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A Blueprint for Higher Education Institutions of Today: Supporting African American Students Through An Institutional Cultural Shift

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Bard

A Blueprint for Higher Education Institutions of

Tomorrow Day: Supporting African American Students

Through An Institutional Cultural Shift

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by

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To all my
chocolate sprinkles out there,
who may find themselves
suffocating in a bowl of vanilla ice cream...

don't. give. up.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to give an honor to God, who is the head of my life. It is only by His grace and through His strength I was able to finish this project. To my daddy, Mr. Shabazz, who always pushed me and for your raised eyebrow when I brought home a 93. Thanks for believing I could get a 100. Thank you for all the things you taught me. You may no longer be here physically, but your spirit and legacy lives on. To my mommy, Joyce Ann, I love you. Thank you for always supporting and loving me. You have always encouraged me and assured me that I could do anything I put my mind to and do everything God empowered me to do.

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know that your prayers, words of encouragement, and love helped me through these four years and through the completion of this project. To Pastor Creflo and Pastor Taffi Dollar at World Changers Church, thank you for your teachings. They've been planted in my heart since I first started attending at the age of 7. Before I came to college, I often heard from people that you go to college to find yourself, or that you find out who you really are. I thank God for your ministry that taught me that my identity is in Christ Jesus and I am who he says I am: whole, prosperous healed, favored, and loved. It is this that got me through the rough times. Thank you!

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To all of my friends, thank you for your prayers, laughter, jokes, motivation, saltiness, smiles, encouragement, supportive texts, caring calls and wonderful hugs. My experience at Bard wouldn't be the same without you all.

To my first-year self, thank you for listening to God and staying at Bard.

To my future self, dream big and never limit what God has already ordained.

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Chapter 1:
An Introduction to the Problem and a Roadmap to Change

My Story

They just. Don't. Get It!
They don't know what it feels like being here -
What it feels like being *black* here!
They constantly remind me that I'm a minority here....

I'm just tired of it.
Being intimidated in class,
Making sure I sound "proper,"
and not using "colloquial language."

I'm just, I don't know.
Maybe if I wasn't so...
black, I would fit in more.
I don't like most of the music, dances, food, and other things of the general culture on campus.

I wanted college to be the best time of my life!
I wanted to find bestfriends, love, fun, excitement, and an indescribable emotion.
Can I really find that here?
The most I've found here is loneliness, cultural ignorance, racism, saltiness, prejudices, and
frowns.
They make me feel my black skin - my difference,
My kinky hair, my ashy hands, my culture.

You know what?
I'm falling asleep - let me just get my rest, then I'll write again.
Perhaps I'll get more "intellectual" tomorrow.

Written February 12, 2012

The writing above was taken from the journal I maintained during my first year at Bard College. This was a hard time in my life. I had never felt so alone, ever, in my life. Bard was like a different world - so different from where I was raised. I was born in Queens, New York and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I grew up in a predominantly black neighborhood and attended predominantly black schools with black teachers and staff members. I grew up very aware of myself as a black person. I'm recalling a poem I wrote in seventh grade. We were asked to write a poem answering the question, "who am I?". I vividly remember referring to myself as a "black girl." How did this become so incorporated in my identity that at 13 I found this important to acknowledge in my poem?

Although I had grew up most of my life knowing that I was black, I had never really felt *black* until I attended Bard College. I started my time at Bard excited about integrating into this new environment and new population of students. I smiled often, spoke to my classmates and really put myself out there by talking to new people, inviting people on social outings and stepping out of my comfort zone. However, what I received in return was completely opposite of this. To be specific, making friends and socializing with other white students was hard. When walking on campus, I was often ignored by most of the white students I passed. They would put their heads down or simply look through me. I felt invisible. White classmates who I had just spoken too and shared stories with would walk right past me in the dining hall. Some would happily acknowledge me inside the classroom and outside of it; however, when surrounded by their other white friends, they wouldn't. They would walk past me as though we had never met. This hurt me and had a major impact on how I socialized with white students during the rest of my time at Bard.

I retreated. I retreated to a community where I would feel like I belonged, where I felt valued and where I would be acknowledged and my presence appreciated. I grew very close to students in the Bard Educational Opportunity Program (BEOP) and those who were Posse Scholars. As an Atlanta Posse Scholar, it was easy for me to find refuge in a community I was already a part of and in one where some of the students had shared similar experiences of feeling like an outsider.

My experience at Bard is what impacted my decision to write about this topic. In fact, it actually influenced me to study sociology in the first place. In my Introduction to Sociology course, for the first time, I was able to learn and look at problems that were not only affecting the society but affecting my community back home and my experiences on campus. Learning about class, race, mass incarceration, sex and gender, and how these things intersect, opened a new understanding on how things work on an institutional and structural level. It not only made me start thinking about these societal issues, but also talking about it by providing me with the language to do so. Finally, it was a platform used to develop my own sociological imagination[1] around the experiences I encountered as a black student at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). How did my experiences relate to other black students at PWIs? What were the societal forces shaping these experiences? How were our experiences different and how were they similar and what factors shaped these distinctions?

Although I understand that my experience does not represent the sole experience of all African American students who attend PWIs, it gives me a lens into how to study and research *how* these experiences come about on campus and *what* mechanisms perpetuate the existence of

[1] Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *"The Sociological Imagination."* New York: Oxford University Press.

such. My experience also adds to my passion in creating more inclusive and supportive environments on campus. Throughout this paper, I will present the information I have learned through my research, while also providing possible policy implications and recommendations for higher education institutions, based off of this knowledge.

Focusing On The Educational Outcomes

This paper is advocating for the improved educational outcomes of African American students in higher education institutions through enhanced inside and outside classroom experiences. For most African Americans - and other groups who have historically been discriminated against in the economic, political, and social spheres - higher level education[2] is the major factor in increased economic capital (Clewell and Anderson 1995; Ferguson 2008) and social mobility in the United States. In 2014, for 25 year old and older African Americans, who earned a bachelor's, their median weekly earnings was $895 ($975 for those earning higher than a bachelor's degree and $1,149 for an advanced degree), compared to $579 earned by African Americans with a high school diploma and $440 with less than a h.s. diploma[3]. This is why focusing on higher educational outcomes for African Americans in college is important.

You may ask, what about the factors that come before college that affect students' educational outcomes - like poverty, socioeconomic status (SES), parental resources, schools, pre-collegiate preparation and neighborhoods? Their impact on the educational attainment of

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[2] *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. 2007. "Higher Education Is the Major Force in Closing the Black-White Income Gap."

[3] U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. "Median weekly earnings by educational attainment in 2014." (http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/median-weekly-earnings-by-education-gender-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm).

African American students and the creation of the existing academic achievement gap is a real issue.

According to an article in the Center for American Progress, the academic achievement gap not only has a negative impact on black and Hispanic children, it has a great impact on the economy.

> If the United States were able to close the educational achievement gaps between native-born white children and black and Hispanic children, the U.S. economy would be 5.8 percent—or nearly $2.3 trillion—larger in 2050. The cumulative increase in GDP from 2014 to 2050 would amount to $20.4 trillion, or an average of $551 billion per year. Thus, even very large public investments that close achievement gaps would pay for themselves in the form of economic growth by 2050 (2014).

This would mean attacking the issue at the kindergarten-twelfth grade (k-12) level, so before a student enters higher education. There is not simply *one* factor that contributes to perpetuating the academic achievement gap and thus maintaining low educational outcomes among black children. Family resources, poverty (Kiernan and Mensah 2011), the neighborhood (Goldsmith 2009), and school resources[4] (funding, staff members, social networks) are all factors that affect a student's educational attainment. Thus, closing the academic achievement gap, on the k-12 level, could mean addressing structural inequalities in the labor market, residential housing, and school systems.

Based on this research, with the closure of the achievement gap, students would have more options in the future and be equipped with the skills and tools needed for success. As described above, an increased educational attainment is associated positively with one's income and life outcomes. As a result of closing the educational achievement gap, the current generation

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[4] Card, David and Alan B. Krueger. 1998. "School Resources and Student Outcomes." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 559:39-53

of children earning higher wages, higher standards of living and a strengthened quality of life will produce "future generations of children [who] will be more likely to grow up in families that can offer them the enriching opportunities of a middle class family's lifestyle" (Center for American Progress 2014).

So, based on this information, why is this paper focusing on higher education institutions? The problem seems to be deeper than higher education institutions and to start much earlier than when a student makes the choice to attend college. For starters, changes in higher education institutions, cannot act as a "silver bullet" in increasing the educational outcomes of African Americans; because, as we have just discussed, the factors that affect these outcomes are spread across other realms - labor market, housing market (residential segregation), political representation. In comparison to these larger societal systems, higher education institutions could possibly be an *easier* system to fix, or rather an institution that could have more effective outcomes after establishing the *what* and *how* in addressing the education outcomes of African American students.

What about the larger number of African Americans who are not enrolled in higher education? Well, from 1976 to 2011, the percentage of black students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions rose from 10 percent to 15 percent[5]; in 2022, this number is projected to rise to 26 percent[6] - the second largest increase after Hispanics (27 percent). Whites and Asians lag behind at a projected 7 percent; while American Indian/Alaska Natives are projected to have the same number of enrolled students. For one, this means that more blacks will be

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[5] National Center for Education Statistics. 2013. "Fast Facts." Retrieved April 23, 2015. (http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98).
[6] National Center for Education Statistics. 2014. "Projections of Education Statistics to 2022." (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf).

gaining access to higher education institutions. So the number of African Americans enrolling in higher education will be increasing, but this still does not answer the question of how educational outcomes will be improved for those who are not in college.

The short and, in a way, dismissive answer would be that the focus of this paper is specifically on blacks who are enrolled in higher education institutions, and not those who are not. A more thoughtful answer is that more black students are enrolling in college, so it is important for them to enter environments that will be conducive to their success. Of course it is important for African Americans who do not have access to college to also be successful academically, economically, and politically. However, those interventions would not begin at the higher education level. Researching the experiences of African Americans in higher education to improve educational outcomes is a response to the increasing number of blacks enrolling in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. With this increase, the important question to consider is whether these colleges and universities are prepared: "are they thinking strategically about how best to serve these students?"[7]

Finally, I am focusing on higher education because this is something I am passionate about. In the future, I intend to work in student affairs to support diverse groups of students on college campuses. True reform does not take the work of one person, nor does it manifest throughout one realm of society. Higher Education is the sector that I want to channel my energies, talents and skills.

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[7] Diverse: Issues in Higher Education. 2014. "Blacks, Latinos Projected to Lead Growth in U.S. Higher Education Enrollments."Retrieved April 27 (http://diverseeducation.com/article/61193/).

Key Concepts

To ensure that you as the reader are able to follow the arguments being made, I will define terms and concepts that will come up often throughout the paper.

- **African American/Black** refers to individuals of African descent. Throughout the paper, I will use African American and black interchangeably.

- **Racism** is prejudice and discrimination based solely on a person's perceived race. What is often left out in this definition is its connection to institutional power and authority. It is different from prejudice and discrimination because of the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways (Lee and Okazawa-Rey 1998). "[It is] a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Tatum 1997).

- **Racial Discrimination** is the unfavorable mistreatment of an individual based solely on their racial identity. It can occur as a result of prejudice, bias or stereotyping.[8] It can manifest through explicit and implicit behaviors/action. An example of an explicit behavior would be the usage of racial slurs and comments against an individual or the deviation from normal practices. Implicit behaviors, which are oftentimes the most experienced by people of color, would be the severe punishment of a black student's misbehavior at school versus that of a white student.[9] Unlike explicit cases, it requires further examination of how bias and stereotyping has played out. Additionally, it does not

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[8] Ontario Human Rights Commission. "Examples of racial discrimination (fact sheet)." Retrieved April 27 (http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/examples-racial-discrimination-fact-sheet).
[9] 2014. "Why Are Students of Color (Still) Punished More Severely and Frequently Than White Students?" *Urban Education* 48(4): 483-489

only occur through biased behaviors that disadvantages another group, but also advantages and favors one's own group (Dovidio et al. 2010)

- **Social Structures** are patterned relations between groups of individuals. People both shape and are socialized through norms and behaviors within structures.

- "**[Social] Oppression** is a concept that describes a relationship between groups or categories of people in which a dominant group benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward a subordinate group...all members of dominant and subordinate categories participate in social oppression regardless of their individual attitudes or behavior. Social oppression becomes institutionalized when its enforcement is so of social life that it is not easily identified as oppression and does not require conscious prejudice or overt acts of discrimination."[10]

- **Exclusion** is the act of keeping someone of something separate and apart. Exclusion can be systematic, existing through oppressive structures of society. It is also connected to power relations. Understanding who is *being excluded*, who is *doing the excluding* and *why* can give an understanding of the power dynamic[11].

- **Culture** in higher education is described as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus" (Kuh and Whitt).

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[10] Johnson, A. G. 2000. *The Blackwell dictionary of sociology : a user's guide to sociological language,* 2nd ed.Oxford [England] ; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
[11] GSDRC: Applied Knowledge Services. "Social Exclusion." Retrieved April 27, 2014. (http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/social-exclusion/social-exclusion-as-a-process).

- **Cultural Competency:**

  One of the first steps in developing cultural competency is recognizing how one's own perspectives and knowledge of the world are rooted in a particular cultural, racial, and ethnic identity and history (Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell 2003) Possessing cultural competency means learning about, acknowledging and respecting the cultures of different groups to maintain effective communication and relationships (Williams and Haynes 2007).

- **Multiculturalism** and **diversity** are the existence of multiple cultures and identities in a space. A key aspect of multiculturalism and diversity is not only existing together, but creating a space where each group can equally hold ownership[12] in the space and one group is not dominant over the other. In this space exists a genuine appetite for learning about other cultures and groups of people, in addition to the positive social interaction between different groups. There also exists an appreciation and celebration for difference, and not the requirement for assimilation.

- **Thrive** means to grow, develop or be successful[13]. In this context, thriving in college means achieving academic, social (or relational), and emotional success, in addition to personal growth (Schreiner 2010). Do students feel comfortable on campus and do they possess a sense of belonging? Is there a sense of ownership and agency within the campus community and classroom?

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[12] *Holding ownership means having some type of authority and possession that is in partnership with other groups present in a space. Each group has a share in the space where they feel welcomed.*
[13] Cambridge Dictionaries Online. Retrieved April 22, 2015.
(http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/american-english/thrive).

- What is the meaning of **success** when discussing the ways in which African Americans can achieve higher educational outcomes through institutional improvements?
    - Academic achievement (i.e. good grades)
    - Social: making friends, engagement in extracurricular activities)
    - Emotional: maintaining psychological and physical well-being[14]
- **Support** is referenced frequently when the higher education institution, faculty and staff members are discussed. To support someone, it means to:
    - "give encouragement to someone because you want that person to succeed";
    - "to help someone or something in an emotional or practical way";
    - "to hold something firmly"[15]
- **Unique** is often used in this paper to describe the experiences of African American students. Unique means distinction and set apart. In context to the experiences of black students on campus, they go through situations that are characteristically linked to their racial identity.

The Institutional Cultural shift

This paper will explore and address some of these structures within higher education institutions in the next two chapters. Recognizing the culture of an institution is understanding the "social, political and economic lines on which it has been historically organized" (Colon 1991:80) in addition to the dominating powers that it has been governed by. Historically, higher

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[14] Association of American Colleges & Universities. 2013. ""What Would Make This a Successful Year for You?" How Students Define Success in College." Retrieved April 22, 2015. (https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/what-would-make-successful-year-you-how-students-define-success).
[15] Cambridge Dictionaries Online. (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/american-english/support).

education institutions have existed through the works of oppressive, racist, and exclusionary practices, reflecting the ideologies of the time and maintaining the concept of white superiority. Although most institutions within society no longer explicitly discriminate against individuals, there are still implicit biases, attitudes and behaviors that govern and affect the structures of these institutions.

So, for higher education institutions to transition into an institution that addresses its racist structures, provides supportive and welcoming environments for all students, and creates a community for students of color to succeed and thrive, an institutional transformation is proposed.

Institutions not engaged in a cultural shift would be sustaining the status quo (Freire, P. 1998). In doing this, the oppressive structures of these institutions will remain and be strengthened through its practices. A truly transformed higher education institution has the potential to create supportive and culturally interactive environments that will transform the minds, beliefs and actions of all individuals who encounter it. Transforming the lives of students and faculty also means transforming the communities, states, and nations they come from - thus transforming the world. Colleges often transmit the dominant societal culture (Colon 1991), so if this oppressive culture could be combated and the system reversed, higher education institutions could influence societal structures to embrace multicultural approaches and reproduce social, economic, and political beliefs and doctrines along the lines of social justice. This goes back to why I have chosen to focus on Higher Education Institutions.

Radical education [for oppressed people] "means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system"[16] (Wynne 2004:109). The system working within higher education institutions must change. "Many of the structures and values we accept on our campuses are actually obstacles to the educational and wider success of people of color and women" (Colon 1991). Creating a thriving environment and retention strategy for Black students involves more than financial and academic support; "It demands racial, social, [cultural] and institutional considerations" (Hikes 2004:17). As more students who diverge from the "traditional student"[17] continue to enroll in higher education institutions, administrators will have to think critically about whether their institutions are serving these students and in what ways they can improve their methods.

African American Students in Higher Education

To gain a full picture of the current situation of black students in higher education, it is imperative to take a pause and look back at the history of blacks in this American institution. So, this section will focus primarily on the historical experiences of African Americans in American education. By studying these experiences, we can draw conclusions about whether and how our society has been affected by structural racism and become informed about the progress we've made as a nation and problems that are still left to solve within, particularly, the higher education institution.

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[16] *Quote by Ella Baker.*
[17] National Center for Education Statistics. 2013. "Fast Facts."

Enslaved Minds

For most African Americans, their ancestral history in the United States begins in slavery. During this period in American history, African slaves were viewed as inferior to their white counterparts because they were enslaved peoples whose main usage for society was free labor. Their labor was exploited for profit that laid the basis for economic growth in the United States: cotton provided over half of all U.S. export earnings[18]. To maintain this level of economic prosperity and in an attempt to perpetuate the racial and social control, the enslaved were not allowed to be taught how to read and write. Slaveowners saw this as a threat because if not leading to physical freedom, it would lead to intellectual freedom[19]. Therefore, if the enslaved did not learn how to read on their own, in secrecy, or through their masters' teaching (which oftentimes only came about to Christianize them[20]), they remained illiterate.

The native language once known by newly arrived Africans slowly faded away as they were forced to speak English (Smallwood 2007). Adapting to America involved assimilating to European understandings of social interactions, customs, language and ultimately views of the world (Smallwood 2007). Within this European view of the universe was the notion that their culture was inferior (Colon 1992; Smallwood 2007). From the beginning they were socialized into understanding their culture to be hostile to that of their new home. To survive was to break away from one's own culture and learn the new ways of life as an enslaved individual. To be a slave was to not be educated, but to be ignorant and illiterate. At the end of the Civil War, 95

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[18] The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. "Was slavery the engine of American economic growth?" Retrieved April 26, 2015 (http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/slavery-and-anti-slavery/resources/was-slavery-engine-american-economic-growth).

[19] Cornell University Library. 2002. "In Their Own Words: Slave Narratives." Retrieved April 26, 2015. (http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/narratives.htm).

[20] Ibid.

percent of African Americans were illiterate (Colon 1991:74). Colon refers to this as a "system of compulsory ignorance", where African slaves were focibly restricted from educating themselves. By learning how to read and write, slaves risked death or other methods of punishment[21]. In the eyes of their slaveholders, their job was to labor and make a profit - not to learn. Slave masters feared their slaves would learn that there was more to life than being a slave [22]. Through the ability to read and write, slaves would develop knowledge and a sense of ownership over their bodies, simultaneously liberating their minds.

Reconstruction

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which freed slaves in the rebel states, and the signing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which freed slaves everywhere, there emerged a group of people with no money, no land, and no conception of what it meant to be free[23].

During this time, missionaries, churches, and schools worked to educate this new population of free blacks (Clewell and Anderson 1995)[24]. Missionary groups established a system of schools and colleges for blacks; some were even created at the beginning of the Civil War for free peoples of color (Clewell and Anderson 1995).

"About 194 African Americans graduated from white colleges and universities in the north in the 30 year span from 1865 to 1895 and 75 of these graduated from a single college, Oberlin...By 1895 black institutions of higher education had produced about 1,151 graduates who entered teaching, the ministry, or other professions to serve their people" (Clewell and Anderson 1995:58). Reconstruction was an important time in American history for African

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[21] Cornell University Library, In Their Own Words: Slave Narratives, 2002.
[22] Ibid.
[23] The Library of Congress: American Memory. "Reconstruction and Its Aftermath." Retrieved April 26, 2015 (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aopart5.html).
[24] Ibid.

Americans. Not only were African Americans of all ages being educated on all levels, but African Americans were becoming integrated into the social and political sphere of America. With the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment, African American *men* were given the right to vote *and* hold office[25]. The only two African Americans to serve as United States Senators in the nineteenth century were elected during this time: Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels of Mississippi[26]. What was beginning to flourish into the political, social, and economic growth of African Americans appeared threatening to whites because it challenged the social order that was created during slavery. As a result, opposition ensued through groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) who created hostile, unsafe, and frightening environments for blacks in the south. Black men who tried to participate in voting were terrorized or threatened. The KKK was not the only oppositional force, states would institute literacy tests and quizzes that blacks were required to take that were almost always impossible to pass; thus making them ineligible to vote. Unfortunately, what could have been a number of sustained efforts to increase the economic, social, and political capital of African Americans came to a fall: "Not until the 1960s would America again try to come to terms with the political and social plan of Reconstruction"[27].

Historically Black Colleges Universities (HBCUs)

The first bachelor's-degree-granting HBCU to exist was Lincoln-U in Pennsylvania in 1865. From 1865 to 1867, at least seventeen HBCUs were established (Rogers 2012:13). Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created as institutions to teach black

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[25] African American Registry: A Non-Profit Education Organization. 1997. "Reconstruction, America's First Attempt to Integrate." Retrieved April 26, 2015 (http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/reconstruction-americas-first-attempt-integrate).
[26] The Library of Congress: American Memory, "Reconstruction and Its Aftermath."
[27] African American Registry: A Non-Profit Education Organization. 1997. "Reconstruction, America's First Attempt to Integrate."

students, separate from white students (Clewell and Anderson 1995). "The bulk of the nation's public HBCUs emerged as a result of the second Morrill Act of 1890, which enabled southern states that were not willing to integrate their historically white institutions to continue receiving federal higher education funding by establishing a separate group of black institutions" (Gasman 2009). As a result, the creation of HBCUs was not only used as a means of reinforcing segregation and the racial binary, but also as a way to provide funds for states who did not want to institutionally respond to a new population of freed blacks by integrating them into their white institutions.

"Like many [Historically White Colleges Universities] HWCUs at the time, these initial HBCUs primarily provided preparatory programs for students aiming to teach, preach, embark on a mission, or attend a university" (Rogers 2012:11). According to Colon, these black institutions of higher learning were not founded with any particular emphasis placed on an "allegiance" to African-American culture, or consciousness thereof (1991:75-6). The purpose of these institutions were to educate African American students who could contribute to the larger society through their learned knowledge and skills. Rogers argues that some African Americans and abolitionists wanted collegiate funding to be focused on black emigrants and to Americanizing them (2012:11). Thus, HBCUs would be a means of black emigrants assimilating into the American lifestyle and culture. As "second-class citizens", they were tasked with assimilating rather than integrating into American society.

The existence of these institutions were an important step for the education of African American students. One could argue that in this time period, one of the main differences between institutions with predominantly white students and those with black students was only their

student population. As mentioned before, HBCUs in their early years did not have a curricula reflective of diverse perspectives, scholars or ideologies. "Much of the curricula at these schools were duplicative or imitative of what was taught and studied at the white schools" Colon 1991:75-6). This could be partly attributed to where HBCUs were getting their funding from. These governments, organizations and churches still maintained white supremacy within their structures, so consequently, an institution funded by them would also reflect their values and ideologies within its framework and curriculum (Collins 1990; Colon 1991; Taylor 1989). Therefore, although HBCUs provided an important service to African American students as higher learning institutions, their structures resembled the oppressive forces that maintained a racial hierarchy and racial discrimination.

Black Students in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

In the Past

By 1954, black students accounted for 1 percent of freshmen who were admitted to predominantly white colleges (Colon 1991); Prior to 1954, HBCUs housed the majority of black students; by 1973, three-fourths of black students attended PWIs (Benton 2001). It was federal legislative acts that created and maintained the segregation of blacks and whites in every sector of society, so it took federal legislature to take a step in creating change on an institutional and structural level (Allen 1991; Clewell and Anderson 1995). As a result of federal legislative initiatives, predominantly white schools began rapidly integrating their student bodies. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited the granting of federal funding to institutions that discriminated on the basis of race which led to an increase in the admittance of students of color to PWIs (Colon 1991). Institutions that practiced racial discrimination through the refusal to admit black students

risked losing federal funding. So, although institutions practiced 'racial justice' through the admittance of black students, it did not mean institutions prohibited racial injustices within the walls of their schools. They were motivated by funding, similar to the Morrill Act of 1890 which led to the establishment of many HBCUs in the south.

Other acts, such as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, created funding and programs for economically disadvantaged students through the development of the college work-study program and need based student grants (Colon 1991). Although these programs did not directly address racial issues, it tackled the issues of class - which up until this point also followed along racial lines. Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, blacks were excluded from almost every sector of society based solely on race. As a result, most black people were unable to accumulate wealth and sustain economic success. The racial wealth gap in the present day is largely a result of a history of federal legislative acts that discriminated against nonwhites (Oliver and Shapiro 1995). In 1968, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students were created, along with the 1972 amendments to the Higher Education Act which created Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, later known as Pell Grants (Colon 1991:77).

Another important landmark, in the effort to integrate higher education institutions and to make amends for past injustices, was the creation of affirmative action programs in 1967. Oftentimes a controversial topic, affirmative action programs fulfill the idea that "compensatory measures are needed to overcome past injustices" by "requiring colleges and universities to adopt plans setting goals for hiring women and racial minorities" (Colon 1991:79). Through this initiative, higher learning institutions, as well as places of employment, could be held

accountable for playing a part in leveling the playing field. The goal was to create equal opportunities for all participants of society and to give a "leg-up" to groups of people who had historically been systematically "pushed down" through legal acts of racism and sexism. According to Colon, affirmative action programs "have not [generally] produced equal educational opportunities for students, increased the representation of African-Americans in the workplace or reduced the racial discrimination which exists in the academy or in the larger society" (Colon 1991:79). Galien argues, in the context of higher education, that these programs only opened a door to African American students that had been closed for centuries; however it did not produce an environment necessarily conducive to the social and emotional support of black students (Gallien 2004). Black students at PWIs faced many obstacles on campus, one of them being feelings of isolation (Allen 1992; Gallien 2004; Taylor 1989). This feeling of isolation was often coupled with the racism and discrimination (Saddlemire 1996) faced by students on campus. Although the federal government legalized the act of black students attending PWIs, it did not mean that the students, faculty and staff members in these institutions experienced the same sentiments.

For many black students, this new environment was hostile to their culture, their needs[28] their potential and to the color of their skin. With the integration of PWIs came a level of tension and conflict that had never existed on these campus (Benton 2001; Colon 1991). As a result, some black students chose to enroll at HBCUs (Allen 1992; Benton 2001) where students reported experiencing "a more amicable and supportive learning and living environment and a

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[28] Needs: an environment that realizes their potential, supports them academically, socially and emotionally

more desirable cultural experience, and the tradition [HBCUs] have sustained in cultivating black leadership" (Colon 1991:79).

Today

> Historically, black institutions have achieved some level of success in black student retention[29]. In the midst of political, legal, and budgetary challenges, traditionally white institutions continue to explore with uncertainty effective measures that maximize student success (Hikes 2004:16).

By examining the experiences of African American students in predominantly white institutions, we can grapple with how this institution is combating the lasting effects of racism and white supremacy within its frameworks.

HBCUs have found methods of success for satisfactory retention rates (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Taylor 1989) among African American students. They have found ways of ensuring their students are equipped with the right tools and resources to thrive on campus. Many PWIs have recognized a need for providing special services for underrepresented groups, but have failed at their attempts to address these needs. Other PWIs recognize a need but are unsure of how to proceed. Some PWIs have not recognized or institutionally affirmed a need for support services for African American students for various reasons.

Authors[30][31] who have wrote about the experiences of African Americans in PWIs have attributed their low enrollment to "the lack of adequate financial aid, the absence of faculty of color who serve as mentors, and the increase of racist incidents on campuses" (Hikes 2004:22).

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[29] "Despite the increased enrollment of African Americans at PWIs, HBCUs still graduate a disproportionate number of students in comparison to their historically white counterparts" (Benton 2001; Allen 1992).
[30] Fleming, J. 1984. *Blacks in College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Hawkins, B. C.
[31] Taylor, C. A. 1989. Effective ways to recruit and retain minority students. Madison, WI: Praxis Publications, Inc.

As mentioned earlier, today the enrollment of African American students in Predominantly white institutions have increased[32]. At present day, black students are more likely to attend a predominantly white institution than a HBCU. This can be attributed to funding, institutional prestige, institutional resources or other factors (Allen 1992).

Faculty members at HBCUs have been characterized as having a "personal and professional commitment to seeing to it that black students are successful in all realms of life. It is this holistic approach -- mind, spirit, and emotions -- that is missing on most majority campuses" (Gallien 2004:12; Kobrack 1992). Although there are major benefits for all students who are exposed to faculty members of color, a white faculty member - if equipped with the adequate tools - can support students of color. Nevertheless, for many PWIs, the number of faculty of color are lacking and the number of racist incident on campus are still significant and affect students of color in great ways[33]. Additionally, students who are integrated academically and socially (Hikes 2004; Tinto 1993) while also maintaining strong emotional health, are more likely to be successful and thrive on campus.

Are HBCUs the ideal?

To increase the graduation and retention rates of black students, scholars have argued that following the HBCU model would be best (Hikes 2004; Carter and Castenell 2004; Allen 1992; Fleming 1984). A number of factors - like a positive campus climate, services that target African American students, and culturally-relevant activities and events (Allen 1992; Benton 2001) - that make up the academic and social life (Tinto 1993) of HBCUs contribute to the success of

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[32] "*In the twenty-first century, African American (black) students will continue to enroll in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) at greater rates than black students enrolling at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)*" Benton, Mercedes A., 2001. "Challenges African American Students Face at Predominantly White Institutions."

[33] Ibid.

their students. Hikes argues that at predominantly white institutions, when it comes to funding reductions, special services and recruitment programs for African Americans are often "easy targets" and among the first to get cut (2004:22). Through this example, one can see how the lack of institutional importance[34] can be reflected through its funding. The bill for supporting black students academically, socially, and emotionally is not free nor cheap -- but it is worth it. An institution that can show it cares about its students financially is important, because it shows that the success of their students is not limited to a price tag. "HBCUs assume a responsibility for their students' growth - intellectually, personally, and socially" (Carter and Castenell 2004:95; Allen 1992). The question is, have PWIs institutionally assumed this responsibility for the success and growth of their African American students?

A critique is that black students, on average, perform better at HBCUs because these institutions primarily serve black students - which is similar to what has historically been the model for PWIs (serving primarily white students). Could HBCUs be an "ideal" because they are serving mainly a racially-homogenous population? I think a counter to this argument is that the HBCU model, that has been successful in graduating African Americans students, was not created in opposition/hostility to nonblack groups. However, the PWI model[35] can be hostile to African American students and has been through academic and social life (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Saddlemire 1996; Taylor 1989).

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[34] Elements of the academic and social life that are of *institutional importance* can be seen through the funding put towards it.

[35] *"The PWI model caters to individuals who academically meet white-created standards, such as high grade point averages and standardized test scores, who have culturally assimilated into mainstream society, and who possess the financial resources to pay for the rising cost of education"* (Benton 2001).

Paper's Significance

"It is our collective responsibility to evolve a truly higher education which can accommodate both diversity and excellence" (Colon 1991:84). To be an institution of higher learning and to adapt to a diverse campus does not make it less excellent, but rather more exceptional. It is important for all higher education institutions to be reflective and to truly think on how they are supporting not only African American students, but also other diverse groups of students. These issues will not go away. If left alone, it'll only grow bigger and become more firmly rooted in the structures of these higher education institutions (Allen 1992).

"Preparing for both the quantitative and qualitative infusion of diversity in higher education will increasingly be a central part of the long-term and short-term planning of American colleges and universities" (Colon 1991:81). The quantitative infusion is the influx of students of color in higher education now. The qualitative infusion is referring to the ways in which an ethnically and racially diverse student population effects the institution and brings in different perspectives, cultures, and characteristics. With the existence of an increased level of "difference" on campus, school leaders will be faced with a number of new and and unique challenges that impact the well-being of students, campus climate and social interactions.

Refusing to provide the academic, social, and emotional support for African American students, and other students of color, does not only affect the personal lives of these students, but the institutions and communities they could have positively impacted. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "an injustice to one is an injustice to all". Failing to create communities for students of color to thrive and experience success impacts the nation by failing to actualize the potential of

exceptional students and empower them to impact the world through the knowledge and skills learned at higher education institutions.

Chapter 2:
If The Walls of the Classroom Could Talk

The classroom space is an essential part of any college student's academic career. Although the shortest amount of time of a college student's life is spent in the classroom, the time spent there is invaluable to the college experience and to their academic development. A student that thrives on campus is one who is academically sound and experiences confidence in the classroom (Tinto 1993). Two important elements of the classroom experience that will be discussed in this chapter are the professors and curriculum students encounter throughout the academic year.

Faculty

Faculty-Student Relations, Pedagogical Strategies & Transformation

The faculty-student relationship should not be underestimated, especially when it comes to working with students from diverse backgrounds. Initial interactions with professors are partly influenced by how students communicated with teachers, school staff members and authority figures before coming to college. In context to African American college students, professors must understand their positionality as "authoritative" figures and small players in the larger existing oppressive structure (Allen 1992; hooks 1992; Taylor 1989). As figures in the classroom, faculty members stand as an authoritarian over the curriculum, classroom discussions, and the classroom climate. Deconstructing the faculty-student relationship is important when examining how PWIs are supporting African American students academically.

Speaking of higher education institutions as oppressive structures is a radical concept. As discussed earlier, these institutions are "microcosms" of the larger society (Hikes 2004). By operating within structures that have been historically discriminatory and oppressive to groups who have not fit the identity of a "traditional" college - white, male, middle class, straight - these institutions have the potential to replicate discriminatory ideologies through its framework if not addressed (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Clewell and Anderson 1995). The classroom climate can be uncomfortable for African American students who are taught by professors who lack the "cultural, historical, or pedagogical backgrounds that are congruent with the dominant learning styles and backgrounds of many African Americans" (Gallien 2004:7; hooks 1992; Taylor 1989). This is especially true for black students who come from primary and secondary schools that reflected their cultural backgrounds. Entering into a classroom where this is no longer the case can come as a culture shock for the student.

Professors who do not believe in possessing this cultural competency[36] can potentially create environments for African Americans students that are unfavorable to their academic success. On many college campuses, this concern can risk going unaddressed if professors hold the belief that it is the student's role to accommodate to their teaching methods (Gallien 2004; hooks 1992; Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989). This pedagogical strategy creates more distance between the professor and the student. A lack of culturally competent pedagogical skills can create silence or resentment (Gallien 2004) among black students or feelings of inadequacy. Black students who are not performing at their academic best, due to a personal and intellectual disconnect with their professors, can think that they are not qualified enough to take a particular

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[36] *Refer to page 10 for definition, under "Key Concepts".*

course or even be a student at a certain school. Some black students may attribute this to their race and reinforce societal stereotypes, negatively impacting their personal identity (Benton 2001; Tatum 1997). However, it is possible for students to use these stereotypes and images to motivate them to excel above societal standards and negative statistics. Nevertheless, the point of discussion is:

> It is nearly impossible for majority teachers to be effective in educating black students if they do not have some background knowledge or significant experiences in the history, culture, and traditions of African American students (Gallien 2004:9).

Professors who lack this information can facilitate cultural misunderstandings in the classroom that may lead to "awkward moments" and uncomfortable situations for students of color (Delpit 2006; Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989). It can also leave most professors unaware of the importance of cultural relativity within the course curriculum and class assignments. Later on in this chapter, in the section in the curriculum, this discussion will go more in depth on how this impacts students and the importance of presenting diverse perspectives that deviate from the Eurocentric point-of-view that has dominated much of secondary and higher learning curricula (hooks 1992; Taylor 1989).

> Because many [professors] believe that the onus is on another culture to master (or assimilate into) the majority culture, many instructors feel that they have no responsibility to contextualize their lessons or patterns of communication in a culturally responsive manner. Also, many do not want to take the time to examine or study the many strategies for transforming their classroom pedagogy to effectively educate a wider cultural audience (Gallien 2004:9).

Thinking globally, it is this Eurocentric framework that has influenced much of the academic disciplines. There exist the belief that the Western culture is superior (Allen 1992; Benton 2001;

hooks 1992; Kobrack 1992). "We seem to assume that our wisdom, emanating from our one cultural perspective, is somehow universal...many of us in mainstream contexts seem confused as well about the significance of culture in the personal and the political lives of all people" (Wynne 2004:115). Specifically within the Eurocentric perspective, there exists an attitude that any perspective or culture that is not congruent to the mainstream is inferior or incorrect. For white students, their culture is reflected through the curriculum and structures of the classroom (Benton 2001; Taylor 1989). The cultural context is one that they can identify with on a personal level and on an academic one. For students of color, their culture is contrary to the one that exists within the curriculum, the pedagogical strategies of the professors and the structural frameworks of the higher education institution (Benton 2001; Delpit 2006).

An important question is "who will retool established professionals in matters of gender and cultural diversification?" (Colon 1991:83). How do professors relearn effective pedagogical strategies and how do they transform their beliefs? It will take a restructuring of the knowledge and skills learned by professionals in academia. More teaching and Ph.D programs are offering courses in diversity for their graduate students. Issues of diversity in education are slowly becoming integrated into the preparation of new professors. However, what about the professors who have been teaching for decades? Are they supposed to change the way they've been taught *how to think* about the curriculum and how they've been taught *how to teach* it to accommodate African American students and other diverse groups of students.

The Impact of Diverse Faculty and Staff

If a student of color is not taught by a professor of color, does that mean they can not excel academically? The answer to this question is no. Students of color can perform well

academically with white professors. However, it is to the benefit of students from all backgrounds to be taught by and exposed to professors of color (Allen 1992; Tatum 1997; Taylor 1989). It has been argued by psychology scholars that this exposure to people of color in high level positions has a positive impact on implicit attitudes and behaviors (Tatum 1997). People of color, and especially African Americans, in high level positions within institutions of higher learning is contrary to society's view and the single story that has been expressed about African Americans. "Sometimes the assumptions we make about others comes not from what we have been told or what we have seen on television or in books, but rather from what we have not been told" (Tatum 1997:4). Thus, being exposed to diverse faculty members interrupts the belief that only whites are capable of obtaining professorship and teaching future leaders.

> Moreover, the conventional wisdom is that by providing minority students with similar-race role models, and by having such role models provide multiracial perspectives in the appropriate disciplines, the interests, motivation and success of minority students will be enhanced (Solomon and Wingard 1991:33).

Solomon point to two important aspects of having diverse faculty members in the classroom. These faculty members not only serve as role models for other diverse groups of students, but they also provide different perspectives in their disciplines for all students (Allen 1992; Delpit 2006; Kobrach 1992; Taylor 1989). Through the personal identities and experiences of diverse faculty members, they are able to acknowledge the problems in operating from a Eurocentric model and thus teach from an alternative model, in line with the needs of diverse students. Most colleges and universities recognize this need for more professors of color; however there is still a large gap in professors of color and white professors.

In 1940, there were 330 African Americans who held Ph.D.'s and none of them taught at predominantly white colleges. In 1968, only 0.13 percent of African American professors taught at white higher learning institutions (Colon 1991). A major factor was racial discrimination and an important factor that may now serve as a larger influence is simply choice. Some black scholars with Ph.D.'s are choosing to not work at PWIs but are instead working at HBCUs. These scholars do not want to be one of the few professors of color on staff or perhaps do not want to live and raise a family in the predominantly white neighborhoods where most PWIs are located.

Another significant factor that contributes to this lack of professors of color in academia, is the small pool of black scholars who actually persist through the Ph.D. program and choose to enter academia (Solomon and Wingard 1991). On average, students of color have a lower high school and undergraduate graduation rate, compared to white students. The pool of people of color with Ph.D.'s must be expanded. As the number of students of color attending higher education institutions increases, colleges and universities will become more aware of the need for faculty of color (Solomon and Wingard 1991).

Curriculum

"The heart of the university is the curriculum" (Botstein 1991:90). The courses and subjects offered by a university says a lot about what the institution values, recognizes as important, and identifies as necessary for students to be successful and responsible global citizens. In my analysis of the curriculum, I will not limit my discussion to only the subjects

offered, but also the material covered in these courses. Thus when examining how higher education institutions can better serve African American students academically, the curriculum offered by predominantly white institutions must be evaluated critically.

To address "the issue of race", a "reform of the undergraduate curriculum" is necessary (Bostein 1991). Currently, most disciplines have been structured according to the ideologies, theories, and frameworks set forth by older, white men (hooks 1992; Taylor 1989). Their realities have become the universal realities and the ways in which we have been taught to understand the world and the things in it. Maintaining the curriculum that is present in most higher education institutions is maintaining the status quo, thus sustaining racist and oppressive structures as defined in the earlier section, "Key Concepts". "Because racism is so ingrained in the fabric of American institutions, it is easily self-perpetuating. All that is required to maintain it is business as usual" (Tatum 1997:11). A method of combating these structures that currently operate in most higher education institutions, we must identify how racism has become institutionally ingrained in their frameworks (Allen 1992; Tatum 1997).

Tatum defines *passive racism* as a set of subtle acts, like laughing at racists jokes, avoiding race-related issues and accepting the omissions of people of color from the curriculum as appropriate (1997). In today's time, most schools are no longer performing explicit acts of discrimination. This oppression occurs through different channels, like the curriculum. Pervading the themes of traditional works of literature and scholarly thought are the voices of elite white men who have controlled the structures of what Collins refers to as the knowledge validation process (1990:201). As a result, theories and concepts that have shaped many academic disciplines have developed and been conceptualized through the "interests and standpoint" of

these white men (Collins 1990; Taylor 1989). This is not reflective of the human experience and human reality. This brings into question, what is truth and who is able to legitimize that knowledge of truth?

The Legitimacy of Knowledge

In the United States, the college or university is seen as the hub for informing and generating information amongst its students. It is held in high regard as a respectable place to gain knowledge about the world and oneself in the world. Within these universities are the concepts and understandings of what scholars have studied and produced. As students, we study these scholars and their theories and this is how we come to gain the knowledge and language to talk about our fields of study and the courses we take. Colon describes scholars as the "producers, distillers and transmitters of knowledge" who influence what people come to believe, and thus control the social construction of reality through the college university (1991:80). Scholars have a large influence on not only how we come to interact with the material in our classes, but also how we come to understand the world around us (hooks 1992).

Maintaining the status quo within the curriculum sustains the "dominant" group's construction of reality for all of us - a reality whose construction has been limited to privileged groups, such as whites, men and the wealthy. "Dominant groups, by definition, set the parameters within which the subordinates operate...the dominant group has the greatest influence in determining the structure of the society" (Tatum 1997:23). For dominant groups to have control over the structures of society - and particularly a society that is continuing to grow and transform into one whose population doesn't look like the dominant groups - it is detrimental to

the success and progress of these future generations of people (Clewell and Anderson 1995; Taylor 1989). .

Validation of Knowledge

> Institutions, paradigms, and other elements of the knowledge validation procedure controlled by elite white men constitute the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process. The purpose of this process is to represent a white male standpoint (Collins 1990:203).

Collins uses the understanding of the knowledge validation process as a way to discuss how the voices of black women have been silenced and excluded from mainstream academic thought. When a scholar makes a knowledge claim, they must convince the scholarly community - which is usually controlled by white men - that this claim is true (hooks 1992; Collins 1990:203). She describes this knowledge validation process (203) as a eurocentric masculinist process. Through this scholarly community, knowledge claims are justified. Thus, if a knowledge claim does not align with the beliefs and realities of the dominant group, it can get rejected. One's idea of reality is an important component in the knowledge validation process. One's reality is greatly influenced by one's experiences. The way our society is constructed, one's social identities greatly affects one's experiences and thus their reality. For example, arguments presented by black feminists can be rejected by mainstream feminists because white women lack the experiences of black women (Allen 1992; Collins 1990; hooks 1992). Some experiences are similar along gender lines; however, along racial lines, these experiences diverge since white women still benefit from their white privilege. Likewise, if there existed a knowledge validation process among feminists, in comparison to women of color, white women would be

the dominant group and could possibly control the justification of knowledge claims. This is where an alternative black feminist epistemology births.

Communities of scholars who differ from elite white men can face challenges when arguing for beliefs that are dissimilar from the dominant group's. These communities that challenge basic beliefs held in culture can be labeled as less credible than those beliefs that support popular perspectives (Collins 1990:203). Therefore, scholars of color who have argued for their beliefs that have stemmed from their unique experiences or stories that have been passed down from their family elders, are discredited and their voices and scholarly work face the possibility of being pushed to the margins of the mainstream academic community and eventually the university curriculum.

On the Margins

Being on the margins in the curriculum means being a part of the curriculum, but not receiving the adequate amount of attention by the university or the professors. There can be certain subject areas placed on the margins, like African American/black studies, or scholars placed on the margins in courses that focus on a Western canon, like black women scholars as discussed above. Although five-hundred white colleges had established programs in black studies by 1971, black studies still remains on the margin in higher education (Colon 1991:78).

During the 1970s, higher education institutions were in the process of transformation as a result of the Civil Rights Act and Higher Education Acts. Therefore, it can be argued that incorporating black studies programs in predominantly white institutions was not necessarily done out of an act of morality or social justice, but as a means of tolerance and convenience (Clewell and Anderson 1995). Colon argues that this act of tolerance and "political expediency"

is different than the acknowledge of black studies as a "legitimate academic enterprise" (1991:78). For many of these schools, incorporating black studies into the curriculum was a political statement, it was not an affirmation of the experiences, voices and knowledge of black people.

The Movement from a Eurocentric Perspective

In coming years, the academy will increasingly be called upon to ... acknowledge the diminishing dominion of Western (or any single) cultural ideology as the universal determinant, conveyer and interpreter of heterogeneous human experience (Colon 1991:80).

It is rare for African American students to read or discuss their history, culture or traditions (Gallien 2004) in the classrooms of predominantly white institutions (Delpit 2006; hooks 1992; Taylor 1989). This can create a distance not only between black students and the class material, but also between themselves and their cultural identity (Dilg 2003). When thinking about the cultures of people of color, African Americans are one group of people who are intensely severed from their ancestral past. For many, history begins in slavery, not in Africa. For some African Americans, Africa is not even considered a homeland. The culture of African Americans has been largely depicted by society as inferior and ignorant through stereotypes shown in the media and the images depicted on television. This causes some African Americans to reject their cultural identity. For most African Americans who take a black studies course in college, this is the first time they are able to learn about the *true* history of their people and read scholarly articles and literature by people who look like them - and not just the literary works Gallien describes as the "popular cinematic 'standard works' [by] Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, and Maya Angelou" (2004:8). These scholars are certainly worthy of

acknowledgement and academic analysis, but there are other important black voices that are yet still on the margins. Engaging with literature and scholars who discuss and theorize about beliefs and experiences that are culturally relevant to students of colors can be liberating (Delpit 2006; Dilg 2003; hooks 1992; Taylor 1989).

According to Colon, monocultural, Western, Eurocentric and male dominated characteristics of American higher education have served as impediments to people of color and women (1991:80). They have created structures within higher education that have excluded or limited their voices. These obstacles have created greater challenges for students of color to succeed in higher education. Of course it has not made it impossible, but it has created unnecessary barriers by which students can engage with the curriculum and the important theories and concepts in their disciplines; and this does not only affect some disciplines. "Denying our students the opportunity to examine pervasive faulty notions of a history and epistemology rooted in oppression, which infects all disciplines, hinders honest intellectual discourse" (Wynne 2004:118). Honest intellectual discourse means acknowledging a western, Eurocentric and masculinist curriculum and the silencing of voices that do not fit in these categories. "Knowledge is a vitally important part of the social relations of domination and resistance" (Collins 1990:221). For a long time, higher education institutions have perpetuated the ideologies of dominant groups that have reproduced thinking in line with these beliefs; but now it is time for higher education institutions to rethink how their structures can be used as forms of resistance to racism, cultural exclusion, and institutional inequalities (Allen 1992; Clewell and Anderson 1995).

What does a culturally responsive curriculum look like?

A culturally responsive curriculum offers the broader human experience (Colon 1991), is student-centered and moves the voices of people of color from the margins (Curtis and Herrington 1992). It does not use the Western and male perspective as the norm. A norm is the average and usual occurrence; it maintains a standard for what is normal. Beliefs and theories that once may have been characterized as deviating from the norm, may now be understood as simply representing another perspective that is not wrong, but a differing valid viewpoint.

A culturally responsive curriculum is one that is intrinsically liberating:

> When taught outside a liberation context, knowledge learned in schools can become not only meaningless to African Americans and other students of color, but worse, a means to maintain an oppressive society. Culturally responsive pedagogy "prepares students to effect change in society, not merely fit into it" (Wynne 2004:107).

Curriculum that is taught within a liberation context does not follow the outlines of the former eurocentric and masculinist framework that has maintained the oppressive structures of society. A liberating curriculum combats that and produces students who will further combat an oppressive society through their studies, their careers, their beliefs and values.

Botstein asks an important question, "How can knowledge, tolerance, respect and affection be nurtured through the work done by students in the college classroom?" (1991:89). A part of the answer is found in the the curriculum: what is being taught and how it is being taught by professors (Allen 1992; Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989)? It connects to what was discussed in the earlier section on faculty. Professors who possess culturally competent pedagogical skills have the potential to teach and engage students inside a liberation context.

Strategies for the Movement

How do colleges and universities get to the level of a culturally responsive curriculum and culturally competent professors? It is a process. Many of the top leaders of higher education institutions do not posses the knowledge base for dealing with diversity and the restructuring of the curriculum; to address this problem, it will take the retooling of these leaders (Colon 1991; Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989). Many of them have been educated and skilled within the structures of the oppressive system that is being combated. Some of them lack cultural competency and are out of touch with the realities of diverse students. Thus, "they do not grasp the essence of the problem and the possibilities for constructively responding to it" (Colon 1991:82). The good thing is that multiculturalism and diversity are not new concepts. Discussion around these topics have increased at some PWIs within the social spaces on campus. Future educators are preparing for these conversations through diversity courses offered in grad school and through their experiences working with diverse groups of people. There are also nonprofit organizations who specialize in facilitating conversations on diversity and working with higher education institutions to develop and maintain them on campus. Additionally, there are student affairs personnel on campus who have gone through diversity training through their graduate school institutions who have come to understand the importance of including multiculturalism in the undergraduate curriculum.

Effects of this Movement

What will it mean for colleges and universities once this transformation of the curriculum has taken place? It will be an unprecedented reform in higher education. Knowledge plays an important role in shaping society. By informing students of societal oppressions and teaching

them within a liberating context, institutions are actively combating inequalities in our nation through higher education (Allen 1992). Knowledge has a special connection in empowering oppressed people and in changing the consciousness within them; leading to social transformation and social change (Collins 1990). Moving from the western, elitist, Eurocentric and male viewpoint that has been deeply-rooted in the academic curriculum to a culturally relevant one will have a positive impact on students of color. Combating the existing beliefs that have formally constructed our reality is empowering because it gives voice to experiences that were once silenced and invalidated (Collins 1990; Delpit 2006; Hooks 1992). It advocates for "culturally sensitive and responsive models" that take African American students' "cultural, historical and spiritual backgrounds" (Gallien 2004:11) into account.

A Seat at the Table

For many black students at predominantly white institutions, the classroom experience can be quite isolating and marginalizing (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Taylor 1989). This is not the case for all black students, but it is an experience shared by many. When the number of African American students enrolled in PWIs is at a low rate, many black students can experience being one of few or even the only student of color in a classroom. In the classroom is where "hidden" and "passive" discrimination patterns can take place that frustrate the abilities of African American students to achieve academically (Gallien 2004). These implicit patterns can also be described as microaggressions. Microaggressions are small instances of discrimination that unintentionally manifest through words or behaviors to confirm stereotypes.

Many black students fear that their voice will be understood as the "voice for all black people", as a result of the few African American students in the classroom and in the school (Benton 2001). African Americans are often viewed as a monolithic group among society. As stated before, the university is a microcosm of society, so this generalization often plays itself out on college campuses as well. For many black collegians, the classroom becomes one of silence for them, where thoughts, ideas and classroom contributions are muffled by levels of "stereotype threat" (Gallien 2004). Stereotype threat describes an individual who is at risk for confirming a negative stereotype. Out of a fear of confirming the negative stereotypes of African Americans being ignorant or inarticulate, some black students choose to, or rather react by not voicing their opinions in class.

Factors that contribute to the academic success of black students

"Research suggests that the more successful African American college students had a mentor (or group of mentors) who encouraged and critiqued their work and followed them through their graduate school experience and beyond, to their professional careers" (Gallien 2004:9). People succeed when they feel supported. A characteristic of effective mentor for black students, is one who can listen to the experiences of the student on campus and validate their instances of microaggressions and passive discrimination while also giving them advice in handling these situations (Willie 2003).

Successful black collegians also have professors who maintain high expectations and demand excellence (Wynne 2004). Professors who do not challenge students do a disservice to them (Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989). Holding high expectations for black students translates to professors rejecting negative stereotypes. It shows that they believe students of color are capable

of achieving academic success. This pushes students to work hard and excel academically. Do the professors have to be of color to ensure the success of African American students? Again, the answer is no. There is a benefit for African American students to be taught by same-race professors, however this is not a requirement. The key is the set of skills one possesses.

> ...majority professors can successfully reach beyond the color line to effectively mentor students of color. African American students continuously maintain that they respond best to professors who care about them. This feeling of care and concern is a serious issue in the retention and eventual graduation rate of African American students across the country (Gallien 2004:10).

The important factors are maintaining a level of care, understanding and cultural responsiveness. This requires professors and mentors to understand the historical context of African Americans in predominantly white institutions. It urges them to understand that, while white students who are taught in the United States are taught within their cultural context, black students are often not: "Too few students achieve at their highest potential when the instructional climate is alien to their cultural experience" (Wynne 2004:116).

Food for Thought: Policy Implications

If we want to change society, we must change the university. Students can be cultivated in an environment that nurtures change agents. This does not come about in institutions that continue to maintain the status quo.

Cultural relevancy is very essential for professors to possess and execute in diverse classrooms. Students respond to and are stimulated by material that is culturally relevant to them. Curricula that is consistently distanced from their culture can be academically and personally

damaging. This distance can cause a disinvestment in the course material or internal feelings of one's culture not being sufficient enough to be a part of the academic discussion.

There is a necessary transformation that must take place within the academy. Pedagogy must "take various culture-based learning styles into account" when teaching the new population of students who are entering higher education at increasing rates (Colon 1991:82). Pedagogy that does not consider and reflect the demographic diversity our nation is experiencing is not beneficial, but harmful to students of diverse backgrounds, our future leaders.

This is where institutional programing comes into action. PWIs must implement diversity and social justice trainings for all of their faculty and staff members. This should be a required component of their professional development. This shows that the institution is not only serious about creating environments for diverse groups of students to thrive, but also that higher education professionals must take ownership over their own cultural competency and influence on the campus climate.

To attract professors of color, it will take meaningful and intensive recruitment from PWIs. Higher level administration will have to allocate significant amounts of funds to recruitment efforts and support programs for professors of color once they arrive to these institutions.

As we are moving to a more diverse nation and a more diverse student population, educators and school leaders must think critically about how the curriculum can be reformed to reflect a diverse human experience. We should be able to identify how relying solely on the voices of elite white men has created and maintained an academic hierarchy and system of oppression within the academic community along the lines of race, gender and class.

This is not only a call for universities to examine their curriculum and the material and scholars introduced to students in these courses, but also a recommendation for university leaders to take an epistemological approach in the transforming of the university curriculum. Epistemology is the study of how we come to understand knowledge and facts as truth. Collins describes epistemology as "the study of the philosophical problems in concepts of knowledge and truth" (1990:202). This approach is important in the curriculum transformation because understanding how we have come to understand theories and concepts as truth is essential in transforming one of the highest systems of disseminating knowledge to the nation's people.

Keeping black voices on the margins in other academic disciplines is detrimental to the education of African American youth. When higher education institutions fail to "recognize, validate and testify to the racism, poverty, inequality that students experience in their daily lives, [students] are likely to view the school and the curriculum as [fake] and 'sugar-coated' constructs that are out of touch with the real world and the struggles of their daily lives" (Wynne 2004: 108). This is because the knowledge they are learning is reflective of the beliefs, values and experiences of the dominant groups who have shaped their curriculum and shaped the academic reality they so often do not see themselves in. When the curriculum and pedagogy omits these realities, many students of color can choose to resist learning (Wynne 2004). Students who resist learning, as a result of a Eurocentric, masculinist curriculum, are not fulfilling their best potential. Therefore, it is important for predominantly white institutions to examine their curriculum to ensure it is not negatively impacting the academic success of their black students.

Higher education institutions can begin their move to a more diverse and inclusive academic curriculum by moving away from a Eurocentric perspective. The academy must take the necessary move from a single cultural ideology, that has historically been Western. This ideology has been used for understanding the human experience, which, as a result, has not been representative. Perhaps if all humans had a Western and Eurocentric background it would be, but that is not how our society is set up nor representative of how our nation will look in the next decades. Therefore, higher education institutions must move away from this Eurocentric viewpoint, that has been so ingrained in the academic curriculum, towards a more accurate understanding of the human experience.

If universities are not ready to examine their curriculum and acknowledge the oppressive forces that are ingrained in their academic studies, then they are not ready to move forward in providing thriving environments for any student of color. Colleges and universities must play a key role in the movement from a Eurocentric perspective to "cultural democracy in education" (Colon 1991:80). Racism can be combated directly and profoundly (Botstein 1991), which I believe can happen through a culturally responsive curriculum.

 It is important for African American students to have mentors who are able to support them academically, emotionally and professionally. This requires a person who genuinely cares about who they are, what they study, is knowledgeable of the higher education institution they attend and possess cultural competency. Mentors should have the skills to work through feelings of marginalization and alienation on campus.

To ensure African American students are thriving academically on campus, it is important for the classroom climate to move from one that is "alien", unwelcoming, and

exclusionary to one that appreciates and values their cultural experience and existence at the

higher education institution.

Chapter 3:
After School Hours

On the college campus, students will spend most of their time outside of the classroom. Although the knowledge learned and skills acquired while taking classes are instrumental in shaping a student's academic career, the things experienced outside of the classroom have just as much as a lasting impact on students' academic, personal, and professional lives.

This chapter will take a look at the campus climate, student involvement and integration on campus, and the choice in friend groups. All of these elements will be explored along the lines of race and specifically through cross-racial interactions.

Studying race and cross-racial interactions are important in regards to this particular topic because the race of students at predominantly white institutions are becoming more diverse with every new incoming class (Benton 2001). However, a university with diverse groups of students who do not interact with each other, and may even be explicitly or implicitly hostile to one another, is not a healthy environment. Why do scholars say cross-racial interaction is important? According to Espenshade and Radford:

> ...students who have more cross-racial interaction exhibit greater cognitive development, more positive academic and social self-concepts, higher graduation rates, increased leadership skills, more cultural awareness and understanding, higher levels of civic interest, and greater college satisfaction (2009:176).

Cross-racial interactions have the potential to break down racist ideologies that many students in America have been accustomed to viewing and hearing from the larger society. They can challenge stereotypes and misconceptions of the "other" and lead to a reduction in prejudice attitudes (Tatum 1997). Going to a diverse institution does not guarantee the benefits of being

exposed to students of different backgrounds; students must engage and interact with diverse students (Espenshade and Radford 2009:176). This is why evaluating race and cross-racial interactions on campus is so important.

Campus Climate

> ...the current attitudes, behaviors, standards and practices of an institution's employees and students, impacts success and retention of all community members. A positive, healthy climate, free of negativity and discrimination, offers an environment in which all community members can thrive (South Dakota State University).

Knowing the campus climate of any higher education institution gives one an understanding of students' experiences there, their comfortability on campus, and their aptitude for success (Tinto 1993). This section will gain a better understanding of how the campus climate affects the overall success of African American students at PWIs by examining racial tension and a student's sense of belonging. These factors can be influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of students and the institution's employees. How does the existence of racial tension and the lack of a sense of belonging affect a student's ability to thrive on campus?

Racial Tension

Racial Tension is the mental and emotional strain on individuals, groups of people and spaces as a result of race. Many people understand racial tension as explicit racist acts of hatred and discrimination. However, it can also manifest through implicit actions, like a white student tensing up as a black student passes or the choice in one's friend group.

A healthy campus climate is one that is "culturally responsive" to African American students (Benton 2001; Taylor 1989); however, what many black students encounter is one that

is "ambivalent about their presence" (Gallien 2004:6). *Do they belong here? How did they get into this school?* These are questions black students can face at predominantly white institutions. Most likely, a student will not come up and ask these questions, but it can be asked implicitly through conversations and social interactions or the lack thereof.

Based on data provided by the National Survey of College Experience (NSCE), Espenshade and Radford collected information to research the experiences of students in highly selective universities. They found that most students took their courses with white faculty members. This meant that most students of color interacted with professors of a different racial/ethnic background while white students did not (2009:181). Additionally, students of color attended classes that were populated predominantly by white students; and navigated campuses where majority of staff members on campus were white as well. Thus, inside and outside the classroom, students of color experienced cross-racial interactions with faculty, staff and students who were "not members of their own race" on a daily basis (Espenshade and Radford 2009:222). Why is this important and relevant to racial tension on college campuses? For students of color this is a cross-racial interaction; however, white students are more likely to not experience these cross-racial interactions because most of the adults and students on campus look like them. Thus, they are not being exposed to other racial/ethnic groups and not benefitting from the growing diversity of their campus (Saddlemire 1996). This can create racial tension on campus. As mentioned before in regards to faculty/staff, it is important for all students to see people of color holding high positions in various occupations. It has an impact on the racial attitudes of students and the beliefs of who can occupy higher level positions.

Race as We Experience it

As a social construct, how can race be defined? Originally constructed through the institution of slavery, it was used to distinguish between 'the enslaved' and 'the free'. Yes, there were free people of color and people of color who owned slaves, but these situations challenged the existing social order. Through race, the social hierarchy was maintained. White was associated with *mastery, freedom and good* while black was associated with *slavery, bondage, and bad*. Today, race is still this socially constructed characteristic that has an impact on how people interact with one another and how people are labeled.

> The parts of our identity that *do* capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us. The aspect of identity that is the target of others' attention, and subsequently of our own, often is that which sets us apart as exceptional or "other" in their eyes (Tatum 1997:21).

For many African American students, race is the identity that is often reflected back to them. African American students who do not have this experience, and are classified as "raceless" by some scholars, will be discussed later on in this chapter in the section, "The Oreo". Individuals who have grown up in the United States have been socialized to *see* race. Young children have even become socialized to see race, discern one's character based on the hue of their skin and develop their self-esteem based on their own race[37]. Tatum describes, in the above quote, the process of how one's identity becomes salient for them. An identity that garners the attention of others is one that distinguishes us as *different* or *deviating from the norm* (Benton 2001). As a result, this identity also gets our attention and becomes an important part of our existence. For white students, race is not salient for them because they do not have to think about it. White

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[37] In 1939 and 1940, Psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted the doll test among African American children in Washington, D.C. It showed the effects of segregation on one's self identity and how it can lead to internalized racism.

people can go throughout their life without ever thinking about their own racial identity because their whiteness is seen as *the norm* since they are a dominant group in society (Tatum 1997; Massey et al. 2003).

The Racial Divide

What does a racial divide look like on a college campus? In earlier discussions, higher education institutions were described as microcosms of larger society, meaning that problems of race, inequality and discrimination also playout within the structures of colleges and universities, but in smaller way. Likewise, racial divides on campuses are similar to those in society: spatial segregation, implicit racial attitudes, and misunderstandings/misrepresentations of groups of people. This chapter will primarily focus on the manifestations of spatial distance.

Is spatial distance a negative thing? The answer to this question is not as easy as it seems. In terms of spatial distance and in context with the topic of this paper, I am referring to the grouping of same-race individuals who distance themselves from those of different racial groups. Tatum explains that racial grouping, which occurs in racially mixed spaces, is a "developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism" (1997:62). According to her research, racism acts as a mechanism that brings people together who are of the same race while simultaneously pushing away those from other racial groups. For Tatum, this is a "positive coping strategy" for students of color who need support in this "stressful" environment. Turning to peers (Benton 2001; Fleming 1984) who share a similar level of understanding is reaffirming and helps students persist in these environments by being able to share one's experience with someone who has lived it (Tatum 1997) or one who will not invalidate it. Thus, if racism -

explicit and implicit - persists on predominantly white campuses, black students will continue forming friendships and alliances with fellow black students as a means for survival.

Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF), Massey and his colleagues explored how different elements of a student's background influenced their academic performance at top higher education institutions. What's most relevant to this paper is their chapter on racial identity and attitudes. Their research found that

> ...blacks, on average, perceived whites to be quite discriminatory. Latinos, Asians, and whites themselves also rated whites quite negatively on this trait. In fact, all groups tended to see themselves and each other as likely to discriminate against members of other groups. In general, minority group members had favorable stereotypes of whites, as did whites of themselves (Massey et al. 2003:145).

The labels we place on other groups and stereotypes we attribute to groups of people have a significant impact on how groups are perceived and thus how we interact with them. In this case, viewing one another as likely to discriminate further solidifies the racial divide by avoiding other groups all together. Spatial distance becomes a defense mechanism for groups of people who are likely to be discriminated against (Tatum 1997). Furthermore, these "stereotypical attitudes reflect personal likes and dislikes and beliefs about the 'proper' status hierarchy among groups" (Massey et al. 2003:145). As a result groups become more spatially distant and the racial divide becomes institutionalized within the daily operations of social life (Clewell and Anderson 1995; Taylor 1989). What student space to visit, where to sit in the cafeteria, and what social event to attend, are the choices that can contribute to maintaining the spatial distance between racial groups.

How do PWIs Get to the Point of Having Racial Tension?

As defined earlier, racial tension is a strain between racial groups which can lead to mental, emotional, and physical anguish. This section will analyze racial tension at predominantly white campuses more in depth. How do predominantly white institutions get to the point of racial tension existing on their campuses? It begins with the increase of students of color (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Taylor 1989). Well, actually it starts with racism and a lack of cultural competency, but at least two different racial groups must exist on campus for this tension to occur and take root.

In discussing racial tensions on campus, the discussion will be focused on implicit acts of racism rather than the explicit acts.

> The problems that black students faced on predominantly white college campuses in the post-Civil Rights Movement era were usually not experiences of explicit racism. Rather, they faced racial insensitivity and racial ignorance on a daily basis. What exacerbated their frustrations was that many alumni recall not having the tools to respond to these complicated and shape-shifting insults, some of which were unconsciously perpetrated by their assailants (Willie 2003:47).

Implicit acts of racism can be just as harmful as explicit acts, directly affecting the psyche of African American students. Implicit acts can be the most challenging to discern as racism because the person committing the act is often unaware of the effects of their words and actions. This creates frustration and resentment amongst black students who may have to deal with this ignorance on a daily basis from students, to faculty, to staff. Another important factor that Willie brings up is the lack of tools held by black students to respond these instances of implicit racism. *What should I say? What should I do? How do I let this person know how their words just affected me?* These questions went unanswered as black students struggled in their social interactions with white members of the campus community.

How a student believes they are perceived, as a member of their racial group, also influences the development and perpetuation of racial tension on campus. "According to respondents, white students appeared scared of, sometimes hostile toward, and usually indifferent to black students" (Willie 2003:49). No one wants to be around someone who is apathetic to their presence. Experiencing this feeling can create an aversion in black students when associating with white students; thus strengthening the racial divide. Black students talk to one another about their experiences. Having an overwhelming number of insensitive, alarming, and racists interactions between black and nonblack groups increases social distance between these groups. The racial divide and social distance are all factors in preserving racial tension on predominantly white institutions.

Another important aspect that must be acknowledged as a contributing factor in reinforcing racial tension is affirmative action (Clewell and Anderson 1995). While racial quotas and racial preferencing has been banned in the college application process, affirmative action remains a 'hot topic' at PWIs that are becoming racially diverse. In regards to one's closeness to "affirmative action beneficiaries", white students expressed the least closeness while blacks felt the greatest closeness to those benefiting from affirmative action, especially when the group was black" (Massey et al. 2003:142). One reason for this difference is an understanding among blacks of why affirmative action programs were created and how it has benefitted historically disadvantaged groups. Another reason is the stereotypical attitudes associated with affirmative action. The belief is that those who benefit from affirmative action programs did not work for their position, are less qualified and took the position from a white person who was more deserving. Additionally, this distance from "affirmative action beneficiaries" is a reaffirmation of

a stereotype that "emerges from the myth of intellectual inferiority" that "without affirmative action most black and Latino students would not be admitted" (Massey et al. 2003:145). Massey et al. argue that this understanding will increase racial tensions on campus in addition to stereotype threat amongst students of color.

Seeing oneself through the eyes of another can lead to discomfort (Dilg 2003) and to disassociation with that person or group of people if what is reflected back is negative. For many African American students, looking through the eyes of the other, or those who are not black, oftentimes reflects unfavorable societal expectations and stereotypes of black people. As a black student, understanding that students of other racial groups identify these unfavorable traits with you can be disheartening and yet strengthens racial tension on campus.

What does it mean for racial tension to exist at PWIs?

For one, recognizing and acknowledging racial tension on a campus is an important and commendable step. For some campus leaders, they do not want to give voice to this strain on campus life (Allen 1992). Others, as Willie has mentioned, do not have the tools to identify this tension if it does not exist explicitly. Recognizing racial tension on a college campus is an important step because it comes before actually doing something to combat it.

For racial tension to exist at PWIs is for it also to exist in the larger society because remember, universities are microcosms. It can also mean that racism still exists within the institution and culture of colleges and universities. Ignoring and covering up the main issue has led to a host of over problems since racism has affected every sector of society.

The Effects of the Racial Climate on the Experiences of Black Students

Now, how does all of this - racial tension, spatial distancing and the racial divide on college campuses - effect black students? All of this influences the campus climate. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the campus climate is associated with one's comfortability on campus and their aptitude for success. So, this directly and indirectly affects the comfortability and success of African American students.

> Degree of comfort also determines social behaviors, such as whether to run for student government, whether to seek out diverse friendships, whether to pledge a fraternity or sorority, or simply whether to feel safe walking across campus at night. Doubts about these matters are particularly strong for minority students attending predominantly white colleges and universities (Massey et al. 2003:133).

Thus, this level of comfort dictates other areas of a student's life. As stated above, students of color who may lack a sense of comfort can transfer this feeling into distancing oneself from the social activities on campus. This is not a conducive environment for African American students to thrive academically and socially. Additionally, the racial climate and perceived social distance to different groups, that a first year student experiences, can have a lasting influence on how they socially interact with these groups during the rest of their college years (Espenshade and Radford 2009:190). So, it is very important to address racial tensions and a poor racial climate on campus because it can last with a student throughout their college years and negatively impact their experience with interacting with different groups of people.

Sense of Belonging

A student's sense of belonging is their feeling or perception of being a part of the campus community and a member of the student body. A feeling of belonging is a human need - the necessity of belonging and being accepted in a social space. A student's sense of belonging on

college campuses are extremely important to their social and emotional health. Students who possess a strong sense of belonging are more integrated in the campus culture and feel as though they have ownership over their experiences and position on campus. Owning one's experiences reflects a sense of agency. Based on this, African American students who possess a sense of belonging at their higher education institutions feel more welcomed and accepted, which in turn positively affects their experiences on campus and in the classroom leading to higher levels of academic success (Allen 1992; Benton 2001; Kobrack 1992; Taylor 1989). "Predominantly [w]hite colleges concerned about attracting and keeping [b]lack students need to take seriously the psychological toll extracted from students of color in inhospitable environments and the critical role that cultural space can play" (Tatum 1997:80). The psychological concept of one's sense of belonging should not be taken lightly. According to Tatum, PWIs who recognize this have higher retention rates among their black students and their campuses become more attractive to future black students (Benton 2001; Allen 1992). Two important questions prospective students ask themselves is, "Can I see myself going here?" and "Do I fit in here?". Fitting in is not so much about conformity, but about feeling comfortable in one's own skin, characteristics, interests, and talents.

Of course it can be argued that developing a sense of belonging is important for all students, so why focus specifically on how it affects black students? Although that argument is valid, this paper is specifically discussing the ways in which predominantly white colleges and universities can better support African American students to assure their academic, social, and emotional success. One's sense of belonging on campus is tied to all three aspects (Tinto 1993). Additionally, PWIs have historically produced environments inhospitable to African American

students (Benton 2001), so it is important that these institutions acknowledge the root of this problem, racism. As discussed earlier, explicit racism existed for the most part in the earlier years of racial integration on college campuses, while now, implicit racism exists at a greater degree within the structures of higher education institutions. However, this does not mean that explicit racism does not exist at all on college campuses. Tatum refers to explicit and implicit racism as overt and covert racism.

> White students and faculty frequently underestimate the power and presence of the overt [explicit] and covert [implicit] manifestations of racism on campus, and students of color often come to predominantly White campuses expecting more civility [niceness, courtesy, politeness] than they find...the desire to retreat to a safe space is understandable (Tatum 1997:78).

For black students, these "manifestations of racism" play an important role in how they feel at PWIs. Many experience instances of racism that cause them to "retreat" to a space this is comfortable and where they can find support - oftentimes this is with other students of color. For black students, if a sense of belonging is not found with the larger student population, it will be searched for elsewhere (Taylor 1989). This can impede cross-racial interactions, which as discussed, is beneficial to all college students and leads to more culturally aware and civically engaged individuals.

Feeling Like the Other

Students who are labeled as *the other* face challenges of being accepted and understood on college campuses. As established earlier, there exists a human need to belong and feel accepted. College students want to be acknowledged on college campuses by their professors and fellow students (Delpit 2006; Kobrach 1992; Taylor 1989). It is not healthy for students to feel

invisible on campus or characterized as different. When I say *different* I am not referring to a student's uniqueness and their talents and interests that set them apart. I am referring to the feeling of being *peculiar* to the majority student body in a way that creates distancing and an "us" vs. "them" mentality. As a black student who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and also attended a predominantly white college, Willie describes her experience in being "othered":

> The gaze of a few white classmates felt like a spotlight, and I was paralyzed, feeling much of the time as though I were on a stage without a script...I'd been identified by others as different in my hometown and at college, and no matter how much I valued or took pride in that difference I had longed to feel normal (Willie 2003:36).

She was watched by her majority classmates because she was racially different than them. Her race made her stand out as different and this influenced how some of her classmates interacted with her. Through this excerpt from her memories, one can see the frustrations she dealt with as an "othered" individual. Yes she was prideful and happy in her own skin, but her human need was to feel like she belonged and feel accepted.

Involvement and Integration on Campus

A student's involvement and integration on campus are two important factors of a student's life on college campuses. For African American students, based on the levels of these two components, one can get an idea of how comfortable a student feels and healthy their social lives are (Taylor 1989; Tinto 1993).

Involvement on campus is judged by a student's engagement in extracurricular activities and campus events. On a college tour as a high school senior, the tour guide advised us that if we wanted to go to college just for academics then we should go to school online. Although I may not advise another college-bound student that, it shines a light on campus life Attending higher education institutions on college campuses is so much more than the classroom experience. Being engaged in the campus community through one's involvement in clubs and participation in activities, prepares one to truly grow into a well-rounded student and informed individual.

Integration on campus is not about giving up one's cultural identity and inner interests to *conform* to the larger campus culture. In other words, it does not mean assimilation. Assimilation has garnered a negative connotation, translating into the shedding of one's culture and identity. This is not what integration is. Integration is co-existing together with other groups, engaging in cross-group interactions and maintaining cultural awareness.

Affirmation of Unique Experiences on Campus

A fundamental component of African American students becoming more integrated on campus is having their unique experiences affirmed by the institution. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, it is the environmental stressor of racism that leads to racial grouping as a coping strategy.

Tatum provides an example of an organization that took the courage to recognize these experiences and implement institutional mechanism of combating the covert and overt racism that its employees faced from fellow employees and perhaps the institution itself. These organizations have created spaces and provided time for their black employees to come together to discuss their experiences, provide support for one another and network. These organizations

found that "such activity supports the recruitment, retention, and heightened productivity of their employees...it is an institutional affirmation of the unique challenges facing employees of color" (Tatum 1997:90).

For students of color who attend higher education institutions that do not do this, they find ways to voice their experiences and obtain positions on campus that will give them the opportunity to speak out on racial and cultural issues on campus (Allen 1992; Dilg 2003). Although it is the result of the lack of institutional affirmation and support, it is a way that students get involved with the campus community. By combating their campus issues, they become more culturally aware and competent as well as civically engaged. So, being a student of color, or specifically an African American student does not directly exclude one from engaging or getting involved with the campus community but it can have an effect on *how* students get involved and *what* they get involved in.

Social Distance on Campus

Social distance between groups is how near or far away one feels toward individuals of a particular race or ethnicity (Massey et al. 2003:138). The social distance of racial groups on campus is important to study when looking at how integration on campus is effected. From Willie's research on black students who attended Northwestern, most of those students were involved in black clubs and organizations and had made strong friendships with other black students; however, many of them were disappointed when reflecting back on the lack of diversity in their friendships (2003). They felt "cheated" and "expected college to be a place in which bonds were forged in celebration of newfound commonalities, not only with with other African Americans". How does a student enter college with a desire to diversify their friend groups and

experience new cultures to leaving college without much luck? This section will look at how the social distance between racial groups are created and maintained throughout a college student's years in school.

Looking back at the research of Massey and his colleagues, respondents to the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF) felt closest to members of their own racial/ethnic group and this feeling was strongest for whites (7.48) - on a scale of 1 to 10 - followed by blacks (7.42), Asians (7.38), and Latinos (6.96) (2003:140). These feelings were not a result of students' experiences on campus because the respondents were freshmen, therefore they entered college with these predispositions. They argue that this is attributed to the inclination of human beings to feel closest to those they perceive to be like themselves (2003). This argument makes sense, but I think it goes further than this. It is an example of how a society shaped by racism affects individuals and is transferred through their actions. Living in a nation where residential segregation is still an issue, in addition to segregation in occupational positions, education and other sectors, it develops into who one feels comfortable being around.

This phenomenon is also found in the National Survey of College Experience (NSCE) used by Espenshade and Radford. "Roughly 90 percent of NSCE students report socializing frequently with, rooming with, and having as one of their five closest friends a classmate from the same racial or ethnic background" (Espenshade and Radford 2009:223). Although in all racial groups there tended to be more social interactions within groups than between groups, interestingly, they found that the greatest social distance occurred between black and nonblack peers. This is interesting because it brings the existing racial order into question. As the United States is becoming more diverse and more than half of all Americans are projected to belong to a

"minority" group (any group other than non-Hispanic White alone) by 2044[38], the question is whether we will move from the *white* and *nonwhite* categorization to a *black* and *nonblack* one. This also highlights an on campus mechanism that is creating distance particularly between black students and their *nonblack* peers.

Class and Integration

What hasn't been discussed is how class plays a factor in cross-racial interactions and how it effects a black's student's ability to integrate on campus. Based on their research, "black students walked onto campus feeling relatively close to poor Latinos and poor blacks, relatively distant from poor whites and Asians, but most alienated from rich whites and Asians" (Massey et al. 2003:142). In this example, one sees how race intersects with class on this issue. Massey argues that this distance and feelings of alienation of those with class privilege does not provide a great foundation in adjusting to "the nation's wealthiest college campuses" (2003:142). This is relevant because he is focusing on the top higher education institutions. This is appropriate to this project because most of those top schools are predominantly white institutions. Massey is arguing that this social distance along class lines is not beneficial for students trying to adapt to higher education institutions that are also the wealthiest college campuses.

Additionally, in this case, the reader was not given the class of the black respondents who felt the closest to poor Latinos and poor blacks. Is this finding the same for black students from lower-income families and those from wealthy families? The finding could be different for the two class groups. For lower income black students, who often live in racially segregated

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[38] United States Census Bureau. 2015. "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060" (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf).

communities (Massey and Denton 1993), their proximity to poor black and latino students can be a result of who they grew up around and the groups of people they are used to socially interacting with. This pre-exposure to them before college heightens their comfortability while in college. The same goes for wealthy black students. If it was found that they felt closer to rich white students, this could be associated with their backgrounds and their family's ability to live in *better* neighborhoods with *better* schools, which may have overwhelmingly been predominantly white spaces.

> ...perceived closeness is increased when a target group is given class characteristics similar to those of the respondent's. The bad news is that perceived closeness is substantially decreased when target groups are given stereotypical characteristics such as poverty...in relative terms we detect a subtle but real tendency to stereotype groups in a manner consistent with racist ideology (Massey et al. 2003:152).

Similarly to race, class can also be a barrier in cross-groups interactions. For whites, their perceived closeness to *middle-class* blacks was higher than their closeness to *poor* blacks; their closeness to blacks in general was at 5.16 while it was 6.60 for blacks in the middle class and 4.20 for impoverished blacks. This social distance can be based on a difference in interests or tastes or in the negative/stereotypical labeling of groups of people. This is important because it impedes cross-group interactions. Additionally, if most blacks on campus are stereotyped as poor, based on their race, then white students and other nonblack students may already perceive themselves as socially distant due to stereotypical labeling.

Friend Groups

One's choice in friends can say a lot about the type of person they are and what they look for in camaraderie. On college campuses, it can also reflect the stressors of campus life and the

needs of that student. How does one's personal choice in friendship reflect the racial dynamics on campus or even inequalities or racism within higher education institutions? This refers back to racial tension, social distancing and one's sense of belonging. What does it mean for black students to have predominantly black friends or the contrary and should this matter? A person can choose to be friends with whomever they want to. However, one's choice in friends and choice in who they choose to interact with on a closer level can reveal racial dynamics on campus (Massey et al. 2003). According to the NSCE, Espenshade and Radford found that sophomores and juniors who had more friendships with students from backgrounds different than their own exhibited less prejudice when they graduated (2009). In this example, one's choice in friend groups while in school influenced their racial attitudes post-college.

The Black Table

At almost any predominantly white institution one goes to, the black table exists. The black table is symbolic of black unity. It is where black students come together to eat, study, talk, and most importantly, share experiences and provide support. As established earlier, Tatum discussed how these spaces came about and why they were supportive for the success of African American students. As a result of the lack of institutional affirmation, of the unique experiences that black students face, and the lack of institutional support, these spaces are created to form encouragement through different avenues - within. Conversations can range from a number of topics, but the subject of discussion that is most unique to this table is that of racial incidents. This is symbolic of the black table because discussing these experiences of covert racism can be frustrating especially when a black student is attempting to explain a racist situation that is brushed off by a *nonblack* friend.

> When feelings, rational, or irrational, are invalidated, most people disengage.
> They not only choose to discontinue the conversation but are more likely to turn
> to someone who will understand their perspective (Tatum 1997:60).

Turning to someone who understands is where the black table comes in. Looking from the outside in, it looks like students are deliberately secluding themselves - what some describe as "self-segregation". However, this is a defense mechanism and response to racism on school campuses (Benton 2001; Fleming 1984). Willie, discussing the predominantly white college she attended: "the larger campus community encouraged a level of racial camaraderie, and even a survival mentality, among black students" (2003:50). So, the black table can exist as a survival mechanism for students to persists through the challenges they face inside and outside of the classroom. It is important for black students to be able to discuss their experiences as *black* students, have those stories validated, and perhaps even receive advice regarding their concerns, as discussed earlier. Although the friend who brushes off the racial incident may not be racist, they are being complicit with the racist structures. Tatum uses the phrase *passive racist:* one who is not actively fighting racism but is going along with the system and perhaps benefiting from it as well.

Tatum further argues that a student's presence at the *black table* is also an expression of one's identity development, because all black students are not ready for the black table: "They may not yet have had their own encounters with racism and race may not be very salient for them" (Tatum 1997:67). But for students who have developed a strong racial identity, the black table is essential to their growth and success as a student in predominantly white spaces.

According to the findings of Massey and his colleagues, having a strong racial identity may not be a positive thing, or rather it is not beneficial to forging cross-racial dialogue. Students

who have a strong racial identity are "associated with greater social distance from whites and an unfavorable view of their discriminatory nature, but greater perceived closeness with ingroup members and more positive stereotypes of them" (Massey et al. 2003:153). A strong racial identity is good in developing favorable images of oneself and one's racial group; however, it prompts social distancing, which as discussed above is not advantageous for predominantly white institutions as they are becoming more diverse. Tatum also acknowledges that the black table and its "oppositional stance" "keeps the dominant group at a distance" (1997:60). When white members of the community see a table occupied by all black students, they rationalize it as a space not for them because they are not black. Nevertheless, it must be reiterated that the development of such is based on "systematic exclusion" of black students from the campus culture on predominantly white campuses. Ninety percent of all students of color said that an "ingroup identity" was somehow important to them and black students were the most likely to comply to a single ingroup identity (Massey et al. 2003).

> As students of color come to embrace their racial identity more fully, they may move into a period of wanting to surround themselves with overt signs of their own culture and to remove themselves from those in the dominant culture (Dilg 2003:64).

Embracing one's racial identity and developing a strong sense of self through the eyes of one's racial group is not something to be criticized, but celebrated. Students of color grow up in a nation where their cultures become negatively stereotyped and culturally appropriated by the dominant group. Oftentimes, they do not learn about their cultures in the classroom or see it accurately/positively reflected in the various media platforms. Thus, for students of color who attend higher learning institutions, it can be a chance to learn about their cultures in the

classroom and engage with it in social spaces on campus. This can be reflected through the classes they choose that studies their culture in history or literature, or in their desire to deepen their relationships with fellow students and staff/faculty members of their same culture. Interestingly, for some students, this can also mean distancing themselves from individuals in the dominant culture (Dilg 2003:64).

So the existence of the black table and the question of whether it is *okay* has a nuanced answer. As Espenshade and Radford acknowledge, "intraracial explorations of race and ethnicity can be just as important as interracial dialogues" (177). It can not only lead students to healthier relationships and higher levels of happiness and a sense of belonging on campus, but also an increased academic performance (Tatum 1997).

The "Oreo"

Ask any black student who has grown up in the United States what the oreo reference means and they will most likely know. It doesn't matter if they've attended predominantly black or white schools or grew up in the south versus the north, just about every black child has heard of the epithet, *oreo*. An oreo is a chocolate cookie with white icing on the the inside. However, when used as an epithet, it refers to black people who are somehow "white" on the inside. It is often used in schools to distinguish a student as oppositional to black culture and thus in line with the dominant culture, or white culture. Being an oreo meant that a student was not *fully* black - only black on the outside. Someone could be labeled an oreo based on their interests, speech, or tastes. Someone could also be labeled an oreo if their friend group was predominantly white. Therefore, having solely white friends could create great racial tension within the black community.

On college campuses, Willie describes this phenomenon as a "desire to divide up the world into people who are racial warriors and others who are racial sellouts" (2003:50). To be a "racial warrior" would be to fight for one's racial group and form solidarity and unity on racial issues that foster strong racial identities. A racial sellout would be one who is contrary to this, one who is uninformed about racial issues and does not see oneself through the lens of their racial group but as one whose racial identity is not salient for them. According to Willie, an *oreo* would be labeled a racial sellout. Those who find themselves in this group may be looked at by black students as "not black enough" or a traitor, while white students may view this student as "one of the good ones" (Willie 2003) or "not like other blacks" (Saddlemire 1996).

Some scholars have come to regard these students as those who are "raceless". They "display a weaker sense of common fate [within their racial group], are more concerned with how whites perceive them, are less concerned with how they are seen by ingroup members, and tend to reject separatists that maintain racial boundaries" (Massey et al. 2003:152). Tatum, on the other hand, would refer to these students as ones who have not fully developed their racial identity. In regards to social distance, these students feel closer to whites and more distant from their own group (Massey et al. 2003). Willie argues that this stems from a difference in desires: "the desire for acceptance by one's own group and by the larger group, the desire to celebrate the changes in race relations that have occurred in the United States" (2003). Black students who experience greater distance from their fellow black peers are excising the mobility that they so rightly have, as a result of federal policies in racial equality; while black students who have a greater distance from members of other racial groups prefer to strengthen their racial identities and desire ingroup acceptance by their racial peers.

Dilg would argue that a black student's desire to distance themselves from their racial group or from individuals who exhibit characteristics/stereotypes of their racial group is responding to the pressures of being in a predominantly white space. "Students of color may perceive that they have a greater chance of success by downplaying their racial or cultural identity" (Dilg 2003:72). She refers to this as "downplaying" one's racial identity and developing a need to code-switch. Code-switching is "adopting different personal styles to fit the needs of specific settings" (Dilg 2003:73). For some black students, this may be a necessary technique for success at predominantly white institutions. It may be a change or switch in speech, dress, and interests that makes them fit in and feel accepted on campus.

Thoughts for Change: Policy Implications

When examining how higher education institutions can better support African American students, school leaders must explore the campus climate to evaluate whether it is conducive for the academic and social success of black students. Assessing the campus climate is highly informative for understanding how African American students are experiencing the college campus.

To create environments where not only African American students feel welcomed and comfortable, but other diverse groups of students do as well, higher level administrators in colleges and universities must understand how to foster healthy cross-racial interactions. Through cross-racial interactions, students can become knowledgeable about other cultures, leading to higher levels of cultural competency and behaviors that promote a welcoming and accepting environment.

Navigating a "majority campus" should not be disregarded as an irrelevant concern. For African American students, this can play a significant factor in whether they feel comfortable, accepted and even safe on campus. Gallien argues that for many African American students, there are few "campus-sponsored mentoring programs" available to support them in negotiating a predominantly white campus (2004:6). This lack of institutional support can be detrimental to the academic and social success of African American students.

A campus that provides an environment for African American students to thrive and flourish has very little racial tension. Therefore, racial tension and racism itself must not go *unchecked* by higher education institutions. "The continuing presence of racism in our culture is visible on campus in overt and implicit ways. Actual hostility, avoidance and condescension - even if it is thoughtless liberal rhetoric - are all elements of the larger dilemma" (Botstein 1991:89). The larger dilemma that Botstein is referring to is the inclination to avoid discussing the root causes of racism and how it has bleed into the institutions that make up the fabric of our society. I agree with Tatum that educational institutions should be encouraging the acknowledgement of racism within their frameworks and crafting ways to effectively respond to it, rather than finding ways to hinder this institutional affirmation (1997).

Hostile environments impede the growth of one's sense of belonging. School leaders must understand this and find ways to combat the ways in which their campuses produce spaces that are detrimental to the sense of belonging among African American students. How can higher education institutions foster environments that promote a sense of belonging amongst its students? Students need to feel "valued, protected, accepted and socially connected" and have a place "to be rejuvenated and to feel anchored in one's cultural community" (Tatum 1997:80).

These factors will encourage students to excel academically and to engage in cross-racial interactions[39]. I want to place emphasis on the importance of feeling connected and grounded in one's cultural community. If the campus community does not embrace and facilitate a safe space for one to engage in their cultural community or promotes a dominant culture that is hostile to diverse cultures, this can be damaging to students of color. Additionally, students need to feel welcomed (Willie 2003). Feeling welcomed is a large part of developing one's sense of belonging. If a student is not well received and accepted on campus, they will most likely feel like an outsider on their own campus and feel as though they don't belong. This can cause some students to transfer to a different institution or remain a student on campus and turn to a different community of individuals or develop an oppositional stance to the campus culture, which can create a social stressor on students.

College campuses must strive to embrace and celebrate differences, not erase or conceal them, to foster more cross-group dialogue. For African American students, who have found comfort in being solely around other black students, branching out and becoming more integrated with the campus community will require higher level leaders to institutionally affirm their unique experiences on campus. It is ignoring these experiences that solidify racial tension and creates a build up of frustration and resentment among black students. Predominantly white institutions must be ready and equipped with the adequate tools[40] to acknowledge that students of color have unique experiences on their college campuses and therefore require institutional support that is tailored to helping students work through it. This institutional support can look

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[39] Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 1997. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race."

[40] *These tools can include, but are not limited to, knowledge, resources, and training.*

like spaces on campus for students to discuss their grievances, an endowment for the employment of a staff member who is trained and experienced in supporting African American students academically, socially, and emotionally or the transformation of the eurocentric curriculum (refer to chapter 2 for the discussion on this component).

A main focus of this project was examining how higher education institutions can support diverse groups of students who have historically been underrepresented in higher education as they are continuing to gain a significant level of access to these institutions. I am asserting that as racial diversity increases at predominantly white institutions, racial tension also has the potential to rise and persist, if not addressed appropriately by the college or university. This is why understanding the development and maintenance of racial tension on college campuses are so important because change can't be made if the problems cannot be identified and understood by students, faculty, staff and higher level administrators. Next is steps toward change.

Conclusion:
"The Blueprint"

With the significant number of African Americans who are enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, and the projection for that number to increase by 26 percent in 2022 (the second largest increase among all racial/ethnic groups; Hispanic/Latinos had the highest percentage at 27 percent), it is imperative that higher education institutions think critically about how their students are being supported academically, socially, and emotionally. A key factor is ensuring students are thriving on campus and not just existing. By improving the inside and outside the classroom experience, I hypothesize that the educational outcomes of African Americans to be improved.

Inside the Classroom

Faculty

- The faculty-student relationship influences how the student engages with the course material and the comfortability of the student in the classroom.

- Faculty members play a major role in ensuring that the classroom is a safe and equitable space.

- It is a benefit for all students to take classes and engage with faculty of color.

  Recommendations

  ○ Implement diversity trainings for all faculty and staff members that are social justice oriented and focus on developing cultural competency.

  ○ Ensure that there is ongoing professional development about discussing and facilitating conversations on social justice issues in the world and on campus.

○ Invest in faculty/staff recruitment services for employing more people of color.

○ Provide support networks and groups for faculty and staff of color that meets regularly.

○ Create a Bias Reporting Team whose main function will be to evaluate instances of discrimination, bias, and prejudiceness in faculty:student relations, faculty:faculty interactions, and student:student involvements.

Curriculum

- The knowledge validation process has been controlled primarily by elite, white men. As a result, their ideas and theories have shaped the curriculum to represent Western, Eurocentric and masculinist perspectives.

- Black voices (like the voices of other communities of color) have historically been placed on the margins in academia. As a result, making space for Black studies and black scholars in academic disciplines can still be a challenge for many predominantly white institutions.

Recommendations

○ As an institution of higher learning, move away from the Eurocentric perspective in the curriculum by:

■ discussing history and cultures of diverse groups.

■ moving to a culturally responsive curriculum that presents a more broad and diverse human experience.

■ recognizing and challenging the history and epistemology rooted in oppression.

○ Professors should develop culturally competent pedagogical skills.

Voice: A Seat at the Table

- For many African American students at predominantly white institutions, the classroom experience can be isolating.

- On majority campuses, many blacks are at risk of stereotypical threat: confirming a negative stereotype as a result of possibly being perceived as "ignorant" by white peers.

- More successful African Americans have a mentor and professors who maintain high expectations and demand excellence.

  Recommendations

  ○ Provide black students with diverse faculty, staff members, and students who can support academically.

  ○ Invest in more support staff members of color (i.e., academic advisors, health counselors, psychiatrists)

  ○ Create a mentoring program to pair interested black students with mentors and professors who have been trained and tooled with the skills to help diverse groups of students, but specifically black students.

Outside the Classroom

- Campus Climate

  ○ A campus climate consists of the current attitudes, behaviors, standards and practices held by an institution's employees and students.

  ○ It impacts the success and retention of all community members.

- ○ The environment blacks can encounter at PWIs are racially hostile ones where students who are ambivalent about their presence are unwelcoming to them.

- ○ Racial tension and racial indifference on campus come about through institutional racism working within the structures of the school.

- ○ A student's sense of belonging is highly connected to the campus climate.

- Involvement and Integration on Campus

  - ○ A student's level of involvement and integration on campus can give administrators an idea of how comfortable a student feels on campus and how healthy their social lives are.

  - ○ Integration does not mean assimilating: it refers to engaging in cross-racial/group interactions and developing cultural competency.

  - ○ African American students whose experiences are recognized and affirmed by the institution are more likely to become integrated on campus.

  - ○ On average, there are more intraracial interactions on campus than interracial ones (Massey et al. 2003).

  - ○ The greatest social distance is between blacks and nonblacks (Espenshade and Radford 2009).

- Friend Groups

  - ○ One's choice in friends can reflect racial dynamics on campus.

  - ○ Having a diverse group of friends can lead to a decrease in prejudice attitudes (Espenshade and Radford 2009).

○ The "Black table" is formed through a lack of institutional affirmation and institutional support for the unique experiences of black students.

○ An "Oreo" is a racial epithet used by black students to distinguish another black student who is operating in a way oppositional to black culture and therefore in line with the dominant culture (white culture).

○ Black students who distance themselves from their racial group is also a response to the pressures of being in a predominantly white space.

Recommendations:

○ Create a group consisting of faculty, staff and students to discuss how forms of racism exist on campus and produce a campus-specific action plan as a group.

○ Give a campus climate survey to all students on campus to gauge students' level of comfortability on campus and to gain an understanding of students' experiences.

○ Invest in creating a multicultural space or center on campus that celebrates, acknowledges and supports diverse identities on campus. This would also call for an endowment in the salary of the multicultural director and other staff members.

○ Implement a required social justice course within the school's curriculum to create a heightened level of cultural competency and cross-group dialogue.

○ Create a group of faculty and staff members who can meet regularly with black students to discuss incidents of racism on campus and actions for change.

Final comments

To make higher education more "culturally democratic", higher education institutions must be willing to endure the transformation of their character, structure and culture (Colon 1991:84). It will require higher level leadership within each school. "In the matters of race, a commitment to widening access for students, diversifying the composition of the faculty and staff, and creating an atmosphere of respect and tolerance on the campus have clearly needed support from chief administrators and governing boards" (Botstein 1991:90). It takes the recognizing, affirming and implementing from school leaderships to create a cultural shift within institutions, because this is where a bulk of the power, resources and funding lies. "Without a persistent and aggressive commitment to student success, the United States runs the risk of creating a permanent underclass citizens and social and economic consequences that adversely affect all Americans" (Hikes 2004:17).

To increase the participation and integration of African American students in campus life, school leaders must articulate a sense of urgency - that "permeate[s] all levels of the institution - by prioritizing it on the institutional agenda" (Colon 1991:82). It will take a deliberate and intense examination of the existing structure to analyze if it is producing an environment that is conducive to the success of students of color.

Reflections from the Author: The Beginning of a New Chapter

In late September of 2011, after a little more than a month of being a student at Bard College, I wanted to transfer. I remember feeling so sad and depressed each day. Waking up to attend class felt like a daily struggle. My bright smile and happy aura made others think that everything was okay, but inside I was emotionally drained from the things I encountered as a black, christian, woman from a low-income family on Bard's campus. During our two-day fall break in October, I remember going to Atlanta to see family and to actually go on a college tour at Georgia State University, where I planned on applying and transferring to.

When transferring from Bard, one has to fill out a form that requires the attachment of a letter stating why one has intended to transfer to another higher education institution. Below is the letter I wrote as a first year in October 2011. I never officially submitted the letter.

I've read the quote "Nothing could be worse than the fear that one had given up too soon, and left one unexpended effort that might have saved the world" by Jane Addams before and it stuck with me. In the past few months, while contemplating whether Bard was truly the place for me, this quote and idea often came up. I thought to myself, "How can you give up on such a great opportunity?", "How can you give up on your Posse?", "How can you support your Posse if you 'give up'?" ,"What will people think if you leave?". As I thought about all the questions I asked myself, I noticed a common theme. All of my questions had to do with outside forces and not with what was best for myself. So, I decided to make a "pros and cons" list for leaving Bard. The pros definitely outweighed the cons.

Bard just isn't the place for me. I've heard that Bard is either a place you love or a place you hate and I think it's clear what side I'm on. You may wonder if I was a terrible student, or if I didn't know how to study, but actually, I'm the complete opposite. I've gotten many compliments from my professors of being an outstanding student! The work was challenging but not undoable. Honestly, my problems with Bard come socially.

I thought that Bard was diverse. As funny as this may seem, I really did. I knew that it was a Predominantly White Institution, but I didn't know that there would only be like 5% of minorities! I felt extremely marginalized. I've never in my life felt this way. This may be a result from me living in a predominantly Black neighborhood and going to predominantly black

schools. I saw Bard as a chance to be placed in the "real world" where it's not just black or white but all colors and races. I wanted to experience the "melting pot" that I learned about in U.S. History; however, I experienced the "salad bowl." I experienced feelings that I have never felt: loneliness, exclusion, sadness, and a hint of depression. There was a time when I went about 3 days without doing work, because I didn't even have the strength to leave my dorm room and experience what I experienced every time I left my dorm: stares and avoidance from others. Yes, avoidance. Some people would try to avoid looking at me or avoid walking past me to avoid the unavoidable "awkwardness." At first, I tried to tell myself that it was normal and that what I was going through was normal for first-year students. However, my hypothesis proved to be false. I am simply at the wrong school. Remaining at Bard would only cause me to lose a part of my cultural self that makes me who I am. I will not conform to a campus that is not open to diversity and culture. If Bard prides itself on being in seclusion, on another planet, who may only want to reach out to minorities for a "quota" then I don't want to be a part of it.

I'm a talented and smart young woman, who doesn't need this institution of higher learning to define who I am. I'm Black. I'm a woman. I'm a Christian. I'm ready for what the "real world" has for me, because this isn't it. I'm stepping out on faith, because that's the only thing that's been consistent here at Bard. Nevertheless, Thank you Bard for opening my eyes and mind. My experiences here-good and bad-will remain in my memories and move me to higher levels within myself.

"Letting go has never been easy, but holding on can be as difficult. Yet strength is measured not by holding on, but by letting go."

End.

...And *here* is where her legacy began...

Karimah made the decision to remain a student at Bard College. The next semester she received the position as a Peer Counselor (PC) in the Office of Residence Life. She co-founded the project Building Up Hudson (BUH) where Bard College students mentor and tutor high school students in Hudson, New York. Under her leadership, the organization awarded three Hudson seniors with $500 scholarships, two consecutive years. During her sophomore year, she

was selected to participate in the Harvard Kennedy School Public Policy and Leadership Conference (PPLC). She was awarded the Episcopal Relief and Development Ghana Pilgrimage Scholarship where she traveled to the northern and southern parts of Ghana - her first time outside of the United States. She was also awarded the Eugene M. Lang Scholarship and the Stephen P. Snyder Scholarship.

Junior year, she studied at the Bard Globalization and International Affairs Program (BGIA) in New York City and in Budapest, Hungary the next semester at Central European University. In the spring of 2014, Karimah became the first student to ever win the Harry S. Truman Scholarship at Bard College since its creation in 1975. The summer before her senior year, she was selected to study at the Goldman School of Public Policy, UC Berkeley through the Public Policy and International Affairs Program (PPIA).

On campus, in addition to being a PC, she also served as a Bard Educational Opportunity Programs (BEOP) Peer Mentor, the Chair of the Multicultural Diversity Committee (MDC) within Bard Student Government, a member of the Social Justice Education Committee and Senior Class Council. She has also been active in the Hip Hop Dance Team, Latin Dance, Caribbean Dance, and the Bard Step Team.

Starting in late June of 2015, Karimah will work as a fellow at the Posse Foundation national office as a Newman's Own Foundation Fellow.

...Karimah attributes all of her success and triumphs to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

The End.

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