surrounding communities. She identified as a heterosexual female with learning differences. Kiah believed she was a representative of her home state in the southeastern United States. She believed that she was living the future her ancestors wanted for her and that they would expect her to strive and succeed in this future. Kiah shared that she was a fun-loving but very introverted person. She was intuitive and curious and came from a family of civil rights activists.

Mo

Mo described themself as dynamic. They were non-binary. They shared that college had not been outside their comfort zone because they were used to attending schools with a few Black students. Mo had switched their major multiple times within the STEM field before

switching to a major they loved, classical studies. They described their college experience using the myth of Sisyphus, a figure from Greek mythology who was punished to roll a boulder up a hill forever. Socially and academically, it had been like this myth, but they knew they would get that rock over the hill one day.

Tiffany

Tiffany identified as a Black woman. She was born in the United States and identified with the nationality of an East African country. She struggled to understand herself because her entire life, she had to alter her personality to fit into specific communities. Tiffany felt she would not be accepted if she were herself. She never fit into a single friend group because there was so much that made her, and she could not be put in a single group. She found it difficult to express everything at once, so when she was in different societies, she picked and chose what to express.

Anthony

Anthony identified as a Black man and described college as "trying to figure out themselves away from their entire family." He grew up in a small farm town in the northeastern United States. Anthony grew up attending primarily White schools and saw college as an opportunity to figure himself out without being the only Black family in town. He knew every single Black student at his high school by name. He felt highly whitewashed and was not going to "throw [himself] entirely off the deep end [of Blackness] for just four years and then try to integrate himself back into [White] society.

DJ

DJ was from a state in the southeastern United States and went to a private, primarily White high school. They earned a merit-based scholarship and had a major and two minors, one being African-American studies. DJ was heavily involved, including being a leader in the Black

Student Union, the National Council of Negro Women, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated. DJ had an on-campus job and an additional job that was occasionally on the third shift. They were family-oriented and took the time they spent with family and home very seriously. When DJ was not around their family, they had close friends they considered family.

Jazlyn

Jazlyn identified as a Black straight woman. She was family-oriented, and it drove the way she went about her college experience. She believed that college was a time that allowed one to "grow and access new opportunities." Jazlyn shared that while some people might not have known she was super empathetic or emotional, her closest friends did know. She learned through college that nothing was worth sacrificing for her well-being, a concept she had learned throughout college. She described herself as a college student who understood the challenges of accessing it and believed you could love and critique a college experience.

Eric

Eric described himself as a "very interesting person" who was very open and outgoing but, at the same time, sometimes anti-social. He was a part of the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH). He tried to get to know many people and especially liked to get to know the staff because their school was a predominantly White institution. He was involved in eSports and formerly worked on campus but had yet to find a job that year. Eric shared that he was conscious about his race once every two weeks, usually around his Black friends.

Black Student Belonging at Primarily White Institutions

The primary focus of this dissertation study was to explore the sense of belonging among Black students at Primarily White Institutions (PWIs). Each participant in this study had a conception of what belonging would look like for them, both in a general sense and within their

respective institutions. Participants described experiences that either contributed to or hindered their sense of belonging at PWIs. Moreover, when Black students failed to experience a sense of belonging on campus, some contemplated leaving the institution. Several participants shared personal stories and anecdotes concerning their own or others' struggles with belonging and the ensuing negative impact. Itumeleng shared a personal narrative that effectively encapsulates the anecdotes of many participants in this dissertation study.

> When I first came to this school, I remember telling somebody in my dorm that I felt like I was going to transfer because I did not feel like I belonged. So, here on campus, you cannot just stay in your dorm if you want to belong. You can decide that, oh, throughout my life in this college, I will not do anything. Because if you have that mindset, you will not belong.

Itumeleng thinks about belonging from the moment they arrive on campus, and these initial experiences related to belonging could potentially alter the trajectory of a Black student's sense of belonging on campus. Itumeleng's narrative also highlights a second notion frequently raised by participants: belonging is a personal and institutional responsibility. When these responsibilities are met, it can lead to uncertainty. As DJ shared,

> I do not know what belonging means to me. I did not feel that in my life before coming to [their institution], and I do not know that I felt that after. I grew up in a family that was expected, like, Okay, you go to college, get your degree, get a job, and move on. So, I do not know that this is a place I want to return to. I have looked at it as a means to an end.

DJ arrived on campus without experiencing a sense of belonging and could not imagine if they would ever experience it. This suggests that some Black students are entering higher education with the family expectation of earning a degree and gaining employment, viewing college education as a means to an end. This socialization may initially create a disconnection from the campus, which could impact how a student engages with initiatives related to belonging. This underscores the importance of higher education practitioners considering Black student belonging, specifically when considering new initiatives at PWIs.

Black student belonging is a significant concern and can serve as a form of orientation for them on campus. A recurring theme in the interviews was that Black peer connections seemed to help Black students adjust to and understand the campus. For example, Jazlyn emphasized the importance of having Black student leaders, such as their Resident Assistant (RA), who holds a formal position in student support, and other Black students in the community,

> I think back to my first-year experience, and I was lucky enough to have a black RA. I have a couple of Black seniors talking to you who are tour guides who, when I finally committed to go to [the institution]. They were always accessible.

These central themes are further detailed into two or more sub-themes that examine factors related to the people and places Black students may encounter at their PWI.

Belonging Is Being Able to Show Up Authentically and Be Accepted

To further explore the concept of belonging for Black students at PWIs, this section is organized into two major themes that examine what belonging means to Black students and where they find belonging. The literature consistently supports that a strong sense of belonging is correlated with positive educational outcomes for students. Black students were asked to describe belonging and where they find belonging on campus. Belonging was consistently described as the ability to bring one's identity to campus entirely and be accepted by the campus community. Karina shared that belonging was like having a second home,

> Belonging somewhere is like having a second home. If you cannot go to that place and truly be yourself, be happy, and not be afraid to be who you are, then you belong there.

Similarly, Jazlyn described belonging as "having a place where you do not feel the need to shed anything about yourself." These narratives suggest that belonging allows Black students to let their guard down, an experience that directly conflicts with how students describe their lived experiences in the larger environments of their institution. This is a desire for authentic presence

on campus, defined in the context of this dissertation study as "the ability for a student to fully embody their intersectional identities without fear of rejection or harm."

Being able to bring one's whole and authentic self to campus (authentic presence) appeared problematic in the larger campus community context. Narratives related to belonging were often linked to an internalization that belonging was not an ordinary experience in the larger campus community. It often required intentional engagement from Black students to discover places or spaces on campus where they could be themselves. Significantly, not all students who participated in this dissertation study believed belonging within the larger community is attainable or important. Tiffany shared the following,

> When it comes to being on campus and how that shows up, I would not say I belong here, but I deserve to be here. So, I take it however I want to. Like it is my space. I am here. So, I will take it. I do not need to be in search of a place for belonging. Because I already found belonging in myself. And in myself, if I am stable in who I am, and I can recognize that I am an individual looking for education just like everybody else on this campus, then I do not need a space for belonging.

Tiffany's narrative reflects a sense of self-assuredness as they navigated their campus community. When asked to imagine what belonging would look like, Tiffany shared something consistent and significant within the narratives of other Black students who are part of this dissertation study: the ability to show up authentically,

> In the sense that if we are speaking characteristics, I established myself when I got to school because I made sure that I am not going to, you know, alter myself for you because, again, I am an individual that came to the school that I wanted to go to. So, I will use to be myself as much as I can.

This quote is also significant because it suggests that Tiffany believes in belonging but has internalized that belonging will come from somewhere other than the campus community. For some Black students, this sense of belonging may not even occur within the broader Black

student community. DJ suggests that even finding community with other Black peers can feel isolating,

> And it is the only time we can get okay among Black people together as if we say there is like free food or something. But other than that, it is like only some people support each other. And it is always the same, like a couple of black students who attend the same event. It is like it is very clicky. That is the word. It is quick. It is like athletes. And then, like little groups inside of each class. It is like theater, not even theater, but it is very clicky.

DJ describes an internal tension within the Black student community as "cliquey." Instead of potentially inviting other Black students to form groups or "cliques," some Black students may intentionally or unintentionally isolate other Black students who are looking for community. Similarly, Kiah describes the intersections of the smaller number of Black students and those Black students not being connected,

> On top of my black identity, being a black male, I noticed there are a few numbers of us on our campus. And aside from that, a few of us are less connected on that same level.

The experience of Black students being isolated, even within their community, while negative, highlights that Black students want to be part of a community. When that does not occur, their experience is negatively impacted. These experiences are also consistent with the narratives that suggest Black student belonging may center on smaller groups of students connected within the larger campus environment, often referred to as "micro-communities.

Micro-communities on Campus as Places of Black Student Belonging

Micro-communities emerged as a second central theme when studying students' narratives related to their experiences in the larger campus environment compared to their experiences in places or spaces where they found belonging. When participants were asked to share how belonging shows up on campus, the larger campus environment was only considered a place of belonging for some of the participants in this dissertation study. The one exception was

Jamal, who believes that the structure of the institution he attends creates opportunities where students can belong. For him, belonging means participating in institutional efforts to facilitate belonging, such as participating in institutionalized efforts to engage students with faculty. Jamal considers "thriving" similar to how the other participants described belonging: being fully themselves in an environment without thinking about how their identities impact them on campus. This also underscores a desire from Black students to have an authentic campus presence, but interactions in what could be considered the larger campus community make that difficult. This necessitates that higher education practitioners think about where, if at all, belonging for Black students occurs on campus. Kiah describes the following,

> I see more of my belongingness scattered out places in small places. Um, you know, most of the time, I do not belong, you know, in the classroom because I am one or two of the only black students in the classroom. So sometimes when, you know, and during those situations, you know, I would not even call it belongingness in the classroom, I would be, it would be more of a competition, you know, because you got to compete with all these other, you know, with these white students.

This excerpt is particularly intriguing because it suggests that belonging is transient—there is no one fixed space, such as a "campus community," that contributes to belonging. Instead, perceptions of belonging depend on the smaller spaces that a Black student may occupy. For instance, in Kiah's narrative, the classroom is not a place of belonging due to the lack of Black students and a sense of competition. Kiah further describes Black spaces and names at the institution as the "authority" on Black spaces,

> I feel like there is a real guiding authority that the institution makes a Black space to be. And so what is the [multicultural center]? Yes, so it is a black space, the African LLC. You would expect it would be a black space because every time I go to the elevator, and there is a white person with me, oh, you go into the fourth floor? No, no, I am not going to the third floor. You know, that, you know, that reality that, you know, even the white kids can say, Oh, we know, this is a black space, because it has the name of it, African diaspora, black people, you know, those things, you know, that is, you know, that, that, you know, what the institution makes, it is what is going to be perceived.

This dissertation study defines authority as an individual or entity with the power to define an experience, either formally or informally. In the case of Black community spaces, many of these are formally defined by the institution. For example, Black students may experience the co-curricular elements of a living and learning community (LLC) but are not the architects of its design. Similarly, Black students are unlikely to be the designers of Black student initiatives related to classroom curriculum, services, the locations of Black-centered spaces, or programmatic efforts for the Black community. If they were, they would not have the final authority for approval but would still be ultimately impacted by the experiences these Black student initiatives create.

Narratives suggest that the ability to be authentically present is separate from the culture of the larger campus community. Instead, it is linked to the ability of Black students to integrate into one of two types of micro-communities on campus: 1) Black community spaces and 2) shared interest groups or communities. Participants consistently shared smaller communities or groups on campus that served as places of belonging, with most students mentioning at least one Black community space that was particularly meaningful to them. In contrast, others described community spaces related to their specific interests.

Places of Black Community

Black community was consistently, though not exclusively, referenced as a place where Black students find a sense of belonging while on campus. Black community can form in formal Black affinity spaces sanctioned by the university, including but not limited to Black living and learning communities, Black resource rooms, or Black cultural centers. It can also be fostered in informal spaces where groups of Black students come together and engage with each other, such as student dorms, group chats, and other spaces not created by the institution. The institution

under study does not have a Black cultural center, but the multicultural center was consistently mentioned as a space of belonging by participants in this study. While not exclusively for Black students, the presence of Black students in the multicultural center was consistently cited as a positive experience. Like many other students who find Black community spaces as places of belonging, Tiffany describes the impact of the Black community,

> I will say that the clubs on campus act as places for us to be comfortable with one another, like the Black Student Association and the African Students United Club. So, when we get together in the middle of these weeks, like after long days of class, it is always refreshing to go and be around people who look like you and can connect to the same things as you, even if it is just like sitting there and listening to music together.

The Black community is described as places of comfort for the Black students who use them. Tiffany's insight highlights a specific need for some Black students: to be around people who look like them. In the context of a PWI, the broader campus is not and can never be a place where Black students will primarily be around people who look like them. This is an aspect of their on-campus racialized experiences that is individually insurmountable. This suggests that intentional spaces for Black students to be around and engage with other Black students are essential to any PWI experience. The Black community can also exist informally, such as on social media or in group chats. These spaces serve as a means of connecting Black students and potentially sharing information about events that could threaten or harm their peers. For example, Anthony describes how Black peers not only try to help other Black students connect but also help them avoid potential threats on campus,

> However, like, there is like, especially at [the institution], like, the group chat is filled with things like, “Hey, this Club's doing an event you should totally come by” or “Just warning you there is police coming outside and ticketing cars,” or “There is kind of, or someone saw one of the trucks that like so like screaming racial slurs at people be careful.” It is the idea that we are all looking out for each other.

Black students at PWIs seem to be finding ways to connect and support each other in ways they cannot necessarily rely on the institution to do. In this example, Black students use social platforms and informal connections to safeguard their peers. While the desire for a Black community appears to be shared among Black students, such groups and spaces do not guarantee that Black students will or can access them. This was another area where Tiffany stood out from her peers, as she knew community spaces for affinity groups yet expressed a strong hesitation in accessing them,

> I know the school has affinity lounges, and you know these clubs. And they also have much stuff that they say, "Oh, this is where the students will congregate in case they ever need." But to be so honest with you, I have never even used those resources because I do not know how, and I do not even know what I have gained from them.

Another critical point to note in Tiffany's narrative is that they have never used the resources because they 1) do not know how to and 2) do not know what they could gain from them. DJ shared a similar narrative that describes a lack of Black students accessing Black community spaces and other resources for Black students,

> There are a lot of resources, but people need to use them or take advantage of them. Like, yes, it is the [multicultural center], but wherever there are spaces for black people or just people of color, it is always the same individuals that are there. We are trying to figure out ways to get the rest of them to come out or to any event so we can meet each other.

These narratives suggest that there is an unaddressed gap regarding the orientation of Black students to resources and spaces on PWI campuses that are specific to their needs. This gap implies that merely creating spaces for Black students is insufficient. It indicates that higher education practitioners at PWIs should actively find ways to communicate the purposes of the various resources and spaces on campus for Black students. Tiffany's narrative is particularly significant because it suggests that having Black affinity spaces alone does not necessarily result in Black students accessing those resources or those spaces contributing to a sense of belonging

for Black students. While the narratives suggest that Black community groups continue to be important micro-communities on campuses that positively impact Black student belonging, these spaces are not the sole focus for Black students when seeking places of belonging.

Shared Interest Communities

Shared interest communities were a more minor but important subtheme that emerged concerning micro-communities that Black students engage with to experience a sense of belonging on PWI campuses. Being authentically present and accepted was a consistent theme among every participant. While participants often acknowledged that being around other Black students contributed to this, belonging was not always sought solely from Black groups. Like most other students in this dissertation study, Eric shares that he is involved with the [multicultural center] and the Black Student Association at his school. However, neither of these was consistently described as spaces of belonging. Instead, Eric talked about the belonging he experiences with the Esports group he has been involved with for the last year,

> Esports is mostly because, you know, I go to many events. I am there three or four times a week I go there. I know a lot of people come in, and we always talk, always, like, have that, like we are friends, stuff like that. It is just really, it is just a really good environment. We are all into discord. So, if you know what Discord is, talk to, you know, yeah. And it is just a cool vibe place to be, plus everyone here plays video games. So, they already have some of that they can relate to.

While Esports is not exclusively for Black students, Eric shared that it was a space where he had met many friends, knows many people who come and go, and gets an opportunity to share space with other people he can relate to—video games. However, Eric also shared a particular history of his interactions with Blackness that may have informed how he approached the community. Eric described being in predominantly White spaces and predominantly Black spaces before coming to his institution, forming significant 'best friend' relationships with both White and Black peers he engaged with. During his interview, Eric referenced negative perceptions of

Black peers several times, which appeared to influence how he chose to engage. When asked to share more about these experiences, Eric shared,

> So, I think that I have clicked with people who, like, are black, but they are also still, you know, scholarly minded or like trying to at least do well in school, right? I can't, you know, I cannot do what the people who are just like not try and fail and stuff like that, you know, that we do not mesh well together. Right? But I liked that there, which made me open-minded to black people. And I just started liking black people a lot more. Then I went to, like, more white stuff. And then the white people were really like being like, yeah, kind of racist. So I was like, Okay, I see it now.

This quote is significant because it explicitly addresses a Black student's perception related to the racial identity of his peers. At an earlier point in his interview, Eric also described how some Black friends "pop off," a phrase often used in the Black community to reference assertive confrontation to conflict. His experiences with Black peers led Eric to conclude that he may not get along with every Black peer. Instead, he is most comfortable with Black peers with similar intellectual interests. It is also important to note that Eric attempted to compensate for these experiences by engaging more with White peers, only to be impacted by racism. Eric's narrative is significant because it reinforces the idea that identifying as Black does not automatically result in compatible friendships, and Black students may seek other communities when they are not comfortable with Black peers. At PWIs, these alternative communities may be predominantly White and can contribute to harm.

Another student, Kiah, shared how she experiences belonging within a micro-community on their campus. It is important to recall that Kiah comes from a family with strong civil rights advocacy ties to the NAACP and a strong affinity for Black-centered political and social issues. She also has a solid connection to a group not centered on Blackness. Kiah shared that even though the gospel choir is very diverse, she feels like she belongs in the group because they are

brought together through their belief in God, and "they accept [her] for who [she is]." She embraces her Blackness and leaves space to explore,

> And so, when it comes to the places that I am to the places that I feel, you know, the belongingness, and it is really in those, I would say, those small glimpses of time when I am with my friends, with, when I am at events that I care about. Those are about blackness and about coming together as a community. And, and to be honest, one, you know, when I feel that I am the, the activities that do not have, you know, all the time black people in it, that my interest is, are aligned to what I believe in. So, like, you know, with Gospel Choir, I am part of the gospel choir, and I truly firmly believe in God and His graces and blessings for me. So, even though the [institution] Gospel Choir is very mixed and has both black and white and Latino and Asian interest in it, I still feel I belong.

This narrative shares multiple connections highlighted throughout the interviews, with the most prominent being that a sense of belonging for Black students is not campus-wide and does not have to be exclusively related to Black identity. Regardless of the demographics, shared interest communities appear to positively impact Black students belonging to predominantly White campuses (PWIs).

Self-efficacy for Black Student Belonging

Black student belonging cannot be attributed solely to how PWI leadership facilitates this institutional goal on campus. Black students often emphasized that they are responsible for seeking to belong and searching for communities on campus, showing self-efficacy. As it relates to Black student belonging, self-efficacy can be described as a student's ability to possess the power and capacity to create belonging for themselves on campus. For example, Itumeleng described an experience where she contemplated transferring because she did not feel like she belonged but realized it would take effort on her part,

> You have to put yourself out there to belong, which I started doing. After my second month of college, I started going to events, and if I had not done that, I would still feel that I did not belong on this campus. And that is what some a lot of black people on campus who like sometimes they feel like they do not belong because um because they

> do not like they just have that field. I have friends who also feel like there, but I tell them you must put yourself out there to belong. You can like it when you go to class.

Itumeleng's narrative highlights two critical points: 1) When Black students do not feel a sense of belonging on campus, they may consider leaving the institution, and 2) Black students must try to find belonging. This is consistent with a study by Gökmen, which found that when students do not experience a sense of belonging, they often feel lonely. This loneliness can impact their overall student experience (2021). Several participants emphasized the importance of Black students taking action to seek belonging within communities on campus, regardless of whether they found belonging in Black community spaces or communities of shared interest. For example, DJ shared,

> Um, day to day, it has changed from my first year. I am a junior now. First-year, day-to-day, I would try to avoid […] because it was not a good experience, in my opinion. But at the same time, I feel like I did not try to give anyone a chance during my first year.

Similarly, Jazlyn described how the withdrawal of Black students could lead to more long-term impacts on their experience and how finding community may "anchor" the Black student cohort,

> And I have, and I knew people who were not as outgoing and social and, like, they are still, like to this day, very isolated going into, like, the second half of our senior year. I have always been curious about what could help with that experience because only some people want to Be part of a cohort and stick together for four years. Like, it is not always like, you know, a great thing because people grow together, they grow apart and like your conflict. But at the end of the day, you have this anchoring community that you can always, like, come back to.

These narratives suggest that not finding a community can be particularly isolating for Black students. They also highlight that Black students may observe their peers isolating themselves or being isolated, recognizing this as a negative experience but ultimately being unsure about how to support their peers. 307 similarly emphasized the importance of Black students being part of a community on campus,

> They also need not be scared to say what is mine and be part of something if they do not, if they are uncomfortable. They also need to have that community with each other on campus because that is not like what happens here.

This quote also introduces a potential need for Black students to feel confident that they deserve a sense of community, suggesting that Black students should not hesitate to take ownership of their experience. Kiah further supports the notion that Black students should internalize their sense of belonging on campus, sharing, 'I do not have to compete with [White students] and say that, hey, I belong here.' Once Black students believe they belong on campus, they may be more easily able or willing to seek a sense of belonging, for example, in the micro-communities on campus. While the presence of micro-communities on campus does not guarantee that a Black student will access these potential spaces of belonging, as the pursuit of belonging may be related to Black students' level of self-confidence and their sense of deservingness of their presence on campus, these actions are also situated in an environment of Whiteness.

Whiteness as the Environmental Factor that Underpins Racialized Experiences

As a part of exploring the primary research question that underpins this dissertation study, understanding Black student perceptions of their racialized experiences and the structures present at primarily White institutions (PWIs) is imperative. Every Black student who participated in this research study was keenly aware of their Black racial identity in comparison to the White racial identity of a noticeable majority of students, faculty, staff, and administration. Every Black student who participated in this dissertation study shared that a racially biased incident impacted them on their campus or knew a Black student who was. While most Black students could not explicitly name policies, they could all connect certain practices and experiences to whiteness on campus. Some could explicitly name practices or responses that appeared to be connected to race. This section explores two themes related to racialized experiences and structures. First, whiteness serves as an overarching environmental factor that

impacts Black student experiences at PWIs, and second, Black student resilience serves as a coping and survival mechanism during their time of attendance.

When considering the demographics of this dissertation's research site, the environment of a primarily White institution will consist of community members and structures who are primarily White, including students, staff, faculty, and administration. Whiteness describes cultures, classes, and groups dominated by the perspectives and values of people with White racial identity (Carroll, 2014). Experiences with whiteness can also be related to University events geared towards external stakeholders, such as parents. For example, one student, Eric, shared,

> You mostly feel with the older people. Like I said, when parents come in, you can feel it like night and day.

Whiteness, as a construct, permeates the Black student experience at PWIs. Consequently, whiteness becomes an inalienable environmental factor for Black students in attendance, impacting both their academic and social experiences in a way that does not have to be considered by White students in attendance. White students can reasonably expect to see themselves well-represented at all levels of a PWI. In contrast, Black students describe experiences where they are minoritized at all levels of the institution and must consider ways to navigate that reality.

Feeling a sense of belonging on campuses is essential to Black students who attend PWIs, regardless of where that sense of belonging occurs. Earlier, this was described as finding belonging in Black community spaces or shared interest groups. It was also highlighted that a perception of not belonging was felt in the broader part of the campus. This could be partly due to the social interactions Black students experience when not engaging in their micro-

communities. For example, Eric described a shared experience with White women college students,

> Okay, so you know, that type of white girl, right? Wearing the sweater that, like, you cannot see the pants, stuff like that, that there is like, copy and paste. I kid you not. That is like 40% of the student body. It is insane. It is insane. And it is fine. Because, like most of them, if you get to know them, they are like, they are distinct from each other and stuff like that. And they are like, they are cool. But it is just what things were like. Oh, I know someone. I walk up to them. I walk up to them. They will get, like, some like this girl. She got scared because, like, I just shocked her. That happens to me. I do not know. Do I look threatening to you?

This quote is important for multiple reasons. Eric is a student who describes himself as extroverted and feels he does not always fit in with other Black students at his institution. First, it is essential to consider Eric's vulnerability when sharing that the researcher, a Black man and former PWI student, knows 'that type of White girl.' The researcher could immediately connect with his example because what was described is also a perception held by the researcher, particularly during sorority recruitment. This also suggests that there may be a lower threshold for vulnerability when Black students can share their thoughts with other Black people because of a perception that other Black people know what they are experiencing.

The second necessary experience in Eric's account is that while he felt he was non-threatening, the White female student was perceived as scared and shocked when he approached her. This interaction represents a well-documented phenomenon in the United States, particularly but not exclusively in the South, where Black men are subject to adverse or threatening racial stereotypes, resulting in racial microaggressions or aggressive stances towards Black men (Helg, 2000). It also highlights a specific reality that Black male college students who attend PWIs may face when trying to engage with White female peers on PWI campuses. Interestingly, Eric also emphasizes the importance of engaging with peers (and staff) on a PWI,

> I am very open and outgoing, but at the same time, I am also anti-social sometimes. But I try to get to know many people and say hey to people when I pass them on campus. Like to get to know the staff, especially for predominately white institutions.

This suggests that while Black male students, for example, may have positive intentions to engage more broadly in the community with White peers, they may experience racial bias and harm when doing so. This phenomenon is not limited to Black men engaging with White women in the broader campus but may also be present in residential environments. For example, Itumeleng shared,

> So, it is like, one time I was in the bathroom, I was brushing my teeth. And I was surrounded by, like, nine white girls. And that made me realize that, oh, you are black.

An important takeaway from Itumeleng's experience is that the experience of whiteness does not have to be nefarious. In this situation, the presence of white peers appeared to be overwhelming and a reminder of her Black racial identity. While this, in and of itself, is not inherently "good" or "bad," it does represent a racialized experience that can be impactful to Black students. Regardless, a student's residential experience can be impactful. This example highlights that while roommate relationships do not always work out, an institution's response can contribute to the racialized experiences of a Black student. Potentially unlike White peers, Black students must consider not only the factual matters of a roommate situation (i.e., not getting along) but also whether a situation may have to do with their racial identity in a way that White students may not. These experiences occur in multiple spaces, including those that are academically centered.

Racialized Academic Experiences

Degree attainment can be described as a primary outcome of students attending higher education. However, the pathway to degree attainment may need to be more equitable when considering students' racial identities. A study by Snidman et al. (2022) found that racially

minoritized groups feel less represented in academic spaces, which leads to feelings of less belonging and comfort. Multiple participants in this dissertation study described experiences with faculty or in academic coursework that highlight the impact of Black racial identity on primarily White campuses, supporting the findings of this study. While the demographic of a classroom is beyond the control of higher education practitioners, the racialized experiences of Black students in academic spaces are important examples of their lived experiences on campus. These spaces not only facilitate one of the primary missions of higher education institutions, academic learning but are also spaces where Black students are consistently present and cannot reasonably opt out of to be academically successful.

First, Black students may seek to enroll in more Black-centered classes, expecting to encounter more Black students, but are disappointed or distressed when they learn they are still minoritized in those spaces. Itumeleng describes the following experience,

> I am in a class called African-American Composers. So, you would expect a lot of black people to be okay, so let me start from my fourth semester. So whenever it is my first semester, because there are, like, not a lot of black students, you would see like just two black students in a class for you to 30 White people.

This example highlights that Black students have to navigate whiteness, not only in general education but even in classes that are centered on Blackness. Similarly, DJ describes the struggle of being one of the few Black students in their program,

> I am a business major. I hate going to the business school because I am the only Black person all the time. Like when I go in there, I am anxious. I have my headphones and go there planning not to talk to anyone. I feel like I am invisible. I have no desire to speak or meet people, which is the opposite of who I am.

Being one of the few Black students might lead to experiences of anxiousness and create environments where Black students may choose to isolate themselves as a means of protection, even if it conflicts with their core values. While, again, this is not innately nefarious, it does

represent a racialized experience that Black students who attend PWIs must navigate. Black students also shared examples that go beyond being racialized and minoritized in the classroom, suggesting that a lack of faculty competency, knowledge, or skills can also harm Black students. Karina shares an example of herself and a friend, highlighting how well-meaning reactions can also hurt Black students,

> When I was there, one of my friends was in class, and the teacher brought up a topic that is often stereotyped: stereotype ties, I guess, with the black community. And, like, she went to speak up. And he said to her, "Do not feel like you have to talk about it." And, like, she stopped talking to the rest of the class. And I was just like, I would too.

In the context of the conversation, the faculty appeared to be attempting to support their Black student by suggesting they do not have to carry the burden of responding from a Black perspective, given the topic. However, the impact of this action was the silencing of a Black student engaging in class. Karina also shared a personal example that highlighted the impact that faculty can have when they are not prepared to engage in specific topics,

> And then also, in one of my other classes, we were it was a black lives matter. We were talking about that. And I, in the middle of classes, you should stop the class. And she said I do not feel comfortable enough talking about this. I am sorry; I am having flashbacks and all this other stuff. And like, I understand trauma, but at the same time, I was just like, what I was like, "Okay, well, then you should not start teaching it in the first place.

In Karina's individual experience, she encountered a faculty member who was ill-equipped to facilitate a conversation related to Black Lives Matter, a topic the faculty member chose to introduce in their classroom. The #BlackLivesMatter movement was created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi as a call to action after Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old victim who was murdered after the perpetrator followed him out of suspicion before killing him—Trayvon Martin was unarmed. His murderer was not held accountable for this act (Garza, 2016). This was a particularly salient moment in United States history regarding the nation's reckoning with the impact of racial violence, often perpetrated by manifestations of whiteness in

the form of stereotyping and the trope of the white "good Samaritan." Notably, this incident was particularly impactful to the Black community, resulting in polarizing views, often along racial lines. This represents an additional experience that contributed to Black students' racialized experiences that could make their experiences more challenging than their White peers due to Black students' presence on a primarily White campus while the nation was dealing with assaults on Black people. Black students are not shielded from these national incidents, and when national conversations were divided into racial lines, there were often conflicting perspectives from Black and White populations.

Additionally, Karina's example highlighted the privilege of having the choice to "opt-out" of trauma and the sense of loss that can come with it. Black students, for example, do not get the opportunity to opt out of their racialized experiences or trauma, including exposure to topics that are sometimes uncomfortable or triggering in the classroom. Statements that suggest that Black students or faculty have permission to disengage, even if made with good intent, can reinforce harmful messaging and contribute to perceptions that Black student perspectives are not welcome in the space or, when they are, faculty is ill-equipped to facilitate a conversation that does not cause harm. Tiffany describes the impact of faculty being able to navigate these transgressions in the classroom space by a White peer,

> And as we were talking about [Africa's perceived failure to self-govern because of the effects of slavery and colonialism], there was this one white student who had not said that or questioned, that professor said, “What makes you think that Africa has the right to self-determination if they were not able to defend themselves when the colonizers came over to the country?” And I was shocked by that. I was so shocked. I wrote it in my notes. And it just made me, and I do not even think it was a racist thing to say because he probably did not know his history. But it was, it was a very arrogant thing to say. And I remember being like, there is no way you just said that. And luckily, our professor is a black woman. So she, you know, took care of the situation and handled it very professionally. I admire her because she encounters these students every single day.

This white student's dismissive comment effectively attempted to distance White colonization and slavery of Black people from the long-term impacts of cultural domination and oppression on the ability of a country to self-govern, the topic being discussed in the classroom at that moment. When these instances go unaddressed, they can be distressing for Black students. Conversely, when faculty can successfully address these situations, as in this case, it can be relieving for Black students. It is essential to acknowledge that a Black female faculty member addressed this situation, and her Black student empathized with the potential reality that she, as a Black faculty member, encounters white students who engage like this student.

This situation also contrasts with the previous students' faculty experiences, which had a negative impact. Notably, at least one of those faculty members identified as Black, demonstrating that Black racial identity does not mean a faculty member is prepared to facilitate conversations on Black experiences effectively. Faculty also carry a responsibility beyond classroom engagement, specifically when mentorship or advising may be institutional commitments. However, Black students may have less access to mentorship or advising, especially when professors are white. Anthony shares the following,

> There needs to be a stronger sense of camaraderie with the professors. Because, like, I know that a lot of my white professors, like, I have passed the class, and then I have, like, never seen them again. But my white classmates I have kept in contact with in those classes were like, “Oh, yeah, like I just talked to them, they helped me, they helped me find this career opportunity.” But, since a lot of times, the white professors do not know how to handle Black students with their needs or, like, kind of ideas of where they want to work, it is difficult to find them as places to go.

Faculty positionality is one of authority and responsibility. There exists an ethical obligation for faculty members not only to have the knowledge and skills on academic and, sometimes, co-curricular topics but also to be culturally competent enough to deliver content in a way that does

not harm Black students and provides them the same access to opportunities and support that they provide White students.

Racialized Social Experiences

Racialized experiences can also occur in social environments on campus, from residential environments to intimate encounters. Some racialized social experiences are directly related to Black students being racially minoritized on campus. One important example is what could occur in residential environments, often considered students' 'homes' away from home. Itumeleng describes the following,

> It is like, one time I was in the bathroom, I was brushing my teeth. And I was surrounded by, like, nine white girls. And that made me realize that, oh, you are Black.

Similarly, Karina described,

> There are times when I go to events, and there is nobody there, or there is maybe one too many White people.

Racial demographics in spaces can matter to Black students. While racial demographics may not be significantly within the control of higher education practitioners at PWIs, demographics can have a profound impact on Black student experiences. In this instance, it appears there was a level of distress and illumination of Black identity when encountering a significant number of White peers in an otherwise neutral experience. The question then becomes, what are higher education practitioners doing to support Black students through these inalienable racialized experiences? Other racialized experiences can be connected to disparities in resources.

When well-resourced White students engage in a seemingly curious or innocent way, these experiences highlight the impact of wealth disparities and White student privilege on the experiences of Black students. The racial wealth gap between White and Black people has been well explored in the literature, with White individuals possessing a significant majority of wealth

in the United States when compared to Black individuals (Sullivan et al., 2015; Gyourko et al., 1999; Derenoncourt et al., 2022; Jones, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2010). On PWI campuses, Black students may encounter class disparities in a particular manifestation - obviousness. Jazlyn shares an experience related to academic course load that connects to White class privilege. In this example, he was conversing with a White female classmate about whether she would take winter-term classes. He was particularly affronted by her response when she shared that she would be taking a vacation with her family because they would 'lose more by canceling the vacation' than if she had participated in the winter term. Whereas Jazlyn was advised to participate in winter term courses, a recommended academic progression, the class privilege was exposed, where his White female peer did not have to consider financial loss as a part of academic decision-making. 'Thank you for calling me poor' was his afterthought. Anthony had a similar encounter with class privilege, sharing,

> It is just being able to call your parents and ask, Hey, I got into legal trouble. Can you get me a lawyer? Not everyone has that. So, you get screwed?

In each of these instances, White peers have no consideration of the privileges that wealth affords; instead, they wield the privileges of wealth in ways that Black students are not likely able to. Comparisons of resources appear to harm Black students, particularly when they come from backgrounds with lower financial resources. While White students may be unaware or have never questioned the impact of financial resources in their personal lives, these types of behaviors may reinforce negative self-image for Black students and, at the very least, have memorable impacts on Black students who encounter them. Racialized social experiences are not limited to platonic encounters but can also happen when Black students are pursuing intimate partners.

Mo described,

> I went on this date with one person and found out they were only dating me because they had never been with a Black person before.

These types of situations can be described as 'fetishizing,' distinct from 'preference,' in the sense that the interest shown is based on fulfilling a sexual fetish rather than true attraction. Fetishizing of Black bodies is not a new topic and has been explored as early as 1966 and continues to be examined in the literature (Rachman, 1966; Nelson et al., 2006; Engmann, 2012; Farley, 1997). Not being desired beyond sexual fulfillment degrades that Black student to an 'object' used to fulfill a desire when that Black student was engaging with the hope of true attraction. These experiences highlight that Black students' racialized experiences are present every day in many social interactions. Black students are then required to develop attitudes and skills to navigate these racialized experiences more successfully.

Resilience as a Means of Resisting Whiteness

Resilience is often used in higher education and is typically connected to persistence and retention. However, resilience naturally responds to challenges, adversity, or otherwise harmful experiences. Being resilient is a strength that Black students exercise in primarily White environments, but the need to be resilient indicates that the culture is innately harmful. Multiple Black students described experiences and coping mechanisms, especially when navigating their racialized experiences at PWIs. Karina describes that an initial obstacle is the reality that Black students must experience being racially minoritized on campus,

> You are not used to being around these many uncolored folks. So, I think that is a common experience of being careful what we say, do, act, and feel.

Karina's narrative was particularly salient because it describes multiple dimensions that Black students must be mindful of when navigating a predominantly white space: how one

communicates, takes action, and experiences emotions. These are not the considerations that their White peers hold because they are not racially minoritized on campus and may be able to speak, act, and feel a full range of emotions without the potential of being negatively impacted due to their racial identity. Black students, inherently, must find ways to persist through this reality, informed by their racial identity. First, Black students may need to internalize that they deserve to be at the institution. Karina also shared what this might look like,

> [Black students] have to have the courage to realize that they are going to make people uncomfortable, not by the way they look, but the fact that they are confident enough to be Black students on a PWI campus.

“Confidence” is one of the words that initially stood out because racialized academic or social experiences may complicate Black students' feeling self-assured on campus. This may be an additional challenge if they have not yet found communities of belonging on campus. Gaining that courage can be particularly challenging when Black students may also come from backgrounds where deficit-based and racially oppressive messages were reinforced. Karina also mentioned,

> So I feel like hearing that growing up or hearing [we are not perceived as good enough as the white men] anywhere can limit the possibilities that Black students have.

Not only may Black students be experiencing their current environment, but they may also have been socialized with certain deficit-based messaging during their upbringing. Black students may arrive on campus feeling that they "are not good enough," which may require higher education practitioners to consider ways to reinforce the idea that, despite what they have been told, they do deserve to be at the institution and intentionally engage in strategies to unravel the impact of pre-college deficit messaging. With this in mind, resilience has an impact. Jamal described,

> I feel like I have just experienced more microaggressions that have impacted that tough skin for myself on some levels.

Being 'resilient' does not come without a cost; an institution should not celebrate Black student resilience. Instead, it should serve as an indicator that the campus environment may be harmful and that Black students may be engaging in survival-based strategies. Anthony describes the steps that Black students may take to avoid harm,

> It is this: you must follow a different set of rules. Especially in my school, most Black kids do not go out alone after dark. […] Like, I used to live with another Black girl, but we, we both had an agreement. We are like, look, we do not go out after dark. Or if you do, you are wearing something you can run in quickly.

In this instance, 'resilience' means Black students anticipating scenarios where they could be harmed and engaging in safety planning on campus. This suggests that Black students may feel a level of unsafety on campus. Higher education practitioners are often familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1987) - safety and security are basic human needs. Black students who feel 'unsafe' on campus means that the institution may not be cultivating an environment that meets this basic need for this student population. This obligates higher education practitioners to intentionally consider Black students' racialized experiences, how these experiences impact their sense of safety and security at primarily White institutions, and what actions should be taken to mitigate harm for Black students on PWI (Predominantly White Institution) campuses. This study suggests that institutions are failing to meet this obligation.

Black Student Perceptions of Primarily White Institution Actions

Higher education practitioners and institutions have a responsibility, power, and obligation to guide student experiences. A central research question revolved around Black student perceptions of PWI actions. Two themes emerged: 1) Black students anticipate harm or disappointment from PWIs, and 2) when PWIs do engage with Black students, it feels like "tokenism." These two themes are closely linked in the sense that not only might Black students expect institutional actions to be disappointing or harmful, but they were also able to identify

specific actions of the institution that reinforced what appears to be insincere care. This may perpetuate a cycle of Black students' internalization of harm or disappointment, making attending a PWI a demoralizing experience.

An Expectation of Harm Caused by the Institution

Every Black student was able to describe experiences where they or a Black student they know was impacted by some form of racial bias or racism and negatively associated institutional responses to those events. They also described reasons why Black students may be hesitant to report incidents when they occur. Jamal shares a perception of insincerity when institutions respond to racially biased or racist incidents,

> So, there is always we hear you will see you. But there is no sense of urgency in resolving the issues. There is just a sense of comforting students when things happen.

Jamal suggests that Black students are looking for an urgent resolution when things occur, and institutions should go beyond just "comforting" impacted Black students. Similarly, Jazlyn raised the question of urgency,

> I do not think they have that same sense of urgency, like, students like me and like, my friends who are in [campus program], my friends who are fellows, like, without those programs, we would not be there.

This perspective also suggests that Black students may have low expectations for their institution to support them in the ways they would like. This, in turn, may reduce Black student trust in the institution. Mo shared the following,

> [The institution] only has a little of my trust and everything. During that big campaign between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, I remember that that little length of time [the institution] was forced to stay neutral. I do not have campuses that are like, like, executives cannot take sides and everything.

This suggests that Black students seek institutional leaders to take precise positions when incidents occur. It is also important to acknowledge that neutrality is a position. Neutrality

suggests that either position could be appropriate, and this can be particularly impactful when one of those positions has significant race-based undertones and implications. As such, it may be particularly demoralizing when institutional leaders do not denounce racism when it occurs on campus. When this happens, Black students might rely on their peers to help them avoid harm.

Narratives suggest that Black students who attend PWIs expect to be negatively impacted by experiences with other students, faculty, or administration, and these experiences become a part of Black student storytelling as a component of their campus experiences. This verbal storytelling provides institutional history from one Black student to another, serving as a form of continuous "orientation" to campus. This orientation often highlights experiences that felt particularly harmful to the Black community. One specific example referenced by multiple Black students was the presence of a "Trump rally" through the campus community. "Trump rallies" were colloquial names given to nationwide displays of support for former U.S. President Donald Trump. On this campus, these displays involved large numbers of vehicles driving through the center of the campus community. Supporters were often described as being boisterous, honking their horns, and yelling at students. This event is significant given the sociopolitical context for Black people in the United States, as these events were happening with former President Trump's rhetoric causing increased threats and violence toward marginalized groups, including Black people (Nacos et al., 2020; Smith & King, 2021).While fewer than half of the students interviewed were present for the rally, almost every student mentioned it. This not only suggests that Black students present were harmed but also that they felt reporting the behavior would not be beneficial due to their lack of faith in institutional responses to address the harm. Karina highlights the narratives that may be passed from Black student to Black student regarding institutional responses,

> They had a whole Trump rally in the middle of campus, and I was like, "Oh, wow." Okay. That is so great. And she is just like, "Yeah, did not do anything about it for a long time."

Karina's narrative is consistent with perceptions of a lack of urgency in response, first introduced by Jazlyn. Mainly, it appears that Black students want their institution to respond to harm in a timely fashion, with more extended, neutral, or no responses resulting in a lack of faith among Black students in the institution. These continued references to this specific event also suggest that Black students share their harmful experiences across cohorts, making harm a part of institutional history and memory.

Black Tokenism

Tokenism can be described as actions that appear to support minoritized populations but are performative in nature and insincere in terms of care. This minor theme also surfaced as one institutional action that could contribute to the harm or disappointment of Black students. Multiple participants described experiences where they felt tokenized by their institution. Often, these experiences manifested as institutional actions that appeared to place a genuine emphasis on Black student support but felt like the institution was using their identities to create a more positive public image, resulting in negative perceptions of the institution. Jamal shares,

> There is even there is an experience of tokenism of being the Black student that everybody wants to see, or everybody wants people to aim to be like, or the person who not is necessarily put on a pedestal, but the person that is more not necessarily valued, but seen more than everybody else.

Similarly, DJ describes feeling like institutional actions are "diversity stunts,"

> But we talk about this too, all the time. Me and my friends see ourselves as like diversity stunts. Um, it is like, wherever we go is a camera. And it is just the camera. It is just like our life is not a joke to y'all.

Each of these examples highlights experiences where Black students do not feel they are cared for but rather treated as a beneficial commodity that the institution positions in its self-interest.

Kiah describes a similar experience related to tokenism and suggests that institutional actions are performative,

> I feel that [my institution] has to maintain their numbers of Black students on campus and to follow their rules on diversity and inclusion to make themselves feel that, every annual year report, that, through their surveys, through what they hear from Black faculty and staff, that the students feel welcome and supported.

Kiah's narrative also suggests, indirectly that Black students do not feel welcome and supported on campus. Similarly, Jazlyn shared the following about how PWI may use Black students for marketing opportunities but not fully support them through their day-to-day experiences,

> It is like, I think, I guess this is like turning into a critique of like the culture, like the institution's culture, which I guess the question is about, but it is like, um, I feel like those are the programs that the people who, like, make you, like, we are the ones who, like, are on the brochures, are the ones who are always asked to speak at admissions events. We are always like on panels and things like that. We always have to be on a task force. But, you know, when it comes down to it, and it is like, is there institutional concern for my day-to-day experience as a [institution] student?

This statement is crucial because it suggests that institutions attending to their day-to-day experiences is essential to Black students. However, instead, they are perceived as being used by the institution. Itumeleng also highlighted how institutions may use Black tokenism to appeal to Black students as early as admissions but do not explore the depth of the experiences or humanity of former Black students that they are highlighting,

> And they did not talk about anything. I remember when they showed me, they just showed me that, “Oh, these are like the first two blacks who graduated,” then we moved on.

The use of the 'first Black' trope represents both tokenism of Black students and intentional, incomplete narratives of those Black students' experiences that may not fully capture their experiences while in attendance. This is particularly salient when we consider the anti-Black reactions of White students at primarily White institutions in the South after desegregation was mandated. For the institution of this study, and not unique to PWIs in the South, the first Black

students who attended these institutions were often subjected to significant harm by their White peers. This reality requires higher education practitioners at primarily White institutions to consider the types of support that Black students want to have more positive experiences at PWIs.

Supporting Black Students at Primarily White Institutions

The final sub-question of this dissertation study explored how Black students imagine being better supported at primarily White institutions (PWIs), specifically regarding institutional actions related to their racialized experiences. Two themes were identified when exploring this sub-question: 1) institutional cultures that embrace Blackness and 2) thoughtful PWI actions.

Embracing the Diversity of Blackness

Being Black was a salient identity across all participants, and Blackness describes how Black racial identity is expressed and experienced. Black students cannot shed their racial identity. Throughout this study, participants shared narratives highlighting that their current campus environment does not allow them to be authentically present in the broader campus, an experience distinct from their White peers. For example, Jamal shares,

> I cannot help separate my Black identity from who I am because of all of my White counterparts. And, because of how students and other individuals form on this campus, they can thrive in an environment where they are entirely themselves without thinking of identities that may impact how they walk on our campus.

There exists a reality that Black students experience primarily White campuses very differently from their White peers, especially as it relates to noticing their Black racial identity and how that identity informs how they navigate campus. As explored earlier in this chapter, Black students may alter how they present themselves to reduce the potential for harm or negative impact in the classroom, within residence halls, peer groups, and the broader campus environment. Kiah shares the following, which highlights the feelings that Black students desire,

> Regardless of the imperfections you see within yourself, your community, or the place you are in, it will accept you, embrace you, and cultivate those imperfections.

This statement defines belonging at its foundation: Students want to exist authentically in an environment by feeling accepted and embraced. This is consistent with early narratives that suggested Black students seek micro-communities to experience belonging because they do not experience these feelings in the broader PWI campus. Higher education practitioners must also consider that Black students choose to attend PWIs, knowing that it may encourage struggles while attending. Karina shares,

> I think knowing that [Black students], well, I am going to say purposely, because the [Black students] that I talked to purposely picked to go to a PWI, and the reason for that is change. There is nothing wrong with us.

This quote is insightful because it alludes to Black students' internal perceptions of themselves, similar to earlier statements related to Black students needing to feel confident while attending a PWI. When considering how whiteness influences racialized experiences, there is a call for Black students to internalize that their Black racial identity is not connected to their worth. Similarly, Jazlyn describes a need for environments to learn, know, appreciate, value, and validate a diaspora of Blackness,

> Just understand how blackness shows up for everybody. And whether you like, resonate with that or not, and you like, know what that walk is, like, everyone is more welcome to understand what it is like. You do not necessarily have to subscribe to it. Learn about it, know it, appreciate it, value it, and validate it.

Jazlyn's perspective additionally suggests that PWI communities do not take the time to educate and appreciate Black racial identity. Jazlyn highlights value and validation as experiences he wants to have. Considering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1987), value and validation speak to the most basic human need: psychological safety. Feelings of safety do not happen spontaneously; instead, they take thoughtful, intentional action from institutional administration.

Intentional Support & Accountability

As disclosed earlier in this dissertation, every Black student who participated in this study shared that they or a Black student they knew was impacted by a racial bias incident. These incidents were described as harmful, and Black students may not be confident that the actions of their institution would respond to these incidents with Black students in mind if they respond at all. Regarding institutional responses, Black students highlighted two strategies they expect PWI leadership to use: 1) institutions should hold perpetrators of racial bias accountable, and 2) Black students should be involved and kept in mind when incidents occur.

Black student perceptions of institutional responses were those of hesitation and were overall negative. Often, these perceptions were tied to feelings that PWI leadership may not be holding perpetrators accountable and that Black students may not be centered when PWI leadership chooses to respond to racial bias that occurs on campus. For example, DJ highlights the tension between Black students reporting incidents and Black students feeling supported by the institution when these reports are made,

> And, we would try to send reports and everything. And, like, nothing was being done or happening about it. And Tuesday, like, we are still determining if it got resolved. Um, but still avoiding the staff unless there are people of color. And like, it might be I feel like the people of color, the only ones who like reach out to you say anything, like I say, if I am walking to class, is only like people of color who even, like, acknowledge you, to be honest.

DJ suggests that when Black students follow the proper university protocol to report incidents, they expect institutional leadership to act but feel disregarded. Furthermore, her statement also suggests that when Black students do not feel cared for by leadership, they may withdraw or avoid White community members, seeking people of color who have more reliably supported them through challenging situations. DJ's perspective alludes to the burden of Black student support falling on other people of color on campus when White community members do not

show the same levels of support. This unfairly deflects the responsibility of Black student support from White community members toward all other racially minoritized populations on campus.

When this harm occurs, Black students look toward PWI leadership to fully address what has occurred. First, Black students shared narratives that suggest perceptions of being ignored or not taken seriously. Tiffany captures the essence of the basic need for Black student support by sharing, 'If you do not deal with incidents that impact Black students as soon as possible, then things are going to escalate.' Black students often highlighted feelings of being ignored. For example, DJ describes experiences where students, not PWI leadership, take the initiative to first bring attention to incidents that harm Black students,

> Um, whenever stuff does happen, it is not even the university that addresses it. It is like the school newspaper that has to address it, like the informal social media newspaper. And that is not good because the student is doing work for you.

Others suggest that the responses of PWI leadership need more urgency. Jamal shares the following related to acknowledgment of harm but no urgency in action,

> There is always the acknowledgment. So there is always we hear you will see you. But there needs to be a sense of urgency in resolving the issues.

Another Black student, Anthony, also describes a perspective where they feel PWI leadership can "start anywhere" because doing something is "better than doing nothing." They also describe an experience of feeling less valued than their White peers when incidents occur on campus,

> Because they start anywhere and be better than doing nothing, which is what they are doing. Oftentimes, like, I witnessed the truck incidents go all the way up the [institutional] chain of command. I know people who reported it to campus police, then someone who tracked down the Dean of Students, and then another person who tracked down the school president to try and get an explanation for it. But I do not think anything changed until it started affecting white students.

In this instance, Black students displayed extraordinary effort to seek support throughout multiple levels of the institution but ultimately felt ignored. Furthermore, they highlight a perspective that suggests PWI leadership does not act with a sense of urgency until incidents begin harming White community members,

> Like that Trump rally that came through was throwing things at not just Black students, but like, I think it was a White professor as well. So once it started affecting, like, the white population on campus, that is when something changed. Then it is sort of, we are all sort of the canary in the coal mine in this analogy. We are all warning, "Hey, something is off," we should probably do something about this.

The coal mine analogy is particularly insightful because it metaphorizes Black students' harm as warnings of a threat to White community members, in the same way, canaries served as warnings to coal miners of imminent threats. Similarly, Kiah describes a perception that institutions may use policy or practice to avoid addressing racism on campus,

> [Institution] was never going to get it right, with situations involving racism because of the plans that they already have that are in place. Like, you know, the policies and practices that they have to go by. […] We are not going to have any mediation. We are not going to have any reprimand for [perpetrators of racism].

Each of these narratives suggests that Black students are looking for PWI leadership to prioritize Black students' experiences when supporting them. They expect urgency and intentional action when leadership addresses Black students' racialized experiences.

Responding to Harmful Incidents

PWI leadership's actions to respond to harm are explicit and overt examples of institutional strategy and provide insight into Black students' overall perceptions of the institution. When responding to these incidents, Black students consistently sought PWI leadership to center the needs of Black students. Tiffany explicitly says, 'Go to the victim.' Similarly, Mo details what supporting a group of harmed students may look like,

> Make sure a group of students or students that happened to talk to them get the information for them, make sure that they are okay, and give them resources to go to for counseling or something to help them talk about what happened.

Mo's statement also should prompt PWI leadership to consider, "What does it mean to make sure Black students are okay?" In one way, this looked like connecting Black students to resources quickly, as suggested by Jazlyn,

> And, like, relating back to another answer of allocating more resources so that you can actualize those things. It is not just enough to, like. However, it is great to link to, you know, our student health services and things like that. What is even better is making sure that, you know, those connections can be made in a more timely manner so that students get the care immediately when they need it.

Jazlyn's perspective also underscores resource allocation as a crucial concern they have identified as a Black student. This viewpoint aligns with delegating more staff to student support, which can lead to more timely connections between students and available resources. Otherwise, higher education institutions must maintain the staff-to-student ratio necessary to establish sustainable support structures.

Student Accountability

In the context of this study, accountability can be described as the efforts made to address individuals responsible for harm within the community. Black students were invited to express their views on how institutions should respond to harmful incidents on campus. These discussions revolved around potential students who cause harm to others, and all the perspectives shared emphasized the necessity of accountability for those responsible. While accountability methods varied among these students, the majority concurred that immediate removal should not be the only solution. For instance, Tiffany shared,

> I am not a fan of punitive punishment, so I do not think people should be taken out of their schools for what they do or like, bashed on social media. But they should reck, they should be held accountable for what they said or did.

Similarly, Eric shared,

> I think they should assess the severity of the thing of the altercation. We should, instead of immediately just trying to remove [the altercation] if it is a student.

Karina describes suspension as 'extremely severe.' Punitive punishments may not be well-received by Black students. Instead, they emphasize the importance of education for the student who caused harm and restorative actions. Jazlyn highlighted the significance of self-reflection. Restorative actions cannot occur unless the person responsible for the harm recognizes their actions and is willing to make amends. Tiffany offers the following perspective,

> I think it would have to be like a formal apology to come out of it. And then, like, you know, the classes that come with it. Like, no, you have to understand what you did wrong. And then also like just pushing them to be in spaces where they have to recognize how impactful racism is, and how toxic it is, and how negative it is, and just how it is not something that you should continue to practice.

While Itumeleng supports the idea of an institution considering suspension, he also believes something should be done to 'teach the personal lesson.' These actions facilitate direct engagement with a student responsible for harm, potentially leading to healing and preventing future harm from that individual. As Eric describes, this approach offers an opportunity to 'address the root' of racial problems and allows institutional leaders to 'take action with the person' instead of immediately removing them. These perspectives challenge any assumptions that Black students who have been harmed seek punishment as a collective response. Instead, they suggest that Black students look to institutional leaders for education and a path toward preventing future racial harm.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirm that Black students encounter racialized experiences while attending PWIs, encompassing both academic and social aspects. To navigate these racialized experiences and establish a sense of belonging on campus, Black students often seek

out micro-communities, as they may not perceive opportunities for belonging within the broader campus environment. These micro-communities include Black peer groups and shared interest groups, allowing Black students to connect with others with similar interests or experiences. Micro-communities, particularly Black peer groups, enable Black students to be authentically themselves and express their desire for their institution to embrace Blackness.

Black students' narratives suggest that their experiences and identities are diverse, although they share commonalities. Recognizing this diversity of Black experiences, students desire to be embraced regardless of how they express their racial identity. In addition to seeking to belong on campus, Black students also endure racial harm, either directly or indirectly, due to incidents or day-to-day experiences while attending PWIs. In such situations, this study indicates that Black students often expect to be disappointed by the actions of PWI leadership, citing inadequate resources and a lack of care.

In summary, this study indicates that Black students wish to see their institutions prioritize Black student-specific support across various dimensions of their racialized experiences, including actions and resource allocation that demonstrate intentionality on the part of institutional leadership.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

"You don't have to think about doing the right thing. If you're for the right thing, then you do it without thinking." — Maya Angelou

Introduction

"This chapter discusses the findings of the dissertation study. It begins with a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the relevant literature, practical recommendations, and implications for future research. The qualitative study aims to explore how Black students' perceptions of PWI responses to their racialized experiences influence their sense of belonging. The following sub-questions further investigate the primary research question of this dissertation study:

1. What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black students attending a primarily white institution (PWI)?
2. What racialized experiences and structures do Black students recognize are present at primarily white institutions (PWIs)?
3. How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting Black campus community members?
4. How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?

The findings of this dissertation study aim to add to the body of literature that focuses on Black student experiences at primarily White institutions (PWIs).

Summary of Findings

As discussed in Chapter IV, the results of this study confirm that Black students have racialized experiences they must navigate while attending PWIs. These experiences encompass academic and social aspects, and Black students must persist through them. To navigate these racialized experiences and find a sense of belonging on campus, Black students often seek out

micro-communities since they perceive limited opportunities for belonging in the broader campus environment. These smaller communities include Black peer groups and shared interest groups, where Black students can engage with others with similar interests or experiences. Micro-communities, especially Black peer groups, enable Black students to be authentic and express their desire for their institution to embrace Blackness.

Black students' narratives suggest that their experiences and identities, while often overlapping, are diverse. Considering this diversity within Blackness, students desire to be embraced, regardless of how they choose to express their Black racial identity. In addition to seeking to belong on campus, Black students also experience racial harm, either directly or indirectly, through incidents or day-to-day experiences while in attendance. Holistically, this study suggests that Black students expect to be disappointed by the actions of PWI leadership when either of these situations occurs. They cite a lack of resources and a lack of care as contributing factors.

Overall, this study indicates that Black students want to see their institutions emphasize Black student-specific support across various dimensions of their racialized experiences. This includes taking actions and allocating resources that demonstrate intentionality on the part of institutional leadership.

Comparison to the Literature

This dissertation study aimed to explore Black students' perceptions of institutional responses to their racialized experiences. In investigating this topic, the study also sought to understand Black students' perceptions regarding belongingness, their experiences on campus, and their support-related desires. Much of the existing literature either focuses on belongingness broadly or does not explicitly address the experiences of Black students concerning belonging.

Recent research has increasingly emphasized belongingness within the Black student population. However, what distinguishes my study is its departure from analyzing these topics individually and applying a systems-based framework to understand the phenomenon of Black student belonging.

Student belonging has been extensively studied, with limited consideration of Black racial identity and belongingness on college and university campuses (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; O'Keeffe, 2013; Thomas, 2012; Hoffman et al., 2002). Recent researchers have intentionally focused on exploring Black student experiences on campus (Morgan et al., 2020; Leath et al., 2022; Hussain & Jones, 2021; Hunter et al., 2019). The findings of my study align with the results of these recent studies. For instance, Hussain & Jones (2021) found that when Black students perceive insufficient institutional support, their sense of belonging is negatively impacted. In terms of challenges faced by Black students, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Morgan et al. (2020), including Black students noting a lack of Black faculty, limited Black cultural programming, and a desire for Black-centered spaces. Similarly, the recent study by Leath et al. (2022) discovered that Black students experience feelings of betrayal related to their intersectional identities, must navigate social cliques, and feel pressured to perform their Blackness in specific ways.

Leath et al.'s (2022) study also found that Black students may rely on other Black students to help them navigate campus, similar to the findings of my study, which suggests that, rather than depending on institutional support structures, Black students seek support from each other. Even with peer support, my study found that Black students may not always express their authentic selves, in line with the findings of Hunter et al. (2019), which indicate that Black students often feel they must sacrifice elements of their Black racial identity to thrive at a PWI.

However, each of these studies has limitations in considering how the results can be applied at the institutional level.

These studies underscore the importance of explicitly exploring Black student experiences related to belonging. The themes that emerge through this more focused exploration can enhance the validity of findings concerning Black student experiences and potentially shape how institutional leaders utilize the results of various studies to inform their approaches on college campuses. While studies on student belonging, including those focusing on Black student experiences, have yielded consistent results, none have applied a systems-based approach that institutional leaders can use to support Black students. This study validates Black students' diverse experiences on PWI campuses and offers a comprehensive framework that institutional leadership can consider when applying the results of each of these studies.

Cultural and Campus Contexts within the United States

Since this research focuses on Black students, understanding the contextual significance of Blackness in the United States is crucial to comprehending their experiences. Within the United States, the term "Black" is intertwined with a long history of anti-black racism and white colonization. For much of U.S. history, the Black population endured enslavement, segregation, victimization, and exclusion from various aspects of U.S. society. Consequently, Black people were not only denied opportunities to accumulate wealth in ways similar to the White population throughout U.S. history, but they were also deprived of political influence in shaping U.S. law, customs, and socialization. These historical injustices resulted in the exploitation of the Black population in the United States. While time has created opportunities for this relationship to evolve, it, unfortunately, does not reverse centuries of laws, and this history informs U.S. culture.

To illustrate how this relationship is dynamic, we can first consider the position of the Black population within a college campus and the broader U.S. context. Despite significant progress within the United States, the unique history of Black people is sometimes overlooked, with an assumption that anti-black racism no longer exists due to the privileges many Black individuals enjoy, such as access to higher education and the ability to vote in elections. However, for much of U.S. history, the responsibility for shaping the country's politics and trajectory rested solely with the White population. As a result, whiteness has become deeply ingrained in the fabric of U.S. culture and socialization.

Recognizing this cultural context, it is essential for campus leadership to acknowledge that the politics of their institution will also be influenced by it. Campus policies, particularly at public institutions, may be influenced by state legislation, which can change with shifts in political ideology within the government. While the law is external to the campus, legislation can significantly impact and disrupt campus policies and approaches to supporting diverse student populations.

A notable example of government influence on campus policies includes legislation in multiple states that limit or even ban diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives on campus. According to the DEI Legislation Tracker by the Chronicle of Higher Education, 34 bills in 20 states have been introduced, impacting DEI offices and staff, DEI training, diversity statements, and identity-based preferences for hiring and admissions. Four of these bills have received final legislative approval, and three have been signed into law (Lu et al., 2023). As a result, campus administrations may be compelled to adopt policies consistent with the law, to the detriment of Black students seeking support and action in areas where these legislations confront the issues.

Ideally, in these situations, campus leadership should be able to voice their opposition to policies they believe are wrong. However, such actions may face scrutiny, for instance, by Boards of Trustees, and could attract unwanted attention from state legislators, possibly leading to punitive actions, including termination. Nevertheless, Black students look to campus administration to be leaders during turbulent and disruptive times that cause considerable harm to them. Campus leadership committed to supporting Black students must develop strategies to navigate political interference effectively. The systems-based framework explored later is one way for leadership to understand their campuses and develop strategic responses comprehensively.

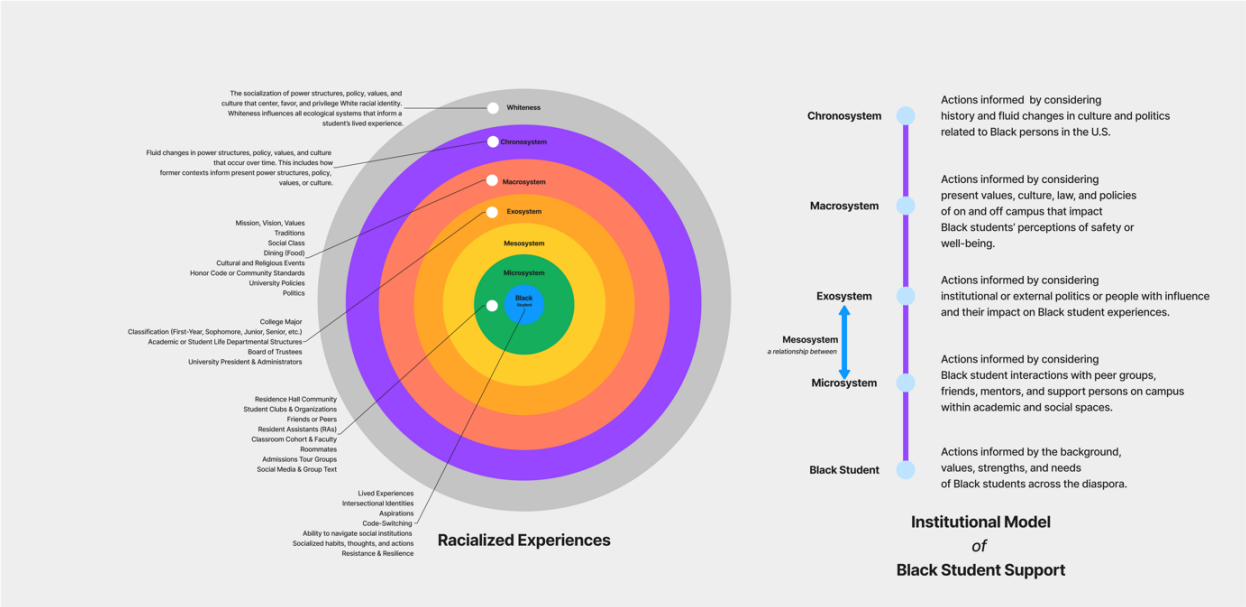
A Reimagined Framework for Black Student Support at PWIs

Whiteness is an inherent part of the Black student experience, both on campus and beyond. The following is a revised conceptual framework, a systems-informed model that integrates Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Yosso's Cultural Community Wealth model from a critical race perspective. While existing literature forms the foundation of this conceptual model, the perspectives of the Black students in this dissertation study have further refined these ideas. Creating a campus culture of belonging for Black students requires institutional leaders to intentionally consider the needs of Black students concerning their backgrounds, values, and strengths—all of which inform how Black students care for themselves and how they wish to be supported.

The findings of this study support the idea that Black students experience racialized incidents on campus and perceive that PWIs are not intentional in supporting Black students. This model represents a redefinition of the initial conceptual framework of this study (see

Chapter 1). This concept emphasizes and responds to the dynamic role of whiteness at the highest level within the ecological context.

Figure 4a. Institutional Model of Black Student Support



This revised conceptual framework places the knowledge of Black racialized experiences at the core to guide how campuses should support Black students. It is founded on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995), emphasizing that Black student support must extend across every ecological layer contributing to Black racialized experiences. Institutional leaders must consider how racialized experiences manifest across systems and commit to responsive actions. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995) offers a holistic framework for understanding Black student experiences across multiple dimensions. It encourages us to move beyond individual incidents that harm Black students and focus on collective Black student support that considers and responds to every layer of their racialized experiences.

Centering Black racialized experiences involves a deep inquiry into the unique lived experiences across the Black diaspora. This commitment and initiative are necessary because

Black students do not always want to be the sole catalysts for their sense of belonging on campus, even though many may find themselves in this role while attending a PWI. One example of this perspective is that Black students must seek out spaces of belonging on campus, such as connecting with other Black community members. Another aspect of self-support is Black students informing their peers about incidents or events that might harm the Black community. However, Black students also expect PWI leadership to model Black student support across all facets of their racialized experiences. This modeling takes the form of intentional strategies and actions by PWI leadership demonstrating an understanding of and responsiveness to the factors affecting Black student belonging while in attendance.

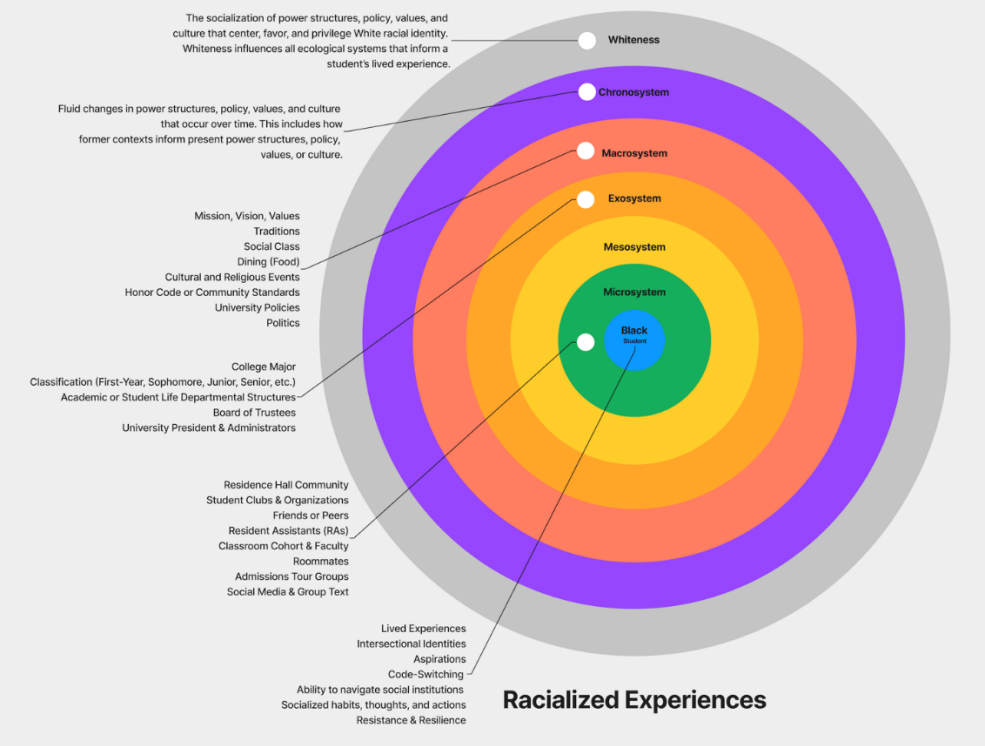
As this research has demonstrated, Black racialized experiences encompass specific incidents as well as the day-to-day encounters that Black students navigate while attending a PWI. Some of these racialized experiences are beyond the institution's control, such as its demographics, but others, like resources and actions, fall well within the control of leadership. While identifying strategies and commitments for Black student support, PWI leadership must recognize that racialized experiences and institutional actions do not occur in isolation. Instead, each is influenced by and manifests within the context of whiteness in campus policies, practices, and politics. Providing intentional support to Black students involves investigating how whiteness influences Black students' racialized experiences on campus and committing to specific actions aimed at mitigating the harm caused to Black students by these realities.

Conceptualizing Black Racialized Experiences

When conceptualizing the racialized experiences of Black students who attend primarily White institutions (PWIs), higher education practitioners must consider the bioecological systems that contribute to these experiences, especially those that may lead to harm. The figure

below zooms in on the portion of my conceptual framework that highlights how Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995) can serve as a foundation for understanding where Black racialized experiences may occur on campus. However, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1995), even in its later revisions, does not address how whiteness encapsulates Black racialized experiences. Whiteness can be particularly salient for Black students when they are in environments where the racial demographics of their peers and, potentially, campus administration are overwhelmingly White. To address this limitation, this conceptual framework adds "whiteness" as the bioecological system's outermost layer, as Bronfenbrenner proposed (1995).

Figure 4b. Racialized Experiences of Black Students



Bronfenbrenner (1995) theorizes that each bioecological system informs and influences the others. By encapsulating the entirety of Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bioecological systems, my conceptual framework emphasizes how whiteness is the fundamental influence on lived

experiences. For Black students, whiteness manifests in noticeable ways within each bioecological system. Bioecological systems are not static, and they are not bound by time, meaning that Black students' racialized experiences occur in tandem with and are influenced by their everyday lived experiences. Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bioecological systems theory states that the individual, Black students, is at the center. Their backgrounds and identities are crucial for understanding how they navigate a campus within the context of a PWI while being impacted by multiple layers of bioecological systems. Black students draw upon their strengths to navigate these racialized experiences.

The Myth of Persistence

Campus leaders should not consider Black student persistence as an indicator of the health of their campus concerning Black support or belonging. Persisting to attain a degree does not necessarily translate to positive experiences on campus, even though "persistence" can be used to describe student achievement. Campus administrators may use the term "resilience" when describing the essential skills students need to persist on campus. However, "resilience" is not always linked to the harmful elements students are expected to persist through on campus. For Black students, this may involve navigating:

1. Incidents of racial bias on or off campus that directly or indirectly impact them, someone they know, or the Black community as a whole.
2. Living or learning in residential and academic communities where most other students, faculty, or staff are White.
3. Code-switching or altering personal expressions or language when interacting on campus.
4. If international, adapting to a new context of being Black in the United States and dealing with anti-Black racism while also feeling disconnected from Black students raised within a United States context.
5. Exerting intentionality and effort when seeking spaces of connection or community that are not visibly present campus-wide.
6. A lack of support in the form of Black-specific resources and people focused on the Black experience.

Within this context, Black student persistence is a strength of survival on PWI campuses and should be recognized. While considering these strengths, campus administration must also recognize that, as demonstrated by this study, there can be significant overlap in Black student experiences. However, Black students also bring different experiences, perceptions, and perspectives to campus.

Yosso's Model of Community Cultural Wealth (2007) emphasizes that communities of color bring strengths guided by their lived experiences to navigate environments. Regarding Black students, "Blackness" exists as a diaspora—a spectrum of lived experiences, backgrounds, and identities that inform values, strengths, and needs. This conceptual framework honors the cultural wealth that Black students bring to campuses in a way that campus leadership may not always recognize. For example, many Black students who participated in this study cited that because they cannot be authentic, they modify how they appear in different spaces. This is often called "code-switching," defined as modifying one's native or preferred behaviors and expressions to avoid harm, exclusion, or isolation. In a context influenced by whiteness, their White peers may not have to code-switch based on their racial identities alone. However, Black students may adjust how they talk, dress, or even contribute in conversations to appear more suitable to the context of whiteness. While Black students should not have to code-switch to feel safer, code-switching is a strength because it requires Black students to continually analyze their spaces and determine the best ways to show up to mitigate the potential for harm. These environments are informed by the concept of whiteness and the cultural norms influenced by it, creating situations where Black students must mute their preferred ways of showing up to be safe and accepted on campus.

Black students may sacrifice their culture, interests, and, in some ways, their humanity. This reinforces that Black students may not be able to experience a sense of belonging on the broader PWI campus because the campus culture does not embrace or consider blackness across the Black diaspora. Unlike their White peers, Black students are not only persisting through the typical stressors of a college environment. However, they are also doing so while withstanding the distress that may come with their racialized experiences. Therefore, institutional leaders committed to supporting Black students must acknowledge that harm is being caused to Black students on their campuses and examine how this harm manifests when strategizing ways to support Black students and increase their affinity to the campus.

Commitment to Black Student Experiences

Belonging and mattering are essential experiences for any student attending college or university, and institutional leaders are responsible for fostering environments that promote belonging and mattering. At PWIs, this is particularly crucial for Black students, given the history of anti-black racism in the United States. Leadership must also confront the challenging history and relationship between whiteness and Black people throughout the history of the United States. This history manifested through the atrocities and violence of slavery and segregation, as well as in the present-day exclusion of Black people from positions of influence, anti-Black legislation, and the elimination of the potential for Black people to experience an existence not influenced by whiteness. Without leadership actions, this perpetuates the status quo.

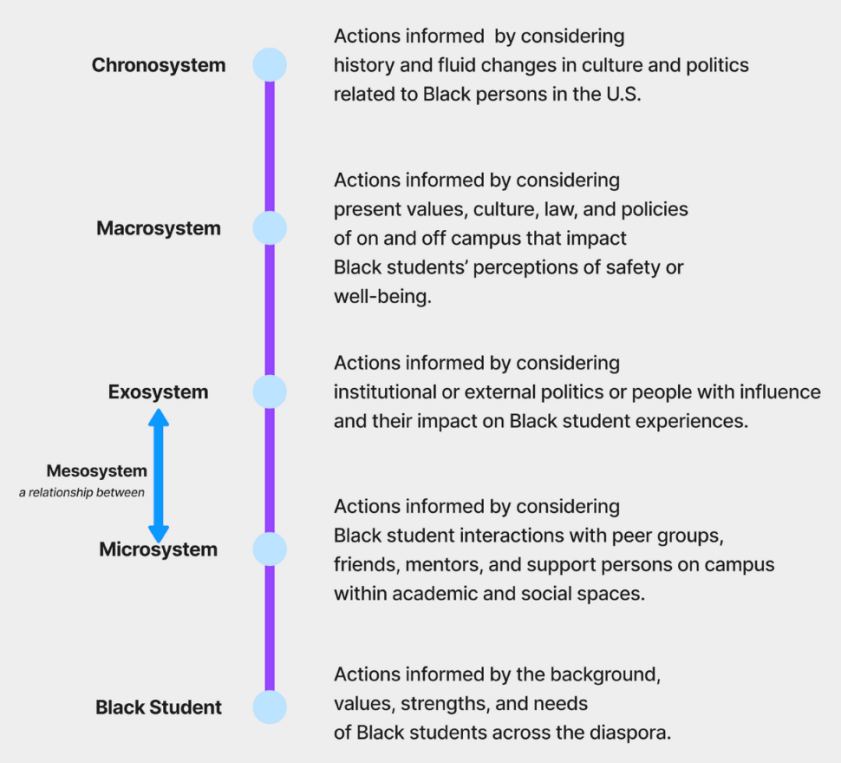
When harm occurs, a prevailing question is whether campus administrators are willing to risk their privileges to champion equity, inclusion, and belonging for Black students on their campuses. For many campus administrators, the answer to this question may be a resounding

"no." For others, it may manifest as articulating support but not engaging in tangible or meaningful actions toward supporting Black students. However, significant effort is required for institutional leaders who genuinely seek to embody these values. Black students in this dissertation study suggested that this support threshold was not reached on campus. A systems-informed approach has the potential to meet this threshold by reimagining how we support Black students on campus.

Applying a Systems-Based Framework to Black Student Support

Systems-informed approaches can potentially transform Black student support on PWI campuses, a need suggested by Black students who participated in this study. The following conceptual framework envisions systems-informed approaches as holistic strategies to support Black students through their racialized experiences while attending PWIs (see Figure 4c).

Figure 4c. Systems-Informed Black Student Support



This conceptual framework posits that multiple bioecological systems must be considered to support Black students adequately. While not explicitly identified, this framework assumes that whiteness is pervasive across experiences and actions. For instance, although campus administrators may know the "right thing to do" for Black student support, ultimately, their actions or inactions will be influenced by how whiteness manifests across multiple systems. Presidents may refrain from taking clear positions for fear of reprimand or removal from Boards; entry-level professionals who are just entering the field may be hesitant due to the fear of early career-ending repercussions. At the political level, politics or policies can be anti-Black, making these transgressions all the more significant concerning Black students' perceptions of leadership. Inaction or the lack of purposeful action throughout the university structure will cultivate an environment of harm for Black students by reinforcing anti-black racism and harmful racialized experiences. Therefore, if campus administrators are genuinely committed to Black student support, they must consider how whiteness may manifest and, importantly, "do the work." The application of a model for Black Student Support is critical to safeguard the well-being of Black students attending primarily White campuses (PWIs).

Applying a systems-based framework requires institutional leaders to investigate manifestations of Black racialized experiences on campus and identify institutional actions that can remedy these experiences. Based on the findings of this study, the following table was created to recommend questions that institutional leaders should consider when using a systems-based approach to Black student support.

Table 1. Systems-Based Inquiry Inventory

Whiteness
1. How is the concept of whiteness defined for campus and is it consistent with literature? 2. In what ways is the campus community educated on the concept of whiteness? 3. How might whiteness influence Black student experiences? 4. In what ways does whiteness influence policies, politics, and people on campus? 5. How does whiteness influence institutional responses to Black racial harm?
Chronosystem
1. In what ways were Black students considered when the institution was founded? 2. How have Black student demographics changed throughout the institution's history? 3. What narratives about the campus culture have been passed down through Black student cohorts? 4. In what ways have campus policies changed with time and were these changes responsive to Black student access and inclusion on campus? 5. In what ways have local, state, and federal changed with time and how have these changes impacted Black populations' ways of living?
Macrosystem
1. How might current local, state, or federal legislation or law impact Black students' perception of safety? 2. How might current campus policies or practices impact Black students' perceptions of belonging and mattering? 3. What current events may impact Black students lived experiences or cause distress? 4. How does the campus community engage with or otherwise utilize Black students?
Exosystem
1. What are the political ideologies of campus leadership on issues that impact Black students? 2. How do political ideologies of campus leadership show up in policy and practice? 3. How might the political ideologies of local, state, or federal representatives impact campus policy and Black students? 4. How are institutional politics expressed? 5. What representation in campus leadership specifically advocates for policies and practices that aim to positively impact Black student experiences?
Microsystem
1. What Black student-specific resources are present on campus? 2. In what ways does the campus prioritize Black student-specific resources, spaces, and support? 3. How are Black students orientated to campus resources and populations? 4. How are faculty, staff, and students educated on issues that impact Black students? 5. What might be peer interactions Black students have that impact their experiences? 6. Who directly supports, mentors, or is otherwise dedicated to Black student wellbeing and success on campus?
Black Student (Individual)
1. What are the backgrounds and lived experiences of Black students on campus? 2. How might Black students navigate campus cultures, places, or people? 3. How have Black students articulated, explicitly or implicitly, desires of support on campus? 4. In what ways does the campus community embrace expressions of Blackness? 5. Where might Black students perceive lack of support or care?

These specific systems-based questions were informed by the perceptions of Black student participants in this study and provide specific considerations that campus leadership may utilize when strategizing support systems for Black students. These questions are designed to be responsive to the reality that no campus has identical cultures, politics, or people of influence on Black racialized experiences. Therefore, institutional leadership must be able to establish an initial profile of their campus before being intentional about Black student support. Establishing this profile requires institutions to investigate all potential influences on Black racialized experiences on their campus.

While literature can be one of the primary ways institutional leaders gain insight, reading and understanding literature has limitations. Namely, literature, by nature, is often broad, and even with specific findings, the implications may not be directly applicable to one's campus. However, these questions are intended to encourage institutional leaders to be more introspective before implementing large-scale approaches to improve Black student experiences, policies, or protocols used to respond to incidents of harm. By understanding and being responsive to their institutional profile, leadership will be better equipped to tailor strategies by considering the unique challenges, barriers, and needs of Black students and their racialized experiences on their campus.

Specific Recommendations for Black Student Investment

Beyond the systems-based questions developed using the experiences and perceptions of Black students attending PWIs, this study also offers the opportunity to provide specific recommendations for investing in Black students. A systems-based approach to Black student support requires investment through allocating resources that contribute positively to Black student experiences and systemic Black student support. Currently, including the site of this

study, institutions may utilize a multicultural approach when supporting Black students, even when Black students are articulating that they want Black student-focused support. This approach is often denoted as "BIPOC" or "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" strategies. However, this approach not only lumps all non-White students into one group but also systematically ignores that each student population of color has different backgrounds, values, and needs.

When Black-specific resources are not explicitly and intentionally integrated into the infrastructure of an institution's Black student belonging or success strategies, it has the potential to reinforce a perception that PWIs do not care about their experiences. This also represents a gap that hinders Black students' experiences by perpetuating a culture where Black students do not have the space to be authentic or receive meaningful support from the institution, contributing to perceptions of not belonging or mattering at the institution. This approach also fails to demonstrate that institutions that do not currently have Black-specific resources prioritize Black student support. Resources and spaces specifically allocated to Black students acknowledge and respond to the reality that Black students' racialized experiences are unique to Black students, with needs that cannot be adequately addressed with a BIPOC approach.

While a BIPOC approach may be perceived as providing positive support for Black students and other student populations of color, it implicitly suggests that the experiences of Black students are similar to those of any other student of color, disregarding the complex history of racial harm suffered by Black populations throughout the history of the United States. This underscores the need for PWIs to ensure they allocate appropriate resources in line with the specific needs of Black students. The following sections provide recommendations for capacity

building by allocating resources to Black student spaces and talent specifically focused on Black student support.

Black Student Spaces

Some institutions utilize a BIPOC or multicultural system of student support. Black students might also seek to belong in micro-communities, such as campus clubs or organizations, not explicitly designed for their experiences. Neither of these are solely and explicitly for Black students. However, Black students look towards institutional leadership to focus on their unique needs, informed by an institutional understanding of Black racialized experiences. While a BIPOC or multicultural student support system may be present on campus, they do not capture the specificity of Black racialized experiences. Moreover, institutional actions suggest that leadership understands the significance and uniqueness of Black student experiences in higher education. For example, institutions may have models that support a BIPOC population while simultaneously highlighting the "first Black student" of their institution, in contradiction to efforts to highlight other "firsts" within BIPOC populations.

In an example shared by a Black student in this study, the mention of these "Black firsts" was brief during an admissions tour and did not provide context for their racialized experiences while on campus—one marked by racism and harm during their attendance. This suggests that institutional leaders may recognize the distinctness of Black people's racialized experiences in the United States but categorically refuse to be responsive to this distinctiveness by allocating Black-specific spaces. Institutions can demonstrate responsiveness to this understanding by investing in spaces for Black students on campus. These spaces can allow Black students to be authentic and experience a sense of belonging, something described as not possible on the broader campus. Examples of these Black student spaces include, but are not limited to:

1. Residential communities in university-owned or operated housing specific to Black diasporic identities, such as affinity housing options, living-learning communities, or shared areas or rooms.
2. Black Cultural Centers with a specific dedication to the social and academic experiences across Black diasporic identities.
3. Black student cohorts that regularly share spaces with others across Black diasporic identities, including options for academic learning and support.

By incorporating Black-specific spaces, institutional leaders acknowledge the racialized experiences of Black students and show commitment to their success by providing Black students with spaces where they feel comfortable showing up authentically. The second resource related to Black student support is the people present on campus, namely faculty and staff talent.

Recruitment and Retention of Black-specific Faculty and Staff Talent

At its core, college campuses are communities of faculty and staff committed to leading their student populations' living and learning experiences. However, the capacity and intentionality of faculty or staff talent that focuses specifically on Black students can be limited. Multiple Black students mentioned that faculty and staff at institutions can be significant sources of support that can considerably impact Black students' feelings of support and belonging on campus. However, multiple Black students also perceived that their institution did not have enough people and resources to support Black students in an impactful and sustainable way. When this situation exists, responsibilities for Black student support may be offloaded to faculty or staff who do not have these responsibilities built into their positions.

While these voluntary actions of faculty and staff committed to Black student support may positively impact Black student experiences, these actions are not sustainable or permanent. These additional responsibilities also can contribute to employee burnout, where faculty or staff feel overburdened to the point where they leave the institution. When these transitions occur, they have the potential to be disruptive or harmful to Black student experiences because these

students lose a trusted pillar of support. This requires institutional leadership to invest in sustainable support structures for faculty and staff on their campuses specifically focused on Black student experiences. Investment in Black student-specific faculty and staff talent includes, but is not limited to:

1. Recruitment and retention of faculty and staff focused specifically on enhancing Black student support and belonging.
2. Ensuring that Black faculty and staff representation is present in progressive layers of institutional leadership.
3. Ensuring faculty and staff are competent in concepts, topics, and issues that impact Black populations and can facilitate conversations and engage with Black students without causing harm.

These three recommendations are responsive to the racialized experiences that Black students described and include three linked areas: 1) recruitment and retention, 2) representation, and 3) education and competencies. Black student support requires strategic attention and investment by institutional leadership in these areas. Recruitment and retention of talent improve the capacity of faculty and staff who can dedicate themselves to Black student support. This includes positions where Black student support is built and reduces the burden on faculty and staff who voluntarily support Black students. Deliberate recruitment increases capacity and may retain more staff by mitigating the potential for burnout due to being overburdened.

Representation builds on recruitment and retention by ensuring that advocates of Black students are represented across the structural facets of the institution. This can include Black faculty or staff dedicated to Black student experiences. However, it should also include representation in areas that may have consistent engagement with Black students or areas where the institution is looking to increase Black student engagement, such as academic spaces, counseling centers, disability resource offices, or academic advising. Representation requires institutional leadership to inventory where Black populations contribute to diversity and notice

areas where they do not—the gaps should be appropriately closed through recruitment and retention efforts.

Lastly, faculty and staff must be competent regarding the Black experience. Institutions should not assume, for example, that Black representation means those individuals are equipped to advocate or strategize around Black student support. Similarly, all faculty and staff who may engage with Black students should have competencies consistent with the ability to support Black students intentionally. This likely includes most, if not all, faculty and staff at the institution. When institutions do not allocate or hold accountable the education of their faculty and staff, they are inherently reinforcing an environment where Black students can experience racial harm or neglect in crucial areas of student support. When this support is compromised, Black students may perceive they do not matter or belong at the institution.

Limitations

There are several limitations identified as part of this dissertation study relevant to the research site as a private institution, sample population, and sample size. These limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings of this study and when considering potential applications of this research. The following section discusses the limitations identified in this study, including considerations that should be made.

First, the institution used for this study was a private institution located in the southern United States. While compelled by state and federal laws governing higher education, private institutions are not subject to the same oversight or legislative impact that public institutions experience. Thus, the landscape of private institutions in the United States presents opportunities to explore issues impacting higher education institutions, with more limited consideration of how state or federal law may influence the institutional culture or potential responses from the student

populations. Additionally, applying this study may be more challenging for public institutions because political influence exercised through legislative action may impact how institutional leaders can address the topic of this dissertation study. This may also limit what actions public institutions could take in consideration of this study's recommendations. These influences also include current and future legislative policies that may affect an institution's ability to focus specifically on issues of diversity and minority support on their campuses. While these realities may create barriers that discourage leadership from engaging in specific actions, the ethical responsibility of institutional leadership remains the same.

Second, this study focused on the perceptions of Black student populations attending primarily White institutions. However, multiple demographic factors should have been more heavily included in this population in this study. One such example is Black student nationality. This study interviewed students primarily of United States nationality. While significant overlap was in the responses provided and themes identified, Black students of international backgrounds may also encounter cultural differences. As mentioned earlier, Black populations in the United States have a specific relationship of harm within the context of the country's history. Black students of international backgrounds are likely being socialized to Black identity in the United States in a way that may differ from Black identity in their native countries. This encounter may further contribute to their perceptions of belonging or primarily White institutions as they continue to orient themselves to United States history, culture, and customs. This may influence how they perceive belongingness or racialized experiences in the United States. This study also did not significantly consider intersectional identities in its data analysis, potentially overlooking how other identities held by Black students further define their lived experiences on campus. Another limitation of this study related to the Black student population was not fully exploring

student classification (i.e., first-year, sophomore, junior, senior, etc.) as an additional factor in Black students' perceptions of their experiences and perceptions of primarily White institutions. Multiple participants informally shared their classification during the study when responding to questions. By excluding classification as a potential factor, this study potentially ignores the impact of student development throughout their time in college and how that development may influence their perceptions of racialized experiences and belonging.

Third, this dissertation used thematic data analysis to study the perceptions of 10 Black students who attended the same institution. While appropriate for qualitative research studies, a smaller sample size limits the number of perspectives introduced and analyzed throughout this study. Although data saturation was achieved, an increased sample size could introduce additional perspectives or experiences not shared in this group of 10 participants. These additions could have contributed to more identified themes and a more robust conversation on the nuances of Black student experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

This dissertation study focused specifically on the experiences of Black students at one private, four-year, primarily White institution (PWI) in the southern United States. This represents a relatively small population within a particular geographic area in the United States. Furthermore, the narratives shared by the Black students participating in this study have highlighted potential gaps in the existing literature, suggesting the need for further exploration to enrich the body of knowledge on this topic.

Black students constitute a minority among the demographics at PWIs, and as such, the culture of these institutions is often perceived and influenced by their white peers, faculty, and staff. These individuals play a role in shaping the racialized experiences of Black students.

Therefore, several areas of study could be explored to enhance our understanding of this complex issue.

First, there should be a focus on examining the perceptions of white community members at PWIs regarding Black students' racialized experiences and their sense of belonging. Second, there is a need to investigate Black students' perspectives on the awareness of their racialized experiences by other community members. Lastly, it is recommended to explore the perspectives of institutional leadership regarding the strategies they consider when developing support systems for Black students.

This research could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms in place to support Black students on PWI campuses. Furthermore, gaining insights into these various perspectives could empower higher education institutions to develop campus-level strategies and advocate for their needs with external stakeholders, such as legislative leaders or donors. Each recommendation aims to expand the knowledge of supporting Black students attending primarily White institutions in the United States.

Conclusion

The primary research question guiding this study is to explore how Black students' perceptions of PWI responses to their racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. The findings of this study support that there are multiple factors influencing the racialized experiences of Black students, including peer interactions, smaller communities within the larger campus, actions of PWI leadership, and the primarily White environment itself. These racialized experiences encompass both enduring realities, such as being part of a primarily White space, and opportunities for institutional leadership to effect change, such as allocating resources to places and individuals dedicated to Black student support.

This dissertation study presented a conceptual framework proposing a systems-based approach to Black student support. It provided specific questions for institutional leaders to use in profiling their institutions and strategizing support—additionally, two specific recommendations related to resource allocation for Black student-specific support on PWI campuses.

This study issues a call to action for institutional leaders at PWIs to acknowledge that Black students are profoundly impacted by their racialized experiences while in attendance, and they should look to PWI leadership to engage in actions aimed at supporting Black students specifically. The systems-based approach proposed as a result of this research offers a practical framework for the considerations that institutional leadership should explore across multiple systems that influence Black racialized experiences. For those committed to fostering Black student belonging, it provides a pathway for strategizing cultural and structural changes.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This dissertation study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol. The table below details the rationale for each question's inclusion and its connection to the research sub-questions, conceptual framework, and theoretical frameworks that ground the study.

Protocol Question	Research Sub-Question	Connection to Conceptual Framework	Connection to Theoretical Framework	Rationale for Inclusion
Imagine you are asked to share your biography for an important award. Could you talk about who you are as a college student and a person?	What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black undergraduate students attending a PWI?	The Individual / Shaft	Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model	This question aims to explore the elements of Black students' lives that are particularly salient for them. This question also serves as an introduction to build rapport between the researcher and the participants.
Could you talk more about your personal identities and which ones you notice most while attending your school?	What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black undergraduate students attending a PWI	The Individual/Shaft	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore each participant's salient identities while attending their PWI.
Your school is classified as a "primarily White institution," where most students in attendance identify as White. Think about your day-to-day experiences as a Black student, such as your interactions with other students, faculty, staff, and the overall culture of your school. Could you talk about what's that like?	What racialized experiences and structures do Black undergraduate students recognize are present on primarily White campuses?	Sense of Belonging / Target Campus Environment/Fletching	Critical Race Theory Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore how Black students feel at their PWI and what factors contribute to it.
What experiences do you think are unique to Black students who attend PWIs?	What racialized experiences and structures do Black undergraduate students recognize are present on primarily White campuses?	Campus Environment / Fletching	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore general perceptions of racialized elements of campus for the Black student population.
What does it mean to you to "belong" somewhere? How does that show up for you on campus?	What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black undergraduate students attending a PWI?	Sense of Belonging / Target Campus Environment/Fletching	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to both explore how Black students define belonging and whether they feel that on their campus.
Could you talk about how you feel about the physical spaces and "look" of campus as a Black student?	What racialized experiences and structures do Black undergraduate students recognize are	Campus Environment / Fletching	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore racialized elements of campus.

	present on primarily White campuses?			
Could you talk about people and places you or other Black students go where you feel most comfortable and be your full and authentic self?	What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black undergraduate students attending a PWI?	Sense of Belonging / Target	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore structures of campus (people included) that contribute to belonging.
Are there any policies or practices that your school has that may impact Black students differently?	What racialized experiences and structures do Black undergraduate students recognize are present on primarily White campuses?	Campus Environment / Fletching	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore racialized elements of campus.
What strengths do you think Black students need to have to be successful at PWIs?	What racialized experiences and structures do Black undergraduate students recognize are present on primarily White campuses?	Community Wealth / Arrowhead	Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model	This question aims to explore what Black students feel they need to have to be able to successfully navigate a PWI.
Have you or anyone you know ever been impacted by a racist experience on campus? Could you share what happened and how your school responded? How did you feel about the way your school responded?	How do Black undergraduate students perceive PWI responses to address racialized experiences and structures impacting their Black campus community members?	Campus Environment / Fletching Sense of Belonging / Target	Critical Race Theory Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore the impact of a salient racialized experiences of Black students in relation to how their school responded. This question additionally aims to explore the impact of that response on Black students.
On a primarily White campus, what do you think is the responsibility of the school to create a welcoming and supportive place for Black students?	How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?	Campus Environment	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore how Black students perceive the role of the institution in creating a positive Black student experience.
Imagine a similar incident occurs on campus. How do you think your school should respond, and what steps should they be sure to take?	How would Black undergraduate students like to be supported through racialized experiences while attending a PWI?	Campus Environment / Fletching Sense of Belonging / Target	Critical Race Theory Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to how Black students would like to be supported.
Far in the future, there is a primarily White campus where Black students feel like they fully belong and can bring their full selves to campus. What would this campus highlight in a publication about how they accomplished this and what their campus looks like?	What do Black undergraduate students believe contributes to or threatens belonging for Black undergraduate students attending a PWI?	Sense of Belonging / Target	Critical Race Theory Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory	This question aims to explore ideal elements of a PWI where Black students feel belonging.
Given that I am interested in the impact of institutional responses to racialized experience on Black students' sense of belonging at PWIs, is	Any	Any		This question aims to capture any salient points that the research participant believes is important to understand.

there anything else you would like to add that you believe would be helpful in understanding this topic?				

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am Detric Robinson-Miller, a doctoral candidate studying educational studies with a concentration in higher education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). I am conducting a study that explores the relationship between institutional strategies to respond to the racialized experiences of Black students at primarily White institutions (PWIs) and Black student belonging. Currently, available research does not closely examine whether institutional responses to Black racialized experiences impact their sense of belonging. Additionally, currently, available research does not readily explore Black students' expectations for PWIs related to this topic. This study aims to increase the understanding of racialized Black student experiences at PWIs and inform recommendations to PWI leadership to support Black students through racialized experiences better.

You are invited to participate in this research study because you may identify as a Black or African American undergraduate student currently attending a PWI. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and should you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time. By speaking to you, I hope to better understand the topics shared above. I may be able to identify concrete strategies that PWI may pursue that would positively impact the sense of belonging for Black students.

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask for your consent to conduct, record, and take notes during a 60 to 90-minute interview with you related to the above topics. Data gained during research will be kept confidential, and you can select or be assigned a pseudonym (fake name). Similarly, the institution you attend will be given a pseudonym, and they will not have access to the specific comments you or any other research participant shares. All data will be kept securely and accessible only by me and my committee chair/members. After my dissertation, all data collected will be destroyed after applicable data retention periods are included in UNCG’s research record and retention policy. You will be compensated $20 for participating in this study.

I am excited about your potential participation and hope to use my research to lift the voices of Black students who have attended a PWI. I hope the results of this study will help inform policy and practices that PWIs use to address racism on their campuses and inform strategies to hold themselves accountable for facilitating a positive sense of belonging for Black students in attendance. If you have any additional questions, please contact me via email at derobin2@uncg.edu or call (919) 717-0065.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you! (If you would like to submit your name for possible participation, please use this demographic survey link)

Best,
Detric Robinson-Miller
Doctoral Candidate, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Field Type	Response Options
Name	Short Text Entry	{Short text entry} I prefer not to answer.
How do you currently describe your gender identity?	Short Text Entry	{Short text entry} I prefer not to answer.
What is your age in years? (Note: If you are under the age of 18, if selected to participate in this dissertation study, we will need to obtain parental consent.)	Short Text Entry	{Short text entry}
Which categories describe you? Select all that apply to you:	Checkbox	American Indian or Alaska Native – For example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community Asian – For example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese Black or African American – For example, Jamaican, Haitians, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin – For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian Middle Eastern or North African – For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese White – For example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French Some other race, ethnicity, or origin, please specify:

		I prefer not to answer.
Are you currently an undergraduate student at a 4-year, primarily White institution, located in North Carolina?	Radio Button	Yes No
Have you experienced or were otherwise impacted by an incident or experience while attending your school that you believe was based on race?	Radio Button	Yes No
Given my interest in exploring the perceptions of Black students who attend PWIs, are you able to refer at least one potential participant to my study by sharing my student and contract information with them?	Large Text Entry	I am willing to refer other students I know and share your contact information and study details with them. I am not able/willing to refer for this study.

APPENDIX D: REFERRAL EMAIL

Dear {student's preferred name},

I am reaching out on behalf of Detric Robinson-Miller, a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Detric is currently researching the impact of institutional response to the racialized experiences of Black undergraduate students who attend PWIs on their sense of belonging. I thought you would be a valuable contributor to his research. Attached to this email is more information about his research study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, he asks that you complete this demographic survey (link).

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Detric Robinson-Miller at derobin2@uncg.edu.

Best,
Your name}

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM - ADULTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Care When You Don't Have To: Black Student Perceptions of PWI Responses to Racialized Experiences on Belonging

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor: Detric Robinson-Miller (PI) and Dr. Beverly Faircloth (Faculty Advisor)

Participant's Name:

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join or withdraw your consent to participate in the study without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to you from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave it before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. You must understand this information to make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. This study involves participant research. This qualitative study aims to explore whether Black student perceptions of institutional responses to Black racialized experiences influence their sense of belonging at Primarily White Institution (PWI) campuses. By capturing the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on belonging of Black students, I aim to (1) build a conceptual framework that explores the links between student experiences and their campus environment and (2) present a series of recommendations for campus leaders to support Black students who attend PWIs.

Why are you asking me?

You may be a student who attends a Primarily White Institution (PWI) and identifies as Black or African-American.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

You will be asked to complete a demographic survey. If you meet inclusion criteria, you will be asked to participate in one 60-90 minute interview regarding your experiences and perceptions as

a student who identifies as Black or African American and attends a Primarily White Institution (PWI). There may be a need for a shorter (30-minute) follow-up interview.

Is there any audio/video recording?

This study will hold virtual interviews via Zoom. Because your voice and image will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed. However, the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described below.

What are the risks to me?

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

If you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact Detric Robinson-Miller or Dr. Beverly Faircloth, who may be reached at derobin2@uncg.edu or bsfaircl@uncg.edu.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project, benefits, or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society due to my participation in this research?

Knowledge gained from this study may be used by institutional leaders of Primarily White Institutions (PWIs) to improve the experiences of Black students in attendance.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

You will be compensated $20 for a 60-90 minute individual interview.

How will you keep my information confidential?

To ensure the confidentiality of research participants, all participants will be provided an opportunity to self-select a pseudonym (i.e., alias) that will be used to reference them throughout this research study. Participants will be provided a disclaimer that if they self-select a pseudonym, they should not use a name that may be easily connected to them, such as a middle name, nickname, commonly used pen name, etc. Participants will also be allowed to allow the researcher to assign them a pseudonym if they prefer not to self-select their own. Pseudonyms will be kept confidential between the researcher and the research participant. Because this research study will also select a primarily White institution (PWI) as the research setting, the institution will also be provided a pseudonym to protect the institutional integrity and participants in attendance. Only demographic data relevant to this study will be collected, and no personal or health information will be requested.

Data gained as a part of this research study will be stored in UNCG Box ("Box"), an online storage service for all University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) users. Access to the Box is password protected and will be maintained by UNCG's Access to and Retention of Research Data policy (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). As the Principal Investigator (PI), I "bear primary responsibility for the collection, retention, and (when

appropriate) archiving of Research Data and Materials (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). Per this policy, I am adopting the following practices:

Data collected as a part of this research will be maintained for five years after the publication of my dissertation. After five years, all data will be disposed of after confirming that no circumstances dictate otherwise.

Data collected will be stored in my personal Box and password protected. Only I, as the PI, and the faculty advisor (where appropriate) will have access to primary data sources.

Participants in this research study will not be provided the names of other participants.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Will my de-identified data be used in future studies?

Data collected as a part of this research will be maintained for five years after the publication of my dissertation for potential future research use.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data that has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you agree that you are 18 or older and are agreeing to participate in this study described by Detric Robinson-Miller.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F: INFORMED ASSENT FORM - MINORS

Project Title: Care When You Don't Have To: Black Student Perceptions of PWI Responses to Racialized Experiences on Belonging

Principal Investigator: Detric Robinson-Miller

Why am I here?

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. Research studies are done to find better ways of helping and understanding people or to get information about how things work. In this study, we want to learn more about your experiences as a Black student attending a primarily White institution. You are being asked to be in the study because you identify as Black and attend a Primarily White Institution. In a research study, only people who want to participate are allowed to do so.

What will happen to me in this research study?

If it is okay with you, you will first be asked for a demographic survey. If you meet the requirements to participate and agree to join this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60 to 90-minute individual interview over Zoom. You will be asked questions about your experiences while attending your institution. You also may be asked to complete a shorter (30-minute) follow-up interview.

How long will I be in the research study?

You will be in this study for the individual interview for 60 to 90 minutes.

Can anything bad happen to me?

Sometimes, our questions might seem strange and make you feel uncomfortable/sad. If anything hurts or you are uncomfortable with some of the questions, please let us know, and we will stop or do whatever we can to make you feel better.

Can anything good happen to me in this research study?

We do not know if you will be helped by being in this project. However, we may learn something that will help Black college students in the future.

Do I have other choices?

You do not have to be in this study.

What if I do not want to be in this research study?

You do not have to be part of this project. It is up to you. You can even say okay now but change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us. No one will be mad at you if you change your mind.

What about my confidentiality?

We will do everything possible to keep your data and records confidential.

Unless the law requires, only the study team can review your records. They are required to keep your personal information confidential.

Will I be paid for being in this research study?

You will be paid $20 for taking the time to be in this study.

Do my parents know about this research study?

This study has been explained to your parent/parents/guardian, who has permitted you to be in it.

What if I have questions?

You can ask Detric Robinson-Miller (derobin2@uncg.edu) or Dr. Beverly Faircloth (bsfaircl@uncg.edu) about the study. You may also contact the UNCG Office Research Integrity at ori@uncg.edu.

Assent

This study has been explained to me, and I am willing to be in it.

Child's Name (printed) and Signature Date

Check which applies below

☐ The child is capable of reading and understanding the assent form and has signed above as documentation of assent to take part in this study.

☐ The child is not capable of reading the assent form, but the information was verbally explained to him/her. The child signed above as documentation of assent to take part in this study.

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent Date

APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PARENTS/GUARDIANS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
CONSENT FOR A MINOR TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Care When You Don't Have To: Black Student Perceptions of PWI Responses to Racialized Experiences on Belonging

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor: Detric Robinson-Miller (PI) and Dr. Beverly Faircloth (Faculty Advisor)

Participant's Name:

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study. Your child's participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose for your child not to join, or you may withdraw your consent for him/her to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to your child for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Suppose you choose not to be in the study or for your child to leave it before it is done. In that case, it will not affect your or your child's relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information to make an informed choice about your child being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your child's participation in this project is voluntary. This study involves participant research. This qualitative study aims to explore whether Black student perceptions of institutional responses to Black racialized experiences influence their sense of belonging at Primarily White Institution (PWI) campuses. By capturing the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on belonging of Black students, I aim to (1) build a conceptual framework that explores the links between student experiences and their campus environment and (2) present a series of recommendations for campus leaders to support Black students who attend PWIs.

Why are you asking my child?

Your child may be a student who attends a Primarily White Institution (PWI) and identifies as Black or African-American.

What will you ask my child to do if I agree to let him or her be in the study?

Your child will be asked to complete a demographic survey. Suppose your child meets the inclusion criteria for this research study. In that case, your child will be asked to complete one 60–90-minute individual interview over Zoom about their experiences and perceptions of institutional responses to racialized experiences. There may be a need for a shorter (30-minute) follow-up interview.

Is there any audio/video recording of my child?

This study will hold virtual interviews via Zoom. Because your child's voice and image will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, confidentiality for things said on the tape cannot be guaranteed. However, the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers to my child?

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

If you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact Detric Robinson-Miller or Dr. Beverly Faircloth, who may be reached at derobin2@uncg.edu or lmgonza2@uncg.edu.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project, benefits, or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of my child taking part in this research?

Knowledge gained from this study may be used by institutional leaders of Primarily White Institutions (PWIs) to improve the experiences of Black students in attendance.

Are there any benefits to my child due to participation in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to your child in this study.

Will my child get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything for my kid to be in this study?

Your child will be compensated $20 for participating in a 60-90 minute individual interview. There is no cost to you.

How will my child's information be kept confidential?

To ensure the confidentiality of research participants, all participants will be provided an opportunity to self-select a pseudonym (i.e., alias) that will be used to reference them throughout this research study. Participants will be provided a disclaimer that if they self-select a pseudonym, they should not use a name that may be easily connected to them, such as a middle name, nickname, commonly used pen name, etc. Participants will also be allowed to allow the researcher to assign them a pseudonym if they prefer not to self-select their own. Pseudonyms will be kept confidential between the researcher and the research participant. Because this research study will also select a primarily White institution (PWI) as the research setting, the institution will also be provided a pseudonym to protect the institutional integrity and participants in attendance. Only demographic data relevant to this study will be collected, and no personal or health information will be requested.

Data gained as a part of this research study will be stored in UNCG Box ("Box"), an online storage service for all University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) users. Access to the Box is password protected and will be maintained per UNCG's Access to and Retention of Research Data policy (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). As the Principal Investigator (PI), I "bear primary responsibility for the collection, retention, and (when appropriate) archiving of Research Data and Materials (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2012). Per this policy, I am adopting the following practices:

Data collected as a part of this research will be maintained for five years after the publication of my dissertation. After five years, all data will be disposed of after confirming that no circumstances dictate otherwise.

Data collected will be stored in my personal Box and password protected. Only I, as the PI, and the faculty advisor (where appropriate) will have access to primary data sources.

Participants in this research study will not be provided the names of other participants.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Will my child's de-identified data be used in future studies?

Data collected as a part of this research will be maintained for five years after the publication of my dissertation for potential use in future research.

What if my child wants to leave the study or I want him/her to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to allow your child to participate or to withdraw him or her at any time without penalty. If your child does withdraw, it will not affect you or your child in any way. If you or your child chooses to withdraw, you may request that any data that has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your child's participation at anytime. This could be because your child has had an unexpected reaction, has failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?

Suppose significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to allow your child to continue to participate. In that case, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you have read it or it has been read to you, you fully understand the contents of this document and consent to your child taking part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you agree that you are the legal parent or guardian of the child who wishes to participate in this study described by Detric Robinson-Miller.

_____ Date: _____

Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature