Brick by Brick: A Narrative Account of Black Undergraduate Men Thriving at Historically White Institutions

by

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Abstract

There is a lack of qualitative research focusing on Black labor at historically white institutions. The overwhelming majority of this labor is coming from Black male students who are cornered into spaces where they have to act on behalf of a school that is not meeting their wants/needs. With new diversity and inclusion measures at majority white institutions, these schools are looking to Black students to find their own way, while repeatedly asking them to serve the institution. In their strategic plans, institutions list that students construct curriculum and programs on their own. This study turns the onus back on the schools who welcomed and invited these Black students into their ranks. Furthermore, the campus climate and culture will be assessed by the experiences of Black undergraduate men that are enrolled full-time at a historically white institution.

The purpose of this study is to highlight historically white institutions' desire for Black men without institutional inclusion. The experiences of Black men engulfed in a white-dominated society speaks to the intentional exclusion of Black voices while continuing to benefit from Black male labor. Understanding anti-Black spaces will serve as a lynchpin to this study as it is the foundation from which every experience is expressed. This sample will take place at five public, four-year, historically white institutions, all of which are land-grant or flagship in the South. This is a qualitative study using narrative inquiry through interviews. The results of this study will be used to make recommendations for student and academic affairs for Black undergraduate men at those institutions and similar institution types.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Black men in the United States have been fighting for their human rights and freedom since they were stolen from the shores of Africa and brought to this country. Through labor and toiling, their personhood has been seen as and reduced to property as part of the racial caste system that by and large does not recognize the fullness of their being. The skills of youthful Black men built this country while the vigor and zeal were still there, but after years of being subjugated to racism and involuntary labor to America, they became expendable to America. Since this study focuses on young Black men, the quote above is fitting for the framing of Black men as laborers who work to systematically deconstruct systems of oppression. Young Black men fighting for their right to breathe free as human beings is a part of the U.S. story of both plight and progress. This progress for Black men has been undertaken by them in their youth, where they are full of vigor and energy. Black men continue to fight while the country they helped build and continue to keep afloat constantly targets their body and soul.

Colonial Construction of Whiteness and Anti-Blackness

Race is the social construct and foundation upon which Western civilization's socio-political organization was founded. As a consequence, race was founded by the idea of whiteness being superior to others (Mills, 1997). The invention of race as a construct and whiteness as an ideology has undoubtedly shown how anti-Blackness is undertaken in the country by everyone (Feagin, 2020; Gusa, 2010). The ideological-philosophical infrastructure of whiteness "determines and reflects the normal, natural and normative ways of functioning" (Kambon, 2004, p. 79). I agree—alongside the work of Kambon (2004) and Gusa (2010)—that whiteness, as an ideology in the world but

specifically in the United States, is dominant and powerful. Whiteness is a byproduct of the myth of white supremacy, castigating Blackness as inferior to America's values. Because whiteness is a dominant ideology, it has made way for the intentional exclusion of others and caused Blackness to be viewed as its adversary. The "negro problem," which Moten (2008) discusses, shows how Blackness is seen as a disease to the body of the American politics. However, Black people nor Blackness is rottenness or decay but rather a threat to the ideology of whiteness and a realization that Blackness is enough and should be viewed as such (e.g., culture, influence, etc.). Harney and Moten (2013) say, "The dismissal of any possible claim regarding the essence or even the being of blackness (in its irreducible performativity) becomes, itself, the dismissal of blackness," which is what I believe whiteness seeks to do (p. 48). However, Blackness has developed itself into a transformational culture across American society, but the supremacy of whiteness has affected the views of American citizens to believe Blackness to be insufficient without the permission to exist from whiteness. Therefore, whiteness is synonymous with the United States and manifests itself into the daily processes of the country through systems and institutions (e.g., criminal justice system, housing, higher education, church, etc.).

One of the main constructions of whiteness is to create and infiltrate a system with a shared interest in seeing it spread. The United States government, the church, and colleges were tri-fold in the foundational building and sustaining of whiteness throughout their organizations (Wilder, 2013). As Black[1] people were taken from their homeland and

[1] Dumas (2016) states that "Black is understood as a self-determined name of a racialized social group that shares a specific set of histories, cultural processes, and imagined and performed kinships" (p. 12-13). The term "Black" will be used in this study to encapsulate the experiences of all Black undergraduate men, not

brought to this country, the decision was already made that there was nothing Black people could do to merit or gain the acceptance of white[2] people, thereby leaving the population ostracized. Whiteness works for white people in policy as the law grants them access to higher education institutions from land grants, while Black colleges were denied access to those same land grants (Johnson, 2019). Whiteness has always held complete control at historically white institutions[3] because it needs total control to exist and espouse rhetoric and beliefs in order to retain power.

The ideology of whiteness is magnified in the implementation of structures that create agency on macro, micro, and meso levels that further place constraints on those outside the white power structure (Ray, 2019). Whiteness from an organizational lens has shown itself not just racially indifferent but racially intolerant to Black people as well, showing itself as inherently anti-Black. In the context of higher education, whiteness is an institutionalized structure established in colonial times as well as today that has persisted in the exploitation of Black bodies without Black reward (Gusa, 2010). Black labor without recompense is structural and institutionalized anti-Blackness.

Patton (2016) says, "The establishment of U.S. higher education is deeply rooted in racism/white supremacy, the vestiges of which remain palatable" (p. 317). Because white men were the constructors of whiteness, they have been able to hold on to majority

solely "African American." Using "Black" will allow the study to work through the nuances and diverse experiences of Black men not being viewed as monolithic.

[2] The word "white" or "whiteness" will not be capitalized throughout the study unless theorized as property or the start of a sentence. Dumas (2016) contends that Black is separate of white as whiteness was founded for "colonization and terror" instead of describing a group of people within a construct.

[3] The term "historically white institution" (HWI) is typically interchangeable with the term "predominantly white institution" (PWIs). "The term '"PWI"' eradicates the historical dehumanization of enslaved peoples as property, who built and maintained the upkeep of these '"prestigious" and predominantly white institutions and universities" (Johnson, 2019, p. 1). In this study, HWI and PWI will be used somewhat interchangeably, but I will make the distinction between similarities and differences when used.

control and even property on these campuses, even when Black people were considered property. Patton (2016) also says, "The functioning of U.S. higher education is linked […] to the intersections of race, property, and oppression" (p. 317). It is hard to argue that the mistreatment of Black men at white institutions is not directly tied to race, property, or oppression because Black men, as individuals, are linked to all of these through the lens of white supremacy. Higher education was the primer for institutionalized anti-Blackness from the foundation. Furthermore, Patton (2016) goes on to say, "U.S. higher education serves as venues […] which formal knowledge […] rooted in racism/white supremacy is generated" (p. 317). The education undertaken at these white schools subconsciously teaches anti-Blackness, from the curriculum to the campus climate and culture. White institutions of higher learning have remained committed to educating their students, but they have also, always and without fail, shown their campus that they believe in whiteness as supreme ideology. Until these institutions disentangle themselves from their love of white supremacy and stand with its Black men, they uphold anti-Blackness on their campus.

The history of U.S. higher education is reflective of an intentional commitment to the degradation and isolation of Black people, fundamental to the maintenance of a colonial order (Dumas, 2016; King, 2014; Wilder, 2013). As a result, the installment of higher education in the U.S. is both typical of and bound to the continued spread of whiteness as a worldview. The earliest American colleges, founded in the colonial period, were made for white men in the ruling class. Historically white institutions[1] (Dumas, 2016) have been in existence since the 1600s, while most African Americans were enslaved and could not receive proper and fair education. Dancy et al. (2018) explore the

relationships between historically white institutions and their longstanding policies and traditions of the exclusion of Black people, from colonial times to the present day. Colonialism shaped anti-Blackness as it gave way to white supremacy and constructing systems in the United States that would force Black people into inferior roles of society. The colonial viewings of anti-Blackness from these institutions have further implications for the exclusion of Black students in the present-day context, as their admittance into these colleges is still scarce (Karkouti, 2016). The current academic model at historically white institutions remains essentially a colonial model that includes Black men's labor but excludes their recognition to the institution (Dancy et al., 2018). The exclusion of Black students at historically white institutions shows that white supremacy is just as prevalent today as it was in the colonial period. The pervasiveness of whiteness into the whole of the institution furthers the refusal of Black students to integrate academically and socially at the institutions.

The landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education (1954) legally ended segregation in America's public schools and most higher education institutions (those that were not already desegregated), which were predominantly white. Although it ended segregation, the policies and attitudes towards African American students at predominantly white schools persisted (Harper et al., 2004). Bell (1992) states, "Actions taken to promote justice for blacks have brought injustice to whites without appreciably improving the status or standards for Blacks." Bell (1992) goes on to suggest that the U.S. both affirmed policies of racial segregation and advocated policies of racial integration," which shows that policies do not always reflect inclusive actions. For Black men at historically white institutions, studies have shown that the levels of academic and

social integration (i.e. organizational involvement, academic mentoring) are lower than Black women (Dancy, 2012; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). Black men are among the lowest in terms of admission, enrollment, and retention compared to Black women (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). For Black men, social and academic integration has been overlooked by a variety of scholars not factoring their belongingness and overcoming of dominant culture/climate into the process (Dancy, 2012; Harper, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 1997; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Strayhorn, 2012). If African American students, and particularly men, are to integrate into a historically white institution, the institution should consider its own historical and current catering to the needs of this population.

Through the years since desegregation, some historically white schools have created diversity and inclusion initiatives at the institutional level. These initiatives have been placeholders for real change, as they appease those who are resistant to change of the college culture and climate. Practitioners and researchers agree that diversity at white institutions is lip service and a band aid, at best, to not appear to be continuing practices that do not include people from diverse backgrounds. The call for inclusion is hollow as well, as it seeks to be performative while not speaking against racism and for equality (Ahmed, 2012). Schools have begun to adopt diversity and inclusion language without diversity and inclusion practices that lead to results from their statements. Although schools are moving in the "right direction" by having diversity statements and requirements, scholars argue that the integration of undergraduate Black men's numbers is still low and is intentionally kept that way (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). A closer look into historically white institutions' historical legacy of exclusion will provide structural

recommendations of how to provide long-lasting social and academic services for this student population (Dancy et al., 2018; Hurtado et al., 1998).

Statement of the Problem

African American male enrollment in higher education is often perceived as troublesome to enrollment managers, but the details are never fleshed out as to why the numbers look the way they do. African American male admittance, enrollment, and retention are still among the lowest percentages in colleges, excluding Historically Black colleges and universities (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). African Americans represent 12% of college students in the U.S. (Strayhorn, 2014). Approximately 85% of these students attend predominantly white institutions (PWIs), according to Hoston et al. (2010) and Strayhorn (2014). Although the numbers look high, they do not tell the story of the experiences of those in the African American college student community at PWIs. The number of Black men attending historically white institutions (HWIs) has stayed similar or decreased, and researchers attribute a portion of the stagnant percentage to the experiences they face while enrolled as undergraduates (Dancy et al., 2018; Harper, 2012; Smith et al., 2007). Research suggests that Black men as undergraduate students at HWIs face a risk of being discriminated against just by attending but ultimately face the possibility of leaving the institution when having to suspend their culture for inclusion (Harper, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Strayhorn, 2010). When social and academic support services are not diversified to fit several cultures, those in underrepresented populations at the institution find themselves assimilating, integrating, and abandoning their culture to receive the "benefits" the university has to offer (Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Wilson et al., 2012). These "benefits" are rife with cultural

extraction while simultaneously onboarding whiteness ideologies. It leads Black undergraduate men to believe that academic success can only come at the behest of assimilating/adopting whiteness. Guiffrida (2006) and others suggest changing the language of the theory from "integration" to "connection" so that this population can still feel growth and development while maintaining their cultural norms. Even holding on to their cultural norms does not erase or address the environmental challenges they may face at HWIs rooted in anti-Blackness. For Black students to be able to thrive at historically white institutions, schools must support them through services outside of white norms. Historically white institutions may have much to offer their African American male student population, but the idea of integration must be abandoned as a means to receiving those benefits. Integration is inherently anti-Black, costing extraction from culture and failure of inclusion. Historically white institutions overwhelmingly desire to integrate their undergraduate Black students, but their culture robs them of their personhood, which makes them exceptional.

Purpose of Study

Anti-Blackness can be argued as remnants of settler colonialism while it continues the legacy of mistreatment of Black students at historically white institutions. In this study, anti-Blackness is the overarching theme to understand the lens through which undergraduate Black men experiences are shaped at historically white institutions. The structure of anti-Blackness leads to the lived experiences of Black men that shape their attitudes, norms, and emotions during their collegiate tenure (Mustaffa, 2017; Tichavakunda, 2021). The purpose of this study is to interrogate, explore, understand, and examine how Black men define Blackness and how they disrupt anti-Blackness at a

historically white institution. The design of this study (critical narrative) will give Black men the opportunity to reflect and examine their own Blackness in community and how it provides agency at these institutions. W.E.B. DuBois's example of attending an HBCU and then attending an Ivy League school, not bending to white norms for acceptance, compels this study to help Black undergraduate men tell their story in a similar respect (DuBois, 1960).

Furthermore, Black men will tell their own stories on their own volition, pushing back against the narratives placed on them. With administration often being the tellers of their story, Black men find themselves at a disadvantage, but this study provides them the opportunity to replace master narratives with truth of their own experiences. According to Delgado et al. (2002), master narratives help the dominant group justify its power with stock explanations that construct reality in ways that maintain the privilege of the dominant group. Bonilla-Silva et al. (2003) says that this is, in essence, "the American version of "blaming the victim," arguing that minorities' societal standing is a product of their lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values" (p. 118). If Black students find themselves falling behind in their studies, it is often portrayed as their own fault without discussing other possibilities. Among Black people in higher education, we see that common practice is to place Black students in a deficit model, in terms of their matriculation in college, to reinforce that they are the cause of their condition (Bush & Bush, 2018). Using their agency, Black undergraduate men will be given the opportunity to give critical perspectives that seek to control their personal narratives in school and society. The data analyzed in this study will come from full-time enrolled, Black undergraduate men.

Research Questions

1. How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions define and make sense of Blackness?
2. How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions disrupt anti-Blackness structures?

Significance of Study

Studies show that minoritized students who navigate their way through the dominant (white) society are usually given services, academically and socially, that aid their growth within the institution (Aragon & Rios Perez, 2006). In this study, I am not looking for services to "help" Black men; rather, I am seeking to interrogate the institutions that offer "help" while retaining a racist culture and climate. Recent diversity measures at universities have been applauded but have not materialized into tangible gains in Black enrollment nor perception of the institution (Dancy et al., 2018; Patton et al., 2019) With anti-Blackness being the overarching theme of this study, Dancy et al. (2018) will build a framework from which to navigate the historical nature of the institution but will give Black men the avenue for exploring liberation while attending these institutions. This study is significant because it extends the work of Dancy et al. (2018) and Johnson (2019). This study explores what stereotypical narratives and enslavement (framings of anti-Blackness framework) look like at a historically white institution, while providing Black men a space that seeks to free them from the narratives of what whiteness says about them. Writing to dissect the settler colonialism that still

engulfs historically white institutions will give these Black men power to speak over what colleges intend to be their plight, transforming it into their own continued progress. Overall, this study will show how Black men make sense of their own Blackness while actively fighting white ideologies of supremacy that affirm Black inferiority (Snow et al., 2004). Understanding that the participants identity as Black men helps to dispel the notion of sameness in HWIs as a race of people, which is an anti-Black practice. Sexton and Copeland (2003) believe that a world manifesting anti-Blackness shows that Black is the only race. While we know Black is not the only race constructed in America, it was the first to be racialized to push Black people downward towards Blackness and to deracialize European immigrants, pushing them up towards whiteness (Sexton & Copeland, 2003).

This study takes place at historically white institutions in the southeastern region of the United States, where African American men are among the lowest admitted and retained. The significance behind choosing schools in this region is their state's makeup of African Americans and also the campuses' hand in enslavement on those grounds. I did not choose these schools by happenstance but rather intentionally for their commitment to keeping Black male representation low. The representation is low in most areas except where institutions feel they have a considerable amount of labor benefits (athletics, mentoring, programming, diversity recruiting). HWIs feel that they are entitled to the Black man's body in their spaces as they belong to them for whatever purpose they see fit (Dancy et al., 2018). White supremacy, causes white people to view their Black counterparts as expendable and intellectually inferior. Gordon (2015) says, "There are two principles that emerge in an antiblack society, they are 'be white' and avoid

blackness" (p. 976). The avoidance of Blackness from schools in this study is due to the anti-Blackness that was built up to call it inferior to whiteness. This study should inform diversity offices, admissions, student affairs, and academic affairs about the experiences that undergraduate Black men are having on their campuses and how they intentionally fight against anti-Blackness that resides at their own front door.

Definitions of Terms

1. Black people: a self-determined name of a racialized social group that shares a specific set of histories, cultural processes, and imagined and performed kinships (Dumas, 2016, p. 12).
2. Race: the sharpest and deepest division in American life; because of the long-standing divide, the social construct has created a part of the American caste system (Adams, 2005).
3. Historically white institutions: a microcosm of society that has historically espoused whiteness as superior through systems and policies (Harper et al., 2009).
4. Blackness: a nuanced cultural perspective of those from the African diaspora to commodify and legitimize their being as authentic (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014).
5. Anti-Blackness: constitutive to the U.S. settler colonial state; a tool and driving strategy in the racial contract and essential postcolonial legacy (Dancy et al., 2018).
6. Whiteness: a state of being that goes beyond an individual's racial identity and captures the experiences of all races succumbed to white (Matias, 2016).
7. BlackCrit: regards anti-Blackness is endemic to all dimensions of human life; Blackness existing in tension with the "neoliberal-multicultural imagination";

creating space for Black liberatory fantasy; resisting revisionist history that erases Whites from a history of racial dominance (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Organization of Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 discussed the background related to anti-Blackness, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of study, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 gives a literature review relating anti-Blackness to Black undergraduate men at historically white institutions. Chapter 3 identifies the research methods used in the study, interview protocol, participants, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 shows and explains the results of the study. Chapter 5 interprets the results and provides implications for future research for Black undergraduate men experiencing the effects of anti-Blackness at historically white institutions.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This quote by James Baldwin speaks to the mythical, inherent goodness of whiteness and the real, intentional degradation of Black people. For white people to believe in whiteness is to believe in the centuries-long anti-Blackness it created and planted roots in. To see Black people as equal or even human would be to abandon the very myth that inflated the psyche of America that Black people were inhumane and, therefore, unable to be treated otherwise. Kendi (2019) believes it is not enough for white people to be non-racists, as that is an accomplice to the privileges of being white. Instead, they must be anti-racist, fighting against the privileges that tell them they are superior. For white people to still cling to the myth of whiteness means they see the reaped benefits of castigating and ostracizing Black people to an inferior state of being.

Anti-Blackness Framework

Anti-Blackness will be positioned in this study as the central argument and overarching theme for undergraduate Black men's experiences at historically white institutions. The purpose of this study is to interrogate/explore/understand/examine how Black men theorize anti-Blackness on the campus of a historically white institution. In this chapter, I will dissect how anti-Blackness looked in a historical sense to set up the present-day study, examining how it is enacted through interpersonal and institutional structures. This chapter explores the many differences of Blackness and delves into why anti-Blackness was created in response to it. After reviewing the literature, it will be laid bare why Black men interpret their mistreatment at HWIs around the premise of anti-Blackness.

Anti-Blackness is fixed between two arrangements: (1) enslavement and (2) stereotypical narratives (Dancy et al., 2018; Wilderson, 2010). For this study, enslavement will be viewed from the lens of metaphorical chains that are still on Black men and the lens of stereotypical narratives that are historical but maintain lasting complications on the perception(s) of Black men at historically white institutions. Anti-Blackness arrangements in higher education, specifically historically white institutions, show how historical arrangements affect present-day arrangements when no intentional structural change is enacted to dismantle these arrangements (Dancy et al., 2018). In the book *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, Wilder (2013) explains the historical legacy of Black people's degradation at the hands of white people to further position the present-day attitudes of historically white institutions. The negative experiences and stereotypes that Black people receive today in society all point to the period of enslavement where anti-Blackness began in higher education (Wilder, 2013). Because historically white institutions were one of the contributors to enslavement, it is also not surprising that anti-Blackness exists with that space as well (Dancy et al., 2018). With the institution of slavery in the states, some HWIs were beneficiaries while upholding anti-Blackness policies at their schools (Wilder, 2013). Historically white institutions during this period were building an economic floor upon the backs of enslaved Africans that translates to multibillion-dollar endowments today. Still anti-Blackness persists with Black people in mind only to be further racialized.

The arrangement of enslavement as it pertains to anti-Blackness is a colonial practice that has manifested into present-day struggles for Black people (Dancy et al., 2018). The labor produced by Black men at historically white institutions is a property-

based mindset where Black men are looked at as performative. When Black men are of service to their white institution of attendance, they are those laboring without full acceptance (Wilderson, 2010). When institutions subjugate their Black men to more free labor, they also open them up to increased levels of anti-Blackness, as they are reaffirming that these men are only good for labor. For Black men, anti-Blackness in education is using their prowess while ignoring their pain. Dancy et al. (2018) write, "Anti-Blackness holds that the Black is not a relational being but is always property (p. 180). When Black people, specifically Black men, are viewed as property, there is a segment of the population that feels that it owns both them and their narratives. Anti-Blackness against Black men reproduces institutionalized racism from the prism of stereotypical narratives that aim to not only degrade them but also cast them as "other," forcing them into more laboring roles.

Stereotypical narratives are an arrangement found in anti-Blackness literature from Dancy et al. (2018) where institutions police, control, and imprison Black people as a "slave" within the institution. Blackness is much more than laboring; however, for white institutions, the majority's imagination of Black people gives a clarion call for domination on every hand. Theorizing anti-Blackness shows that while Black people are by and large greater than the stereotype, they are not free of the webs of white master narratives. Dancy et al. (2018) assert, "White humanity is dependent on its ability to harm Black life" (p. 188). To the point where whiteness has a controlling narrative over Black lives, stereotypical narratives seek to harm Black life and fracture their existence in the eyes of all. Anti-Blackness is the byproduct of the creation of whiteness. The foundational scope of whiteness is to lift self up while putting Blackness down.

Responding to anti-Blackness in higher education, it is imperative to know that structures, once established, only build barriers and curtail the deconstruction of whiteness (Dumas, 2016). Theorizing anti-Blackness allows us to respond to the role of institutional racism in an educational setting (Dumas, 2016). In doing so, one must wrestle with the fact that Blackness itself is constructed as a problem for whiteness. Viewing racism through the prism of anti-Blackness within education also shows how embedded it is into the fabric of institutions and how it seeks to disregard all Black life by controlling their narratives (Wilderson, 2010).

Theorizing anti-Blackness can lead to the project known as Afro-Pessimism (Fanon, 1961). Scholars have positioned Black people, as part of the diaspora, as those who are "slaves" disposed of agency and desire (Dumas, 2016, p. 13). Although legally they are not still in enslavement (chains), Black people have been cast into the margins of society, placing them in an inferior status to their country. Blackness is a colonial and capitalist institution that causes that system to double-down on anti-Blackness as Black people have no reward, only oppression. Walcott (2014) writes, "The Black body is not the most abject body in a competition of abjection and oppression, but the Black body is the template of how the abjection by which the human was produced" (p. 101). Black people continually find themselves "out-of-place" when it comes to trying to assert their Blackness and affirm their humanity. Anti-Blackness has taken full form in the eyes not only of white people but of Black people as well, as the latter has been conditioned to view Blackness as "bad," causing them to feel that they must prove themselves to gain merit (Knowles & Lowery, 2012). Black people believing in meritocracy and submitting themselves to respectability politics is anti-Black. Blackness is much more than social

recognition; it is a culture that is unearthed by ages of resistance and a longing for liberation in the face of whiteness in America. Unfortunately, Black people are the only ones in American society that the nation stigmatized their skin (King, 1963). So, while Blackness as a culture can be nuanced, Black people's skin is the concretized hurdle along their quest for liberation. Positioning anti-Blackness in the light of western civilization's transgressive acts will highlight the nuances of Blackness and the reality of the anti-Blackness belief that Black is inherently inhuman (Walcott, 2014).

Anti-Blackness in American Society

Walcott (2014) says, "What it means to be human is continually defined against Black people and Blackness" (p. 93). Since the Dred Scott decision in 1857, Black people have been fighting against what it means to legally be human. Black people's lack of true citizenship rights during a pre-civil war period had lasting effects on how they are viewed today. The global spread of anti-Blackness can be traced to the colonies enslaving Africans, but there is a sharp line drawn to seeing Black people as three-fifths of a person (Smaw, 2017). White supremacy created anti-Blackness, but it did not stop at creation; It measured Black people's worth by the standards of whiteness that never fully recognized Black people as human beings. Sexton (2010) asserts that America misunderstands "the specificity of anti-Blackness and presumes or insists upon the monolithic character of victimization under white supremacy" (p. 48). White supremacy has decided for Black people what the terms of their existence will be in the United States. From the period of enslavement to Reconstruction, to convict leasing laws, to Jim Crow, to the Civil Rights Movement, to mass incarceration, and to modern-day police brutality issues, white supremacy has regarded Black life as cheap and disposable (Alexander, 2010). Black life

has been regarded as cheap to America, causing her to treat those who identify as what I call “wards of the states.”

Black people are in wardship jurisdiction under the legal custody of the United States of America. The country has granted the right to exist but not the full citizenship rights of those who have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Rowland & Jones, 2011). Through centuries of denial and neglect, Black people have been under the jurisdiction of white supremacy, which sought not to give them freedom but to give them updated terms of their plight. Throughout American history, we see that enslavement was never fully abolished; it was reformed (Alexander, 2010). The reformation of slavery into other forms of oppression has and still is a white supremacist model that seeks to eradicate Blackness from the mainstream of American society. For Black people, fighting against anti-Blackness is war sometimes ending in bloodshed due to white supremacy not yielding to the social pressure of being emancipatory. Anti-Black ideologies in society cast Black people as “social pariahs,” whose labor, while extensive, is undervalued and undermined (Jeffries, 2014). Black labor has been decoupled from the physical chains of slavery, but their continued labor has been utilized in social settings to donate to the capitalist society that is America (Sexton, 2010). I contend that Black people have been regarded as workers, building institutions, and pouring into systems that were not made for and do not benefit them like their white counterparts. According to Day (2014), “because antiblackness is a terror formation rather than a hegemonic one,” you cannot guarantee a total emancipation of a society that hinges upon anti-Blackness (p. 115). While the production of Blackness is in the American fabric, anti-Blackness research asserts that labor produced by Black people cannot contribute to American society or

economy. While this thinking serves to delegitimize the work of Black people, an extensive racial caste system in America shows that Black people have been the drivers of the society and the economy since America's inception (Ruef, 2014). To see America is to see Black people labor and sacrifice, no matter what system or institution they build.

In the next section, I will review the literature about how Black men have been placed into systems and institutions of anti-Blackness while continuing to labor for the white power structure.

Anti-Blackness against Black Men

Black free labor, without intellectual inclusion, for Black men in America is directly tied to white supremacy's hand in labeling Black men as property and not creators. Black men were shackled in chains upon arrival and used as laborers to produce a harvest of the fields and hypersexualized to be planters of children to bring forth new Black life (Dancy, 2012). It can be argued that these chains have moved from the physical to the metaphorical and onto white college campuses and society. Dancy et al. (2018) believes that the enslavement of Black people during the colonial period fixates the argument of anti-Blackness and their treatment today as still a part of plantation politics. Even though Black men produced for their masters, they were still seen as inferior and castigated as barbaric, as opposed to white people (Dumas, 2016). Black men were left out of the ideology and principles of America, a nation where "all men are created equal" unless their labor was needed (hooks, 2004). hooks (2004) extends this belief of a patriarchal society and how Black men are trapped in the web of white supremacy by saying:

> Black males often exist in a prison of the mind unable to find their way out. In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then Black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity. (p. xii)

Although Black men contribute to the patriarchal structure, they are not the originators, thus leaving them caught in the web of white supremacy. Black men's being and bodies have been seen on white campuses as revenue generators, entertainment, and property, which upholds the stereotype of them being considered as singular in purpose (Dancy, 2012; Dancy et al., 2018). As student-athletes, Black men are the highest revenue generators on white college campuses today but are still considered inferior no matter their production. Black men are admitted into these institutions as those who are in service to the white majority—be it as high-achieving students or student-athletes. In both positions, Black men find their way into the university, trapping them in the webs of the white supremacy mindset that the university owns their time and talents. Black men on these campuses are often misidentified as athletes (revenue generators) because the campus is used to viewing Black men in light of their perceived athletic prowess without considering their academic abilities and capabilities (Dancy, 2012; Dancy et al., 2018; Harper, 2015; Palmer et al., 2014; Strayhorn, 2008c). For Black men enrolled at historically white institutions, there is an assumption that these students are there because of athletic reasons, affirmative action, or both. Black men are just as high-achieving as their white counterparts and fight to resist these stereotypes every day to prove that they are worthy of their place at these institutions (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Black men do not always start from a deficit—as most literature around Black male collegians shapes

them to do. Instead, they give the best of themselves in labor and service to these institutions. With these stereotypes manifesting into human form, Black men start to feel fatigue, moments of isolation, and classroom inequities. Everything that happens to them is through a hyper-magnetized lens (Dancy, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2008b).

Anti-Blackness and Institutional Racism in Higher Education

Higher education is viewed as one of the most important institutions in a civil society; those who have access to it tap into its many societal privileges. The original intent of higher education in the settler states of America was to serve the white male elite while also excluding every other group from the privilege of education (Thelin, 2004; Wilder, 2013). Early U.S. colleges and universities were created with the embedded legacy of educating the colonizers' offspring and preserving the status quo at all costs (Thelin, 2004). White male colonists were educated as doctors, lawyers, and ministers but were also educated and socialized under the condition of white supremacy; that is, they also received an education about dominating and controlling the social classes in the nation (Solomon, 1985). After all, the nation's social classes were constructed upon the newfound idea of race in the colonies that prescribed certain benefits to white people and denied those same benefits to Black people.

Patton (2016) proposes that U.S. higher education institutions are linked to capitalism by race, property, and oppression (p. 317). The social class of Black people was technically, by law, not considered people at America's inception. However, "Black people" were still used as property and labor to help develop higher education institutions, which would in turn further the formal production of knowledge through white supremacy. Black laborers originally outnumbered the white faculty, staff, and

administration at white colleges. There, they labored as property, consistently faced inhumane treatment, and repeatedly experienced violent acts of terror (Dancy et al., 2018; Wilder, 2013). Research suggests that higher education would become the "great equalizer" in which people would just have to earn an education and work hard; however, for Black people, this was not their reality. Instead, their "hard work" made it white people's reality (Patton, 2016, p. 318). Consequently, Black people were working hard building white institutions while the policy of the institutions further denied them, the original architects, and aided white people. With policies, colony charters granted permission for the mistreatment and degradation of Black people and insisted that higher education institutions do the same. Though anti-Blackness did not start with the period of enslavement or even with higher education institutions (Kendi, 2018), historically white institutions have always stood as an accessory to spreading it within its institutions (Veracini, 2010; Wilder, 2013).

Anti-Blackness permeates throughout all historically white institutions (Dancy et al., 2018). Black undergraduate men unfortunately must bear the burden and shame of racism levied against them at these institutions. Because anti-Blackness exists and still affects the daily processes of campus life, institutional racism exists in complex and nuanced forms. The policies and procedures that are written for these institutions were built with the original lens of excluding Black people and showing the supremacy of whiteness within those hallowed halls (Dancy, 2012). Jenkins (2006) shows that society espouses rhetoric of concern and desire to elevate Black men but, on the other hand, practices a policy of oppression, prejudice, and disregard (p. 127). In the same vein, the experience of Black men in America is positioned as being viewed as both "mister" and

"nigger" (Jenkins, 2006). Black men have seen themselves as "mister," but being referred to as "nigger" has positioned Black men in the lower rungs of society and espoused that they are inherent underachievers. In higher education settings, Black men are granted positions of influence but have no true influence on the overall process of the campus, no matter their position. Undergraduate Black men are seen as both commodities and threats, which shows that these campuses see their worth but ultimately decide how much influence they will possess.

The systems present at historically white institutions allow Black undergraduate men to be stereotyped and further marginalized into spaces that whiteness wants for them to operate in (Jenkins, 2006). This type of subordinate assumption about Black men exists throughout an entire university and manifests itself in colleges, schools, departments, committees, hiring, and policy. Lawrence and Keheler (2004) describe such actions as institutional racism, a means of discriminating against a certain group through unfair policy, discriminatory treatment, and inequitable opportunities that intentionally lead to further marginalization, its intended impact.

As previously stated in chapter 1, the history of higher education in the U.S. is the groundwork upon which Black degradation happens institutionally and systemically to further undergird the legacy of a colonial white order (Dumas, 2016; King, 2014; Wilder, 2013). The current conditions seen at historically white institutions are akin to the installment of anti-Blackness from the inception of the institution (Dancy et al., 2018). Black bodies on the campus have always been viewed as property owned by the system already established. This view gave way to anti-Blackness while also furthering the spread of whiteness through academic and social segments of the campus. Historically

white institutions have always "recognized" Black people but never truly included their contributions unless mentioned with whiteness as the main contributor (Dumas, 2016). Black people still hold a place of inferiority in the white psyche, and this can be seen covertly or overtly (Harper, 2015; Wilderson, 2010). Institutional racism situates unfair policy, discriminatory treatment, and inequitable opportunities in a system that perpetuates a cycle over time that cannot be broken (Lawrence & Keheler, 2004). In the next few paragraphs, I will discuss unfair policy, discriminatory treatment, and inequitable opportunities as they relate to anti-Blackness and institutional racism that Black undergraduate men face at historically white institutions.

Black Underrepresentation

An issue at predominantly white institutions, but overwhelmingly at historically white institutions, is the hiring of faculty and the underrepresentation among diverse racial populations. The overwhelming majority of faculty and staff at historically white institutions reflects the student population (Snow, 2010). When students can go to school with their peers and see representation of the classroom officials, they are more than likely to view the campus in a positive light (Harper, 2008; Kuh & Hu, 2003; Snow, 2010). Unfortunately, undergraduate Black men are not represented within the classroom as faculty, which opens the door for the acceptance of whiteness as one of the most important factors to retention, matriculation, and graduation (Harper, 2008). The choice of curriculum at historically white institutions and the representation of an almost white professoriate further push the door open to white supremacy (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Moreover, whiteness and white supremacy are inherent and the status quo; it also reinforces levels of anti-Blackness throughout the entire campus (Dancy et al., 2018).

Black male students' access into college has grown over the years since legal integration, but their inclusion into these spaces has not been fully welcomed due to anti-Blackness (Harper & Griffin, 2011; Karkouti, 2016). For Black men to be included, changes to the policy and procedure must occur while also restructuring systems of exclusion as systems of inclusion. Scott (2016) says, "A lack of appreciation, recognition, and acknowledgement of Black culture, excellence, and achievement is prevalent at many of these institutions, causing significant numbers of Black students, faculty, and administrators to feel disconnected from the larger campus community (p. 41).The number of Black male faculty and administrators in historically white institutions are dismal but their impact on Black students when present is impactful. Scott (2016) shows how Black men on white campuses have the academic acumen to hold these positions but are often not given these opportunities as they are not the "quality candidate." Policy shapes the procedures that colleges and universities take into their daily processes, and a school's policies—written or unwritten—can exclude populations, causing discriminatory mistreatment.

Black undergraduate men have been known to develop their own communities and places of solace due to the opportunities presented to their white counterparts and the social exclusion of them (Grier-Reed, 2010). If Black people have been around historically white environments, specifically colleges, they have labored in creating spaces solely for them due to the racism that surrounded them in the form of blocked opportunities. For instance, the Divine Nine (NPHC), a group of organizations whose mission and vision aid communities of African descent, were mostly founded because of their need to provide validation and space for African American students in college. The

Divine Nine's existence at white institutions was not accepted, so creating space for themselves at these institutions was resistance and refusal to accept white norms (Kimbrough, 2003; McClure, 2006). Opportunities to join the Interfraternity Council and Pan-Hellenic Council are slim to none, with membership among Black students being very small. However, historically these councils hold the majority influence, money, and network opportunities. In 2013, the University of Alabama student newspaper published a report entitled "The Final Barrier: 50 years later, segregation still exists," in which they highlighted an African American woman with a 4.3 GPA and family ties to the university who was not invited to the rush for the sorority she was interested in joining (Crain, 2013).

There are other student organizations, such as Student Government Association and private societies, that Black students know about but, because of the historic presence of white supremacy, are not invited in the same way as white students. Privileges such as these are labeled as "embedded benefits" which provide a level of connection to the institution long past graduation (Hurtado et al., 1998). Research shows that inequitable opportunities that Black men experience happen to be intentional from the majority (Guiffrida, 2003). In 2015, a video surfaced from a chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, Inc., at the University of Oklahoma where several white men chanted "There will never be a nigger SAE. You can hang him from a tree, but he'll never sign with me. There will never be a nigger SAE" (Fernandez & Perez-Pena, 2015). These actions subsequently push Black students into organizations that expose them to their own culture because of the exclusion they face at white institutions (Grier-Reed, 2010).

The Resistance

Vincent Tinto's work of social and academic integration has been highly debated by scholars who conclude that the concepts are inherently against racial minorities (Flowers, 2006). Tierney (2000) believes that Tinto's views on this matter force Black students to assimilate to afford the privileges designated for white, heterosexual, Protestant, and upper-middle-class backgrounds. Recent scholars agree that Tinto's social integration is inherently anti-Black by asking Black people to purge their personhood for a list of qualities that may not align with their own (Davidson & Wilson, 2013). For example, some historically white institutions in the South still salute to Dixie and Dixieland in the singing of their fight songs and alma mater (Yearwood, 2018). Historically white schools disguise these songs as heritage and pride when they are nothing more than anti-Black sentiments and hate towards minorities. These symbols, songs, and images are passed on as acceptable practices at the institutions, being anti-Black and pro-white, among faculty, staff, and students (O'Connell, 2019).

Social integration is manufactured through faculty, staff, and peer interactions during involvement in intellectual and social activities (Stage & Hossler, 2000). Black students are actively involved in campus affairs, so this involvement makes them predisposed to anti-Black symbols, images, and songs while also being asked to integrate socially, which is also inherently anti-Black (Davidson & Wilson, 2013). Black students are often found in predicaments to accept what the majority white campus gives them from fear of backlash or being seen as not "loving" their institution. Nora (2001) discusses Tinto's "rite of passage" for students, particularly those who come from marginalized backgrounds with family support as a difficult transition. Tinto argues that

students need to sever ties with their home and cultural beliefs to accept new ones and be open to learning in college. The challenge for Black students, some of whom may have backgrounds of strong familial influence and cultural beliefs, is that doing so might sever their driving force for entering college. Stripping their culture and family away could further disconnect them from the campus, a place where they now feel forced to accept a culture and norms that may not be inclusive of their person. If Black students do not find community or connection to their culture, persistence issues tend to arise, and the threat of attrition is imminent (Nevill & Rhodes, 2006).

Winkle-Wagner (2009) challenges Tinto's arguments of Black students simply "dropping" their culture and family to be integrated; he encourages Black students to keep familial connections to help with persistence. While white institutions are constantly trying to integrate their Black student population in the same way as their white student population, they are losing their Black students because of cultural reasons. Tinto's idea of social integration involved the "rite of passage" theory, which believed there were certain steps to go through to achieve a level of acceptance and growth on campus. This acceptance unfortunately comes at the cost of Black students being forced into the space of acceptance, disregarding how the campus's view of them as people. Social integration continues to ask Black students to lay aside their personhood for the sake of a place in the institution among those in the majority (Reid, 2013). Moreover, academic integration does equal harm, if not worse, by indoctrinating Black students with a curriculum that again praises whiteness and banishes the contributions of Blackness.

Academic integration is inherently anti-Black through curriculum and academic structures sustaining white supremacy (Davidson & Wilson, 2013). As previously

mentioned, institutional racism, unfair policy lays the foundation for academic integration to be valid in the eyes of the university. While discrimination continues, the furthering of inequitable opportunities for Black representation as faculty and for being a part of the curriculum does likewise (Lawrence & Keheler, 2004). For academic integration to work for the entire student population, including Black students, it would have to be rid of assimilation tactics (Smallwood, 2015; Vickers, 2012). Along with Wingfield (2016), I contend that academic integration does not look to help Black students navigate but only to use them in ways that benefit the status quo. Anti-Blackness has been seen and resisted in the classroom from Black students who saw themselves as not just another "nigger" but as one who challenged the teachings and curriculum presented to them (Jenkins, 2006). Black students' academic skills and abilities are often misconceived as academic integration, but they are instead resilience and persistence manifesting in the classroom (Borglum & Kubala, 2000; Strayhorn, 2014). Overall, Tinto's work is believed that, for academic integration to transpire, there would need to be an institutional commitment that required active learning. Braxton (2019) argues that the institutional commitment must meet the welfare of the student. This welfare could be met only if the campus was involved with equity-based practices. Historically white institutions cannot afford for the historical legacy of their campus and academic enterprise to fully give way to a diverse curriculum because that would take away from the ones they originally set out to serve.

The satisfaction and persistence that students display in a college setting tie back to their classroom experiences with faculty who intentionally add themselves as a resource to their success (Borglum & Kubala, 2000). Guiffrida (2005) suggests that "othermothering" for Black students at PWIs helps them more in the long run, as their

expectation for Black faculty and faculty who understand their cultural differences helps them navigate college rigors. Research suggests that two factors influence the satisfaction of African American students at PWIs when interacting with faculty (Chen et al., 2014). The first factor is that Black students may often experience difficulty regarding connecting with their white faculty and seeing them as role models (Chen et al., 2014; Guiffrida, 2005). Black students look for faculty and academic connection to advocate for them above and beyond the classroom.

Black Men in Community

At historically white institutions, there is a known practice of creating sacred spaces designed solely for Black undergraduate students, specifically Black men (Harper, 2014, 2015). Various studies call this phenomenon creating "counterspaces"; however, Black students are creating space to exist as Black people, free of care from whiteness. Many schools have adopted a Black male initiative, but Black men already undertook this initiative when they were first admitted to these schools in mass (Sedlacek, 1999; Smedley et al., 1993). Quaye and Harper (2007) show the need for these spaces by saying, "When students are exposed only to white, dominant perspectives, they come to believe that viewpoints from other racial and ethnic groups are trivial and lack value, intellectual worth, and scholarly credibility" (p. 36). Black undergraduate men from a year-to-year basis do not see themselves in positions of value around campus yet are exposed to the full nature of whiteness in every segment of it. Because of this yearly, and almost daily, double-down of whiteness-as-acceptance in social and academic spaces, Black men have taken the onus on themselves to show Blackness in ways they wish to see it displayed. Cultural centers, Black male initiatives, the Divine Nine (NPHC), and

other forms of social and academic counterspaces have been empirically proven to help Black men find their sense of belonging at HWI's (Guiffrida, 2003; Patton, 2006; Quaye & Harper, 2007; Strayhorn, 2014). A sense of belonging for a Black male undergraduate student at a white institution could be the difference between a graduation and a drop-out (Strayhorn, 2012).

Counterspaces have been identified as an important factor to the academic and social progression of African American students at white institutions (Grier-Reed, 2010; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Solórzano et al., 2000; Pelzer, 2016). Strayhorn (2014) explores what it means to be a Black male undergraduate achieving personal and institutional success while also facing barriers that are known to lead to Black male attrition. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) show that "grit positively predicts achievement in challenging domains," which also leads to a happier sense of satisfaction among Black males. Though Black men are challenged in these institutions, grit is not a way of showing their academic prowess and overall worth to these institutions. Grit is needed to traverse the turbulent waters of college, but it causes internal strife to external stressors that are not presented to all ethnic populations. What grit does not show is the untold story of their experiences to achieve success in the face of oppressive conditions. Black men continue to be oppressed and feel moments of isolation, but they now have found intentional spaces that validate them as people. Quaye and Harper (2007) say that the "Black cultural center" was the only place/space on campus where the experiences, interactions, and exchanges of African American students felt validated. The counterspaces that Black men seek academically and socially help with the coping of racial microaggressions (Solórzano et al., 2010).

Not only do Black students perceive racial discrimination, but they also receive racial discrimination from the hands of faculty relying on stereotypes and microaggressions for cross-racial interactions (Strayhorn, 2008b, 2008c, 2013). This is why Black spaces of community or, as research suggests, "counterspaces" provide Black students with the opportunity of not catering to a white majority whose norms can be oppressive and counterproductive to their matriculation (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Syed et al., 2011). When Black male students can see the influence of their Black male peers in positions of power, they will see the possibility of themselves and join these white dominated organizations out of exposure (Grier-Reed, 2010). Another form of Black spaces that helps these students find their way and bring their Blackness into the campus culture is seeking out mentors to help them in unfamiliar spaces.

Mentoring fills a significant gap in the literature to analyze the importance of the role that faculty and staff interactions play in the persistence of underrepresented minorities. Research shows Black undergraduate men's interactions (mentoring) happen more intentionally than their white counterparts, as there should be a specific focus on Black men as it necessitates their existence on these white campuses (Guiffrida, 2003). With faculty and staff not being numerically reflective of the growing diverse student body at predominantly white institutions, the brunt of the work for Black students falls on the backs of the few African Americans there (Allen, 1998; Smallwood, 2015). Though schools have started to build initiatives to create "space(s)" for Black students, they are doing it for retention rather than genuine concern. While the schools move to build

initiatives that make Black students feel more comfortable, it is only due to the service and labor that Black students promise in return (e.g., no resistance, protest, retention).

For Black male students to navigate their way through and connect with the institution, administrators and mentors should create opportunities for the students, which will automatically lead to retention and persistence (Peltzer, 2016; Syed et al., 2011). Persistence literature explains that academic success in college depends on the student's ability to adjust to, and integrate into, the institution (Bonner & Bailey, 2006). The only issue with the persistence literature is its focus on the students, not the responsibility of the institutions. The institutions must commit to providing for these Black students on their campuses. Moreover, those in positions of power must recognize their responsibility; otherwise, the Black male student population at HWI's will begin to resist everything in the form of activism (McElderry & Rivera, 2017).

Black Men as Activists

As previously stated in the introduction, anti-blackness is fixed between two arrangements: (1) enslavement and (2) stereotypical narratives (Dancy et al., 2018; Wilderson, 2010). Since their legal integration into higher education spaces, Black students—having remained in the minority—have engaged in some form of activism as they resist the furthering of whiteness into their space. Not having "space" has caused a level of structural violence on Black people, unknown to other racial demographics (Biondi, 2012). The culture, traditions, policies, and racial climate at HWIs have all led to the benefit and reward of white students at the expense of Black students. Dancy et al. (2018) surmises, "Policy responses to anti-Black violence reveal higher education's commitment to the maintenance of Black trauma" (p. 189). In recent years, universities

have been looking to adopt anti-racist discourse to absolve themselves and alter institutional policies. However, this effort has fallen hollow on the ears of Black students, who have been asked to serve as diversity champions while the campus maintains its racist climate (Hamer & Lang, 2015). Consequently, in recent years, Black students on white campuses have constantly received the burden of racism but are ramping up their activism—an intensity not seen since the civil rights movement—to combat this oppression (Garza, 2014). The installment of the Black Lives Matter movement and other Black-centered organizations on college campuses has galvanized Black people but placed white institutions on high alert. Black students have become acutely aware of their own power within the university. They have leveraged their organizational positions and connections to try to dismantle negative stereotypes and ultimately receive a level of liberation in a non-liberated space (Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Smith et al., 2007). Black men are caught in the webs of white people's imagination, which is a dangerous place to reside because they will not own anything except more oppression. With HWI's campus climates that impede upon the academic, social, and cultural progression of their Black student population, students have reverted to organizations involving activism to help them navigate those spaces (Hurtado et al., 2015).

At historically white institutions, Black men are fighting against both arrangements of anti-Blackness literature, in the forms of institutionalization and interpersonal racism. Because of this fact, Black men have been led into practicing activism, which scholars believe can cause a resistance on their behalf that leads them into spaces and experiences owned by them alone (Jones & Reddick, 2017). Ladson-Billings (2016) offers an ahistorical and acontextual reality of Black people to show how

their voices have been tried to be muted in this respect (p. 20). Black undergraduate men practice activism on historically white campuses not only as resistance but also as a navigation tool through oppressive spaces (Simmons, 2013). Tichavakunda (2021) says that "Black life in higher education, especially at HWIs, has little to say about Black collegians' positive emotions and experiences (p. 298). Tichavakunda (2021) believes that if the expression of Black joy is going to happen for Black students, they must separate themselves from the university administration who sometimes find themselves inhibiting joy. Additionally, Black collegians, particularly Black men, are now engaging in a form of activism that believes "Black joy is necessary" in a society of systematic racism, especially higher education (Tichavakunda, 2021). The activism that once was done to break barriers has now transitioned to breaking barriers and liberating Black people into spaces where they feel joyful about. Mustaffa (2017) talks about the framings of anti-Blackness and suggests that the activism students engage in forms creative sites, practices of self-care, and self-definition. All of these are important as Black men are constantly trying to navigate spaces where a dim possibility for the acceptance of Black cultural norms exists. Black men are using resistance measures to benefit themselves, leading to positive emotions and experiences, not seen in most literature of HWIs, according to Tichavakunda (2021). Love (2019) suggests, "Joy provides a type of nourishment that is needed to be dark and fully alive in white spaces such as schools" (p. 120). Black students are finding themselves creating space with their own agency, not as a means to combat anti-Blackness but to find and define their own Blackness that brings them joy.

An oppressive campus climate, along with institutional racism persisting in historically white institutions, causes the Black student population to stay mobilized in resistance through activism (Evans & Moore, 2015).. Because Black students face the real-life threat of violence while under surveillance and over-watching from administration, they have taken their efforts to social media to stay vigilant and safe (Logan et al., 2017). Stories of oppression and marginalization of Black students at predominantly white institutions have been told since they could attend, but now these stories have been amplified with the visible and concrete evidence on social media (Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017). Social media has given Black students a platform to bring visual images of discrimination and mistreatment to those who shrug off Black students' experiences around racism. Audiences who once denied racism's presence on white campuses can no longer hide behind the guise of oblivion and are now forced to come in contact with Black students. Black Lives Matter, an organization founded due to the historical inequities Black people faced within American systems, has found its foothold and imprint on college campuses (Dohrn & Ayers, 2016; Schuschke & Tynes, 2016). The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has trended on college campuses since the organization's inception and has served as an ode that acknowledges Black students' struggle for freedom and justice at white institutions (Dohrn & Ayers, 2016; Schuschke & Tynes, 2016). Williams (2015) believes that social media has been "instrumental" in spotlighting racial discrimination against marginalized people. Due to the spike in racial hate crimes committed on college campuses because of the political discourse and climate of the nation, Black students have taken to social media with hashtags that make the latest racist incident available in seconds (Jackson, 2016; Williams, 2015). The

hashtags used helped to reach populations of the campus who were interested in being allies and advocates of the protests, which are needed for Black student attention to the masses (Richardson & Radloff, 2014).

#Concernedstudent150 showed just how much power and leverage Black men at historically white institutions held depending on their service to the campus (McElderry & Rivera, 2017). Because Black athletes did get involved with protests via social media, there was a storm of support. For the average Black male student, however, there was little to be said in support. This hashtag showed the ugly truth about the disparities of treatment for Black men on white campuses and how out of touch faculty, staff, and administration can be to the basic concerns of Black students (Berrett, 2015; Brown, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014). An implication worth noting in social media activism studies, like many others, addresses how faculty and staff do not provide safe spaces to resist but ultimately take all the credit when a diversity agenda item is accomplished (Ahmed, 2012). #StayMadAbby (*Fisher v University of Texas*, 2015) was a social media win for Black students who got national attention when a college admission case was taken to the Supreme Court of the United States. With this hashtag, Black students were able to challenge the inherent "goodness" of white people admitted into the University of Texas while also defending their excellence and worth to take up space and capital as students at the state's flagship institution. Because of instances like these, along with institutional racism persisting at historically white institutions, the Black student population stays mobilized through activism (Evans & Moore, 2015).

Summary

Suffering from no real neutral footing on race and equity, Black students continue to feel the full weight of whiteness even when they resist. What is not accounted for in the face of student activism is the burnout and emotional trauma these students face by confronting racist encounters without any recompense from the university (Pierce, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). This leads Mills (1997) to believe that the liberty America has promised to its citizens was intended only for its white citizens. Despite the laboring of Black people for America, that original intention serves as a raging deterrence for Black people striving for progress within a white institution. Black men at historically white institutions are not battling hypotheticals; rather, they are tackling white supremacy and whiteness daily. The anti-Blackness that these men face trying to matriculate and to overcome anti-Black policy makes liberation a tall task (Dumas, 2016). Furthermore, the Black men that currently attend these institutions are having to fight against stereotypical narratives against their person while wrestling with the surveillance of their every move (Dancy et al., 2018). Anti-Blackness persists, for it was built into the foundation of these institutions. But, for some, the physical presence of Black men attending these institutions is liberation in and of itself. Black men must stay active in the fight against anti-Blackness because, time and time again, their activism has shown to be their biggest force in their quest for full liberation (Evans & Moore, 2015). Anti-Blackness structures seek to entangle them in the webs of white supremacy, so they must free themselves through their narratives. As dark and grimacing as anti-Blackness literature sometimes reads, it must be addressed to shine a light on every experience Black men have at these schools.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the way that Blackness is perceived in the lives of Black undergraduate men attending historically white institutions. Additionally, Black men understanding the way that Blackness presents itself in their lives and the overall campus climate will bear witness to their experiences at HWIs. Interpersonal and institutionalized racism at historically white institutions has served to further marginalize Black people, specifically Black men (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015). Because of this claim, I employed narrative inquiry for Black men to share their own lived experiences and challenge the deficit frameworks that Black college men are often subjected to (Harper, 2012). This study examined the ways in which Black men understand Blackness and disrupt forms of anti-Blackness throughout their experiences at HWIs. I worked with Black men to construct narratives, through semi-structured interviews, in service to the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions define and make sense of Blackness?
2. How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions disrupt anti-Blackness structures?

Because Black experiences are not monolithic, it is imperative to acknowledge that Blackness and anti-Blackness persist and affect Black people in different ways. Using BlackCrit theory, I examined the critical role of Blackness for the participants, especially given their experience at historically white institutions, which are anti-Black structures (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Epistemological View

As a critical-constructivist, I viewed Black men's narratives as their truth, positioning them as experts of their own experience(s). My critical-constructivist views resonate with my use of BlackCrit, in how I encouraged participants to make sense of their experience and realities within the context of the hegemonic system they find themselves in. For example, I invited participants in this study to define Blackness for themselves, allowing them to exhibit their own understanding and knowledge of what that means. Through my own epistemological lens, I believe that Black undergraduate men's experience is their reality. In order for Black men's experiences to be shared and heard, someone has to first take an interest in the lives of this population, outside of scholarly and political gain. Although I am undertaking this study as a scholar, I came into this research from my own fractured and marred experience as a Black male undergraduate of a predominantly white institution.

I am also mindful that, while I am a Black man interviewing Black men, participants may or may not feel comfortable sharing certain experiences with me because of my position in this overall study, as Black men can contribute to anti-Blackness as well. This is why , in order to build further rapport with the participants, I treated each interview as sacred space. While Black men in this study construct their own meaning of Blackness, it is imperative to let the stories come naturally and not push them towards my own narrative.

Positionality and Reflexivity

I am motivated to undertake this topic after working in higher education at a HWI with undergraduate Black men. I saw an opportunity to raise the voices of Black men into

a light that sees them as not people to fix but people to hear. Additionally, working with and studying this population have helped me better understand one's own Blackness and how the saliency of it contributes to how we present ourselves every day.

I was enrolled as a college freshman in the fall of 2008 when I was asked to join the Student Government Association. The Student Government Association (SGA) is the most highly profiled student organization and is tasked with the responsibility of being a voice box to administration on behalf of the student body. At the time, a white man served as SGA president. The racial makeup of the school and SGA was mostly diverse in terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds. But there was a lack of Black men in SGA, which is perhaps part of why I was asked to join. There was an obvious need for the representation of Black men, but it was obvious that SGA looked like this for a reason at a predominantly white institution. One day I was walking to class and overheard a conversation between two white men who happened to be students. I was passing by, as I was already late, but got intrigued in the conversation that was slightly above a whisper. As I was "getting water," I remember the two men speaking about how they would try to rig the votes on the next upcoming SGA election because a Black man was on the presidential ticket. Not only was this discussed but they went further, adding their disdain for the Black man from the south side of Chicago who was currently running for president of the United States of America.

The campus was semi-avoidant of racial discourse until the U.S. presidential election of 2008 took place, duly electing Barack Hussein Obama as the nation's 44th president. The day after the election I saw the SGA president in passing on my way to class. Because he was a public figure on campus, he wore his best face, but you could tell

how defeated he was just by looking at him. Upon arriving in class that day, my professor decided to make a racist remark about President-Elect Barack Obama. This professor, who identified as Native American, confused a younger me as to how one minority could speak so vilely of another. That instance and many others while I was an undergraduate showed me that anti-Blackness and white supremacy rhetoric existed in more than just white bodies. From that day forth, I never viewed the campus the same. There were spikes of racial incidents everywhere, reported mostly by Black men. A few months later, the white SGA President was out of office, and the Black man was in office as the newly elected SGA president. Perhaps because he was a football player, he had capital and respect from some white peers and higher-ups on the surface; after all, he was their representative and entertainment on Saturday afternoons. Life seemed easy for him, but for other Black men on that campus, life was made hard. To find community among other Black men, I joined the Black Student League and pledged (Divine Nine organization) Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Aligning with Vincent Tinto's (1993) research of academic and social integration, I joined organizations that helped my time in undergrad. However, I refused integration; this was navigation. By joining organizations that recognized the worth and humanity of Black people, I intentionally refused and shunned the idea of stepping into the doors of whiteness that had offered me nothing but tokenism.

Joining the Black Student League and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., were ways to extend my Blackness through association with like-minded individuals who aided in the cause of liberation on an already-fractured campus. The Black Student League, like the Black Student Union on most predominantly white campuses, was founded around the 1960s when segregation/integration took place (Fleming, 1984). The

Black Student League was my haven, and it was also the organization of pride and resistance to a campus where we were not always welcomed with open arms. Our very existence was threatening to some, but our refusal to cooperate within a system tasked to exploit us was liberation for all. When I joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., I gained a set of brothers and brotherhood that had a network to help me navigate not only college but life itself. My fraternity was founded at a private historically white institution, Cornell University. Although Black people were enrolled at this school in 1906, there was still a need and a longing for Black people to include themselves in campus life when the administration would not. Seven courageous Black college-educated men started an organization around manly deeds, scholarship, and love for all mankind. Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) describe fraternities for Black men as friendship and camaraderie among students. However, my fraternity involvement as an undergraduate was much more than that. It was a space to be Black in the face of pervasive whiteness, and it was unapologetic to the core of its existence. The very thing I needed to survive a predominantly white campus was to stay authentically Black. Existing freely in Blackness helped my navigation in white spaces when the administration wanted my integration into a culture that was not all-inclusive of my being. Many white historically and predominantly white institutions today want all their students to integrate into the culture, but that is troublesome and problematic for Black students.

Having been an undergraduate at a predominantly white institution and now working at a historically white institution, my reasoning for undertaking Black men in this study is twofold. My undergraduate institution was a former women's college run by white women, but my current institution placed me in an environment where white male

patriarchy built the foundation and continues the legacy of whiteness in a discriminatory manner. There are other stark differences between the schools, but one thing has remained unchanged: the anti-blackness rhetoric that entraps Black people and Black men. The pressures from administration to integrate into a culture that is oppressive and discriminatory is exploitation at best, but exploitation shows that there is worth. Black men are worthy of the conferring of degrees at these institutions their ancestors built. They also should be afforded the opportunity to blaze their own path without administration feeling the need to control their being while enrolled as students. Black undergraduate men have to navigate their experiences and celebrate themselves, as most of these institutions lack the cultural competency and social awareness of this population's marginalization. Studying the experiences of Black men within a historically white institution will further extend the research of Black male collegians persisting within an ultra-white setting. It will also make recommendations for initiatives, outside of the word *integration,* as part of their strategic plan to make the campus climate and faculty more inclusive for Black men as undergraduate students.

Theoretical Framework: Anti-Blackness in Black Critical Theory

This study was not to critique the nature of whiteness but to give credence and validation to Blackness. Critical race theory (CRT) explores the nature of the "critique of white supremacy" as it relates to the construct of racial attitudes, but in this study, I use BlackCrit as a means of understanding the "theorization of Blackness" in anti-Black spaces (Dumas & ross, 2016). Critical race theory gives us an overview of the permanence of racism, but for this study, I am looking to delve not just into race or racism but also the specific ways that Blackness presents itself as culture and shapes

peoples' sense of being. CRT as a framework positions race and racism to be interconnected to the experiences of those from marginalized communities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Solórzano (1998) notes, "A critical race theory in education challenges ahistoricism and the interdisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods" (p. 123). However, Blackness is not solely based on racism but also manifests in culture, beliefs, and customs, which CRT does not fully assess.

BlackCrit addresses the attitudes towards people who identify as Black and Blackness as a whole. Dumas and ross (2016) believe BlackCrit "confronts the specificity of anti-Blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and perhaps most importantly, as an antagonism, in which Black is a despised thing-in-itself" (p. 416). Relative to Dumas and ross (2016), BlackCrit resists the "notion of tenets" (p. 429). The framings of BlackCrit discussed by Dumas and ross (2016) hold that (1) anti-Blackness is linked to and is central to how we all make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life (p. 429), and (2) BlackCrit should create space for the vision of Black liberation that believes in another form of revision history where whites are not those who have the legacy of supremacy (p. 431).

Powell and Coles (2020) tells us that Black men, or even more so Black people, must imagine freedom and reimagine a world where white people have not been in racial dominance in order to elicit these rich narratives. The formation of race in other critical theories focuses more on the structure of white supremacy (racism) that is important to

how anti-Blackness is theorized, but it does not center Black male bodies as systemic fighters to an oppressive system. BlackCrit elicits stories from Black men that speak about their experiences and existence outside the frame of whiteness and white norms (Johnson, 2019). I used BlackCrit to explore the agency Black men have at these institutions, in the face of anti-Blackness structures and systems. BlackCrit helped extract the varying experiences of the Black male undergraduates' "experiential core of college life" by centering Blackness in their experiences from college entry to exit (Stevens et al., 2008). Blackness matters as agency and a space used to liberate those who identify as Black men in this study. For the Black men participants, their agency stands alone but joins in tandem to create their own framings of Blackness by storytelling (Johnson, 2019).

Narrative Inquiry

The premise of narrative inquiry is that, through this method, researchers can gain the ability to better understand the lived experiences of the participant (Brydon-Miller, 2001; Chase, 2005). When conducting any study, the relationship between researcher and participant(s) frames the inquiry. A common critique of narrative inquiry is that it takes only a snapshot of one's life who is of interest to the researcher (Girden, 2001). Shuman (2015) believes that, in correcting this power imbalance and dismantling and reconstructing the power, it becomes crucial to "[insist] on the personal story" (p. 47).

Participation in narrative inquiry research creates a shared space in which the narratives of both the researcher and the case participant interact and affect one another (Kim, 2015). People's narrative practices shape and are shaped by their narrative environments (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). As a researcher, it was up to me to provide a

space where these narratives shaped their single experience in the context of an anti-Black institution. This study must be viewed as a "sacred space" and time for participants to share their own experiences into a meaning that I conceptualized through data analysis (Harper, 2014, 2015). In treating our time in interviews as sacred space, I also shared my experience with this topic. In this study, I built rapport with participants and provided opportunities for participants to share their stories with the goal of their narration to be emancipatory and not regulatory. I provided Black men the opportunity and space to voice their experiences and give their own meaning to Blackness in the framing of anti-Black structures. Through participation in this study, Black men were able to voice and highlight their "Black life making" and collegiate experience at HWIs (Mustaffa, 2017).

Participants

This study uses purposeful sampling for the purpose of "identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas et. Al., 2015, p. 534). This study consisted of 11 Black undergraduate men who are currently enrolled full-time at an HWI in the southeastern region of the country. The institutions I chose for this study were all founded pre-Civil War and had the institution of slavery on their campus, for the exception of one (see Table 1). The percentage of white undergraduate students for all of these institutions is 70% or greater. These factors were important in deciding on which institutions to include in the study, as they all fall under Dancy et al.'s (2018) definition of historically white institutions. The students in this study selected their own pseudonyms and did not identify their institutions, as those were given pseudonyms as well. All of these students identified as Black and were undergraduate students in the school year 2022-2023. The

study had different identities among the participants, as I intend to show that while experiences may be similar, Black people are not monolithic.

Table 1. R1 Universities Represented in the Study

Schools	**Land-Grant and/or Flagship**	**Black Undergrad Enrollment**	**Founding Time**	**Location**
Igloo University	Land-Grant	1,200	1800's	Samville
University of Snow	Land-Grant and Flagship	1,200	1700's	Fountain City
University of Clay	Land-Grant and Flagship	2,000	1700's	Honkin
University of Wind	Flagship	4,000	1800's	University City
University of Flagstaff	Flagship	1,900	1800's	Torpin

Data extracted from iPeds.com

The schools selected for this study fit within the following criteria: (1) is a flagship and/or land-grant institution, (2) carries R-1 research distinction, (3) was founded pre-Civil War, (4) is located in the southeastern region of the United States, and (5) has a Black undergraduate enrollment < 8% or white undergraduate enrollment > 75% (PNPI). These schools are important, as I define the nature of historically white institutions and their impact on the state citizenry and how it responds to Black men within their ranks. All schools listed have pseudonyms associated with particular details of the university. Igloo University (5%), The University of Wind (10%), The University

of Snow (5%), The University of Clay (7%) and The University of Flagstaff (12%) are the percentages of Black undergraduates.

These schools listed are highly selective institutions that all have a history of Black male labor building and maintaining the status of the institution. The Black male labor shows up in but is not limited to construction, recruiting, teaching, and mentoring. This is important to highlight as HWIs have benefitted from the voluntary and involuntary labor of Black men since inception. Being a land-grant and/or flagship institution means these schools are indebted by state legislatures, which allocate resources to educate and employ their state citizenry. Each of these schools is responsible for teaching, research, and extension in its respective state. For Black students, their percentages of enrollment are even lower than their state average of representation in their demographic group. It is an extremely high possibility that the labor and service they provide to the institutions that are responsible for teaching, research, and extension will not even extend into their communities within the state. If schools do not have a commitment to serving these communities with their teaching, research, and extension, they will not be committed to serving those who come from said communities either. I therefore interviewed undergraduate Black men to investigate whether these schools were upholding racism and anti-Blackness with federal- and state-allocated resources.

To recruit Black men for this study, I sent out emails to Black male-affiliated student organizations (National Panhellenic Council, Black Male Initiative, Black Student Union, National Society of Black Engineers, etc.). For participant selection, I used purposeful sampling, which is judgment- or criterion-based sampling, as I sought to understand Black undergraduate men's collegiate experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015). My

selection was informed by the responses to the demographic survey (Appendix B) and also my personal experience working with Black undergraduate men to understand how their responses fit into the context of the study. Working with undergraduate Black men, I've come to understand the nuance in their experiences by analyzing their responses to a certain phenomenon. I sought to understand the theorization of a phenomenon (Blackness) from the viewpoint of Black men where they are minoritized (in anti-Black environments; Harper, 2012).

Data Collection

Within narrative inquiry, there are multiple ways to collect data that leads to rich data and overall findings. As part of my narrative inquiry approach, I used interviews, member checking and peer debriefing.

With this study focusing on Black undergraduate men explaining their collegiate experiences, it is imperative to not let metanarratives downplay the historical significance of the trauma Black men deal with on campus (Awkward, 2013). Clandinin (2013) emphasizes that narrative inquiry is fluid. The participants' sharing their knowledge about their experiences was not linear, causing their stories and data collection to define, disrupt, and express the meaning of their own Blackness.

The interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes or whenever the students answered all questions and exhausted all possibilities of responses. While interviewing the participants, I used the protocol as a guide but not as a crutch because participants cannot be bound to a protocol when searching for critical narratives. I interviewed these students according to the interview protocol but took opportunities to ask follow-up questions as well.

I reached out to over 20 colleagues in the field who currently worked or have worked at historically white institutions in the Southeast. I relied on the rapport that Black faculty/staff have built with their Black students to ensure participants were not selected at random but were intentionally thinking about their experience as a Black man. Participants were able to tell their story as Black men, existing in anti-Black structures. The interview process gave participants the ability to tell these stories free from whiteness. Studies focusing on Black undergraduate men's experiences allowed them, as Johnson (2019) says, "to imagine and reimagine" their realities as free Black people from under the guise of whiteness.

Interview 1 (see Appendix 2)

I developed a line of questioning that let the participants talk about their stories in ways that more fully reflected their experiences (Hickson, 2016). Guiding assumptions from BlackCrit directed me to encourage and embolden participants to explain their stories in ways that highlighted their own Blackness while constructing narratives that validated themselves in anti-Black spaces. As a researcher, I sought to learn the ways Black men have navigated the pressures and rigors of college, particularly at a historically white institution. This information is important to me as I continue to do research and remain a practitioner in a field that seeks to recruit and retain Black men in these very same places. I wished to analyze and reflect on stories by these Black men that help me understand the ways in which these institution types help or hinder their quest for education in these spaces. Ultimately, I wanted to ensure that as a scholar/practitioner I am not attributing anti-Blackness to these Black men's experiences at HWI's. This process allowed me as a researcher to gain a more holistic understanding of Black men

that helped challenge alternative narratives that may be shaping their experiences. It is important to note that Black men can voluntarily place themselves in educational spaces for the benefit of their future careers and be subject to immense anti-Blackness because of said choice. These Black men narratives were studied by me, who helped to make meaning of their narratives by questioning not only experiences but also structures. Upon completion, I co-constructed meaning by forming my own narrative of the stories told by Black undergraduate men.

Coles (2019) describes Black participants in his study as challenging the core interactions and institutions that Black people in America find themselves in. While recruiting Black men for this study, I positioned two arrangements of BlackCrit (a) Blackness existing in tension with the "neoliberal-multicultural imagination" and (b) creating space for Black liberatory fantasy. Both arrangements shaped how I structured the interview protocol for the research and helped answer the research questions created for this study. Exploring these two arrangements helped me recruit participants in order to understand the experiences Black men have around celebrating Blackness while also being critical of an anti-Black space. Exploring BlackCrit as the foundation for this research helped me show their critical narratives in a way that called forward their Blackness ahead of the perception of their Blackness in society. The questions I asked sought to prod and to provoke, to challenge and to call out, to resist and to reimagine their experiences that definitively are their own.

Interview 2 (see Appendix 3)

The critical narratives that these Black men told were used to show how Black men are taking their own stories and providing context to their experience. Leaving some

time in between contact gave the Black men space and time to think on some unfavorable experiences that could shape their narratives (Figure 1). It is important to understand that experiences were ongoing as they were college students who faced rigors every day. Knowing this fact, it is also imperative to understand what could have transpired since the last point of contact. I checked back in with the interview participants to follow up on questioning from the interview to see whether there had been moments or instances where they had to think more intently about their own Blackness. This checking is important because my initial contact with them may have been the first time anyone had asked them this line of questioning; following up could yield some introspective responses not heard during the first time.

The narrative part of the research can evoke critical examination and intense moments of self-reflection, which in this study caused Black men to think intently about their own Blackness in the confines of an anti-Black campus (Sparkes & Smith, 2012). The question, "How can Blackness exist freely on campus under your control? Is this possible? Explain," was important for the participants because it explored Johnson's (2019) idea of freedom and also challenged one's self to see whether Blackness has limits on campus. Moreover, an overarching idea of this research was freedom and imagination without the threat of whiteness. Consequently, their collegiate journeys were not monolithic, which means answers varied, but this question alone hinged upon the research questions in examining how Black men are making sense of their own Blackness, a part of an anti-Black space.

Chapter 4: Interpretations and Analysis

Data Analysis

My goal in undertaking narrative analysis was to see the ways in which Black men made sense of their Blackness and how that materialized in their experiences at historically white institutions. Polkinghorne (1995) discusses narrative analysis by configuring data to be coherent. Using this approach helped me flesh out participants' narratives and shape their experience in a cohesive and concise understanding of Black men in historically white institutions. Polkinghorne's (1995) idea was to maintain the richness of the story, and my use of this idea was seen in telling the actual story through analysis. Moreover, Spence (1986) shows us how to story and restory a narrative in analysis to incorporate events and experiences in an organized lens. As Ozias (2017) writes, "whereas other qualitative methodologies employ processes of coding and theming, narrative inquiry involves a different, but no less intentional and rigorous process of meaning- and knowledge-making" (p. 68). Critical approaches to narrative inquiry are much more than telling a story, but they get into the weeds of re-telling and shaping that story in a way that frames responses in a larger cultural narrative. Critical approaches to critical narrative inquiry prioritize interrupting the status quo to give participants an opportunity to shape their own meaning.

Analyzing this data with a narrative analysis approach gave me an opportunity to make meaning through an intentional process that highlights specific elements of the narrative in a nuanced way. In essence, I employed narrative smoothing (Spence, 1986) to unpack the narratives into events and the implications of those on a broader scale of experiences from the participants. Burrowing, or understanding how participants'

experiences shape their feelings about a given topic (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), helped me provide an in-depth look at the participants' stories from their point of view. By smoothing and burrowing, the analyzed data show a nuanced but consistent telling of events that shape Black men's individual experience as original, which honors critical narrative analysis. This was important to do for everyone to ensure that I, as the researcher, did not lump Black men's experiences into a whole, dealing with multiple factors. I gave the participants an opportunity to story and re-story their ideas of freedom while liberating themselves in narrative form. BlackCrit discusses narrative analysis in a way that frees the participant's narrative, reimagining the framing of the interview to help the participant see past the system structure they find themselves in.

Coles (2019) discusses BlackCrit analysis in a way that inextricably binds the framework with themes of anti-Blackness using semi-structured interviews. Using narrative analysis combined BlackCrit, as those in tandem interrogated the experiences of Black men in an anti-Blackness framework. Dumas and ross (2016) link BlackCrit to creating space and imagining freedom, so analyzing participants' data had to be viewed from the lens of linking the data into relevant and concise storytelling. I used BlackCrit theory to organize and interpret the experiences of participants who defined Blackness in the framing of anti-Blackness structures (Coles, 2020, p. 12). Coles and Kingsley's (2021) understanding of Blackness not only as racial but also as a gateway for providing sight to the surrounding world contributed to my operationalization of Blackness as a world view. This approach created the opportunity to see how "Blackness" was defined and operationalized from multiple Black undergraduate men, as their experiences would differ from each other. Ultimately, I used a narrative analysis from Polkinghorne (1995)

to configure the data from events and happenings from participants in a clear manner. How Black men operationalize and define Blackness through their narratives from studies like Johnson (2019) led me to employ smoothing and burrowing to make a clear and concise timeline of events. To ensure no harm or misrepresentation of words, I checked in with the participants and engaged in peer debriefing with scholars who had similar research interests. To ensure this study on anti-Blackness was not contributing to its own form of anti-Blackness, I cross-checked between scholars to keep consistent language throughout the analysis.

Trustworthiness & Credibility

The trustworthiness and credibility of myself, as the researcher, build on the foundation of transparency. The quality of the investigation will help readers better understand the overall approach I took to conducting interviews and analyzing the data. In accordance with remaining transparent, interviews, and member checking were looked over by committee members and colleagues in the field. The responsibility of a researcher using BlackCrit is not like any other; they are unearthing and unmasking systems and structures housed inside physical bodies (Coles, 2019). Black men at these historically white institutions have taken on a level of thinking that repeatedly tries to show them they are less than. Like Johnson et al. (2017), I tried to help Black men in this study use their narratives to dismantle anti-Blackness while also celebrating their own Blackness in joy. It was important for me to let Black men tell their stories but not force the data to meet preconceived hypotheses. As I interpreted the data, I kept in mind that these men were using critical narratives and I could not step in and be majoritarian to

finish a research project. To remain reflexive in the research project, I sought to make sure reflexivity is in the analysis and not just the interviews.

To maintain the transparency and flow of the study, member checking, preliminary surveys, and interviews were all provided with a detailed plan of how each was done. The member checking was done to "focus on reassuring the credibility of constructions of the participants" and to also see whether their framing of Blackness had changed (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 323). This process took place after the interviews. The steps taken to elicit responses from the participants followed the flow and outline of the study. While using narratives in a BlackCrit framework, I believe that it is imperative to treat the process with intentional care because of the demographics of the participants in the study. Because this study can be extremely beneficial to the understanding of the ways anti-Blackness metaphorically sinks its teeth in the flesh of Black people, specifically Black men, it is imperative to make sure the study holds validity. Coles (2019) says that it is the "responsibility of urban educators to explicitly engage in examinations of how structural systems of oppression facilitate social hierarchies, and thus social interaction with their students" (p. 8). For the story to hold validity in the minds of the readers, the participants' words must be constructed to help validate celebrating Blackness while being critical of the anti-Black structure they find themselves in.

Theoretical Framework

BlackCrit was chosen for this study as a means not to call out racism against Black male undergraduates but to examine a structure that implicates institutional complicitness. To reiterate, critical race theory, in its understanding, fails to dive into the

nuance of Blackness and how that affects the body politic. BlackCrit shows itself as a methodology worth exploring in this study; it married well with critical narrative inquiry. The framing of BlackCrit, as it relates to anti-Blackness in this study, helped participants talk through their experiences in a way that was not just critical of singular acts but also connecting those singular acts to a larger undergirding of the campus climate. BlackCrit was operationalized in this study to help define and theorize Blackness (Dumas & ross, 2016) so that students could challenge and re-story their experience that centered themselves, not the way the campus would center them. BlackCrit was also utilized to help the students talk through the lens of being labeled as anything other than just Black (minority, person of color, diverse student, etc.) by the campus. BlackCrit helped the students name instances that happened to them for what they were, and not in an ambiguous way, that kept white people comfortable. BlackCrit moved the participants from a feeling to a sureness about their identities and the experiences they had because they are Black men. Tichavakunda (2021) lifted this study by pulling students out of miserable experiences and helping to recreate a Black lens that helped them feel and express joy. A part of BlackCrit is challenging historically white structures in unconventional ways and for using their voice and agency. This line of questioning in the study in which responses were their own, was most of the participants' first experience wherein they were the authoritative voice.

Interpretations

As stated in previous chapters, the purpose of this study was to interrogate, explore, understand, and examine how undergraduate Black men disrupt anti-Blackness on the campus of a historically white institution. Additionally, participants defined

Blackness to substantiate their experiences at a historically white institution and how they used Blackness as agency. Blackness and anti-Blackness are two overarching concepts in this study to understand the sense of belonging these Black men have at HWI. The narratives shared by the participants caused me as a reacherer, to reflect on their experiences in a way that was singular but also communal. In the process of re-telling the experiences of these participants concisely (narrative analysis), I used some highlighted quotes to engage in reflection of the research questions, theoretical framework, and data analysis. I will use colloquial AAVE headings to describe the experiences of the participants to explore in-depth their understanding of Blackness and historically white institutions.

I will answer the research questions according to the responses provided by the participants, tie them into the theoretical framework (BlackCrit), and use critical narrative analysis to analyze the data. Since I am not theming the data, I used critical narrative analysis to organize and make meaning of the experiences that participants shared into a concise flow of events, still authentic and consistent with their words (Ozias, 2017). To better understand how they made sense of belonging as Black men in largely anti-Black spaces, the participants engaged in two interviews (combined responses in narratives). Participants chose their own pseudonyms to ensure anonymity throughout the entirety of the study. As the researcher, I withdrew certain details from their transcripts to provide confidentiality. These young, gifted, and Black men expressed themselves in ways that contributed to the literature describing Black men as liberators from the structure(s) that try to define who/what Black men are at HWIs.

Research Questions

Question 1

How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions define and make sense of Blackness?

JD- "As a Black man, support and uplifting from other Black men who provide wisdom and insight. Passing the culture on."
Peter- "Our stories are all different, but we all create pathways from our experiences. I feel comfortable as all of us do together."
Josh- "I see myself being proud of being in the color of my skin despite the disadvantages we go through on this campus."
Dwayne- "I feel like most Black men and Black people here bond over our mistreatment rather than our fondness of the university."
Clifton- "Wherever I show up, that's where Blackness resides. I don't let places define my culture."
Chase- " I see myself as a strong Black man not limited to how the world sees me. My ancestors fought for this spot for me here."
Chris- "I realized I was perceiving Blackness from a stereotypical lens because of white people. I now know Black is exceptional."
JB- "I wasn't aware of Blackness in white spaces before coming here. I carry myself well, and my Blackness is a blessing to others."
Dee- "Blackness is resilience, strength, and royalty. That's what I carried from the crib to college."
John- "My parents instilled pride in Blackness early on. I started adapting to safely exist the way white students never have to."
Colby- "I am a Black man who can do what I want to better myself. Blackness has not always been free, but I am and I break ceilings."

All I got to do is stay Black and die

When the participants in this study started to define Blackness, they provided all surface-level yet honest responses of how they understood their existence as Black men. Taking a deeper dive into the framing of their response, not just the response itself, reveals that the participants understood the nuance of Blackness and how one would define it. Depending on the classification of the students, the responses varied in depth and nuance. For example, most sophomores would respond to the question of defining

Blackness as something concrete, something you could put your hands on (food, music, sports, etc.). The responses of upperclassmen were more abstract as the responses delved into more spiritual and emotional realms. The upperclassmen unpacked Blackness on their own while those younger in the college journey required prompting. One thing that remained constant in responses, regardless of classification, was that they were confident in their responses and not apologetic about how others may view Blackness or them as Black men. The Black men in this study defined Blackness and further conceptualized it as the culture that predicts a lot of their actions. It is not that Blackness has blinded them; rather, it has been a light to them in times of darkness in majority white spaces. Colby's quote about "breaking ceilings" came at a time when he thought to leave the university because of the pressures to "perform" for white people; however, he was reminded by his fraternity brothers to destroy all ignoble impulses that tried to strip him of his Blackness and manhood.

Colby, like many others in the study, found a community of friends that shared a common interest, Blackness. It is imperative for Black men in majority white spaces to find and build community because these campuses can become isolating (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). On the contrary, Dwayne's and many of his peers' experiences and was bonding over the mistreatment and racism levied against them versus the love of the school. The Black men were finding ways to connect and stay together, but some of that connection was not because of celebrating Blackness but rather sticking together to combat anti-Blackness. BlackCrit was important here because it challenges the system that perpetuates anti-Blackness instead of calling out single acts of racism. Overwhelmingly, when the Black men in this study felt uncomfortable in the presence of

whiteness, they thought to retreat. Lige et al. (2017) call this "dampened racial identities" when Black students feel they have to shrink themselves to fit in. Like Davidson and Wilson (2013), I reject the idea of social and academic integration, which is where white colleges push their Black students to shrink into the culture of the campus. These Black men were not looking to fit in but to raise the profile of Blackness, particularly their own, as worthy of existing outside of the white dominant culture.

I hate it here

Participants fully expressed their displeasure with the culture and climate at historically white institutions and how the implications of attending affected them as Black men. It is an interesting dichotomy that they loved the name of their institution yet expelled the practices of their institution towards Black people. For the Black men in this study, there is a love for the institution because their forefathers built it, so they reserve the right to perpetually critique it. Dwayne, Dee, and JB all shared that they took a risk on their universities, as they are out-of-state students, and it was not what they imagined it to be. Their university had shown each of them so much of who it truly was, and they thought attitudes and perceptions of them as Black men would change with the more labor they offered to the university. Givens (2016) describes this as the "invisible tax"; as Black students face anti-Blackness head-on, they essentially are depleting the physical, mental, and emotional resources in their bodies. Each institution showed them who it was, microaggression after microaggression, racist act after racist act, indifference after indifference, intolerance after intolerance in regard to Black people on campus. There was a sense of desperation of John that eventually tired him out from participating because the more he did, the more visible yet invisible he would become. Dee loathed the

idea of being visible by white people because he also expressed where he is invisible and that white surveillance dictates his visibility. Valandra et al. (2022) share that surveillance of Black men on these campuses is trending up in percentages when the students are guilty of nothing other than being Black in a white space. The participants in this study saw this surveillance as a sign to begin taking up more space to normalize and validate their presence on these campuses.

What seat you got?

The Black men in this study all decided that at one point in time that they would flee from respectability politics and start existing in every room they were or were not invited in. Participants started to develop a greater sense of belonging not to the campus but to each other as Black men. Thelamour et al. (2019) discuss the racial disconnect between Black Americans and Black people from countries outside the U.S., but I argue in this study that Black men need Black men. The community and resolve around being connected to each other far exceeds the difference of ethnicity. JB spoke a lot about his fraternity and how it was a bridge builder for other Black men on the campus and the overwhelming joy he got from being his authentic self in all spaces. There seemed to be an understanding of always having one another's back that all Black men, regardless of their affiliation to campus and proximity to whiteness, were made aware of before attending. Black men were not trying to activate activism on campus, but sometimes instances would require them to stand in the gap for each other in order to not be pushed further into the margins. Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) show that the students who do find themselves in activist roles are highly respected on campus as leaders in student organizations. I noticed that the closer connected the participants were to student

organization leadership, the more they understood who they were as Black men, their sense of belonging, and how to navigate being a Black man on a historically white campus. These positions on campus would help not only them but also their Black peers on campus disrupt and fight against anti-Blackness structures.

Question 2

How do undergraduate Black men enrolled in historically white institutions disrupt anti-Blackness structures?

JD- "We simply continue to advocate for what we want. I think people get tired of us asking, but that's okay. We get what's ours. At a school who wants to make you believe it's a family, we have to break up that false reality."
Peter- "We have to make the administration honor what they told us when recruiting us. Addressing a problem is not solving the problem at hand. It is only a starting step in resolving that problem. Words are not enough for me. I want action, and I ask for it."
Josh- "We focus on Black students first and the needs of administration and white folks last. They always call on us when they need us for diversity things but hardly come through for us. Once we get what we want, then you'll get what you want."
Dwayne- "Unfortunately, I am a pessimist in this situation in the sense that I do not feel we will ever be able to exist freely to do so. This place was created for white people while closing the door to Black people. It's hard even thinking this is possible."
Clifton- "I'm not trying to change this place or change the minds of anybody. They already let me know what it is when I came here. But I will say that I fight back against every stereotype sent my way. It's the only way to survive in this place without being swallowed whole."
Chase- "We have to introduce our culture more and more on this campus even if we get weird looks and stares. Something as simple as cultural food can cause a huge disruption because that's how culture and understanding get passed from generation to generation."
Chris- "We have to continue to create our own things. We stop asking for what white people have and say what Black people want. We should not be afraid to go and create what we want. We have the solutions."
JB- "We continue to tell our stories and stop code switching. They wanted us here, so they have to take us as our authentic selves. Once we get together in our organizations, we feel invincible, and I know that makes white people uncomfortable."
Dee- "Remind them that this is a land-grant institution, and we don't get the scraps. We get included at the beginning. You can't expect us to just take what's given, but if you do, we accept little pieces to make them feel small."
John- "Black men have to make a way out of no way. Create organizations dedicated to the well-being and advancement of Black men on this campus and provide a safe space."
Colby- "We have to pay homage to our trailblazers and ancestors while ignoring theirs. I know their ancestors founded the school, but we built this place brick by brick, and we have to keep reminding them of that. These racist statues and buildings have to go. We are this school."

There go your boy

While Blackness was defined by the participants in this study, anti-Blackness was apparent in the responses. Participants were all able to story and re-story their experience of Black men attending an HWI, but anti-Blackness was rampant even when they tried to imagine a campus without it. Clifton, a participant from a flagship institution believed someone would have to burn the entire school down and start fresh in order to have a shred of an idea of where Blackness was fully accepted. Others echoed some of the same sentiments in that no matter where they turned or moved away from, this reality of anti-Blackness followed them all over the campus. To that end, participants overwhelmingly talked about surveillance as Black men on campus, where they felt their every move was being monitored. The monitoring of Black men on campus was mostly controlled by white men on campus who, as if people of authority, would oftentimes want to check Black men's whereabouts. One place of anti-Blackness and surveillance, consistent throughout all participants, was the darkness and exclusion that lived on fraternity row of each institution. The vestiges of the Old South crept into the white male-dominated fraternities on these campuses, as a portion of administration and stakeholders were mostly members of these organizations. The richness I received in response to understanding the campus came from those in student organizations because they were in peer groups with the current members of these fraternities. Participants would often define fraternity row as bleak, unwelcoming, racist, and exclusionary. Participants had all found themselves in a fraternity row scenario in college, and while they saw their Black male peers on the sports teams accepted, it was widely communicated to them that they

were “too Black” and that the fraternity stood to gain nothing from their presence by being there.

This ain’t it

There are times during Black men’s tenure in college, particularly white colleges, where they collectively or individually decide for themselves that something about the place is not for them. In this study, most of the participants who expressed this realization were all involved upperclassmen who had tried time and time again to “fit” into the campus culture, when the culture overwhelmingly showed them they would not. Participants who were engaged with the campus through student organizations seemed to have an understanding because the campus showed them on specific terms that Black men were always viewed as lesser and property. Attending historically white institutions (Dancy et al., 2018), these participants are a part of schools that, since inception, have shown anti-Blackness to be the temperature of the campus. Gordon (2015) talks about two principles: 1) be white and 2) avoid Blackness in an anti-Black society. The participants in this study expressed the same sentiments, sharing that to be fully welcomed into the campus required conforming to whiteness and not showing any shred of Blackness in any space. The participants also expressed that they felt they were a commodity to the campus, someone to be used or exploited for gain but not taken seriously as a college student without the approval of whiteness. Charles et al. (2009) believes the vestiges of white supremacy will have all those who allow anti-Blackness to view Black counterparts as expendable and intellectually inferior. All participants expressed that when they used AAVE or even “proper English” around their counterparts, they were still viewed as “other.” All of the participants shared a time

where they decided to flee from the idea that they were going to merit acceptance in the eyes of white people no matter if they were peers, faculty, staff, or administration. They expressed the calm and almost lack of response to racist acts on campus, in fear they would be judged for their response instead of being understood in their outrage. Colby points back to a class where he told a teaching assistant, "I'm a man, a Black man and how you talk to me is not going to fly." Colby, like many others, point back to their student organizations or fraternities that helped them navigate this space to understand that for Blackness to be free on their terms, it had to be owned and operated by Black people and Black people only.

We all we got

Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hillard (2015) show that Black students report the highest level of race-related stress, and it is even higher among Black men. Some of that stress comes from the lack of social belonging and connectedness. For Black men at historically white institutions, the lack of racial demographics and lack of support for Black students put them at a great disadvantage on being connected to the campus. I would coin this in the study from the participants' side as "Black lack." There is a lack of Black students, Black professors, Black staff, Black programs/initiatives, and overall lack of Blackness. Johnson et al. (2007) says this contributes to the lack of feeling and connectedness to the campus. However, Black men feel a connectedness to other Black men, just not the campus. Dwayne goes on to talk about the Black male bonding and the "bond over our mistreatment rather than our fondness of the university." While the bonding of Black undergraduate men can be authentic, some of it can be a result of trauma from the campus climate. The upperclassmen in the study understood that as

Black men, regardless of affiliation, they believed they needed to stick together. A lot of participants recount moments of racial trauma and how they saw some Black men who didn't feel "Black enough" to hang out with them suffer at greater length because they had no one to turn to in times of turmoil and anguish. Once those Black men saw they were accepted, they developed a greater sense of belonging because they saw those alongside them fight the same fight. Mwangi (2019) believes that these same-race, same-ethnicity relationships in college helps students understand they need to stick together. Sticking together is more than just bonding with another Black man; it is developing a deeper bond beyond trauma that forces those to stand up for Blackness no matter the space. The healthy bonds between these Black men spoke to manly deeds, achievement, bridge-building, tradition, and leaving a blueprint for the next Black undergraduate men to come. When Black men can bond on their own volition and expand Blackness through their social spheres, the health of their person and connectedness to themselves are paramount.

Conclusion

Participants in this study were willing to hold senior-level administration accountable even if it meant possible retaliation. There was a sense of resolve that surrounded the participants as they reflected on the time they were "fed up" with the campus. The more the campus showed them anti-Blackness, the more the participants showed them their Blackness. Participants also re-storied some experiences as a means to free themselves of the tentacles of whiteness. Participants experienced anti-Blackness differently depending on their involvement with campus, but they all collectively leaned on their Blackness. Participants did not merely let their collegiate experience happen to

them but actively worked to create the freeness and space they desired to exhibit Blackness. The narratives in the next section show their experiences as not monolithic but strivings to want better for the campuses even when it did not want to be better for itself.

Chapter 5: Participants Narratives and Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the way that Blackness is perceived in the lives of Black undergraduate men attending historically white institutions. Additionally, Black men understand the way Blackness presents itself in their lives and how they disrupt the status quo with their agency as Black men. This study examined the ways in which Black men understand Blackness and the experiences surrounding them in an anti-Black space.

In this chapter, I will introduce the participants by their self-chosen pseudonyms and a brief background of their collegiate involvement (approved by them). Participants were asked about the sacrifices—both internal and external—they had to make prior to and during their current enrollment to their institution. Those responses shaped their paradigm and gave way to my understanding of their personhood in a homogenous non-white space of learning. Responses have been checked by participants for accuracy, and AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) is laced throughout the transcription to keep authenticity of voice. Participants expounded upon responses about their backgrounds and went on to describe their experiences as Black undergraduate men at a historically white institution.

Overview of Participants

The 11 participants in this study make up four historically white institutions in the South. The undergraduate Black men in this study have all contributed and represent a

varying academic majors and classifications, ranging from sophomores to seniors. The HWI's in this study are public, 4-year, land-grant or flagship institutions in their states. These self-identified Black men all echoed their decision to attend these institutions on their own volition but lamented the fact that their institutions fall short in the areas of supporting its Black students. While all participants did not feel full support from the college, they did speak to how Blackness is shown through collective thought, interactions, and experiences that make them feel supported from within their own microcosm of Black expression. The participants also took the time to provide additional details to the study to give context of their experiences on campus. For confidentiality purposes, all participants selected their own pseudonyms (see Table 2).

Table 2. Description of Participants

Name	Year	Major/Minor	Hometown	HWI
JD	Senior	Industrial & Systems Engineering	Bessemer, AL	Land-Grant
Peter	Junior	Biomedical Engineering	Meridian, MS	Land-Grant
Josh	Senior	Broadcast Journalism	Starkville, MS	Flagship
Dwayne	Senior	Management/HR	Atlanta, GA	Land-Grant
Clifton	Sophomore	Marketing/Communication/Business	Clanton, MS	Flagship
Chase	Sophomore	Cinema Studies	Memphis, TN	Land-Grant/Flagship
Chris	Senior	Civil Engineering	Murfreesboro, TN	Land-Grant/Flagship
John	Senior	Human Development /Family Science	Marietta, GA	Land-Grant/Flagship
Colby	Senior	Health Promotions	Thomaston, GA	Land-Grant/Flagship
Dee	Senior	Wildlife/Fisheries	St. Louis, MO	Land-Grant/Flagship
JB	Junior	Creative Media	Powder Springs, GA	Flagship

Narrative analysis seeks to tell a story not in a thematic nature but in a consistent and chronological flow of events. I've asked the participants to reimagine their time at their institution with whiteness not placed on them. Additionally, this also leads them to talking about the historical legacy of their institution and how that has played into their treatment as Black men. During this section, I will introduce the participants in this study by providing a quote and paragraph that serves as an overview of their experience and person. I will take time in this section to highlight some specific responses to certain questions asked about their experiences relative to the research questions. These

narratives are constructed in chronological order, sharing experiences as undergraduate Black men from first-year to their current classification. There are quotes throughout the narrative that dig deeper into their understanding of Blackness, anti-Blackness, community and joy. The participants range in classification from Sophomore to Senior and have varying majors/minors of study.

JD

"We should not have to excel in all facets of college life but get ignored when we ask for inclusivity"

JD was in a reflective space as it related to his collegiate journey. Our time spent in the interview was introspective in what he could have done to make his collegiate experience better for him but ultimately for the next Black men. JD fully understood who he was as a Black man at a white school and how others perceived him on campus. JD spoke in matter of fact terms when it came to race and gender and how those two coincide at his institution. JD credits his family and his college family for helping him push through hard times in the face of anti-Blackness.

If I had to go back and tell the freshman year version of JD something, it would be to get out. I felt like I was in the movie *Get Out* coming from Bessemer, AL where the population is so different. It was a complete culture shock coming here when my home city was so diverse. We had white people there, but coming here was a challenge because I had never been around this many white people. Starting off college in a chemistry lab proved to be quite hard to adjust to, but I had a friend and we decided we would stick it out together. Until I started building connections, it was challenging but I knew I couldn't be afraid to try. I realized I was a freshman just like everyone else and if they could do it, I could too. I got involved with a student organization my freshman year and gained some friends, and that's when the full college experience started happening. College, of course, got harder as I started having to juggle school and family health issues back home. I am a

private person, and I don't share a lot, but my family at school and home were checking on me to make sure I was okay.

> **Me:** Tell me the ways you were supported as a Black student at your institution.
> **JD:** I feel like the institution was very supportive of our Black Student Union, but I kept telling them there are other student organizations to help. Our fraternities and sororities need help, our Office of Inclusion and Diversity, our women's organizations.

I wanted them to put more money and resources into the Black students because this place is not cheap. Scholarships started to dwindle because of merit v. need base. I feel like they are trying to do a better job in addressing disparities, but they are still lacking. I've had to rely on my friends and fraternity members at the institution to really help and encourage me through school. Those have been my day 1's. I did think about leaving at one point, but that was more family stuff. My friends and family encouraged me to just keep pushing, and that has been a part of my Blackness. My Blackness is authentic, and I've been able to use that in spaces unapologetically. Black people have been my underlying support at this school. Even when we had racial incidents on campus, we always stuck together. Here I am now as a senior making recommendations to campus leaders on how we can make this place better for Black people. I've represented the student body on university committees, so I'm constantly trying to make this place better for Black alumni and future Black men.

I sat in on a Presidential Task Force around diversity, talking about the ways we could support Black students. We're sitting around a room with the main administrators on the campus, and I'm like, "Come on y'all, we all know what the current climate is for Black people." I feel like I'm fully hands-on at my school now that I'm involved with so many things, and I think I finally found the secret sauce to this place. Now that I'm so

involved, I know how to connect the younger students and let them get their shine on. I'm still around but more like in a support role, and I don't have to be seen all the time.

> **Me:** Talk about a time where you've felt seen/heard/valued.
> **JD:** It was our anniversary of our engineering program. People were being recognized for the things they did for the program. Some of the younger students were coming up to me like, "Oh, you're famous." I was like, "I'm not the king of this place," but it does feel good to be honored for something.

I finally found my purpose and my reason at this school, and it was for those younger students. The older students when I was coming into this school did the same thing for me that I did for them. I guess you kinda have to pay it forward sometimes, and you don't see the fruit of your labor until it's almost over. I think this school needs to start giving the full recruiting experience to Black students from all areas so they can possibly have favorable experiences like mine. If this school truly promoted Black students the way they did white students, this would be a much different place and folks would want to come here. If we're really going to talk about family, we have to recruit all of the family.

Peter

"The city and university of Igloo are so heavily focused on traditions that rarely change occurs."

Peter is a legacy of his university. Peter had the foreknowledge to understand history and how that plays into every decision the university makes. Peter was a glass half full and glass half empty type of person when it came to what the university would do for Black students, particularly men. Peter would often comment on how the school wanted everyone to feel like family but was not sure if that invitation was extended to Black students. Peter was able to give a lot of insight into the inner workings of the university as a student leader.

I'm from Meridian, MS, and I'm also a legacy of this school. I told myself coming here to take everything that was going to be given to me. I knew coming to a white institution that white people already didn't think much of Black people or their

intelligence. Even now they don't expect me to have proper grammar or proper behavior, and they eat it up when they hear me talk or do certain things they wouldn't expect Black people to do. I've only been turned down from one thing while being in college, and I believe it's because they feel they had too many Black men in the position. As a Black man, balancing my mental health in these situations and just college in general has been an adjustment. The pandemic produced challenges both in school and at home. There have been some Black administrators that encouraged me to reach out and get what's mine. I was short on scholarships, and I saw the university was using my likeness and when I needed them, they said no. Unfortunately for them, I wouldn't take no for an answer and got what I deserved from helping this institution.

> **Me:** Have you thought about leaving your institution?
> **Peter:** I have and I do daily. I think the reason I'm still here is because I know I can do this. I knew about the campus when I got here but not so much the atmosphere underneath it. The Black people here are a part of the family, but we feel like distant cousins in a way.

Regardless of all that, I'm still here living and existing in my Blackness. Myself and the Black community here have taken a lot of punches, but we've survived all of them. There are certain places we don't go on campus because they feel anti-Black, and we don't need to be anywhere else that doesn't value us as Black people. However, I knew in order to get some things done on behalf of the Black community I had to put myself into some white spaces in order for us to get some representation. Thankfully, the Black Student Union has proved to be a place where Black people can be celebrated in spite of how the campus may feel about us. I remember winning an award, and I felt like all of the Black people were there to support me. I was like, "Dang, I can really count on these people. I'm at home." This place would feel like home for Black people if they

weren't trying to put us into other minority categories and just make sure we had what we needed in order to be successful.

> **Me:** Are there places on campus that feel anti-Black?
> **Peter:** There are buildings named after racist people, mostly politicians. I know the history and what they stood for, so I try to stay away. I think we need to move on from these people if we truly want to be an inclusive campus. If they stay up, I think we're saying their views are okay.

Honestly, the history is what it is. I try to focus on things like the Black Student Union, where my friends are, and where I've built community. These are the places for us because we built those spaces for us. Even in my major, I have a Black assistant dean, and they always look out for the Black people. Anytime we have an accomplishment, they are the first ones to know and shout us out. They even encouraged me to get involved in SGA. Even though I was one of few Black people, it felt good because I felt like I was representin' all of us ya know. I mean this is a great school academically, but the cost of attendance is very high and I know Black people don't have that type of money to be going to a school like this. I was talking to my assistant dean and told them if the university did their half, we as the Black students could get them here. It's kinda hard showing up here as a Black person sometimes, but we do it because we know sometimes we all we got.

Josh

"They give black organizations spaces to go to the administration to discuss issues they see but that's all it is, is a discussion but no action behind it.

For Josh, to attend his university was a huge deal because of the pressure he put on himself to perform for his family. Josh came from a household where parents made sacrifices for the children and the children had to return the investment tenfold. While on campus, Josh let a lot of external familial concerns intersect with his identity as a student. Because of this, Josh often found himself referred to as "big bruh" and a mentor to the up and coming Black men on campus. With Josh's involvement on campus, he was critical of action or inaction taken because he understood "how it works".

I came from a hometown that was pretty much a rival to the school I chose, and I know that upset a lot of people. Coming to this school as a freshman, I heard everything from "you gone get lynched" to "white folks hate Black people there" to "you'll never succeed," but I never really listened. The good thing is I came from a high school that was pretty much 50/50 Black and white, so I already had a sense of who I was as a person, so the chatter didn't bother me. It still was kind of different though being the only Black person in some of these classes and having to remind myself to be prepared. I know the history of this school, and they truly recruited me hard, so I had to give them a chance. My hometown school, which is also a historically white institution, didn't want me until they heard the other school wanted me, so I was like, "Oh now y'all want me huh?" I chose this school because I wanted to get away from home for a little while, and I know this was a good school academically. I remember being on academic probation and telling myself like I gotta be better than this, I can't let myself or my family down.

> **Me:** Speak to the importance of family in your collegiate journey.
> **Josh:** I remember the week after I finished pledging, my grandmother passed. She was the rock in my family, and it happened unexpectedly. Also, my mom stopped school twice to make sure my sister and I finished school.

I started to deal with anxiety and panic attacks, but somehow I overcame all that. I've leaned on my faith a lot in undergrad because God has been the one constant that has seen me through all I've gone through while I've been in college. Actually, God, family, and fraternity brothers really have played a huge role in my life and college. My fraternity brothers have truly supported me and always been in my corner to cheer me along. It's like all those lessons you learn while pledging help you in the long run when you're going through hard times in your life. Speaking of fraternities, we've all had to

support each other as Black Greeks because all the white fraternities and sororities have houses and spaces for them. Like, they can walk around on campus doing whatever they want to and everyone sees it, but nobody calls it hazing. The moment some Black Greeks even breathe hard, they're trying to suspend us, and their suspensions are very short-term, but they almost give us a decade. This university is all about money and most of that money is controlled by white students and alumni, especially those in fraternities and sororities. I can say overall the campus has made some improvements in my four years here, but that racist shit just really gets under my skin. I fucking hated that shit with a passion.

However, the more involved I got on campus, the more I was plugged in to what was going on around me. The organizations I became involved in made campus a little easier to stomach because of all the support I received as a student leader. Like people see me and know me on campus and look up to me, so I know I can't let them or myself down. Even when the racist shit continued, like white folks didn't want to sit by you or hold the door for you, I kept on being me because that was going to prevail at the end of the day. My fraternity even taught me not to move off the sidewalk for white people, so I started making them walk in the grass or we bumped shoulders when we passed each other. The older I got, the more I realized I paid the same tuition dollars as everyone else, and I wasn't going to feel less than anywhere on campus because this was my home too.

> **Me:** Talk about what that racism did to you internally.
> **Josh:** I never tried to internalize it because I knew that's when it would take a toll on me. I stayed leaning on my community to build me up when I was feeling low.

I remember one time the donor who my college was named after put some racist shit on social media and I was like, "Damn, is this what y'all support?" I thought about

leaving then because I was thinking, “If y’all keep this racist dude around, y’all already letting me know how y’all feel about me.” But the school got rid of the name, and I was like, “That’s huge for me,” because I know they probably didn’t want to do it, but they knew it was the right call to make. I remember speaking up and voicing my opinion at that time, and that’s when I knew I really found myself. If I wanted to see change at this school, I knew I couldn’t run from it, but I had to stick in there and fight with the other Black students. Blackness for me in these moments meant creativity, innovation, and sacrifice. I’m thinking about how Black people really control the world through our minds and our voice. Like Black people smart as hell bruh, and them white folks know that too. I’m right here at graduation, and I’ve let my full Black self feel all the love from this school, hell I even demanded it. The dean was like, “Only Josh would do something like stand up and clap for himself and be recognized.” I was like all the shit this school put me through, I’m gonna take what’s mine!

Dwayne

“They will never let us occupy too much of one space, because it is against their agenda and something their donors would never want to see.”

Dwayne is highly active in campus activities that relate to the existence and validation of Black people. As a Black man, he does not feel that the campus does anything for Black men that are not student-athletes. The anti-Blackness he described on campus was very layered and nuanced, taking you through the intricacies of understanding race and gender in white spaces. He is confident and comfortable in his Blackness, so calling things that are anti-Black was particularly easy for him to consider.

I’ll be honest, I would tell my freshman self not to come here. I believe I should’ve followed my own path and attended an HBCU. I’m from Atlanta, GA, and it is a Black city and all the classrooms I grew up in were Black. I came here because I felt like it was the best opportunity, but they really haven’t supported Black students because

enrollment is declining. I had to sacrifice comfort coming to this school because I was never in a situation made to feel uncomfortable with my Blackness. I think about the time where I was not selected as president of a business fraternity I was running for. I ran on all the values we needed. I didn't get selected, and to make matters worse, the elected people came in implementing the ideas I came up with. I ghosted them and alienated myself because I was like, "What is the point?" Moments like that and when they gave us an NPHC legacy plaza, it felt disingenuous, like they just gave it to us just because. I realized the community I had that supported me was the community I built.

> **Me:** Who have been the superheroes in your college experience?
> **Dwayne:** My fraternity brothers and my chapter brothers are the superheroes because at one point I was ready to transfer. I didn't really fit in, I didn't feel there were enough Black people, and I wasn't enjoying myself. As soon as I pledged, it was a whole lot of things I was introduced to and another part of the Black experience I didn't experience before joining.
>
> **Me:** Who have been the villains?
> **Dwayne:** I feel like the Board of Trustees are the villains. They act in the best interest of the majority, which is white people and not the entire campus. I don't feel like they support Black people, and they don't try to help us progress.

I embraced my experience fully when I stepped into my Blackness. The microaggressions came with it, but I knew how to stand up and speak up for myself then. When I clicked with the Black Student Union, I realized a lot of us were going through the same things in our classroom and campus, so anti-Blackness was prevalent. For example, the white fraternities and sorority houses never felt like a welcoming environment to us, so we held our own stuff to celebrate Black culture/music. I felt the joy of being Black at our Black homecoming step show. Like everything and everyone just felt Black. We were free to be ourselves, free to dance, free to dap it up with the homies. It just felt like a good Black ass time. The university could take a note from this

and host events like this for Black people where everyone can come learn about Black culture. It shouldn't always be us having to host events, but the school should get in on it too. In the grand scheme, I would tell Black men not to come here, and that's just because I don't think the school is doing enough to keep Black people.

> **Me:** Define what Blackness means to you.
> **Dwayne:** To me, Blackness is embracing who you are, where you come from, everything about yourself, good or bad, just embracing it all.

I've honestly embraced everything about my Blackness and who I am as a Black man. Even with the racism and microaggressions, I know how to stand up for myself at all times. I think that's some of what Blackness is too, ya feel me. Knowing you don't have to take a back seat to anyone just because they don't like you or are uncomfortable with how you show your Blackness. I constantly surround myself around people who don't conform to the status quo and are true to themselves. I show up authentically as a Black person, and that's most seen when I'm at a BSU [Black Student Union] event. The organizations for Black people and the ones that feel family-oriented is where I hang the most. I just want Black people to know they have the ability to dictate how this thang gone go. When we start to voice our opinion or fuck some shit up, that's when these white folks start paying attention. But this is what they should've been doing all along, paying attention to Black people. And at the end of the day, even if they don't give us opportunities, we still create change by creating space. We end up carving out spaces on our own because we don't want white people to continue to define what Blackness is. Rather, we do it for ourselves. We still may not be accepted, but at least we know we did something for us in this place.

Clifton

"From my experience, they don't look at us as capable but we're just as capable."

Clifton is a student who truly is into his major and understands the racial history of his campus. Being a journalism major, he talked about the importance of telling the story of his people in a positive light for what they've done for the university. He is also keenly aware of what college he attends and how they view Black men, student-athlete or not. He understands that the institution has a legacy that excluded him but is making intentional moves as a student-leader to include Black men as contributors.

I wouldn't tell my freshman year self to change much, but I would tell him to lock in a little more. My brother attended a school in the SEC like I did, but his profile was a lot larger, being a student-athlete. It really kind of helped because I would go spend time with him while I was in undergrad, so I already pretty much knew what I was getting myself into coming to college. Especially with a large white school like this, I already knew what time it was coming here, so it really didn't faze me. I was away from family and friends back home, but like I said, I already knew what it was coming here, so I didn't feel like I was sacrificing anything. Being a young Black man at a large white school was the biggest adjustment I had to make. I knew coming into this school I had higher ambitions than some of my friends from back home. People tell you all about what's at these schools and the rewards for finishing, but they never really talk about how easy it is to lose focus. As a young Black and attractive man, I find myself keeping to myself, and I'm not super involved like that, but I peep everything going on around me.

> **Me:** Tell me the ways your institution supports its Black students.
> **Clifton:** They don't go out their way to accommodate us. I used to work the front desk and do all type of work for advisors, professors, and deans. I will say they have helped me if I ask, but I can't say they just gone jump to help you in my own experience.

I got a story for you that happened my freshman year dealing with an academic advisor. I made good grades in high school, and I couldn't seem to grasp why the work

looked so familiar. I showed my assistant dean, who was a Black lady, my schedule and she was basically saying I needed to come up out of that math class because I had no business being in there. She pulled me out of that class and got me in the right class, and I knew all along I was a better math student than the material I was learning, so I guess it was an error on the academic advisor's part. That's just my experience, and I know this ain't all Black students' experiences, but it could become really detrimental to Black students because that's the majority of the students that were in the class. It was Black women like my assistant dean and one of my professors who really paved the way for me here. I mean I already knew about college, but they really took the time out to get to know me personally, and I believe it's because they cared about me. Sometimes, I felt that I could become my own worst enemy, but these two women really advocated for me and made sure I stayed on the straight and narrow.

> **Me:** Have you ever thought about leaving this school?
> **Clifton:** No, because leaving is like quitting, and I'm not a quitter. I'm not afraid of a little adversity because that's just how I am.

I had some friends talk about leaving, but that's mostly because they had the wrong perception of what this school was. They were legit shocked when they came to this school and seen all these white people. I was like, "This is a predominantly white institution." I never came to this school until I came to college, but I knew what it was because of my brother playing ball, so I guess you could say I had an advantage over the rest. But I asked my friends if they thought they were coming to an HBCU because anybody with eyes can see this school is white as hell. And I think while we're talking about Blackness, it was important to understand in that moment that the way I view things as a Black person and the way that other Black people view things is different.

People may say to me that I'm not really Black because of the way that I talk, but that doesn't bother me honestly. I'm confident in who I am, and I know that offends some people and that's okay too.

> **Me:** Where do you feel the Blackest on campus?
> **Clifton:** Everywhere honestly. I feel my most authentic self 100% of the time wherever I am. I can't compromise my character just because of my surroundings and who I am just to make someone else feel comfortable.

I used to be very uncomfortable because the white people would just stare at you like they've never seen a Black person before and maybe they haven't, but that was just weird. I honestly stopped worrying so much about the stare in a negative sense and started focusing on the people who were giving stares in a positive sense. Going back to when I told you earlier about working in that department, it really paid off for me because I still stay connected with those deans, advisors, and professors now. My assistant dean told me that one of the deans was really impressed with me and even wanted me to connect with him to make sure I was taken care of while I was in school. I can't say this is the case for all Black students at this school, but it happened for me ya know?

> **Me:** How would you change this place for Black students?
> **Clifton:** It is what it is. Like you would have to burn this school to the ground and start over because of the traditions. I couldn't remake it because it is tarnished all the way around. Like these people still talk about the confederacy. I would tell Black people not to go here if you truly care about your experience.

Chase

"The only moment I truly felt connected was moments where I joined clubs that had people like me or people who shared my experiences."

Chase dealt with moments of isolation until he found the academy for Black men on campus. He talked a great deal about not feeling connected and also as an outcast because his major didn't see many Black men. When he was able to connect with the academy, he found himself. The academy provided a space for him as a Black man to connect with his peers who would experience some of the same highs and lows on campus. The academy pushed him to be excellent and thrive in his Blackness.

I should've come to this campus a little more confident than I did. I've always had this paranoia about large spaces, and this being a space where I wasn't represented racially didn't make it any better. I knew I was smart and capable and could pass the classes, but I just had moments of doubt. I think they call it imposter syndrome or something, but I knew I had to get more connected. It helped when I joined a campus ministry my freshman year, and then I had a newfound confidence and my spirituality told me that I could manage anything on my own. I wasn't a very social person to begin with, but I realized the more I got involved with peers, I grew out of being so introverted all the time.

> **Me:** Would you say social anxiety was the hardest thing to overcome?
> **Chase:** Yes! I felt like the only Black person in some places until I got involved with the Success Academy. I felt alone before, but there were a lot of Black men in there, so I got to familiarize myself with my identity.

I told you I struggled with paranoia to a point where I would just stay in my room, but the campus ministry and Success Academy really was a game changer for me. I guess it was an overall culture shock because I was outnumbered everywhere I went outside of these student organizations. Most of my friends from back home were Black or Hispanic, which Success Academy focuses on men of those groups. I'm from Memphis mane (man), and we go to all different walks of life after high school. I chose to come to this school even though it was far from home, but I took a chance because I knew some people coming from Memphis. Also, this school has heavy recruitment from the Memphis area, which is predominantly Black.

> **Me:** How does your school support the Black students you describe?
> **Chase:** The Black Cultural Center is huge for Black students. We really just get a chance to come and hang out and be free. I'm pretty sure the school knows we're

here, and I would love more inclusion from them but sometimes when there's lack of representation, we have to do it ourselves.

Especially in my field, there is not a lot of diversity or inclusion because of the nature of the field. Like we never talk about incorporating gay or trans people and with this major, you would think we'd include them a lot more than we do. I know I am isolated from a lot of other Black people and Black men on campus because of my major, but I still try to make an effort to meet up with them whenever I can. I feel the most Black when I'm with the Success Academy because I know I can be myself and I don't have to code switch at all. I don't have to explain myself in there. I can use whatever slang I want, and everyone knows what I mean. Like if I'm talking to you, I can say "What's good my g?" and you know exactly what I mean. That's what I get in Success Academy, and that's what I get in every place where Black people are represented, familiarity.

Me: What does representation look like in the classroom?
Chase: I have an African American studies class and it's much different than what they teach you in high school. Everything is Black and it's positive images. I'm even starting to see more white students in these classes.

I've also had some pretty cool professors and even though they weren't white, they didn't try to single out my Blackness or anyone else in the class. I also have a student organization advisor who is a Black man and a mentor. He has like 100 students to look after, and he remembers every single detail about me and makes sure to check in on me. That really means a lot. If we're going to make this place better for Black students and particularly Black men, we need people like my advisor. Africana Studies class is cool, but how I feel in that class is how I should feel in all of my classes, included. The institution can do a better job of representing people and not making everything feel so

segregated. I hate to say segregated because it sounds like such a harsh word, but that's what it is. I think if we can have some exclusive things for identities that have been excluded for so long, we can feel as good as these white folks do about this campus.

Chris

"I realized that blackness was a perception, a view from the outside that is so intense that it can affect how you view yourself."

Chris came into college already feeling that he would be an outsider. Coupled with the unsureness of his own Blackness, he found solace and safe haven with other Black men who felt eerily similar. He talked about being a victim to the stereotypes of Blackness that surrounded him in and out of the classroom. Mentors and fellow peers is who he attributes his maturation of a college student to, while also acknowledging his parental structure. Chris seemed to be the most unsure about his Blackness until he decided to define it for himself and lean into it everyday.

As a freshman, this was my first big taste of freedom away from home, so being in a new environment, I had to take care of business. I just kept telling myself to reach out more and try new things. I had a mentor, but he actually never reached out to me. I had to reach out to him. That honestly was not good for my mental health because I was just getting to school, and I was trying to figure out why things weren't falling in line the way I thought they would. This thing was not glamorous in the beginning because I trusted myself that I chose the right school and program and it would pay off in the end.

> **Me:** How did you end up connecting with the campus?
> **Chris:** I had a program director named Mr. G. He was clutch. It felt like every question I had to ask, he had the answer to it. I'm grateful because I'm not sure where I'd be without him.

There are plenty of diversity centers around campus, and I tried to make sure I connected with all of them to make sure I had community. One of the deans hooked me up with the director of the cultural center, and he even paid for an event that I hosted for people in my major to feel more included. I ended up connecting again with the director,

and she told me about all the resources her center had, and I started connecting with Black students there and started to study with them. I knew some of my Blackness I would have to feel and experience on my own, but I will say those spaces I was connected with made me feel supported.

Coming into the college I knew early on about the National Society of Black Engineers [NSBE], I just hadn't fully connected with them yet. Being from the middle part of the state, I knew there were a lot of different directions I could go in for school, but I wanted to come to a good engineering program. There were staff members that recruited me and told me that I would become a great student, so I chose to come here. This place is huge, and I knew I would need community, so I started building my own network. I found out early on that this place is not cheap, and you've got to make sure you can pay for this stuff, so I remained focused in my classes. I remember a time feeling really lonely on campus my freshman year even with friends, but I thank my parents for continuing to push me even when I thought about transferring. That felt like the lowest part of college. Fortunately, I found the Center for Black students where I found a welcoming environment. These were the superheroes so far. It would definitely be my parents and the center.

> **Me:** Who were the villains in your college story?
> **Chris:** I'd definitely say the professors and the classroom. Not having and honoring office hours. I remember going to one professor for help and they said, "I'd rather not." I know there hasn't been great communication about grades, but that was hard to go through mentally. I just had to go through it, I guess.

The classroom felt anti-Black because I was one of the only people in there, like always. We had professors not honoring their office hours and some of them just being flat out rude. But I knew I wanted to succeed and even with the professors doing me like

that, I knew I had to be better because I didn't want to be labeled, especially as a Black man. I felt the stereotype to do good in class because I didn't want to be the Black student that was struggling. I got involved with the university in a pre-college program. That's why I think I excelled academically, but social skills were the issue. My parents continued to encourage me mentally, financially, and educationally. Without them, I wouldn't have made it to my senior year where I am now. I wasn't good at building connections, so I relied a lot on my parents. At one point, I felt like I didn't really have people here.

> **Me:** Who were the people you connected with?
> **Chris:** NSBE helped me in tremendous ways I can't fully put into words. Like I was coming into my own, but I think I found my people with NSBE.

The more I started to get involved with NSBE and people in my major, things started to shift for me. Socially, I've had a time navigating, but schoolwork was fine. I knew I was smart. I was already hesitant about coming here because the demographics felt overwhelming, and it made me a bit uncomfortable. When I was gaining some steam on campus, COVID happened, and it felt like it took all of my momentum away. But I didn't give up on school or myself, I just came back when they brought us back to school and jumped back in it. I remembered the connections I made while being in school before the pandemic and the ones I held throughout the pandemic. It seemed like most of the people I vibed and connected with were mostly associated with NSBE in some sort. Engineering is hard and there aren't that many Black people here, so we try our best to stay tight and make sure we are supporting each other.

I realized for me that Blackness was all about perception. My parents perceived me a certain way, and my professors and friends probably perceived me another way. All

of that is cool because I know about my Blackness and however it is perceived, I still live my life. You've been asking me a lot of questions about Blackness, and I think it is up to me to define it for myself and how that looks at this school. I started to feel my most authentic Black self when I was out at the basketball court. I felt like I was free to show emotion, to wear my hair how I wanted to, to be loud and expressive, and nobody would judge me. I took that spirit and channeled it in a group I created for racial minorities in my major that I told you the dean helped fund. Prior to that though, I ended up winning the 1st place LSAMP award, and I was so shocked I won it. It felt like that shy kid who was trying to find his way at this school had finally made it. The affirmations my parents and friends gave me paid off, I guess.

John

"I am in a black fraternity, and it gave me a black brotherhood and never-ending support system on the campus of my PWI that helped me through the hardest of times."

John grew up in a suburban area of his city, often surrounded by white kids, whose only commonality was the school they attended. Much could be said about John's upbringing and his time in college mirroring each other. John was a student-athlete who was able to navigate being a Black man first and an laborer for the institution second. Mastering this feat was not easy as his sport had high demand for his time and his personhood. John found community in his teammates and most importantly his fraternity, as he describes Black brotherhood to be paramount to the hardships of college and life.

I think the best advice I could have given myself my freshman year is to pursue anything I had an interest in. Being a Black student at a white school, a lot of times people try to put you in organizations that are heavily Black-oriented. I found interest in some of the organizations because they were big in notoriety, and because I aspired to be a certain type of student, I knew tracing footsteps of people with similar paths would further my success. I remember this Black orientation leader that was huge in the Black community before I got to school, and I knew when I got there I was already thinking

about the fraternity he was a part of. Since I knew I wanted to be a college athlete and I knew I wanted to be in that fraternity, I started doing the things that would lead me there. But with being a college athlete came a lot of sacrifices that caused me to miss some social aspects of my college career. Like, I haven't been to a Black homecoming tailgate since 2018, and that's huge for the Black community at my school because that's when all the Black students and alumni come together, it's really huge. Being a student athlete, I'm on the field on Saturdays, so I can't do what all of my friends do on the day before game days.

> **Me:** What sacrifices have you had to make specifically? How did you manage?
> **John:** I lost my mother the week leading up to homecoming week. I had to go home and be with my family and be back at school for my team and fraternity the next day. I felt pressure because I knew even in my loss, I had to perform. Those same people who would cheer for me on Saturdays in my gear didn't know the hurt I was experiencing at the time. I leaned heavy on my fraternity chapter that lifted me up.

I had a lot of good examples that helped me along the way like my class advocate, which actually became my prophyte later in college, and I knew this fraternity would help me in immeasurable ways. We had a bunch of programs for Black students, but we had two (Black Male Initiative and undergraduate recruitment) that were the highlighted experiences of Black men on our campus. We all knew who everyone was even before we got to school because current students had already reached out to us and connected us. We had already built a sense of community before we even got to campus because these people looked out for us. Once we got to campus, we met people in our diversity office who were basically family and made sure we had everything we needed. Being a student athlete had its challenges, but I tried to connect with my people as much as I could but at schools like this, you're always in the public eye and everyone wants to talk to you.

Me: So what is it like being a student athlete at this school?
John: Honestly, it's a great feeling because all these parents and kids come up to you and really look out for you. If nothing else, the whole Black population got your back. I remember one of my teammates asking if I knew all of these Black folks cheering for me and I told them no but then again I do. I knew they wouldn't understand but at my school, Black people just got your back like that.

However, there were some moments where I felt like I was called out by professors who didn't understand what it was like to be a student athlete. Like I had to come all the way across campus from practice and make it to class, and I would be late sometimes. I stopped going and just started doing the quizzes online because the professor moved my seat to the front and wanted to embarrass me. That put a really bad taste in my mouth, but thankfully I ended up getting some Black professors who totally changed the game for me. I had a support system, so I never had to think about leaving, and I had a certain level of privilege as a Black man and particularly a Black athlete. I remember one time I got pulled over by the police, and I know I got off because they saw my athletic bag. I can't help but wonder how that would've gone if I wasn't an athlete because all spaces on campus aren't friendly to Black people. We knew to stay away from the fraternity houses and downtown as Black people, but we started having our own stuff to where we didn't need the white people's spaces. There were countless numbers of things I encountered on campus, but I can say mostly positive because I connected with the Black leaders early on and stuck beside them.

Colby

"When I did find my community and started to feel belonging, I felt like I was going through Maslow's chart because I had finally elevated to a level of where I was comfortable in my space and building connections."

Colby was a young brother with a great deal of intellect that was often viewed as cocky and better than the others from his white professors. He would describe how professors would question his knowledge of a topic in great detail and challenge him to knock him

down a level. Colby is a very proud man from a rural part of his state that lays claim to holding some of the best and brightest without the academic resources. Colby reveals that it is many more Colby's from his area headed to his university, not to play ball, but to ball out in the classroom. Colby demanded respect and gained it through his academic prowess.

I had to learn how to not be so worried about the future when I started because I had chemistry, which was giving me the blues, but I ended up switching majors. I think it was good for a little revelation because I switched to health promotions and focused on health equity and disparities among Black men. Where I'm from in the country, we really don't talk about it like that, but I knew it was important to me because of family. I come from a double blended family where I didn't get my first sibling in the house until I was 14, almost in college. I knew in order to be a role model to them I would have to make some sacrifices, sometimes when I didn't want to, but I advocated for myself. I remember one class I had a TA who was a real asshole, white dude. I had to check him as a man and as a student to let him know I'm here to learn and better myself, but I'm not going to be talked to like that. I look back on it now and see that's just how some professors are, but that caused me to have a little imposter syndrome. But I knew who I was, and I knew what I was capable of doing and becoming as a man, ya feel me. I ended up finding my support system after this class and connected with the honors college to make sure I excelled in my courses no matter who the professor was going to be.

> **Me:** Who were your superheroes?
> **Colby:** It was this man and his wife who were graduate students. It was cool to be mentored by older people and I think they were in Africana Studies. The diversity office, my frat brothers, the student union, and the Black Male Initiative. Honestly, all the Black community because we were so tight, hell we had to be. I really had folks in my corner before I even got to school because of the Black leaders who reached out to us.
>
> **Me:** Who were the villains?

> **Colby:** I know the dude probably got a PhD in Chemistry now, but that TA was such an asshole. I think he is still an asshole. I was studying, and I wasn't used to making C's. I looked at other students in the department making higher grades with basically the same work. I ended up passing the class like a beast, but the whole chemistry department is terrible.

I never thought about leaving because that is like quitting, and I don't do that. The classes were hard and some of the stuff felt racial, but I knew overall this place could make me better and I would figure it out. I will say that my school actually makes an effort to support Black students and make them feel welcomed, but I think the Black folks really take over and make it our own. I came to this school because I thought the world reflected what it looks like here. It's crazy you're making friends with future lawyers in class, and you may connect with them as adults. I see these people and speak, but my community is around people who look like me and in my major. Like Black homecoming week, that's when me and my niggas can just be ourselves because the whole campus know what's up that week. Speaking of niggas, I remember this time this white dude said it in the stadium, and it made national news. I feel like sometimes white folks get too comfortable, and they just start saying what's really on their heart.

> **Me:** Give me some examples of white people speaking freely?
> **Colby:** Bro, like they had a Republican governor candidate on campus and then all this Roe v. Wade stuff and some of the stuff just felt anti-Black. It didn't specifically say anti-Black, but you could just smell it in the air. I start to think like, "Damn, this how y'all really feel?!"

But honestly, that's just how they are sometimes, and I try not to focus on that. I really just make sure I connect with my classes, NPHC, and multicultural student organizations. The more I connected with my community, the more I realized there were people who cared about me as a Black man. I've been called to meetings with higher-ups, and I let them know where they need to improve for Black people. I care about Black

people's mental health, so I made sure to advocate for them and tell them how this place can affect us mentally. I wouldn't change anything about this place for Black students. I believe it's designed this way for a reason, and the people that I've gone through this with have made it all worth it.

Dee

"Although this school is a land grant school, which is brought up everytime race is mentioned, most of the opportunities are given to white people and the leftovers are then shared."

Dee came to school with a lot of institutional knowledge about land grant universities. With his major providing resources and advocacy through extension, Dee knew firsthand what he was stepping in to. He spoke about the numerous white people he would come across who all but said they didn't think Black men existed who wanted to work in his field. Misconceptions about Dee and his causation for attending his college all but fueled him into being a top scholar in his program. Dee believes without the help of mentors and advocacy, he could fall victim to negative stereotypes.

Some things came to light my freshman year, but I tried not to take it too personal even though it was personal. With this being a big football school and all, it seems to be the only thing they care about honestly. I remember being at some games and white kids yelling "Let's go Brandon", "F Joe Biden", or "We want Trump." It was weird because I'm like, "We're at a football game and supposed to be cheering for the same team," but they found a way to put politics in it. I also felt they did that because Black students were around, but I wonder if they would say any of that stuff to the football players. I won't say I ignored it because it hurt and it sucked to hear, but I just learned to cope with the reality of this white space. I also feel like no one cared to tell them to shut up, but I'm sure if there were a big crowd of Black students yelling Black Lives Matter, I'm sure it would be a whole issue. I guess it was college kids being college kids, but I'm a college kid too who chose not to do that, so I guess you could say I'm a little bit different from

them. I think these white kids get to act how they want because they know this campus was made for them and they'll never truly be checked for their actions.

> **Me:** What did the sacrifices look like coming to a place like this?
> **Dee:** I'm 8 hours from The Lou. I drive every now and then but it's pretty hard to make it back like that with my major being demanding. My siblings are my best friends so to be away from them is pretty tough.

I don't want to make everything about race even though I know that's a part of your study, but you really think about it a lot on this campus where you're far from home and people that look like you. I'm one of very few Black men in my major and you see your race even more when it comes down to group projects and working with classmates on assignments. Nobody was willing to work with me, and they didn't even seem to want to talk to me. I asked a question about class content to this white guy, and he told the white girl to tell me instead of just speaking directly to me. Emotionally, it's hard and disappointing to think college life would ever get to this point, but I'm in my major for a reason and I'm not just going to lay down. I've found a group of people, Black people in my major that are a part of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS). This is where I feel like the college supports us a little through this organization because it is one they respect. They do stuff for MANRRS I have seen them flat out tell other organizations no.

> **Me:** Why MANRRS?
> **Dee:** All of the people are relatable. Even the white people a part of this organization gets it. It's like we're all like-minded in some sense.

I've found some mentors in my field to be very helpful as well, and yes they're Black. These people helped me my freshman year all the way up until my senior year to get acclimated with the campus. I was getting ready to pay out-of-state tuition to come to this school and through the academic common market, these mentors helped me get in-

state tuition and that changed the game up right thurr (there). One of them also hooked me up with a job so I could have some coins in my pocket, and I got to work on the side of campus with my folks so I didn't feel so isolated. I started to feel comfortable in my own Blackness, which made me feel powerful. There were and have been a lot of racial incidents on this campus, but I haven't worried about them as much now, not because they aren't hurtful, but I'm in a different space now mentally.

> **Me:** Where do you feel your most authentic self?
> **Dee:** Man, everywere (everywhere) now. With my friends, in the dorm, at the rec, werever (wherever). It feels good to just have a peace of mind about this place now because it wasn't always this way.

I think this place can consume you as a Black person with it being such a large white campus. But you can make a big place feel small, and I do that with my closest friends around me. All the Black people on campus are like one big family because it ain't that many of us. We take classes together, eat together, travel together, and just share in everything together. There was this professor who once made a comment that he knew I was or wasn't in class that picked at the idea that I was the only Black person in the class. But I think this makes an even greater case that Black people are always on your mind because you know who we are and how we carry ourselves. I know this happened to more of my peers, but I feel like the best way to combat this stuff is to keep showing up in our Blackness and whatever that looks like. This university can be doing a lot more for Black students, but while they're sitting in those buildings trying to make up their mind on what to do, we gone keep on doing what we do. At times we feel invisible, and at times we feel seen, but we choose for ourselves through it all.

JB

"I feel strongly that I can be my authentic self and I do not have to worry about code switching or anything though, I try to be my authentic self in any setting, it is just different when you are around people that look like you."

JB is a product of parents who both graduated college and set the bar at graduation for JB's collegiate experience. JB spoke about feeling a time where college was not for him but knowing his family required him to be excellent. A lot of JB's motivating factor for traversing the rigors of college was familial and fraternal. He was well versed on what college offered but paved a way for himself to make it to the finish line. His understanding of anti-Blackness affected his views on Blackness and how he saw himself and how the university treated those who looked like him.

Both of my parents are college graduates, so I know what college is all about. In hindsight, knowing what I know now, I should've been able to be my most authentic self. That authenticity would also tell me to grow and explore new opportunities. I got into the Bridge program here, and that was the resource I needed in order to really take this PWI head on. Because I had to sacrifice and leave folks back home who I've been cool with my entire life for a place like this. With Bridge, I was able to flourish and step out of that shell I came to school with and step into new possibilities for me.

> **Me:** Does the university support Black students?
> **JB:** I feel like they do some. They highlight the larger Black organizations and some I'm a part of with being a mentor and all.

Mentoring is huge because I remember my freshman year I was mentored by some upperclassmen. If it wasn't for mentoring, I wouldn't have known about my fraternity or other student organizations. I can say Bridge was really a catalyst for getting involved in other things on campus, so when it was my turn, I became a mentor to pay it back. There were points when even being a mentor didn't keep me feeling mentally safe at this school. I got to a point where I did want to leave, and I questioned if college was really for me. But after talking to my parents, they made sure I stuck it out. I told you

both of my parents were college graduates, and they made great investments in my education, so I didn't want to let them down and especially those people I began to mentor. Mentoring really paved the way for me to start walking around campus with my head held high and knowing that I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be.

> **Me:** You're a young, Black, and successful young men in a rather visible role on campus. Do any places feel anti-Black or unsafe?
> **JB:** Those damn frat houses dawg. The law has deemed us equal but every time you walk by there, you're reminded that you're not.

I guess being in the Deep South and knowing the history of this state, I should already know that some of this stuff is coming, but you never get used to it. But I try not to focus on what they got going because I'm deeply invested in places like my fraternity and Bridge. Those two places have celebrated me and let me know that as a Black man here, I am valued and my most authentic self is never in question. Joining my fraternity was the best decision I've made in college, and it has paid off dividends in every aspect of my life. The camaraderie of brotherhood bonding and true spirit of fellowship is what has helped me move through this college journey rather smoothly. I'm in a scholars' program where I am the only Black man in the cohort, and I never feel alone now because, through Bridge and my fraternity, I've learned exactly who I am and nothing can be taken away from me. My proudest moment in college was when my dad and mom came down to my probate and got all the love for them. I remembered all the talks we had about school and Greek life, and I felt like I was at the top and couldn't be taken down. That's what my fraternity has done for me, put me at the top to where this feeling lasts a lifetime because I never have to come down.

This is why I think all the Black fraternities and sororities need houses the same way the white organizations do. I really think that's the way it needs to be across the

board. If the white students have it, the Black students need to have it. I think this makes us an inclusive campus, and that's what the administration wants to preach all of the time. I've tried to make the best of my college journey and I have, but as a Black man, I'm thinking about those students coming after me. I see this campus building things every day, and I can't help but to stop and think, "Where is the stuff for Black students?" There is a lot of money thrown around on campus, and I would love to see Black people get some of it. We have a purpose on this campus, and it is already established, but I want to make sure it lasts forever.

Findings

There were three findings that resonated with the entire study through the participant narratives: (1) anti-Black stereotypes pose the largest threat to the degradation of Black men at historically white institutions, (2) psychological and physical labor is extracted from Black men for the school's public image towards diversity, and (3) joy is linked to belonging in resistance at historically white institutions. These findings were not an exhaustive list from the narratives shared by the participants; however, these three were highlighted throughout the analysis in showing that, beyond themes, these are also feelings of the participants. This study contains a narrative inquiry methodology to understand the experiences of 11 undergraduate Black men at historically white institutions (HWIs). The Black Storywork (Coles, 2018) speaks to narratives fostering community and harmony. The stories shared by the participants not only landed on these findings but built up a collective talk that centered Black men having power and agency over their own story. The findings also include the connection between the existing literature and theoretical framework.

Anti-Black stereotypes is the catalyst

The participants in this study all landed at a moment in their collegiate journey where they realized anti-Blackness was maintained by more than white people. Dancy et al. (2018) refer to the permanence of anti-Blackness and the "plantation" politics that consumes historically white institutions. Blackness was very hard to define within this study for some of the participants, but anti-Blackness came with great ease. For the students in this study, the anti-Blackness levied against them was heavy and almost made college seem insurmountable. Participants in this study often referred to their experiences in like manner in agreeing that the campus often saw them as singular besides, making it very rigid to be anything else. Either you were an athlete or a scholar but the idea of being both, or occupying more than a singular identity fought against the master narrative of the campus. There were moments when the participants felt that even the Black people were contributing to anti-Blackness by believing the stereotypes about them and acting upon those stereotypes to other Black students. Participants' views of anti-Blackness lined up with Dancy et al. (2018) from the aspect of Black men being labeled as "other" and that reproduced the prism of institutionalized anti-Blackness towards Black men.

Dumas and ross (2016) show how the specificity of anti-Blackness further contributes to the harm against Black bodies in educational spaces. Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) extends beyond the Black-White binary of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in that it impresses upon us not only race (Black) but nuances and embodiments it houses for conditions consumed by Black people. Participants in this study were overwhelmingly proud to identify as a Black man but they were not always willing or able to call out their conditions outside of "racism". However, Dwayne was one to add that "Our connection

as Black men is not because we are Black here but that we bond over our mistreatment". At its core, this is the importance of undertaking BlackCrit in this study, by means of helping Black men liberate themselves from a "racial" structure into understanding the systemic nature anti-Blackness has on all of us. At these institutions, anti-Blackness flows in more than white bodies, but all of it is due to the overwhelming acceptance of whiteness as supreme in the fabric of the campus. Dancy and Edwards (2020) argue that the "humanity" or, put plainly, heartbeat of the campus is dependent on its ability to cause harm to Black life. Participants would lament their harmful experiences and say they should have advocated better for themselves and Black people. I challenge that in believing that no amount of advocacy to the campus will free Black men of the stereotypes they find levied against their person because of the permanence of anti-Blackness. Advocacy for one's self will free them internally from the stereotypes that are not theirs to carry. While speaking on anti-Blackness from the participants perspective, there was a sense of hopelessness in educating their white counterparts to free them of the stereotypes they were forced to believe about Black men.

There was also a point to note that the Black undergraduate men in this study were athletes, student leaders, Greek letter organization members, and ambassadors—they were tired. The labor they expended for the university was returned in the form of microaggressions and surveillance, largely due to stereotypes. In the psyche of white people, Black people hold a permanent place of inferiority (Wilderson, 2010). In the study, Clifton, speaks to the idea of "burning down" the entire institution because it was for centuries held an identity that believes Black people are only in these spaces to serve white people. This agrees with Dancy et al. (2018) about the anti-Blackness nature of the

campus reducing Black people to subordinate roles. Some of the participants believed they could make their way to acceptance in the minds of the campuses but ultimately all agreed that they tried and failed. Participants went so far to say that if they were just given the opportunity or represented more than things may look different on campus, which would force white people to see them as their equal. Scott (2016) believes that the "lack of" causes the entire Black population including working professionals to feel disconnected from the campus. I contend, from a historical perspective, historically white institutions were built by Black men but never had Black men in mind outside of the subservient role. There will always be a disconnect in the feelings of Black men at these institution types but the campuses decide they will actively work against anti-Black stereotypes.

Every participant recounted a time when he thought the university had taken a turn with the Black Lives Matter movement, particularly in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. In most cases, even with video evidence of George Floyd's innocence, they still found themselves in talks with administration and peers that believed Black men were still guilty in suspicion of some crime. There were constant reminders for these Black men and their peers that the campus was willing to go only so far to believe that Black men were innocent of the stereotypes that consumed them. Dumas (2016) believed that these beliefs were only kept alive because structures built around the stereotypes. Once structures are built by white people who are the greatest beneficiary, there is no incentive to tear down these structures. Afro Pessimism literature places Black people as a constant threat and antagonistic relationship with the world around them (Fanon, 1961). I believe the same is true for the participants and their Black male peers because they are

always seen in the eyes of the campus as persons of interest. Black men often find themselves out-of-place in the very institutions their forefathers helped build. The lack of progress for Black men at these institution types shows that they have a greater commitment to order and tradition than to tear down colonial structures that lead to the further degradation of Black men (Dancy et al., 2018).

Psychological and physical labor

These Black men in the study expressed they were good enough for their image to be monetized to recruit more Black men into the university but never good enough to freely exist as Black men. Dancy and Edwards (2020) further extend that white campuses operated under the premise that Black males were valued only in their income-generating labor (athletics), not in their intellect. But for those students who were in school for their academics, they were used as the poster child for diversity to recruit more Black students. The participants all shared moments where they felt "pimped" but never exhibited the strength to fight back due to thoughts of retaliation from the university. Peter, expressed there was a time that the university needed his name, image and likeness (NIL) but when he requested for scholarship funds from the university, he never received a response. Most undergraduate Black men who attend historically white institutions are not athletes, but they are treated one in the same when it comes to the exploitation of their talents. National Senior Sports Writer, Bomani Jones, refers to this as legalized exploitation. Historically white institutions use Black men for profit and image, trending a vicious cycle of regarding Black life as cheap and disposable (Alexander, 2010). Historically white institutions have the most expensive NIL brand, ironically, which was built on the back of free labor from Black men.

In their practice, historically white institutions are cut and dry, but image is where it gets deceptive. The structure of historically white institutions always lends itself to whiteness (Dancy et al., 2018). However, white institutions make allowances for other races, particularly Black people, but it costs them far more than they were willing to pay. Participants would recount their experiences in a way that was critical not only of white people but also of the institutional behavior of the entire campus as it relates to Blackness and Black people. Anti-Blackness is in every fabric of these institutions, and no matter how hard Black people fight against it, whiteness takes precedence and residence in the minds of those at the institution (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). The illusion of diversity programs and measures was to attract more Black people into enrolling at the university while simultaneously asking white people to stop being intolerant of Black folks. The main beneficiary of diversity and inclusion from the viewpoint of the participants was the university. Even when trying to provide avenues and create spaces for Black people, the university is consumed by whiteness, leading the participants to further believe that their name, image, and likeness were for white people's benefit. If these institutions could appear not as anti-Black, then the market for attracting more Black men would be of even greater reward. Absolution from anti-Blackness was a step too far for the participants to imagine because they believed the university benefits from being a certain level of elitism towards peer institutions and alumni. Participants were never under the impression that their mere existence was enough for their school to remove anti-Blackness structures because the same image of Black men that these institutions loathed also paid out the biggest dividends.

A participant shared an encounter with the police in which he was assumed guilty of a near-death encounter until the officer saw the athlete's bags, bearing the university athletic logo. His physical labor paid off. This instance coincides with Dancy et al.'s (2018) claim that Black male athletes, as revenue generators, operate in a sphere of white acceptance. This type of anti-Blackness reduces Black men down to laborers and property of the university, which further contributes to stereotypical narratives (Dancy et al., 2018). If the participant and his peers in the athletics program at his school would find labor in which to take up, the consequences could be fatal. In reality, white institutions do not let Black men exist without labor because to exist without labor is to resist and to resist is to move towards freedom. The participant referred to this act of anti-Blackness in that he had to provide a symbol of whiteness or something white people respected in order to be viewed as a human and receive the benefit of the doubt. This Black male athlete now exists freely from the threat of violence (physical and psychological) that operates within the institutional framing of the colonial state of mind that the university takes on (Smith, 2014).While the student-athlete did not try to speak for every Black male athlete, he said there was a consensus that you always wear athletic gear in some capacity, for the fear of being looked at as "just another nigga." This mindset causes Black men in the study to have a psychological labor withdrawal from their mental health. Davidson and Wilson (2013) would refer to the inaction of the police as a "benefit of campus". Consequently, those benefits are not accessible to all Black men, just those whom the power structure has deemed acceptable laborers. The benefits do not outweigh the risk of being a Black man on a largely white, densely populated

campus where the preconceived notion is that leaning into whiteness is a prerequisite for receiving fair treatment.

The participants attending historically white institutions had varying experiences, but almost all of the narratives pointed to a "legacy" around the campus (Wilder, 2013; Dumas, 2016). This legacy was built of whiteness extracting labor from Black men and Black people (Dancy et. al., 2018). Schools seemed to hold more reverence to their preservation of anti-Black symbols and monuments than it did to eradicate the images at the request of their Black students (O'Connell, 2019). However, there has been a Damascus road for historically white institutions in their false repentance of history that has for centuries casted Black people in the lower rungs. Even through this, white colleges have continually asked of Black men and Black people to champion their name while receiving crumbs in the process. Dumas and ross (2016) confront this anti-Blackness through BlackCrit as anything "Black" being despised and furthermore, not willing to meet request(s). Anti-Blackness from these institutions are now being called out on a level modern higher education has not seen and forcing HWI's to give an account is misdeeds towards Black men. Historically white institutions need Black men to save them from their guilt. Consequently, Black men need historically white institutions to free them of their involuntary labor of an institution that continues to legally exploit (Mustaffa, 2017). The participants felt that the diversity and inclusion offices that now found their way onto campus were not to liberate or include Black people but to move white people from indifference to tolerance of Black people while on these campuses.

Joy, Belonging and Resistance

The participants in this study were all asked to think about how joy came into their collegiate life, free standing of Blackness. The participants did not nor did they try to separate their joyous moments from their identity as a Black man. The Black men in this study responded in ways that suggested their joy was linked to sense of belonging. Their belonging tended to be linked to each other as Black men and their Black organizations than to the overall campus. Chase said, "I felt like an outsider here, but it wasn't until I joined the academy with other Black men where I knew I arrived." Most of these participants were members of the Divine Nine fraternities, which brought them into a much deeper understanding of Blackness for Black men on college campuses. JB said, "My fraternity was really a game changer. I was thinking about leaving, but once the bruhz got a hold of me, I was there to stay." The participants were very proud, and their confidence was not altered just because the campus climate was cold and unaccepting of who they were as Black men (Mwangi et al., 2018). They knew that when they found another like-minded Black man/men, they had found a community. When Black men have a racial identity connection, that serves as their connection to the campus (Thelamour et al., 2019).

The purpose of higher education in America at its infant stages was to educate the white male elite and have them largely benefit from societal privileges (Thelin, 2004; Wilder, 2013). Black men have taken the status quo and flipped it on its head by requiring all things that were originally intended for white men on college campuses. The direct refusal and resistance to accept what campuses give them, has been seen in the ways Black men free themselves in community. Ray (2019) extends that HWI's

reproduce inequality along racial lines in organizations, structures, and cultures. I contend that while this is true, Black men who find community amongst other Black men disrupt and challenge organizations, structures and cultures of the college. The participants in this study were all involved in organizations on campus, and all of them joined their organizations for different reasons and in different seasons of their lives. However, they all chose the organizations they were involved in because of Black male student influence. Dwayne said, “I feel like we’re bonding off the fucked up shit that happened to us and not that we were Black men about to receive degrees from a great institution.” Although influenced by other Black men and Black people, participants found themselves engaging in these organizations to engage Blackness but to ultimately spite white supremacy (Dancy, 2012). John said, “I remember homecoming and all the Black people cheering for me, and my white teammates asked if I knew all of them. I told them, ‘Yeah, in a way you’d never understand.” The participants Black peers helped them have confidence and resolve in their Blackness that they were missing on campus. Participants were receptive to the idea of joining organizations where white people were in the majority, but with Black organizations, there was a sense of belonging they could not deny.

Once the participants figured they could use their voice, their time at these institutions started to make more sense as Black men. Colby shared that once he found his voice against a racist professor, he felt he was in the right place and started to get more involved with the campus. Tichavakunda (2022) illuminates the studies around Black students' feeling of joy linked to affinity organizations or Black cultural centers. While joy and other positive emotions are linked to the perseverance and visibility of

Blackness in certain contexts, participants in this study showed their joy also came from defying whiteness. I contend that it is not the mere organizational membership or counterspaces that bring Black men joy but directly opposing white supremacy also brought them great satisfaction. Okello et al. (2020) and others who write on Black joy at HWI's are valid in their critique of research being centered around the negative experiences of Black students. In this study, when answering questions that caused participants to think about anti-Blackness they could answer them, but when asked about moments of joy, they would hesitate and often allude to never being asked the question. I believe two things are true here; the moments of anti-Blackness are visceral and traumatic, which causes you to never forget and researchers are not genuinely interested in their healing, only their suffering.

The original framing of this study around Tinto's (1993) idea of Black students dropping their culture for the campuses is not what the participants in this study believed in. All of the participants echoed John in that Black people were not monolithic on these campuses, but they were all each other had most days. There was a sense of belonging in collectively resisting the integration measures their schools tried to place on them. The Black men were proud to stand in defiance to the evils of the campus that only meant to exploit and extract from them. Dwayne said, "I'm not sure what it was like during the civil rights movement but I felt like some of this was our time." Black men not acknowledging songs saluting The Confederacy, defacing racist monuments, protesting racist Presidential candidate visits to campus, were all examples of them finding their "place" and feeling as if they belonged (Davidson & Wilson, 2013). This was not joy in the sense of positive emotions (Tichavakunda, 2022) but the spiritual awakening of their

person to step freely into their Blackness . This study, similar to Davidson and Wilson (2013) and Reid (2013) shows that adopting the campus culture is harmful to Black students who have their own culture at historically white institutions. Black men at historically white institutions is a story of strength, power, vulnerability, resistance and faith. Any culture that pushes them away or tries to rob them of these further contributes to anti-Blackness.

Summary

Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) ask what it would look like for Black men to abandon or refuse the model and ideas that white institutions have for them. Historically white institutions are not in the business of letting Black people, particularly Black men, exist free from their control. For institutions who now claim to care and label themselves as diverse and inclusive, there are still Black men who tell another story. In this study, the second interview of my participants gave them an opportunity to re-story and imagine a college experience free of white norms. This was particularly hard for all participants, not because they did not want to be free but because they knew their school was in the business of controlling their narrative. All participants spoke on ways they would galvanize efforts between minority groups to boost Black acceptance and validate their existence at these institutions. Because historically white institutions sold some of them a dream, the Black men in this study decided to create space to fight the ways in which they could be consumed. Historically white institutions' wanting to appear inclusive of Blackness is real, but Black men's wanting to tell their own stories is even more real. Black men in this study all decided that, whether the campus did something for them or not, their existence would be honored. Once they started to understand the plight of each

other, no matter their classification or orientation to the campus, they saw themselves not as victims but as owners of their own experiences. Black men who entered the institution believing the institution had their best interest learned that their best advocate was themselves. Historically white institutions have no incentive to yield to Blackness, but due to the divestment of resources towards Black men who aren't athletes, these students decided that they would use these institutions the same way they used them.

The 11 participants in this study expressed their experiences at historically white institutions through two interviews. These Black undergraduate men discussed topics that range from family and campus involvement to societal pressures and hostile climates. Regardless of how the Black experienced belonging, labored for the institution and were stereotyped, all participants expressed they needed other Black men for survival while in college. Black men attending historically white institutions are often viewed from a deficit lens and rarely seen as bringing value to the institution (Kim & Hargrove, 2013). The need for historically white institutions to now appear to see the value of diversity and inclusion seem to be understood from the perspective of the participants as law. There are and have been laws in place in recent and past years around incorporating Black people into white institutions, but the law never changed the feelings and attitudes of the people for whom it was originally intended. With the campus lobbying for increased measures into diversity, these schools reside in southern states that are now undergoing a microscopic look into their diversity plans. While this dissertation is not thematic in nature of analysis, it is imperative to point these commonalities out, as they surfaced in some form in all interviews. I connect responses from interviews back to the research questions and theoretical framework (BlackCrit) in this study.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

Summary

Chapter six is a full range of understanding recommendations, limitations, future research and implications. I briefly discuss the recommendations as they relate to the findings of this study. Black undergraduate men attending historically white institutions come with a full range of understandings in how to support them.

The title of this study, "You Won't Break My Soul" is not a pop culture reference but a war cry for Black undergraduate men who continue to face anti-Blackness policies and practices at HWIs. In the song, "Break my Soul" by Beyonce Knowles, there is a continual chant in the chorus saying "you won't break my soul". I liken the continual chant in the lyrics of the song to the continual refusal from Black men to cave to the pressures of the culture of HWIs. Integrating into this culture can crush their soul as integration is the extraction of their person into a culture that actively works against them. The participants in this study remain steadfast, immovable, and liberators in their experiences at HWIs as they continue to challenge and resist anti-Blackness as this is their calling into understanding and exhibiting Blackness.

As a Black collegian who was once and still is affiliated with majority white institutions, I understood the reckoning of these participants as they tried to work through their experiences of anti-Blackness. This research is ever important as Black men continue to be the "problem" when recruiting into these HWIs but are often called on to labor and not just exist as a student. There is an interesting dichotomy between Black men and historically white institutions but what is clear is that these institutions need and long for Black men. HWIs are not always acting with good intentions of Black men but

there continues to be a need to keep them enrolled and engaged with the institution. That level of engagement is often predicated off what the college wants or needs for them. The totality of this study gives Black men the permission to have their college experiences on their own terms and continue to challenge the status quo at historically white institutions.

Recommendations

Anti-Black Stereotypes

The participants in this study often spoke to the harmful nature of stereotypes and how they would land on their person. Participants were often asked what sport they played at the institutions, causing them to believe that there was no genuine concern to learn who they were as people. Once participants started pushing back on stereotypes is when their understanding of their experiences changed. I challenge historically white institutions to create spaces for Black men to challenge and fight against stereotypes. Black men are often tasked with creating their own spaces of counterspaces and narratives. Creating spaces like academies for Black men can often become a difference maker in how the campus views them. Professors, staff members and students can understand Black men better when they are seen in spaces that are not athletically driven.

Seeing more Black men in leadership roles on campus also shows the universities commitment to seeing the Black men in high ranking with the institution. Participants often remarked on how they never saw Black men in positions of leadership and that affected how the campus viewed Black men. The institutions can do more in their policies and practices that show Black men in a positive light. As suggested by participants like Colby and Dwayne, institutions have to put their money where their reputation resides. Institutions oftentimes are not willing to put their reputation on the

line in supporting Black men because their institutions thrive off anti-Blackness. Stereotypes are likely to continue but concerted efforts on the universities behalf to bring Black men out of the margins closer towards the center matters. In order for the stereotypes to change, historically white institutions have to change the way they engage Black men.

Psychological and Physical Labor

Black men at historically white institutions are more often than not, ushered into roles that extract labor from them. Participants in this study often remarked on the needs the university had as it related to their collegiate tenure. Participants would find themselves answering for the entire race of Black people, faces plastered on campaign and marketing material and even asked to recruit more Black men to the institution. When it came time for Black men to ask for what they wanted in return by making good on their labor sacrifice, institutions would often turn cold to the point of not responding. If institutions did do anything for the Black men it was always on their terms with no room for compromise. Institutions have to be more willing to help and provide avenues for Black men as they are often asked for their talents the most.

I recommend from the responses of participants in this study that institutions ask what ways they can be useful to Black men. Black men must also not be afraid to ask and stall out requests that do not meet their list of demands. Historically white institutions will never stop truly exploiting Black men but it is time to meet in the middle. One of the participants suggested that if Black men would continue to be asked for their labor, the university needs to talk about reward(s) upfront. If Black men are to be able to come out of this darkness they often find themselves in while attending HWIs, it is time to demand

their needs. It is not solely on the students to ask or even demand but it is on the offices and departments who continue to seek this labor. As diversity offices and centers grow around the country, it would be beneficial for the institutions to include Black men in their processes. The labor ask of Black men is never going to stop but if Black men can boldly ask for what they want, the extraction of labor may not seem so harsh.

Joy and Belonging

There's a song called Joy and Pain written by Franky Beverly and Maze. There's a line in the song that asks the question to listeners but I believe asks the question to Black men at HWIs, "How come the things that makes us happy makes us sad?" For our Black undergraduate men attending historically white institutions, that has been their experience to some extent. All of the participants in the study had a bit of nostalgia when thinking about their acceptance into their institution and what that did for them mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Looking back on those same emotions, years later, they've been robbed of those positive feelings. Tichavakunda (2021) I believe gives us an idea on how we should engage Black men to learn about their experiences around joy and belonging. The majority of the joy and belonging the participants felt was opposing whiteness, which did not always mean celebrating Blackness. For the participants who experienced true joy and belonging, it most often pointed towards their community of fellow Black men. This could be seen through fraternity involvement, recreational activities, parties, academies and spiritual fellowship. Echoing other findings, Black men were tasked with doing this in silos.

Joy and belonging for Black men at HWIs in the nuances of their experiences. It is imperative for HWIs to be in tune with the nuances of the experiences as they show a

genuine concern for their existence in these spaces. One recommendation from Josh is that Divine Nine fraternities be given the same opportunities at Interfraternity Council (IFC, predominantly white) when it comes to suspensions and development. Divine Nine fraternities cannot afford to have 5+ year suspensions for the same infraction committed as their white peers, as it ultimately affects the way HWIs will be able to recruit Black men. Participants also remarked that not just in Greek Life but in Student Affairs in general, white organizations were given larger budgets and larger platforms for visibility (orientation, preview days, athletic seating priority). Black men should be included in the larger organizations like Student Government Association, Campus Activities, Leadership and Service, and Judicial Affairs. If Black men are included in the more visible organizations it not only gives them a seat at the table but a voice in the process. Overall, participants felt that if the institutions could support them through recruitment and through graduation, then they would have a much more positive outlook on the campus and feel they belong.

Black men continue to be able to crush the arrangements of anti-Blackness (Dancy et al., 2018) by taking up space for themselves that exhibit Blackness by means of celebration .There is another song in the saying in the Black Baptist Church that says, “This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.” Much like those Black parishioners who stand in the face of opposition to forces that mean them no good, Black undergraduate men, too, say that this joy that I have, the institutions didn’t give it and the institutions can’t take it away.

Limitations

Participants in this study were mostly involved (socially through student organizations), knowing the structures and inner workings of the campus. In another study, having a mix of students who were not as involved as the participants to get an understanding of how they define and theorize Blackness would be beneficial. One could see the difference in understanding the campus climate and culture by the participants' classification, but when it came to involvement, they mostly said the same things and felt the same way. Also, missing from this study are student-athletes from revenue-generating sports. That level of exposure to ultra-whiteness would be beneficial to capture in order to understand the Black men's thought process when interacting within the frame of witness for benefit.

The participants all understood who they were as people but did not always have the historical context of Black men at historically white institutions. They all were from historically white institutions, but a few more schools in the Southeast would give a stronger connection to how land-grant and flagship institutions influence attitudes and perceptions of Black people in these spaces.. Having a greater sense of who these Black men were before we interviewed could have prepared me for some of their responses and how to interpret them based on their personality. The participants were asked these questions for the first time in their collegiate journey, and sometimes their responses reflected such because of the depth, or lack thereof. Engaging students who are solely in student organizations to contribute to the health and well-being of Black people or Black men would be greatly beneficial to a study of this magnitude.

Lastly, the participants in the study were very limited on their understanding of "predominantly white" versus "historically white." When talking through the understanding of attending a white campus, their responses seemed to be "it's a lot of white people" instead of thinking about why there are a lot of white people. Preparing participants with some understanding of their institution type may have produced different responses. However, qualitative research is subjective. I still wanted to let the participants arrive at their responses free of me to ensure I did not make the study anti-Black in swaying their responses to my understanding.

Reflexivity

This study was about five years in the making from thought to conception. During that period the scope of the study changed on multiple occasions but the population did not. When deciding to study undergraduate Black men, it was an intentional decision as this is my identity and reading prior research showed that my collegiate and professional experience were not singular. The full culmination of this study required a lot of iterations of analysis, literature reviews, methods and frameworks. My overall product is finished but will need more fleshing out in the future to make this work land with intentionality with the higher education administrators it was originally intended to reach. I did not take on this study to call out racism but to call out the systems and structures that implicate all of us in this work. If I utilize this in the future, I would make sure to work through the fullness of these structures and how they could inform how I choose methods and frameworks.

I have been taught through this study that all the pieces matter in the end. The research questions, the method(s), the language, the interviews, the participants,

everything. Because everything matters, everything has to be considered down to the very minute detail in your study. I set out to complete this study with some rather lofty goals, some of them were achieved and some of them missed the mark. As a novice researcher, it is imperative to work through every detail in study to ensure you reach your goals no matter how lofty they may seem. I believe this study in totality was a challenging study but could have used more fleshing out in certain areas to ensure all parts of the research met and exceeded expectation. The thorough nature of qualitative research forces you to be on point and not close to the mark. No writing is without critique but as a qualitative researcher we/I must maintain a level of integrity when performing a study and be honest about limitations when they show themselves. The exact limitations are listed in the aforementioned and following section to be transparent about the nature of the research and where it still needs tending to.

Overall, the study covers a lot and fulfills a lot of the promises I made to myself in completing this study for undergraduate Black men. Additionally, those promises I made to myself also have to align with the research and researchers who set out to do this work. I provided and brought my own uniqueness to this study but that uniqueness also has to be held to a standard of practice and research in a qualitative nature. Through this study, I have been able to learn quickly the successes and challenges of being a qualitative researcher who seeks to interrogate and challenge systems of oppression. All things do not have answers as the fluidity of research also beckons for the fluidity of thoughts. What I thought I knew about Blackness, anti-Blackness, and BlackCrit are all valid but so are the other researchers who spend time in service to this field. Challenging a system in your writing can be challenging because systems learn to grow and adapt.

Moving forward as a qualitative researcher, it is imperative for me to do more member checking with those who do this work to ensure I am retaining a level of integrity and showing myself as a student of the work I am undertaking.

Discussion

In my own understanding of narrative inquiry and BlackCrit, this study fell short of fully representing the marriage of framework and method. When working through the analysis, I found the marrying of narrative inquiry and BlackCrit not to be fully fleshed out in the study as it relates to Blackness and anti-Blackness. In future studies around this topic, I believe it best to view from a critical narrative inquiry. The critical role of the narrative inquiry helps to understand the narratives from a storytelling and resistance to marry well with BlackCrit in its specificity of understanding anti-Blackness in systems.

Anti-Blackness in this study was used to try to understand the ways in which undergraduate Black men defined Blackness and experienced belonging to the campus. Upon a deeper dive into the method and framework, the re-story from the narrative was missing. In order to be critical about the narrative means for the system and structure to have more accountability towards what perpetuates the anti-Blackness. Anti-Black structures and systems are not meant to simply benefit from Blackness but to exploit, demean, thingify, and ultimately retain power of it as property. The importance of working through the entire framework and theory could be the missing of an important narrative that seeks to free themselves versus just speaking of an experience.

With the numbers of Black undergraduate men being small in number, there is a possibility that these narratives may be shared by other Black male collegians (faculty, staff, graduate students) at historically white institutions. Black male collegians often

feel moments of isolation, racism and subjugation from historically white institutions. Through this study, participants shared that they longed for more Black male bonding across the university but were reminded that there were only so many Black men to seek bonding. In future studies, employing BlackCrit and Critical Narrative Inquiry would cause me to think in a more nuanced way about how bonding is viewed from the lens of Blackness. Ultimately, any concept undertaken to study Blackness in an anti-Black structure, has to be discussed in more emancipatory ways than simply longing for freedom. All participants expressed the need for central administration to practice solidarity with them and other racial minorities when atrocities affect their communities on campus and in society. Additionally, focusing on the praxis of Black storytelling and Black story work (Coles & Powell, 2020) will cause for a study to be more intentional into Black people experiences overcoming the proximity to inferiority the master narratives try to claim them to be.

Thinking about future studies, BlackCrit and Critical Narrative Inquiry will be able to help the study move through the permanence of anti-Blackness experiences in a emancipatory way and not just calling out racism. The use of BlackCrit in this study was intended to highlight Blackness and show how anti-Blackness from HWIs had a chilling effect. The use of BlackCrit is a more liberatory way to show how Blackness is dominant in its agency and frees those who agree or disagree with its place in society. To use BlackCrit fully would be to show how the narratives are set to free the narrator and on all those who wanted to exist free, even those non-Black. Critical race theory in all of its usefulness has not dissected the nature of BlackCrit as a framework and what it means to the understanding of Black men at historically white institutions. If more research is

conducted around undergraduate Black men, BlackCrit should be undertaken to understand the structures that implicate all university officials regardless of race and how they contribute to anti-Blackness. When discussing the structures that Black men find themselves in, discussing Blackness will give clearer context to the understanding of their experiences. Blackness matters in studies like these as the framing seeks to liberate the storytelling of Black men from master narratives that continuously seek to demean and invalidate their experiences.

Further Research

Currently, there is sweeping legislation (divisive concepts) passing through southern states legislature's that are diminishing and erasing the contributions of Black people on American society. At a broader level, the Supreme Court is offering opinions on Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard, which will significantly impact how colleges admit their students when race is a factor. With these two legal battles facing the country, admission for Black students will see even more of a challenge on acceptance to white campuses. As diversity efforts grow at public-four year land-grant/flagship schools, particularly in the south, studying the effects of this legislation on Black undergraduate men will give insight into an already vanishing population. Additionally, Black men who often find themselves trapped in labor roles for the university, may also offer some collective thought behind administrators' siding, instead of challenging legislators who make these laws. Black undergraduate men at historically white institutions are often studied from a deficit model, but in this case, however intellectually superior, will have to reckon with their school placing them further in the margins and at a greater deficit. There has been research in the past about intellectual collectivism of Black men but

reframing that from the lens that the history of Black intellectualism is not only challenged but illegal in the classroom may yield rich responses.

Research on the topic of Black male collegians in the future should aim at what Tichavakunda (2021) describes as Black joy on campus. The joy these students have now are affected by the negative experiences they have been exposed to. Centering Black students' voices around the positive aspects they have been able to experience will change the landscape of research around Black male collegians. Extending further to understand Black male collegians attitudes towards healing when experiencing the negative will offer a different perspective. Participants remarked on the lack of mental health resources available to them when anti-Black transgressions occur on campus or in society. Ultimately, Black male collegians experience should be considered holistically and not just on a singular experience as it could open the door for an anti-Black study. As demographics keep with a consistent pace of admittance for Black men at HWIs, it will be important to document their successes and challenges as they continue to give the campus a face lift while they still scrap for resources.

Conclusion

Black men attending historically white institutions are often viewed from a deficit lens and rarely seen as bringing value to the institution (Kim & Hargrove, 2013). Black undergraduate men attending historically white institutions are in a daily fight to not be seen as a threat while also showing they are a threat. This is where the participants nod to their fellow Black-men bonding, gained through student organizations, that would pull them out of these spaces. The sense of belonging felt even more strong among the participants who saw the campus for what it was and decided to push through it alongside

their Black male peers. Ultimately, the participants saw that the more the campus tried to exploit their being, the more they realized that exploitation came from only what one values. These Black men knew their value even if the institutions tried to take advantage of it.

The need for historically white institutions to now appear as models for diversity and inclusion seem to be understood from the perspective of the participants as law. There are and have been laws in place in recent and past years around incorporating Black people into white institutions, but the law never changed the feelings and attitudes of the people for whom it was originally intended. With the campus lobbying for increased measures into diversity, these schools reside in southern states that are now undergoing a microscopic look into their diversity plans. States like Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia have all implemented some partial bans to curriculum that educates students on what they call divisive topics. As a result, diversity and inclusion offices have received repeated attacks against their initiatives to increase campus diversity. Most of the participants attend a flagship, land-grant, or both institution types that are also Research-1 institutions. A land-grant institution's mission is research, instruction, and extension to the benefit of the state. Diversity educators argue that state legislators are now using their platform and resources to sponsor state-sanctioned racism. Participants in the study often viewed the diversity offices as a safe haven and sanctuary, so attacks on these offices feel personal to the Black undergraduate men. The Black men in this study have used their platform to advocate and speak against anti-Black attacks from the state government. These universities now stand at a crossroad and in the

crosshairs of a state legislature that seeks to legislate Black men's very existence at historically white institutions.

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Appendix A: Initial Interview Protocol

Interviewee Information
Interviewee name (pseudonym):
School:
Survey Section(s) Used:

- ☐ Interviewer Background
  - ☐ Institution
  - ☐ Blackness
  - ☐ Community
- ☐ Closing

Introductory Protocol

I. Opening
II. Questions
  A. Background
    i. Given what you know now about yourself and about college, what would you tell the freshman/1st year version of yourself?
    ii. What sacrifices have you had to make coming to college or while being in college?
    iii. What is the hardest thing you've had to face/overcome while in college? How do you do it?
  B. Institution
    i. Tell me the ways that your institution supports its Black students.
    ii. Thinking about your time in college, who/what have been your villains and who/what have been your superheroes?
    iii. Have you ever thought about leaving? If so why, If not, why not?
  C. Blackness
    i. Define what Blackness means to you.
    ii. When and where, on campus, do you feel most Black?
    iii. Are there places or instances on campus that feel anti-Black?
  D. Community
    i. What organizations or experiences have you had that invited/celebrated your Blackness?
    ii. Talk about a time when you felt seen/heard/valued (on campus, in college). Talk about a time where you didn't feel seen/heard/valued (on campus, in college).
    iii. Talk about a time when you experience the most joy (on campus, in college).
  E. Closing
    i. Given everything we've talked about, how would you remake the university for Black students?

Appendix B: Second Interview Protocol

1. If Blackness had no limits of existence, what ways would imagine Blackness to have freedom on campus?

2. Speak to what contributes most to your understanding of Blackness and how you see yourself.

3. Summarize any moments or instances that have caused you to think more about your own Blackness since our last talk.

4. Talk about your sense of belonging as a Black man on a historically white campus and community building with other Black men.

5. Talk about how the response of the administration to anti-Black acts (campus, world) advocates or does not advocate for you as a Black man.

6. Talk about attending a historically white institution and the historical legacy of the campus that contributes to anti-Blackness.

7. Tell me the ways in which Black men can exist freely on this campus and how they can pour into the future generations of Black men.