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WHITENESS IN BLACK SPACES: AN EXTENDED CASE STUDY OF
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

TIARA GIDDINGS

Under the Direction of Rosalind Chou, PhD

ABSTRACT

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been noted for their ability to create an environment that fosters black intellectuality, specifically for students who are systematically excluded from white academic spaces. At a time with heightened racism on college campuses, it is important to examine the purpose and significance of HBCUs in today's perceived post racial society. Utilizing an extended case method, I explore how students at HBCUs discuss their experiences on campus and the extent to which HBCU students conceptualize race and racial events using the white racial frame and black anti-racists counter frames. Semi-structured interviews reveal a coexistence of elements of the dominant white racial frame and counter-frames, suggesting a dialectic relationship within predominantly black academic spaces. Therefore, it is important for HBCUs to assess the ways in which white supremacy is manifested within these spaces.

INDEX WORDS: Systemic racism, White Racial Frame, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Race

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TIARA GIDDINGS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2018

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Tiara Giddings
2018

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HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

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December 2018

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to the family, friends, and faculty whose guidance, love, and support made this possible.

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I would first like to thank my chair, Dr. Rosalind Chou for believing in my ideas and instilling the confidence necessary to do this work. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Tomeka Davis for her generous, unwavering support that allowed me to see this project through. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Wendy Simonds for her keen eye and insightful guidance that continues to remind me that writing is a process.

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1 INTRODUCTION

White supremacist groups have been emboldened by political and racial tensions within the United States, increasingly targeting college campuses. White supremacist groups have used college campuses to promote racist views such as the August 2017 rally at the University of Virginia. Although this rally gained national attention, specifically because protests turned violent, killing a woman and leaving dozens of others injured, most racist incidents on college campuses are quieter efforts (Heim 2017). For example, flyers were posted around the campus of the University of South Carolina, blaming black people for the election of Donald Trump and referring to them as “dumb” and “stupid monkeys” in January 2018 and racial threats were left in campus restrooms at DePauw University in April 2018 (Associated Press 2018; Adams 2018). Unrest around these racist events on predominantly white campuses has expanded dialogue within both academic and social spheres regarding whether black students are better off attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) than predominantly white institutions.

Dillard University president Walter Kimbrough stated in an NPR interview that campus racial tensions on predominantly white campuses has increased the attractiveness of HBCUs (Martin 2016). Kimbrough joins other scholars who suggest that black students are seeking safe spaces for learning as a response to the heightened coverage and incidence of racial oppression against Blacks in the United States, white supremacists recruiting on college campuses, and the prevalence of other racial aggression on predominantly white campuses across the country (Martin 2016; Washington and Gasman 2016). A number of HBCUs have seen record increases in first-year enrollment for the fall 2017 semester. North Carolina A&T university reported a record breaking incoming class, the largest student body in the institution’s history (Johnson

2017). Virginia State University reported a 50 percent increase in freshman enrollment for 2017, Alcorn State University reported a 38 percent increase, and Central State University reported a 13 percent increase (Carter 2017). Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been credited for their black- centered curriculum and providing solidarity and a place of belonging (Martin 2016; Washington and Gasman 2016). While students at HBCUs may be escaping overt forms of racism that black students experience at predominantly white institutions, these students may not be escaping the dominance of white ideologies that persist in society as a whole.

Among these dominant ideologies is the white racial frame. Sociologist Joe Feagin (2010) developed the concept of the white racial frame which provides a reference for racialized knowledge and understandings including racial stereotypes, narratives, images, and emotions. The white racial frame has been consistently validated on the interpersonal and institutional levels, pressuring all racial and ethnic groups to internalize this dominant perspective. Racial minorities who are uncritical of the systemic nature of racism may adopt the white racial frame (Feagin 2010; Chou and Feagin 2014). Historically Black Colleges and Universities occupy a unique space as institutions whose histories are embedded with counter-frames but must still work to prepare their students to be functioning members of a society in which the white racial frame continues to dominate.

There is a need for exploration into how ideologies of racism can “function both as the vehicles for the imposition of dominant ideologies and as the elementary forms of the cultures of resistance” at HBCUs (Hall 1980: 342). In order to continue to uncover the complexities of racial oppression in the United States and understand the hegemonic nature of the white racial frame, I examine how Historically Black College and University students define their racialized experiences at these institutions. My research questions are: (1) How are messages of race and

racism transmitted at Historically Black Colleges and Universities? (2) How do students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities discuss their experiences with race? (3) To what extent, do Historically Black College and University students conceptualize race and racial events using the white racial frame and counter frames?

1.1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

1.1.1 Systemic Racism and the White Racial Frame

Racial oppression has played a crucial role in the structure of the United States and has created an unequal racial hierarchy that emphasizes the hegemonic view of white superiority. The foundation of the United States is predicated on European's genocide of Native Americans and enslavement of Africans. Each major historical period of U.S. society is characterized by exploitation and oppression that has afforded whites large-scale wealth-generating resources and intergenerational transmission of economic and social assets (Feagin 2006: 6). Systemic racism theory underscores the persistence of racial oppression as an intentional invention of powerful white Americans that has been reproduced in U.S. institutions through enduring racial ideologies and practices (Feagin 2006: 8).

Systemic racism produces an inegalitarian racial hierarchy that has required constant reproduction and maintenance within major institutions within society. Over centuries, institutions are shaped and reshaped by highly racialized processes to maintain the unjust enrichment of whites and the impoverishment of Americans of color. The basic elements of racial oppression have endured over centuries despite significant racially historical events. Thus, racial oppression is not just a surface level, prejudicial attribute of U.S. society, but a social and ideological reality reflected and embedded in U.S. institutions today (Feagin 2006: 2).

Central to the persistence of systemic racism is the development of the white racial frame, “an organized set of racialized ideas, stereotypes, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate” (Feagin 2006: 25). The white racial frame is a broad racial framing of society composed of an array of elements including five important features: (1) a belief aspect- racial stereotypes; (2) a cognitive aspect- racial narratives and interpretations; (3) visual and auditory aspects- racial images and language; (4) a “feelings” aspect- racialized emotions; and (5) inclinations to discriminatory action. Each subframe of the broad white racial frame contains “bits” of racial knowledge, interpretations, and understandings that are deeply embedded into the minds of whites that inform the actions of individuals and groups who function within major sectors of society (Feagin 2010: 15). These major frame elements serve as a frame of reference regarding racial matters by providing the knowledge needed to understand, interpret, and act in everyday experiences.

The white racial frame remains powerful and pervasive with several subframes that whites use, whether consciously or unconsciously, in evaluating Americans of color and accenting whiteness. Today, whites frequently combine major elements of the white racial frame. The contemporary racial frame not only encompasses racial stereotypes and narratives, but also nonlinguistic elements such as emotions and images that generate inclinations to take discriminatory action. Anti-black stereotypes are a persisting element of the white racial frame in which many white Americans and some Americans of color assert that black Americans are animalistic, violent, criminal, unintelligent, lazy, oversexed, among numerous other stereotypes and images (Feagin 2010: 104). Racial stereotypes are strongly linked to visual and linguistic elements of the white racial frame that transmit negative images of blacks and positive images of whites through societal institutions, most notably the media.

Racial stereotypes, imagery, and language constantly contribute to racial narratives and interpretations of our racialized society. Commonplace narratives in the white racial frame accent the virtues, privileges, and power of whites. The white racial frame normalizes white views, values, and framing that accents the superiority of whiteness in which whites are viewed as more moral, intelligent, attractive, and hardworking than black Americans and other Americans of color (Feagin 2010: 96). Verbal and visual imagery of the dominant racial frame are also frequently linked to strong emotions. Clear examples of strong racial emotions throughout U.S. history to the present include greed and a strong desire for material wealth, racialized arrogance, anxiety or fear of resistance from people of color, and the rejection of blackness and black bodies (Feagin 2010: 110). Overtime, white, racist, emotion-laden stereotypes and images breakdown an individual's capacity to experience positive emotions of black Americans, essentially creating a system of oppression that legitimates white hostility, discrimination, and social degradation (Feagin 2010: 105-10).

The white racial frame is initially learned through childhood socialization and consistently reinforced within a series of interactions in recurring social networks that help to establish and reconstruct social understandings of society. Social networks are an important setting for gaining understandings, images, and emotions of the white racial frame by observing, consuming, and performing the behavior of parents, peers, and friends (Feagin 2006:44; Feagin 2010:16). In the past and present, whites do not create elements of their personal racial framing of society, but adapt them in social interactions, usually occurring with white individuals and groups (Feagin 2010:94). Within these networks, constant repetition and performance of elements of the white racial frame including negative images and stereotypes of people of color, and associated emotions and inclinations to discriminate, are essential to successful reproduction

of the dominant frame. These family and friendship networks serve as major transmitters of collective understandings and interpretations passed on to each generation through established collective memory. Collective memory not only determines how we interpret and experience our racialized present but also shapes the U.S. racial structure.

Most racial groups within the U.S. have collective memories, however, systemic racism grants white Americans the greatest control over societal memories that are recorded in history books, laws, and the media (Feagin 2010:17). Institutionalized white collective memory ignores the continuation of racial oppression through collective forgetting and collective remembering of U.S. history. Powerful whites determine which and how historical events are stored in collective memory and which events can deteriorate. Collective forgetting downplays and eliminates significant portions of U.S. history and abandons white responsibility in the oppression and exploitation of people of color (Feagin 2010:17). White Americans and some Americans of color have internalized a white collective memory which rescues whites from the realities of their actions in establishing and maintaining a racist U.S. society (Feagin 2010: 36; Bracey 2017).

An important dimension of systemic racism has been resistance to racial oppression by black Americans and other Americans of color. Black Americans have fought to counter and destroy societal racial oppression, creating a long-standing dialectical relationship between white oppression and black resistance (Feagin 2006: 31). The persistent presence of black resistance to oppression shapes white response, which in turn generates an enhanced, restructured black resistance strategy. The social reproduction of anti-black oppression is central to systemic racism remaining a fundamental element of society. Anti-black oppression has become this ongoing

process that is constantly shaped and reshaped, creating a struggle black Americans and other Americans of color continue to endure today.

People of color have worked to reveal the hegemonic nature of the white racial frame and have challenged the dominance of this framing through alternative and counter perspectives. Although counter-frames were initially established as survival tactics, many elements have been added to enhance strategies of resistance. As in the past, counter-frames have provided toolkits to equip individuals and groups to effectively counter white racism and discrimination. In addition to the dominant white frame, Feagin (2010) identifies three additional frames that are essential to understanding resistance to systemic oppression in the United States: (1) liberty-and-justice frame; (2) home-culture frames that Americans of color draw from to develop anti-oppressive counter-frames and (3) anti-oppression counter frames of Americans of color.

The liberty-and-justice frame is significant in U.S. history as a central frame with concepts such as liberty, freedom, equality, and justice appearing in founding documents. Conflict with Britain contributed to the goals of attaining freedom and ideas of liberty and justice. However, white Americans contradicted earlier sentiments of liberty, freedom, and justice through the exploitation of Native Americans and enslaved Africans for the enrichment of whites (Feagin 2010: 156). Black resistance efforts have highlighted contradictions between the white liberty-and-justice frame and whites' everyday actions. Black Americans stress important achievements and contributions of black Americans accenting their desire for liberty and justice within U.S. society which they have helped to build (Feagin 2010: 156).

In the midst of pressure to conform to the dominant Eurocentric culture, Black Americans were forced to know and understand the white-generated culture in the United States as well as their own home culture. As a result, Africans created a home-culture that incorporates cultural

aspects of their African ancestry and aspects of European culture. Enslaved Africans and black Americans have drawn on their African background for cultural elements that influence the crafting of a counter-frame and anti-oppression strategies of resistance. The anti-oppressive counter-frames adopted by black Americans include essential elements such as: (1) a collective understanding about black and white Americans in society that critiques white racial oppression; (2) aggressive countering of negatively stereotyped framings of African Americans by asserting black humanity and the achievements of blacks; and (3) a critique and naming of white oppression and white racism (Feagin 2010: 163, 172). Historically, blacks have employed these counter-frames to challenge the constructions of blackness and black inferiority, and continue to use the frames today in the pursuit of deframing and reframing our society.

The historical context of systemic racism provides a foundational understanding of how the white racial frame pervades all spheres of society. Although black institutions including families, churches, and schools have been pivotal to the survival and success of black Americans despite extreme racial oppression, the white racial frame persists in institutions like Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This juxtaposition of racial thoughts, feelings, and practices calls for an examination into how white supremacist ideologies and anti-racist counter perspectives exist in predominantly black spaces like Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

1.1.2 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities mirrors the country's struggles with systems of racism and racial injustices. Racism prevented blacks from attaining the same civil rights as whites and were legally barred from receiving an education. White supremacist ideologies naturalized the ideas that Blacks were incapable of succeeding as

intellectuals and culturally unable to value the benefits of post-secondary education (Albritton 2013). Although Lincoln University and Wilberforce University provided opportunities for Blacks to pursue higher education prior to the Civil War, most HBCUs were founded following the Civil War by religious missionary organizations.

Northern missionaries actively worked with the Freedmen's Bureau to establish Black colleges in an effort to provide primary and secondary education to free blacks. The leadership of these institutions was dominated by whites and presented a paternalistic goal of governing. Funding from these missionary organizations influenced the missions of Black colleges to uplift black freed men and women by converting them to their principles of Christianity, creating a class of ideal American citizens with "moral character," and preparing them for wage labor (Albritton 2013; Gasman 2010; Wilcox et al. 2014; Cantey et al. 2011). By the end of the nineteenth century, private HBCUs also began to receive philanthropic support from white northern industrial leaders. The practice of paternalism continued under the appointment of predominantly white male presidents and leaders who controlled black education at these institutions. Historically Black Colleges and Universities became the hallmarks of an educational system that produced skilled workers to benefit industrial enterprises (Gasman 2010). Both white religious missionary organizations and white northern industrial businessman had vested interests in HBCUs that upheld the segregationist system of racism (Gasman 2010).

Prominent thinkers, most notably Booker T. Washington, supported the vocational educational model. Washington promoted the need for Blacks to develop practical skills that would be immediately beneficial in industries. He believed that with an industrial education and hard work, Blacks would gain acceptance of Whites and racial prejudice would cease (Albritton

2013). Washington used his industrial education perspective to found the curriculum at Tuskegee University to provide students with the manual labor skills he deemed necessary for mobility. Washington's accommodationist view of education appeased white philanthropists who saw the value of industrial education in maintaining the racial status quo, thus reinforcing the racist social order of the time (Albritton 2013; Cantey et al. 2013).

Washington continued to emphasize the importance of industrial education, propagating his perspective through speeches and articles. He promoted the idea of teaching students at Tuskegee "how to sit at a table and eat properly, the uses of a napkin...how to care for tools...and how to systemize their labor" (Washington 1906). Similarly, politics of respectability were stressed at institutions like Tuskegee University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College to present a "respectable" identity that would alleviate racial stereotypes (Cantey et al. 2013). Institutional practices were enforced at these HBCUs under the guise of ensuring that students position themselves for upward mobility (Cantey et al. 2013). The institutionalization of such practices mimic events throughout United States' history that support white supremacist ideologies. Slavery was rationalized under the agenda of improving uncivilized Africans who were intellectually inferior; segregationist rhetoric was upheld in cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* with the assertion that white men knew what was best for Black Americans. Today, the white racial frame continues to perpetuate the notion that whites are more moral, intelligent, rational, and hardworking than black Americans (Feagin 2010: 72, 86, 96). Under the direction of Washington and other HBCU presidents, these institutions forced the internalization of elements of the white racial frame that impose hegemonic white standards and reduce resistance to racial inequalities.

Despite approval of strict policies and appreciation for the contributions of philanthropists, students and black faculty did not like practices of white paternalism and lack of control at Black colleges. Black students began to develop a racial consciousness and critical awareness of their potential to become leaders within the Black community. Black students and faculty rebelled in demand for autonomy over the governance, operation, and education of their institutions. As a result, the leadership of Black colleges began to change and more blacks were afforded roles as faculty, deans, and administrators (Albritton 2013; Gasman 2010). The shift in leadership also accompanied a shift in educational perspectives toward a more liberal arts education, articulated by W. E. B. DuBois. DuBois rejected Washington's philosophy of industrial training and advocated for an expansive curriculum that trained Blacks in other areas such as philosophy and science (Albritton 2013). He actively demanded the need for Blacks to receive an education that would equip them with the tools to oppose segregation and challenge Jim Crow (Albritton 2013). Black colleges adopted DuBois' liberal arts educational model and offered courses in literature, philosophy, sociology, and history (Cantey et al. 2013).

By the 1960s, the functions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities moved beyond spaces for educational attainment and became centers of political activism, resistance, and empowerment. Black students not only received formal education but were also equipped with the skills to fight inequality and the mechanisms through which white racism perpetuated the subjugation of black Americans. Students and leaders of HBCUs were actively involved in civil rights and social justice organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Urban League, National Council of Negro Women, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Albritton 2013). Many social justice groups held meetings on Black college campuses because these institutions, aside from black

churches, were often the only places in the South, blacks and allied whites could organize without fear (Mbajekwe 2006: 9). During this time, Historically Black Colleges and Universities provided students an experience that affirmed their identity with racial pride and consciousness, and challenged them to use their education as an instrument to demand justice for the black community (Albritton 2013).

The history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities continues to shape these institutions and the experiences of their students. Today, most HBCUs continue to emphasize the history, culture, and contributions of black Americans (Mbajekwe 2006: 24). While acknowledging the importance of maintaining the historical and cultural traditions of these black institutions, many HBCU presidents note the changing dynamics of educational institutions in the twenty-first century. These presidents assert that HBCUs must preserve the foundational strengths of the institutions but also adapt to the changes in higher education (Mbajekwe 2006: 25). Historically Black Colleges and Universities work to maintain a competitive curriculum, withstand the pressures to have a diverse student body during a time of “multiculturalism,” and remain financially stable. The current position of Historically Black Colleges and Universities presents critical questions about the persistence of black anti-racist counter-framing and the ways in which messages of race, empowerment, equality, and success are interpreted and transmitted within these institutions, as they prepare their students to live and succeed in U.S. society.

1.1.3 HBCUs and the Counter-Frame Continuum

There are significant variations in the use of the white racial frame and black counter-frames. The use of black counter-frame ideas and language exists across a broad continuum, from aggressive expression of black anti-racist ideas to little or no use of anti-racist ideas. At one end of the continuum is the conscious, overt, and assertive anti-racist critical analysis of race in

the United States. The establishment of HBCUs directly opposed the white racial framing of society that denounced liberty, justice, and equality for black Americans. During continuous widespread racial oppression, Historically Black Colleges and Universities also avow resistance by empowering a black cultural identity that counters the white racist framing of blacks as biologically distinct, unintelligent, uncivilized, immoral, and other stereotypes used to justify the institutional disenfranchisement of black Americans.

At the other end of the counter-frame continuum there is little or no use of critical anti-racist ideas (Feagin 2010:176). Historically Black Colleges and Universities are pressured with the demands of upholding their mission as centers of black liberation and empowerment, but also as institutions of higher education that must prepare their students to live and function as Americans in a white-dominated society. Although black Americans will never fully access white stratospheres of socioeconomic power, HBCUs have historically transmitted politics of respectability (Cantey et al. 2011), encouraging conformity to white folkways. The institutionalization of politics of respectability at HBCUs is an effort to create a distinct group of middle- and upper-class black Americans that can acquire enough social, economic, and political capital to symbolically infiltrate white spaces. These classist ideological practices assert aspects of the white racial frame's negative views of African Americans that suggest insufficiencies in black cultural norms and behaviors. Adopting elements of the white racial frame and making little use of anti-racist ideas reinforces systemic racism and racial advantages for whites (Feagin 2010: 190).

This continuum illuminates the power of the white racial frame that causes a mental struggle for blacks in which they must negotiate whether to use the anti-oppressive frame or alter their language and actions to conform to the elements of the white racial frame. Thus, blacks

often use both the white racial frame and the black counter-frame in a varying degree based on individual inclinations, family socialization, and the circumstances of a particular setting (Feagin 2010: 177). Instilling and maintaining the anti-racist counter-frame is difficult because of the pertinence of the white racial frame in most institutional settings and the pressure for people of color to adopt this white racist framing. Only in spaces where there are assertive and substantial anti-racist counter frames, are there strong tendencies to resist the elements of the dominant white frame (Feagin 2010: 190). This suggests that although HBCUs are spaces where anti-racist counter-frames have historically and contemporarily existed, these institutions must continuously impart the elements of the counter-frame and overtly reject systemic racism, the white framing of racial matters, and the racialized advantages of whites. If strong counter-frames do not exist, students will continue to internalize elements of the white racial frame even within these predominantly black spaces.

Most educational institutions in the United States, especially predominantly white institutions, are primary distributors of the white racial frame, so much so that the existence of anti-racist counter-framing is very limited. Moore (2008) details how law schools operate as white institutional spaces that propagate white hegemonic ideologies through physical space and institutional practices, reproducing white power and privilege. Chou, Lee, and Ho (2015) argue that at predominantly white institutions, whites have the power to dictate the operations of these elite institutions and how people of color are included or excluded, thus determining the racialized experiences of students of color. Asian American students in their study found difficulty in questioning the racial status quo, and both subtly and overtly internalized the racial views of dominant white ideologies at their predominantly white institution, despite any experiences of racism (Chou, Lee, and Ho 2015). With this, Chou, Lee, and Ho suggest that the

adoption and normalization of white, dominant ideologies spreads beyond segregated white spaces, also socializing people of color (Chou, Lee, and Ho 2015: 38).

Previous research has overlooked the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities as inculcators of the white racial frame. Considering these institutions incapable of perpetuating white ideologies based on their history, fails to truly capture the structural, ideological, and discursive mechanisms that work in all racialized spaces, including HBCUs, to maintain this racist system. It is important to acknowledge the overt and covert ways in which whites control institutions to ensure Americans of color internalize elements of the white racial frame and diminish resistance to racism and racial inequalities (Feagin 2010: 189). Attending an HBCU does not immunize black students from inadvertently contributing to the subservience of white standards. I seek to unveil the complexities of Historically Black Colleges and Universities as racial spaces that are uniquely positioned to reproduce hegemonic racial ideologies, despite the premise of their foundation as institutions that counter white supremacy and as centers of black resistance.

In this chapter, I introduced systemic racism and the white racial frame and how these theories are central to examining the racialized experiences of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In Chapter 2, I explain the methods employed in this study to determine the extent to which students at two HBCUs in the South conceptualize and discuss race and racialized events using the white racial frame and contemporary black counter-frame. In chapter 3, I identify and demonstrate how students utilize major elements of the white racial frame and counter-frame to understand, interpret, and act in everyday racialized experiences. In chapter 4, I conclude with discussion about important findings that arise from my analysis and

the implications of my findings to our understanding of how systemic racism and the white racial frame function to determine the experiences of students at HBCUs.

2 METHODOLOGY

In this study, I examine how the pervasive elements of the white racial frame infiltrate into predominantly black spaces. Specifically, I examine how the white racial frame and anti-black counter-frames are reflected in the narratives of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In this research, I use the extended case method to explore the effect of the macro social structure on the experiences of individuals at the micro level. Essentially, the extended case method reveals how individualized racial socialization of students at HBCUs is shaped by systemic racism and operates through the white racial frame. Using the extended case method requires the researcher to avoid the assumption of a shared experience of a race and allows for the examination of what each case tells about the social context of our society (Burawoy 1991). This method illuminates the diversity of experiences and shows how individual experiences either reify and/or resist the effects of white supremacy on one's academic and social experiences at a Historical Black College or University. The extended case method is an ideal method for exploring interpersonal experiences and "the study of power and resistance in the modern metropolis" (Burawoy 1991).

2.1 Site

Participants in this study attend two private, liberal arts, Historically Black Colleges in the South. Lyle College and Hill College are a part of a large association of historically black institutions of higher learning, whose mission is to provide quality education for African Americans.

2.2 Data Collection

To centralize the experiences of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 11 self-identified Black undergraduates enrolled at Lyle College and Hill College. I followed an interview guide listed with subtopics to allow discretion in my question wording and ensure an informal, nonthreatening interview environment (Singleton and Straits 2010: 266).

The interview guide consisted of 21 open-ended questions on students' decisions to attend an HBCU, students' understandings of the purposes and significance of HBCUs, the racialized lessons learned at their institutions, and their personal beliefs on race and racism. Although standard questions within the interview protocol were used, interviews often became conversational allowing participants to reveal experiences they consider significant. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and on average lasted 45 minutes. Each participant voluntarily agreed to participate in an interview. All participants signed an informed consent document and were offered a copy for their own records.

The interviews took place at Lyle College, Hill College, or a space outside of those campuses in which the participant felt most comfortable. I recruited participants using a convenience sampling method to contact students currently enrolled at Hill College and Lyle College with whom I have personal relationships. To increase recruitment for this study, I used snowball sampling, in which participants were asked to locate individuals in their academic and social networks willing to participate in this study after their interview was completed.

2.3 Participants

Participants in this study consisted of eight students enrolled at Lyle College and three students enrolled at Hill College. All participants self-identify as black/African American. Three

participants identify as men and eight participants identify as women. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 25. Six participants are classified as seniors and five are classified as juniors. Six participants major in economics, three in biology, one in chemistry, and one in dance. Five participants are from the South, three from the Northeast, 2 from the Midwest, and one from the West. All participants are full time students at their respective institutions.

2.4 Positionality of the Researcher

It is important for readers to understand the standpoint of the researcher. Reflexivity requires a critical inward examination of one's own lived experiences and understanding how one's own social background, assumptions, and biases shape the decisions one makes throughout the research process and the value placed on the findings that emerge from the analysis (Harper and Gasman 2008; Hesse- Biber 2014). Within qualitative research, the researcher is "an instrument in the data collection and analysis process," therefore, reflexivity is particularly important to situate the researcher's social location and social biography within the research process (Mann and Kelley 1997). Here, I make clear the ways in which my personal background and connections to HBCUs affected the treatment of the data.

I am a proud graduate of Lyle College and continue to maintain a long-standing relationship with this institution, faculty, and students. I regularly engage with current students through personal relationships formed prior to my attendance, but most specifically through continued relationships with students who are members of an international black Greek lettered sorority. I regularly support the campus chapter by attending a host of fundraisers held on campus. This relationship has allowed me to stay connected to the campus and current students. I also have lasting relationships with alumni of my alma mater with whom I actively engage in annual alumni events including homecoming, Founder's Day, and commencement activities. I

am an openly, vocal advocate of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their profoundly important role in educating black students.

My continuous support of the advancement of Historically Black Colleges and Universities largely, stimulated discomfort as I formulated this research and attempted to make sense of the data. This discomfort was realized through a conversation with a participant in this study that occurred after his interview. The participant asked if I felt protective of my alma mater, similarly to the protective instincts individuals possess with their families. He used the analogy of a family to express one's comfort with critiquing members of their own family, but not allowing those outside of the family to express these same criticisms. This analogy perfectly depicted my reservations in conducting this research. On one hand, I endeavored to authentically report the experiences participants shared during their interview. But on the other hand, I worried that reporting data on these institutions would be distorted and used against Hill College and Lyle College specifically, but HBCUs generally by those who wish to exterminate HBCUs as institutions of higher education. I assert that the findings in this study are not an indictment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities; rather, this research is conducted in hopes that it will illustrate and deconstruct racial discourse at these institutions that can be used to improve the experiences of their students.

2.5 Limitations

There are limitations present in my research. First, it is important to note that my research is particular to students at Lyle College and Hill College. Historically Black Colleges and Universities are often discussed as homogenous institutions. However, HBCUs range from single-sexed to coeducational, bachelor to doctoral conferring, highly selective to open admissions processes, and large to small student bodies (Wilcox et al. 2014; Rashid 2011).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities also differ in funding levels, student and faculty population characteristics, and the degree of culturally specific curricula (Arroyo and Gasman 2014; Rashid 2011). Although I cannot make generalizations about all students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities based on this sample, this study allows for a preliminary investigation into how dominant racial ideologies are reflected in the told experiences of students at HBCUs.

Second, my findings cannot be generalized to the experiences of all students at Hill College and Lyle College because I cannot assume a singular experience among all students at these colleges. Students differ in cultural identity, class status, gender identity, religious affiliation, ability, and sexual orientation. These identities, the intersections of these identities, and the experiences fostered based on these identities, contribute to how students think and behave in different spaces (Gasman et al. 2017). In the same vein, factors including major, level of involvement in campus organizations, and housing also contribute to how students experience their HBCUs. The participants in this study are heavily concentrated within STEM majors, creating difficulty in generalizing the experiences expressed within this study to students who major in arts and humanities disciplines. However, since social science majors are more likely to explicitly discuss issues surrounding race, the sample gives insight into the experiences of students who may not have the same exposure to information and can identify how race is addressed in STEM courses. Future research should capture the experiences of students at HBCUs with varying characteristics to ensure representativeness across the target population.

Third, the scope of my analysis does not provide a comprehensive examination of factors outside of students' HBCU experience that contribute to how they receive, comprehend, assess, and respond to messages about race at these institutions. The qualitative nature of this study

creates difficulty in controlling for outside forces that shape student experiences such as family background. Future research should examine how the intersections of these influences shape how students respond to their HBCU experiences.

3 FINDINGS

My analysis of interviews with students at Lyle College and Hill College reveals variations in the use of the white racial frame and counter-frames. My findings demonstrate that elements of the white racial frame and counter-frames co-exist in student discussions of their experiences at Historically Black Colleges. Participants' continued use of elements of the white racial frame demonstrates that counter-framing does not undermine the existence of the white racial frame. Historically Black Colleges and Universities are spaces that foster resistance to hegemonic racial ideologies but also perpetuate these dominant ideologies. In this section, I highlight how black counter-frames do not contest the persistence of the white racial frame at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Over centuries of racial oppression, black Americans and other Americans of color have developed counter-frames to resist and in some cases to simply survive. Counter-frames have empowered individuals and institutions, like Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to counter white discrimination and oppression. Black Americans develop and enhance counter-frames that help to make sense of their social world in a white controlled society. As predominantly black spaces, HBCUs are often perceived as incapable of perpetuating white ideologies based on their racialized histories. I use this assumption to structure my findings using Feagin's (2010) description of important elements in the contemporary black anti-racist counter-

frame and to demonstrate how elements of the dominant white racial frame infiltrate these predominantly black spaces.

The contemporary black anti-racist counter-frame encompasses important elements including (1) distinctive language of resistance that is linked to the collective understanding about black and white Americans, and U.S. society largely; (2) a critique and naming of white oppression and white racism a strong critique of white racial oppression; (3) perspectives on how to deal with white discriminators; (4) sensitivity to whites' negative framing of African Americans; and an (5) assertion of positive aspects of black humanity and achievement. It is important to note that individuals are "multi-framers" and have several frames they can apply to a single racial situation. Therefore, my subsections function as an organizational tool to highlight the range of framing use, rather than to denote dissonance among frames. I categorize the information analyzed into four thematic frames with subframes to explicate use of the white racial frame and counter-frames that appeared in my analysis.

3.1 Collective Understanding of U.S. Society

The contemporary black counter-frame encompasses numerous cognitive elements, including language of resistance based in collective understandings about black and white Americans and U.S. society largely (Feagin 2010: 172). Four major themes emerged from participants' description of how their institutions evoked a collective understanding of U.S. history: (1) black culture specific pedagogy at HBCUs serves as a source for collective memory; (2) black culture specific pedagogy is limited in STEM courses; (3) physical spaces at HBCUs are inherent with lessons of black and white Americans; and (4) the demographic makeup of student and faculty bodies demonstrate the diversity of blackness.

In my analysis, participants explain how pedagogical practices centered in black culture generated new understandings of U.S. society. Collective understandings were not limited to linguistic aspects of the anti-oppressive counter frame within the classroom. Demographic characteristics of students and faculty, and the physical spaces such as campus buildings, extend the knowledge and interpretations acquired within the classroom to incorporate new understandings of black Americans, white Americans, and U.S. society largely. This new knowledge acquired at HBCUs counters stereotypes, images, and narratives of the dominant white racial frame reiterated through social processes prior to attendance at HBCUs. The production of black collective understandings of African history and U.S. society offers students new “bits” of cultural information that restructures how students interpret our racialized society and use these elements in everyday situations. While physical spaces and demographics are stable features of HBCUs, black culture specific pedagogy is minimally implemented into STEM and upper level courses. Limited repetition of anti-oppressive understandings of U.S. society allows the persisting power of the white racial frame to remain a dominant feature of systemic racism in the United States.

3.1.1 Collective Memory Making Through Black Pedagogy

Collective memory is central to the persistence of the white racial frame. The knowledge and interpretations of our racial past shapes how we interpret and experience race presently. Most racial groups have collective memories of their racial past but white Americans in the United States have the greatest power to control society-wide, institutionalized memories including history books, textbooks, and laws (Feagin 2010:17). Collective *forgetting* and *remembering*, or what the dominant racial frame legitimizes or suppresses, are critical to the oppression of people of color (Feagin 2010:17). White Americans have tried to suppress

collective memories and accurate understandings of the United States' racial history and construct positive, fictional memories. This mythological history is passed down from one generation to the next and internalized by not only whites, but also people of color who have adopted elements of the white racial frame (Feagin 2010:17).

Most educational institutions are primary distributors of the white racial frame and therefore, are antithetical to the dissemination of accurate understandings of history that assert the humanity, experiences, and contributions of people of color. A key distinctive aspect of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that distinguish these institutions from predominantly white institutions is their culturally centered curriculum that "legitimizes African knowledge base....and, supports cultural continuity and critical consciousness" (Lee et al. 1990). Black centered pedagogy at Hill College and Lyle College creates collective memories that provide an expanded knowledge of history in Africa prior to colonialism to present understandings of blackness in both United States' and diasporic contexts.

Students also provided explicit examples of how the history taught at their HBCU countered the historical mythmaking discussed in their previous academic institutions. Michael, a 25-year old, junior at Hill College from the Northeast, credits HBCUs for implementing racially inclusive pedagogy in a perceived post-racial society. He states,

It was significant for me because from K to 12th grade it was like, you know, you learn white history, and I mean I went to school in [La Playa], so I mean I had a history teacher, like really tell me that slavery wasn't that bad. Like, [chuckle] slavery wasn't that bad and the slaves weren't treated that bad because they were investments and stuff like that.

Michael recalls an educational experience where his teacher explicitly minimized the severity of slavery. Michael chuckles, not to imply that his former teacher's comments were funny, rather to propose a disjunction between his teacher's description of the conditions of slavery and accurate

historical facts. Michael expresses the significance of being in an educational setting that offers an alternative perspective on history that is not controlled by hegemonic white historical perspectives. Here, Historically Black Colleges and Universities serve as source of anti-racist counter-frames where students and faculty engage in collective memory making to reconstruct students' racialized understandings.

All participants who are students at Lyle College discussed Black Studies, an interdisciplinary, two-semester core curriculum course required for all students. This course was developed to analyze and evaluate the diverse cultures and histories of Africa and its diaspora. Through an array of international and transnational scholarship, Lyle College students utilize an intersectional framework that fosters a collective racial identity while celebrating differences among black people and clarifying the experiences of black people that created the African diaspora (Brown- Glaude 2010). Sam, a 21-year old senior at Lyle College from the South describes her experience in the Black Studies course:

Freshman year, we have to take [Black Studies]. Everyone dreads [Black Studies] but it was an eye-opening class, and experience as a whole, because I never really, I mean you know about slavery and everything, but you never dig deep. And then you never question why. So, because of that I question everything now.

Sam and all participants from Lyle College credit Black Studies as their main source of knowledge regarding black Americans and US society largely; one that provides an extensive recollection of history not present in previous academic institutions. Sam appreciates the in-depth approach to studying the African diaspora, but describes this course as an experience that shifted how she interprets society. Sam recalls learning an incomplete perspective of history that she never critiqued or questioned. Black Studies has developed Sam's critical thinking skills that she uses not only to analyze her studies but to also evaluate every aspect of her life.

3.1.2 *Black Culture Specific Pedagogy Absent from STEM*

While students credited their institutions for their black culture specific pedagogy, there are limits in the extent to which black culture is incorporated into the curriculum. These limits include a lack of incorporation into upper level courses and STEM courses. All students at Lyle College referenced Black Studies but had difficulty recalling explicit dialogue about race, racism, and oppression in other courses, excluding a few humanities core curriculum requirements. For example, Jacqueline a 22- year old senior at Lyle College from the Northeast considers her experience as a biology major:

Umm ok, besides [Black Studies] and women's studies and like women in music class that I'm taking, um I mean not in my bio courses....I mean and sometimes that's not really on topic. If it relates, yeah, we'll bring it up. But besides my humanities classes, in the sciences we don't really talk about that. We don't really discuss that.

Jacqueline has a difficult time recalling discussions regarding race in her courses. She distinguishes natural science courses from social science and humanities courses, later concluding that race does not apply to the material covered in natural science courses, specifically biology courses. Jacqueline later provides an example of one professor who discusses the history of scientific inventions and techniques. He makes students aware of ideas that were stolen from notable female contributors and credited to men. However, Jacqueline's example does not speak explicitly to how race and racism are discussed in her biological courses, rather how gender inequalities are highlighted.

Ashe, a 21-year old senior at Lyle College from the Midwest states, "I will say [Black Studies] is the only time we had conversations about that and with it being so long ago, I really don't really remember specifically like the conversations that we had about it." As a senior, Ashe has taken a variety of courses throughout her matriculation and can attest to the pedagogical practices of her major courses and core requirements. Ashe identifies courses that explicitly

discussed race but had difficulty recalling what was discussed in those courses. This demonstrates that without constant reinforcement within STEM courses, students find difficulty recovering bits of stored information learned in humanities courses taken early their college careers. When asked about why she thinks that is, she goes on to say,

So, I would say it is because of the classes that I'm taking. So, like with me being econ based, we don't really just sit in class and talk about racism all day. Like, I feel like if you were more so like a psychology major or if you were women's studies or depending on like if you were like an English major than depending on certain topics you may have to write about, like, those so are the majors that might bring up those discussions and have really deep conversations about it. So, yeah like because of my major, I don't really have that experience.

Ashe forms similar conclusions that a student's major influences the extent to which they engage in discussions regarding race in their courses. Ashe mentions social science and humanities courses that would allow for discussions and assignments about race and racism. Ashe's comments about "sitting in class and talk[ing] about racism all day" suggests that the format, content, and rigor of STEM courses does not allow for in depth conversations about race.

Students see a place for explicit dialogue regarding race, racism, and oppression within social science and humanities courses and feel indifferent about its' place in STEM courses. Critical discussions of race and racism can serve as resistance to dominant curriculum standards present in most academic environments. However, without constant repetition and performance to counter the dominant white racial frame, reproduction of black collective memories insufficiently counters the power of the white racial frame in these spaces throughout students' matriculation at HBCUs (Feagin 2010: 16).

3.1.3 Historically Black Colleges and Universities as Racial Spaces

The physical space and demographic makeup of HBCUs also provides a level of understanding about blackness, black cultures, and black histories. In his comments regarding

whether or not race needs to be explicitly discussed in class, Eric, a 24-year old junior at Hill College from the West states, "...we understand the past like this, [Hill] was built in Atlanta which used to be a civil war sight. It's a battleground. So, it's impossible. It's impossible to not understand your position racially at this school. So, I don't know if it needs to be taught. It's inherent." Eric describes the location of Hill College, within a major city in the South, specifically during the Civil Rights era, as a lesson within itself of race in the United States and the position of blacks within the racial hierarchy. He goes on to say,

It made it human.... I didn't have that connection with it. It was like an off in the distance thing.... But then you come here and you look around and you look -- like MLK's dorm room is still here...I can walk in the same building. Yeah, humanizing experience.

Eric suggests that the physical spaces at HBCUs provide the knowledge students need to understand their position in our racial hierarchy. Existing within the same spaces where students had to fight against violent threats, brings to reality the fight for rights for freedom and justice. Black centered pedagogy at HBCUs provides students with facts about historical events such as slavery, but Eric suggests that this information can sometimes disconnect students from their ties to this history. Students are aware of the major historical eras including slavery and Jim Crow, but Eric laments that these periods of U.S. history can appear to be in the distant past. Therefore, Eric posits that the history of HBCU spaces and structures connect students with the history taught in class, providing students with a hands on, tangible, lesson about black history in the United States. As students exist in the same physical spaces where historical events took place, the space itself becomes educational.

3.1.4 Diversity of Blackness at HBCUs

The racial demographics of HBCUs is predominantly black. However, diversity does not only come in the form of race and respondents discussed how the demographic makeup of their

institutions expanded their understanding of blackness. Desiree a 21-year old senior at Lyle College from the Midwest, states:

When I think about race growing up I never had any African like friends or knew anyone from Africa or anything like that. And going to [Lyle] you see women from all types of walks of life and just seeing like you know like you always know there's people from other countries but until you're seeing them on a day to day sometimes you forget.

Desiree's statement demonstrates how the space and student body of Lyle College verified the diversity of blackness. At Lyle College, there is an acceptance and demonstration of variety of black bodies. As Desiree discussed cultural differences, Michael discusses class differences among students. Michael states,

I mean like I said we all look the same but it's a diverse place.... You have somebody that's from... somewhere in California and their parents gross a million dollars a year, and then you got this kid, like you know, he went to public school all his life and his experience as a black person is completely different than this guy's experience. So, like, usually we meet in the middle where he kind of understands his experience and he kind of understands his experience. And he knows that's attainable and he knows that this is possible.

Class diversity among students explicates diversity beyond race at HBCUs. Class differences determine diversity in the experiences of black people across various demographic categories. Students offer each other alternative perspectives on the experiences that are complicated by various axis of identities. Michael describes how students empathize with other students. This not only creates a collective understanding of black Americans, the complexity of blackness, and the diversity of experience among Blacks, but it also expands the representations of black achievement. Students provide each other with visual representations of blackness that negate monolithic images of blacks.

The white racial frame is disseminated within institutions such as school, media, and family. Collective remembering and forgetting are utilized to consciously remove events of history based on violence and the exploitation of indigenous Americans and Africans. This

practice is countered through black culture specific pedagogy at HBCUs that recalls events that are often removed or ignored in mainstream United States' history. This black centered pedagogy provides an in-depth critical examination into racism and an understanding of how racism is embedded in the social fabric of this country and maintained through institutionalized practices. However, this black culture specific pedagogy is not implemented consistently across academic departments and course levels. Complete implementation within the curriculum across the colleges is necessary to counter decades of cognitive repetition of elements of the dominant white racial frame.

Students not only discuss explicit dialogue regarding race within their classrooms but also express how the diversity among students and the physical location of their institutions expanded their knowledge about blackness and black history. Student comments demonstrate HBCUs as racialized spaces that resist white superiority that idealizes whiteness and white norms. Scholars have extended the discussion of race and space beyond geographical context (Lewis 2003). Wendy Moore (2008) also expanded the context of racialized spaces beyond geographical location in her development of white institutional space, with a particular focus on law schools. White institutional spaces are distinguished by their foundational history of excluding people of color and the white construction of norms, values, and ideological frameworks that organize these spaces. Moore suggests the history of law schools provides a precedent for the racialized practices and discourses that dominate these white spaces, and the physical structures and visual signifiers throughout the campuses reproduce a white racist frame (Moore 2008: 38).

Moore also highlights the interaction between institutional structures, everyday practices and policies, and dominant ideologies that reproduce white privilege and power within these

educational spaces (Moore 2008: 27). I extend this analysis to HBCUs to suggest that the physical and discursive structures at Lyle College and Hill College determine the racialized experiences of students at these institutions. The predominantly black student bodies and faculty, the historical context of classroom buildings and dormitories, and discourse centered on cultural experiences of black people, provides a collective understanding of black Americans and the United States society largely. This critical understanding fostered through the physical and discursive structures of these institutions resists rather than reproduces the white racial frame.

3.2 Critiquing and Naming of White Racism

A critique and naming of white racism and white oppression is among the oldest of black counter-frame elements. In this element, blacks recognize white discriminators as a central problem to white racism and develop an understanding of how, where, and when white discrimination operates on both the interpersonal and institutional levels (Feagin 2010: 172). Two major themes emerged from the use of this counter-frame: (1) participants use an institutional racism approach to discuss racism in the U.S. and (2) participants avoid directly critiquing whites' role in U.S. racism. Participants demonstrate a systemic racism perspective on racial oppression within the United States by identifying and critiquing fundamental elements of the U.S. racist system that have been reproduced and embedded into U.S. institutions to maintain the racial subjugation of Americans of color, such as the criminal justice system and the workplace. All participants displayed an understanding of the various ways white discrimination operates in the United States but did not identify white people as the creators and perpetrators of white racism. Decisions of an array of individuals, especially powerful white actors, reinforce our racist system (Feagin 2010:36). Participants rarely discussed the central role of white actors

in shaping and maintaining the U.S. system of racial oppression, essential salvaging whites from the realities of their actions.

3.2.1 Institutional Critique of Racism

Participants displayed an understanding of institutional racism, distinct from individual racism, a perspective that explains the systematic disenfranchisement of people of color in the economic, educational, judicial, political, and other systems of society (Bonilla-Silva 2001: 26). For example, Tiana, a 21-year old senior at Lyle College from the Northeast, critiques racist, institutionalized practices at her internship:

And so that actually became a topic of discussion amongst myself and some partners, as well as some of the other interns as to, do you see the institutionalized racism that you're doing in your own office. And no matter how much you guys try to like, promote your diversity efforts, you still have me sitting in an office and not being at the forefront of what you know I could be a great asset to the firm, but you let other people be in front instead of me, mostly because of the color of my skin.

Tiana was as intern as part of a diversity internship program that targeted students from underserved populations. She displays frustration toward those in charge for falsely presenting an effort and desire to diversify their company, while continuing to implement practices that further marginalize the same groups they are supposed to be serving. Tiana discusses practices of exclusion of interns of color that reflect the institutionalized social hierarchy that affords whites racial and social capital associated with their occupancy at the top of this social hierarchy. In this example, white interns were afforded opportunities to go into the field and work with clients while the interns of color, specifically black and Hispanic interns, were restricted to working in the office. This practice led to racial disparities in full time offers for interns.

Many participants critiqued racism within the criminal justice system. Desiree laments mass incarceration as a new method for maintaining white supremacy that was once imposed by slavery (Alexander 2010: 177):

I feel that we're still in a form of slavery it's just in a different format...and so instead of us being on plantations and, you know doing sharecropping and so forth, we're in prisons and we're getting umm arrested for doing nothing at all, just for the color of the skin....You know these African Americans whether it's men or women come back into society...they don't have any type of programs to get them a job and...I just feel like it's the systematic umm operations that are in place to continue to breakdown the African American community just in a different way than the past slavery but still the same thing just modernized.

Desiree describes cyclical institutionalized practices within the criminal justice system that allows for the continued disenfranchisement of black Americans post-slavery. She dissects the process from an individual's arrest to release to demonstrate how these policies and practices result in slave like conditions of confinement and control.

Desiree's comments align with Michelle Alexander's (2010) contention that the criminal justice system has become "a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow" (4). This legalized stratification system creates racial disparities at every level of enforcement that ultimately contribute to increased rates of black unemployment and single-parent households. This counter-framing incorporated a counter system analysis, one that "examines the institutionalized and systemic character of white racial oppression" (Feagin 2010:172). Students identified how systemic racism of the past has been institutionalized and manifested in major aspects of U.S. society today and how racial realities operate through the dominant white racial frame to rationalize white privilege and dominance.

3.2.2 No Calling of White Actors

Participants demonstrated an understanding of how, where and when white discrimination operates in society. However, despite overtly critiquing white racism, participants frequently privileged whites by employing discursive techniques to rescue whites from direct criticism for their role in racism. The U.S. racist system persists because of the actions of

powerful white actors. Mainstream depictions of U.S. history rarely provide a critical and detailed analysis accenting whites' actions in shaping and maintaining racial oppression (Feagin 2010: 36). Bracey (2011) terms this practice *rescuing whites*, “the process of using grammatical techniques and discursive strategies to avoid directly criticizing whites, as racialized actors, for white supremacy and racism. Bracey identifies three main strategies for rescuing whites: absenting whites, personification of effects, and narrative bracketing. Participants in the study used the personification of effects strategy in their discussions about racism.

Personification is the technique of anthropomorphizing objects and placing responsibility for the creation, maintenance, and effects of racism on objects rather than white actors (Bracey 2011). As opposed to absenting whites which fails to name whites as actors, personification involves explicitly placing responsibility for racism on nonhuman actors. Personification often implicates subjects such as “society,” or “the system,” as responsible for white racism (Bracey 2011). For example, in his discussion of how racism affects our society today, Michael provides a thorough critique of policies and practices that maintain residential segregation but characterizes the actor responsible for these practices as “the invisible hand:”

So, in New York, it's like, the blacks live with the blacks, the whites live with the whites, but we don't call it racism anymore it's just like you can't afford to live in this neighborhood.... Ok so it was about residential segregation...after these policies are implemented, I guess the invisible hand plays its role because.... The economic situation of black people in 2017 is a lot different because my grandparents couldn't make the same investments as your grandparents, or my grandparents didn't have the same educational resources.

Michael explains the lasting effects of racist institutional practices like redlining that has maintained residential segregation and the racial wealth gap. However, he creates a new actor, “the invisible hand,” to substitute for whites as responsible actors in creating and implementing this policy. In this example, “the invisible hand” performed the action of implementing policies

that resulted in residential segregation and inequitable resources, thus creating an illusion of naming responsible actors.

Respondents showed difficulty in explicitly naming white actors even when prompted to name those responsible for the effects of racism. For example, Eric explains how his experience at Hill College has equipped him with the tools to handle racist encounters by instilling self-confidence, an attribute that other black men may not develop:

But I also think as a black man...you become fearful sometimes because you're always taught that you can't. Like can you go to college? I don't know umm. [chuckles]. There's a better off statistic that you'll be dead or in jail or unemployed. Or like you know just stuff like that. It's...self-confidence is the first thing they strip you of.

Eric critiques how racism operates through the framing of black people as incapable of self-determination and prone to criminal behavior. This negative framing can be internalized by black people causing them to question their abilities to succeed, specifically academically. Eric uses “they” as the subject responsible for stripping black men of their self-confidence. When probed to identify “they,” Eric responds, “Who is they? The same they that invented racism. The proverbial, the omniscient, the all-knowing, the all-saying they.” Although Eric did not identify the subject as human or nonhuman, Eric creates a new actor, identified as “they,” implying that racism requires a social actor, without explicitly naming whites as that actor.

Racism is an interaction between human groups and rescuing whites through personification obscures essential aspects of racial oppression. Erasing the role of white actors in racism obfuscates the human dynamics of racism and whites as beneficiaries of racism. This erasure occurs because personification censors critiques of racism by reducing its effects to the actions of impersonal, unidentifiable, abstract actors (Bracey 2011).

Students were able to identify how, where, and when white racism occurs. The anti-black counter-frame incorporates a recognition of the systemic nature of racism. Systemic racism

theory details a major dimension of U.S. society- racist institutions that are integral to white superiority of Americans of color. Students understand how historical events have led to institutional racism in major sectors of society including the workplace and the criminal justice system. While all participants critiqued white racism, many rescued whites in their discussion of racism through personification. Participants' acknowledgment and understanding of systemic racism is conflicted with rare discussion of the actions of white actors that has maintained racial oppression. Participants use the collective understanding of U.S. history and the pervasion of racism into the social structures of society to critique the complexity of white racism. There is a softened tone that excuses whites from their actions. Thus, racism is maintained rather critiqued to hold whites' accountable. The messages of race and racism learned and discussed at HBCUs is not critical enough to combat white racism and its pervasion into these predominantly black spaces.

Although students at HBCUs are not responsible for creating the white racial frame, rescuing whites reinforces racist ideologies that guide racialized experiences. Essentially, rescuing whites continues to privilege whites at the expense of anti-racist resistance efforts that critique racism and centralize whites as creators and maintainers of racism. Illuminating the effects of racism to bring about social change requires specification of white people as the group of people whose actions benefitted them at the expense of the oppression of people of color (Bracey 2011).

3.3 Dealing with White Discriminators

The contemporary black anti-racist counter-frame includes perspectives on how to deal with white discriminators, whether passive or active. Two major themes emerged in participants' discussion of how to deal with white discriminators: (1) student negotiate how to deal with white

discriminators depending on context and (2) HBCUs encourage conformity to white standards as a strategy to deal with white discriminators. Participants assert the need to consider the situation, time, and place when determining how to deal with white discriminators. When confronted with white discrimination and white discriminators, participants often grappled with directly addressing white discriminators using elements of the black counter-frame and altering their orientation, statements, and actions to diffuse discriminatory conflict. Participants also expressed institutionalized rhetoric at their HBCUs that promoted conformity to white standards reflected in major elements of the white racial frame.

3.3.1 The Importance of Context in Dealing with White Discriminators

Students offered a variety of strategies to employ when dealing with white discriminators. As students often negotiated between employing little to no strategy to active resistance, students generally fell in between the continuum of resistance strategies, suggesting variable use of tactics depending on context. Students were appreciative to their HBCU for teaching them to consider the context of the situation when deciding how to deal with white discriminators. For example, Tiana a 21-year old senior at Lyle College from the Northeast states:

It has taught me the importance of timing and strategy when it comes to that type of thing. Because I mean realistically me going off on my boss in the middle of a meeting is not going to be conducive to anything. And so, really being able to learn how to strategize and make sure that the time is right to address the issues and figuring out the best avenue, I think they've given me the critical thinking to do that.

Context in terms of setting and the social position of the white discriminator was essential to students' consideration in dealing with white discriminators. Tiana considered the authoritative position of her boss and the setting of a meeting to conclude that particular context was not appropriate to address discrimination. She suggests that considering context is a result of

learning to think critically. Tiana credits her HBCU for developing critical thinking skills that she can apply to racial situations. HBCUs teach students to follow criteria that assesses the situations in order to develop the best strategy for dealing with white discriminators.

Similarly, Eric recalls a racial encounter during a trip in central California when a man spouted prejudices and stereotypes about black people and questioned his intellectual capacity. Choosing not to directly address the white man's prejudicial insinuations, Eric explains:

It's crazy because I felt like I was trained my whole life for that one moment. You know like because if that was to happen to me right here right now I would be like, "nigga what? What you say?" like "who are you talking to?" But in that town, in that space, it's almost that there was a vibration like that I have been programmed to understand.

Eric describes feeling prepared to handle this situation in a particular manner but after considering the location of this racial event, he recognized that for his safety, it was best he disengage. Although Eric did not explicitly state who trained him throughout his life to handle racist encounters, Eric suggests that the context of this racial event- dominating demeanor of the white discriminator in an unfamiliar town- overpowered any preparation for this encounter. Eric utilizes bits of information of the black counter-frame regarding the history of blacks in America that taught him the nuances of similar racial encounters. Eric describes the process of internalizing elements of the black anti-racist counter frame as being "programmed." This information provided a road map for Eric to navigate this racial encounter, ultimately resulting in a subdued response.

Students also recognized the importance of considering context in instances of violent discrimination that may result in life and death situations. Desiree described a recent incident in which a woman was receiving death notes from other tenants in her apartment complex. She contemplates how she would respond if placed in a similar situation:

I don't know how I would deal with that. I would leave right away because I just can't deal with certain things, but certain people can and you know, maybe she might want to stand up and you know, to those people. But I know me and what I want to do in life.... I don't know you don't want to run away from the situation and let them feel like they have the control, but it's like choosing life over death. It's a hard you know choice. So, I feel like it's up to everyone's discretion of how much they can take and how much they're willing to sacrifice themselves for a cause bigger than them.

Desiree wrestles with the idea of overtly addressing white discriminators or fleeing the situation. She evaluates herself by saying she cannot deal with the consequences of actively dealing with white discriminators and considers her life goals. She uses language of life or death to demonstrate the severity of racial encounters with white discriminators. Desiree conducts a cost-benefit analysis in which the costs outweigh the benefits when actively addressing white discriminators. Emphasizing the struggles many black Americans endure, Desiree implores individuals to conduct their own cost-benefit analysis, considering context, when addressing white actors.

Sarah, a 19-year old junior at Lyle College from the South also describes how she internally negotiates how to interact with police officers after a previous encounter that left her feeling vulnerable and upset:

Now it's just like oh, it's the police. I wonder if he is going to stop me today like. How I react. The questions I ask. And like I don't want to get buck because that's my life on the line at that point. But at the same time, it's just like, well, if you're going to come up with a smart answer, you're not about to just shut me down because of how I look. Like, I don't care what kind of policeman you are, what ranking you have. Like, you're not about to faze me. But it's contradicting because you really don't know. Like, you really can just be chilling in the car and they pull the trigger.

As opposed to Tiana who considered the authoritative position of her boss, Sarah suggests status does not matter when dealing with white discriminators. However, Sarah demonstrates a similar struggle that Desiree experienced when deciding how to engage with white discriminators considering blacks are disproportionately killed by police officers. Students express desire to

address discrimination explicitly but also recognize the consequences of calling out white racism and discrimination, specifically in instances that can result in death. Ultimately, Sarah concludes that white police officers' actions are not predicated on your decision of how to deal with white police officers, whether actively or passively.

The collective understanding established within the classroom, the physical spaces of HBCUs, and interactions between students creates a collective memory of United States' racial past. The knowledge acquired at HBCUs shapes how students interpret and experience current racial events. Students are able to draw from the collective memory of experiences, understandings, images, and emotions of black people to evaluate instances of racial discrimination and determine how to handle them.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities stress the importance of context when dealing with white discriminators. Messages of race at HBCUs create a conflict where students often battle with how to deal with white discriminators. Historical context teaches students how whites' control societal institutions and have power to determine daily life events whether it be an employment opportunity or a violent encounter. Students often choose to disengage rather than directly address the discrimination in the moment, perhaps out of fear of white retaliation. Although students appear to understand their option to resist, participants tend to choose otherwise. For example, Eric explained that he has been programmed to deal with white discriminators in a manner to "get past" the situation because it can result in the loss of his life. This aligns with the legitimization of white superiority, white achievement, and other positive images of whites within the white racial frame.

3.3.2 *Conformity as a Strategy to Deal with White Discriminators*

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have encouraged students to use the collective memory established in these predominantly black spaces to assess their racial events and employ either active or passive strategies to handle such situations. While students credit their institutions for stressing the importance of considering location and strategy, their institutions also projected conformity to white standards as an effective tool to deal with discrimination.

Students at Hill College discuss the benefits of putting on a “suit and tie” as a strategy to succeed in larger society. Eric identifies the education system as a mechanism through which people are taught to conform as he states, “In white society, in society, because society is white society, you have to blend in and the academic process really teaches you how to blend in. It teaches you how to wear a suit. It teaches you how to be a Renaissance man. Like what is that? What African was in the Renaissance?” Eric identifies the education system as an institution that socializes students to conform to white folkways. As he describes this process, he utilizes common verbiage used at Hill College that encourages students to embody a particular image of a man. Eric acknowledges the need to blend into the dominant white society but also challenges Hill College as an institution who promotes such rhetoric through his use of a “Renaissance man.” He questions the relationship between the ideals schools socialize students to internalize and African traditions. By questioning this relationship, he tries to draw connections to the African heritage of HBCUs and a desire to embody a Renaissance man.

Michael describes his experience of learning to blend in and become the “Renaissance man” Eric discusses in his comments:

as you matriculate you learn how to discern like between the two of like actually learning and learning how to be a good negro. Like sometimes I joke with my friends and I say

this is assimilation camp... So, I call it like assimilation camp where you learn how to assimilate ourselves amongst white people and be respectable black people like.

Michael describes a similar assimilation process that occurs at Hill College to teach students what he calls “to be a good negro.” Although Michaels states that he uses this phrase humorously in peer social circles, his joke is premised in Hill College practices that teaches students to seamlessly engage in predominantly white spaces and present a respectable image that appeases the white gaze. Michael continues to discuss that when faced with discriminatory situations, he resolves to “putting on his best suit” because in a Western society, you must abide by the norms institutionalized by whites. He specifically addresses how he handles interactions with police officers:

But it’s like now, every time I speak to a police officer, it’s like they treat me with respect and stuff like that, but it’s because I subscribe to these respectability politics and I walk upright and I annunciate all of my words and stuff like that. Yes officer, respectable. But this is your job. Why do I have to pull my pants up and you know play, I don’t know like, put on my white face basically.

Students internalize assimilationist messaging and apply this information to everyday encounters beyond their collegiate spaces. Michael uses linguistic and visual strategies in his encounters with the police. Although it is not clear whether he was socialized to implore respectable strategies prior to attending college, Hill College reinforced these ideas that he continues to utilize. Although he describes the benefits of ascribing to respectability politics, he immediately questions why this behavior is necessary. Ultimately, Michael concludes that HBCUs are training black students to go into the professional world and suggests that students should understand this paradox and understand “you put your white face on and you lose your black face.”

The white racial frame encompasses stereotypes and imagery of black Americans that justify white privilege and superiority. The history of the United States is premised in the exploitation of Africans and black Americans for the unjust gain of resources and assets for whites. To combat the imagery and stereotypes of black Americans, blacks develop strategies such as politics of respectability. The politics of respectability operates as a form of resistance for blacks to the racist framing, stereotypes, and stigmas of Blacks within the white racial frame. By adopting the politics of respectability, Blacks present themselves in what is perceived as moral and respectful to the white gaze. As a strategy, the politics of respectability enables Blacks to construct themselves in manner to declare their right to full citizenship in a society that has historically dismissed their humanity. The politics of respectability shapes the opinions, policies, practices, and experiences of Blacks on what is the most appropriate course of action to gain racial equity (Harris 2014). A respectable environment is enforced at HBCUs to socialize students into presenting an image that is antithetical to the racial stereotypes and stigmas held against Blacks (Evans 2008). Beliefs, emotions, and stereotypes of the white racial frame dictate messages students receive about race and how to deal with white discriminators individually and a white racist society. However, employing respectability politics maintains the white-dominated racial structure.

Although HBCUs instill the principles of politics of respectability as a tool to prepare students to be competitive in the larger white controlled society, these practices produce a false belief that conformity to white hegemonic standards would protect them from white racism and white supremacy. Additionally, while politics of respectability were employed to negate black stereotypes and negative framing of blacks largely, the effort to project the best image of themselves comes at the cost of admonishing black cultural esthetics that are deemed too black

and not pleasing to whites (Njoku, Butler & Beatty 2017). The condemnation of certain black cultural esthetics and behaviors further marginalizes subpopulations within the black community that do not adhere to the tenets of respectability politics.

As black respectability politics continue to operate at HBCUs, these predominantly black spaces are still undermined by practices rooted in white supremacy and white racism.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities must “dismantle harmful traditions and ideologies that promote Black respectability rhetoric” (Njoku, Butler & Beatty 2017). Students critiqued these institutionalized practices at their HBCUs and the need to adhere to this strategy to survive in white society. However, their resistant thoughts of questioning and challenging the practices centered in white supremacy are undermined by their complicit actions of ascribing to black respectability politics. As opposed to previous perspectives on black respectability politics as an effective strategy to shield blacks from racism, students acknowledge that they are still susceptible to the realities of racism. In the end, students recognize that respectable black people are susceptible to racism, but still internalize the ideology that respectability politics is efficient to being competitive in a capitalistic, white society.

3.4 Sensitivity to Negative Framing of African Americans

Another important element in the contemporary black anti-racist counter-frame is a developed sensitivity to whites’ negative framing of blacks. This counter-frame involves questioning and challenging racist stereotypes and actions when encountering a racist environment (Feagin 2010: 173). Centuries- old stereotypes of black people as violent, criminal, unintelligent, lazy, and hypersexual, are among a number of stereotypes that are still common. One major theme that emerged was a particular sensitivity to the stereotypical framing of black as unintelligent.

3.4.1 *Sensitivity to Negative Framing as Unintelligent*

Participants were sensitive to negative framing of blacks in regard to intellectual capacity and indicated the need to counter this narrative. For example, Eric asserts:

I'm less willing to put up with my people's micro aggressions. Like, I will go home and people will start talking to me strangely like, like "excuse me, who are you talking to?" Like I'm just as educated, probably more educated than you are. I don't know where the words are being lost or where the communication is being lost, or why they are disrespecting me.

Eric critiques the racial environment he returns to in his hometown, where people engage in casual degradation of black intellect. He demonstrates a sensitivity to negative framing of blacks as unintelligent with a decreased tolerance for micro aggressions. Eric feels compelled to actively address his peer in these social encounters. He describes a shift in his response to racial micro aggressions after attending Hill College. He considers these behaviors disrespectful and responds by affirming his intellectual capacity in comparison to his peers. He challenges the idea that he is less intellectual because of his black race and assures people that he is educated, if not more formally educated than they.

Jamal, a 22-year old senior at Hill College from the South shows sensitivity to the framing of HBCUs as less academically prestigious institutions compared to predominantly white institutions:

Now we're in an age of where you know, you start seeing a lot of African American students, not even maybe a lot, but you see more African American students get into these higher, I wouldn't even say higher, but more socially prestigious institutions like the Yales and the Harvards and things of that sort. And you don't know, it makes HBCUs kind of come off by the way side... I don't know if you saw the video of the guy getting into Harvard from the preparatory school. Everyone was just like oh my God, you got into Harvard. But nobody does that for Morehouse or Howards or anything of that sort.

Jamal shows sensitivity to media coverage of black students getting accepted into PWIs. He questions why people do not exude the same level of excitement when black students are accepted into HBCUs. Before describing recent social media coverage of a black student opening his letter from Harvard, Jamal corrects his use of the word higher when referencing Ivy League schools. He replaces higher with socially prestigious institutions, implying that the prestige of and admiration for these institutions is a result of societal processes based on racialized constructions of intelligence and ideas of who is deserving of receiving an education.

Jamal uses the example of a video of a young black high schooler opening his acceptance letter from Harvard University that went viral on social media to demonstrate how white Americans and Americans of color have adopted a similar ideology regarding institutions of higher education. The video showed the student's family and friends erupt in excitement as he realizes he has been accepted. There were also thousands of social media comments of others congratulating the young man on his accomplishment. Here, acceptance into predominantly white institutions, specifically Ivy League schools, appears to demonstrate validation of black intellectuality from whites within a white dominated society that perpetuates the idea of black intellectual inferiority. Jamal critiques the assumption that black people and therefore black institutions are unintelligent.

A main element of the white racial frame is the negative framing of blacks. This framing is the foundation for the justification of inegalitarian social structures that benefit whites and has allowed for the persistence of racism in the United States. Students have a highly-developed sensitivity to the ideology of black inferiority. During the Jim Crow decades, white professionals developed a scientific view of people of color as innately inferior to whites. Anti-black stereotypes from the white racial frame, including low intelligence, physical deficiencies, and

cultural inferiority were legitimated by scientific racist factually unsubstantiated scientific observations (Feagin 2010: 85). As demonstrated by Eric's assertion to address his peers' racial micro aggression, students are proud of their blackness and assert their willingness to address the stereotype of black intellectual inferiority. Students understanding of anti-black stereotypes and discrimination causes them to question and challenge this dominant framing when encountering racial events.

3.5 Assertion of Black Humanity and Achievements

An assertion of the positive aspect of black humanity and achievements is a central element of both the older black counter framing and the contemporary anti-black counter frame (Feagin 2010: 173). Two main these emerged within participants' discussion of black humanity and achievements: (1) HBCUs serve as symbols of black humanity and achievements; and (2) classist ideologies propogated at HBCUs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities provide tangible representations and images of black humanity and achievements through a predominantly black student and faculty body and by incorporating positive images into course material. These visual aspects provide alternative depictions of blackness to the anti-black framing of the white racial frame. Thus, students suppress the white-generated framing of blacks within the white racial frame and reference positive aspects of blackness and black people within the black counter-frame. Although HBCUs serve as spaces that affirm black humanity and achievements, participants underscore anti-black stereotypes and practices perpetuated by their institutions that undermine the humanity of working class and poor blacks.

3.5.1 *HBCUs as Symbols of Black Humanity and Achievement*

Students discuss HBCUs as black spaces and how the demographics of these black spaces affirm black humanity, abilities, achievements, and potential. Sam, who expressed not

wanting to be black at one point in her life, credits her courses at Lyle College for showing her the positive aspects of black humanity that led to her greater appreciation of being black, stating, “it literally took [Black Studies] and maybe a few other courses to make me realize that being black is probably like a gift. Not everybody can be black or a black woman and actually have that strong perseverance to just like push through everything.” Sam describes a point in her life where she was ashamed of her blackness and no longer wanted to associate with the black race. However, her courses at Lyle College showed her positive aspects of being black that expanded and changed her perception of blackness and black womanhood. Specifically, she refers to the Black Studies course all Lyle College students reference that focuses on the history of black people throughout the African diaspora. The lessons learned in this course exposed her to the histories of black people who have endured centuries of oppression. Sam’s understanding of this history gave her greater appreciation for being a member of this group, and considers it a gift all people can embrace. Here, Sam’s HBCU experience asserted and affirmed black humanity and achievements. Similarly, Eric espouses blackness and black people for persevering through centuries of persecution and oppression:

We were born into a situation that was completely unacceptable, the largest human catastrophe to ever be recorded. And to look at how far we have come in such a small amount of time is amazing. For black women to be the most educated group per capita in American is mind boggling. Just two hundred years ago you were slaves you know. Like how did maneuver that way? Or for African American men to be the fifth most educated group. Like how did you get here? You must be some type of exceptional to be able to come from nothing and to still be able to walk everyday.

Students recall racialized understandings of black people and black history in the United States, some learned through courses at their HBCUs, to accent a positive view of blacks. Recognizing positive aspects of blackness affirms students’ personal black identity and fosters

greater appreciation of being a member of this group, despite pervasive stereotypes, images, narratives of the white racial frame that justify ideas of black inferiority and racial oppression.

Ashe considers how the racial demographic makeup of HBCUs asserts students' ability to succeed that may not be fostered in predominantly white academic spaces:

A lot of people, they don't feel comfortable going to PWIs because they are intimidated because they don't see a lot of faces that's like theirs. So, I think they created HBCUs to bring together young, black individuals so they can pull out the leadership qualities in them and show that you know you can be just as successful as the next person who does go to a PWI. So, I think they made it all to ensure that umm you can make it. You can do it.

Ashe identifies how the racial makeup of PWIs and HBCUs impact students' academic experiences. As opposed to the racial climates of PWIs, Ashe believes that the predominantly black spaces at HBCUs eases feelings of marginalization for black students that allows them to develop and grow academically with confidence in their skills. Similarly, Jamal talks about the role of a black faculty presence at HBCUs:

So, I think I got more comfortable with that idea, seeing people that I want to emulate. Because seeing my research mentors, you know, have their PhDs. You know, going on to do great things at these other institutions and other companies and things. I think from that standpoint, I think it was good for me to see that. To see those people and I can see myself as those people.

Jamal extends Ashe's sentiments regarding the predominantly black racial makeup of HBCUs. Jamal specifically addresses how a black faculty presence at HBCUs provides students with tangible representations of black achievement that are not readily available in white spaces. Representations of black achievement through faculty give students hope for their personal achievements and success.

Ashe and Jamal suggest the predominantly black racial makeup of HBCUs affirms student potential for success through communal support and tangible representations of black achievements that are not readily available in white spaces. The anti-black frame in the white

frame includes stereotypes of blacks as lazy and incapable of attaining a certain level of academic, social, economic, and political success. However, participants receive messages about the resilience of blacks throughout centuries of oppression, and positive images of blacks attaining success in various social spheres.

3.5.2 *Classist Ideologies at HBCUs*

Students also discuss how Lyle College and Hill College project elitist ideologies in their relationship with the local community. For example, Ashe discusses Lyle College's interactions with the local community:

Umm one thing I can say like with [Lyle], being in the community that it's in, and for the people who go to [Lyle], a lot of times their background is totally different. So, it's like they embrace the [Lyle] College tradition and like having the gates around them, the sisterhood type of thing. But like, in all reality like, when people actually get to the school, they don't even like walk into the [Southside] by themselves. And it's like, how can you sit here and try to make it seem like, oh, this is my school, I love my school, and I love that community that it's in and we need to do so much about gentrification within this community, but you personally don't even like going to the [Southside] and talking and communicating with the people on a daily basis.

Ashe highlights a contradiction between Lyle College student's projection of a love for the local community and the lack of interaction with the community. Ashe believes Lyle College should work to foster a relationship with the local community, beginning with a change in the perceptions of local community members. She asserts the need to recognize that class differences do not suggest differences in character. This change in ideology will make students more receptive to engaging with the community. Ashe goes on to describe how these classist ideas are propagated at Lyle College:

In a way, I feel like [Lyle] enforces that. So, it's like when you come in, that first week of orientation, like, they emphasize a lot like you know don't walk by yourself at night, like. They give you these whistles just in case something happens. They tell you, you know that basically like, be precautious at all times. Which is like important because it's not the best neighborhood, so you can be aware, but at the same time it's like I feel like those are prenotions, like thoughts they have in their head.

Ashe attribute a lack of community engagements to institutional practices that create visual images of community members as dangerous. While Ashe recognizes the need for student safety, she believes these practices are founded in stereotypes and prejudices of poor black people. Here, class overpowers all racialized understanding of the diversity of blackness.

Michael echoes Ashe's critique suggesting that Hill College also project classist ideologies within the classroom:

And just like being at [Hill] like [Hill] is in the [Southside] community so like it's completely different. So, like you have some professors that teach that and you have some that professors that kind of prescribe to the respectability politics and they are so far removed it's like be careful when you leave these gates you know. Those are the bad blacks out there you got to be careful. Don't go out there too late. You know be safe.

Professors at Hill College hold similar views as those at Lyle College that warrant students to be aware of local community members. Both Ashe and Michael make reference to the gate at their institution serving as not only as a physical barrier, but also serving the latent function of delineating class differences of their HBCUs and the local community. Michael specifically uses the term "bad blacks" to characterize members of the local community. At Hill College, professors imply character differences between students and community member despite racial similarities. Messages of safety include dog-whistle rhetoric that insinuates the possibility of danger when interacting with community members. Michael problematizes this narrative about the local community and prioritizes the need for black people to not perpetuate ideas of black people as dangerous.

Michael continues to critique this practice at Hill College and challenge this ideological perspective on particular black subpopulations stating, "It's like I mean if you demonize your own people and criminalize them and this is your kind of perspective of black people, how do you expect other people from other cultures to perceive us? So, like, you just have to understand

like it's kind of about resources and stuff like that." He states that in order for there to be a change in the way black people are viewed on a societal level, there must be solidarity among black people that is not threatened by polarizing ideologies that ignore the complexity of blackness. Michael concludes by centralizing class and access to resources as mechanisms that perpetuate classist ideologies that permeate predominantly black spaces.

At Historically Black Colleges and Universities, classist ideologies co-exist with positive assertions of black humanity and achievements, suggesting certain subpopulation of blacks are more deserving for their humanity to be recognized and valued. There is a juxtaposition between asserting black humanity and achievements and condemning certain black populations for their lack of conformity to white standards. These classist ideologies coincide with imagery of black Americans as dangerous and prone to criminality that justifies the marginalization of certain black populations. This allows for the perpetuation of racism and permits unjust practices that maintain wealth and income inequality and the economic benefits of whiteness.

Institutional practices centered around safety efforts and dialogue within the classroom about characteristics of residents of the local community are among the ways in which Lyle College and Hill College continue to ascribe to the politics of respectability that maintain complicity within white supremacy. Classist ideologies such as the politics of respectability project negative framing of blacks that is rooted within the white racial frame. A persisting aspect of the anti-black subframe asserts that blacks are violent and criminal among other stereotypes and images (Feagin 2010: 104). Ashe and Michael's comments demonstrate that this racist framing of blacks not only affects the way whites think, feel, talk, or act, but also the ways other blacks and "elite" black institutions have internalized this anti-black framing.

The black middle and affluent classes use principles of black respectability to create a hierarchy that place them above black poor and working class individuals (Njoku, Butler & Beatty 2017). This further marginalizes poor black individuals and those who do not conform to black respectability politics, maintaining systems of racism and white supremacy and undermining the efforts to assert black humanity and achievements.

4 DISCUSSION

My analysis of student experiences at Historically Black Colleges and Universities uncovers the existence of a racial dialectic relationship that underscores the white racial frame co-exists with the contemporary anti-black counter-frame. My findings elucidate variations in the use of key elements of the black counter-frame among students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Students demonstrate alterations in their beliefs, feelings, and actions depending on the context of social situations. Students also demonstrate varied use of the anti-black counter-frame and the dominant white racial frame within their institutions practices and racialized messages. My research illustrates the persistence of the white racial frame in maintaining white supremacy by countering the anti-black counter-frame in black institutions. It is imperative to continue critically examining the pervasion of the white racial frame in predominantly black spaces.

Students use essential elements of the anti-black counter-frame through distinctive resistance language linked to a collective understanding about black and white Americans, and U.S. society largely; critiquing and naming of white oppression and white racism; well-honed perspectives on how to deal with white discriminators; a developed sensitivity to whites' negative framing of African Americans; and an assertion of positive aspects of black humanity

and achievement to reject the dominant white racial frame. Black anti-racist counter-frames were central to the experiences of students at Hill College and Lyle College. However, students demonstrated a struggle with white frames in their critique and naming of white racism, perspectives on how to deal with white discriminators, and assertions of black humanity and achievement.

My findings elucidate prevalent use of key elements of the black counter-frame among students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Historically Black Colleges and Universities counter-frame the dominant white racial frame through collective memory making that reconstructs students' racialized understandings. Black centered pedagogy provided an expanded knowledge of black history in the United States and the African diaspora, and a communal understanding of black struggles for social equality and justice (Wilkins 2014). This counter-framing to the historical mythmaking of the dominant white frame fulfills the key mission of HBCUs to function as spaces that preserve black history and culture and remain an integral part of social uplift and black empowerment (Albritton 2012).

Black Americans have been pressured to conform to white dominant culture. Blacks have been restricted by whites in how much they could use positive elements of their African influenced home culture and assert a black identity, because it is antithetical to whites' agenda to maintain racial dominance. Because of the efforts to hold on to the African home-culture and African-origin understandings and cultural elements, blacks continue to draw from positive elements of this history and culture to create, strategize, and implement anti-oppression, anti-racist frames. The knowledge students develop, reflected in their experiences and sharing of this knowledge in both academic and social spaces at HBCUs, helps to build counter-frames to deal with white racism in their everyday lives (Feagin 2010: 180).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are credited for their black culture specific pedagogy, however, the extent to which black culture is incorporated into the curriculum is limited by course level and major. The dominance of historical mythmaking within the dominant white frame makes it difficult for whites and some people of color to reject important understandings of racial histories and realities in the United States (Feagin 2010: 198). Therefore, substantial changing of this centuries-old framing will require continuous effort through educational strategies of deframing and reframing to replace the white racial frame. Without constant repetition and performance to counter the dominant white racial frame's racialized information, reproduction of black collective memories insufficiently counters the power of the white racial frame in these spaces throughout students' matriculation at HBCUs. Therefore, dialogue on race and racism must be incorporated into upper level and STEM courses to continue to provide a space centered in black culture, rather than on the margins, to directly counter the white racial frame (Bettez and Suggs 2012).

My analysis reveals students actively critically critique white racism. Students also deciphered institutional racism from interpersonal racism, highlighting racist institutionalized practices within the workplace and the criminal justice system. Students identified how systemic racism of the past has been institutionalized and manifested in major aspects of our society today and how racial realities operate through the dominant white racial frame to rationalize white privilege and dominance. The collective understanding established within the classroom, the physical spaces of HBCUs, and interactions between students, shapes how students interpret racism as a system. Students are able to draw from the collective memory of experiences, understandings, images, and emotions of black people throughout history to evaluate how, where, and when white discrimination operates interpersonally and institutionally.

Students demonstrated an understanding of how, where and when white discrimination operates in society; however, students frequently privileged whites by rescuing them from direct criticism for their role in white racism. Rescuing whites has serious implications for the black anti-racist counter frame. The tendency to rescue whites fails to directly challenge racist ideologies. Rescuing whites by using personification to attribute the creation and maintenance of racism to nonhuman actors undermines resistance efforts from implicating whites in historical and contemporary racism, and limits the effectiveness of anti-racist work. Historically Black Colleges and Universities must continue to incorporate knowledge regarding black history and overtly name white actors for their role as the creators and beneficiaries of racism (Bracey 2011).

Historically and contemporarily, blacks have utilized institutions of higher learning as sites of freedom and resistance. These black spaces have supported the innovation, creativity, and intelligence of black people for over a century. However, these predominantly black spaces are also filled with assimilation tactics to white supremacist capitalist society (Njoku, Butler & Beatty 2017). While students credit their institutions for providing them practical skills to deal with white discriminators and assertions of black humanity and achievements, their institutions also projected conformity to white standards. Therefore, administrators, faculty, and staff serve as gatekeepers to ensuring that our racial system is maintained through politics of respectability.

Elements of the white racial frame enacted through the practices of HBCUs and driven by black politics of respectability are counter-intuitive to practices of empowerment and freedom, foundational to these black institutions of higher education (Njoku, Butler & Beatty 2017). As Historically Black Colleges and Universities continue to ascribe to classist ideologies such as politics of respectability, systems of racism and white supremacy are maintained and undercut the efforts to assert black humanity and achievements.

In an effort to dismantle white supremacy, I assert the need for Historically Black Colleges and Universities to assume the role of deframing and reframing our white dominated society. This study works to deframe the old white frame by critically analyzing how, when, and why critical elements are internalized by students at Historically Black Colleges. HBCUs must use their unique histories to create educational spaces that reflect and evaluate the ways in which it promotes white supremacist, anti-black liberation practices. Black institutions need to be aware of the reality of the white racial frame and teach the importance of its reframing. Overall, there must be critical thinking in terms of the power and pervasiveness of this dominant frame. Deframing must take place before efforts to reframe because unless there is a thorough understanding of the elements of the white racial frame, the reality of its deep root permeation into society, and a recognition that the frame must be replaced, reframing efforts will be in vein. Historically Black Colleges and Universities must preserve their legacy as sites of black social uplift and empowerment through critical assessment of the ways in which white supremacy is a manifested within these spaces.

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