Spring 2019

"A Different World":Navigating Between White Colleges and Low-Income Racially Segregated Neighborhoods

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Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2019

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Invictus
By William Ernest Henley

Abstract

This research project focuses on the ways in which college students, Black, African-American and Hispanic/Latinx, from low-income racially segregated backgrounds navigate their neighborhood and predominantly white institutions (PWI). Importance for this study is focused on how coming from such environments due to socialization and identity can impact their ability to navigate their PWI as well as how they view their neighborhood once they returned during their college years. These students left their own world and step into a new one containing a whole new set of values, norms, and institutions separate from their own. Figuring out ways to navigate this new world can be a difficult process and struggles can persist as these students try to adapt into higher education. At the same time, what happens when they go back home? How do they navigate their original world once they transitioned into a new one? This project will highlight these students' experiences going back and forth between their low-income racially segregated neighborhood and their predominantly white institution, what it means to navigate two worlds.

Keywords: Predominantly White Institution, Minority College Student Institutional Whiteness, Borderland Theory, Sociological Eye, Place Identity, Low income communities, racially segregated community, Neighborhood and College

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Preface

I became aware of the inequalities that existed in my neighborhood ever since I was a young boy. I was always aware of the crime, the lack of school support, the lack of social services, the high levels of poverty, and the racial makeup of my neighborhood. Some people call it the "ghetto", others call it the "hood" or "low-income communities." I had no idea what to call my community but one thing I knew for sure was that everyone in my neighborhood was of the same race and similar ethnic background. As many times as I saw beauty from my community, I also witnessed the struggle and I wondered why. I wondered why I never met a white person until I came to college. I wondered why the racial demographics on the 6 train changed once I went past 125th street. I wondered why resources were different in black neighborhoods versus the white ones in Manhattan. I saw this observation as the most outstanding feature of neighborhoods. I remember moving 4 times in high school due to financial conflicts at home, and everywhere I went I saw nothing but the same thing, beauty, community, and struggle. It was in every block and every instance of my life. My outlet was education but education did not make it any better. Private schools were out of reach and public schools were underfunded. Teachers seemed to have given up on their students and schools seemed to have given up on its community. School often became a place of residence and holding rather than a place of learning and enrichment as was my experience growing up. However, I was very fortunate to have teachers who supported me and helped me get to the next stage in my life, college.

College was nothing but a dream. A distance that seemed too far to reach or even fathom. I was often told growing up that I wouldn't make it college. To become a first-generation college student from my segregated neighborhood held such meaning in my life even if those close to me

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did not understand that. College is a big step for us all but students who come from low-income racially segregated communities may have to take an extra three to four more steps. Often, I heard them endure multiple cases of culture shock that affect their ability to stay in college. They talk about how different the environment is, how difficult it is for them to connect with students on campus (especially white students) and how complicated their studies can be. Students from underprivileged backgrounds who are finally given the opportunity to experience upward mobility now face another obstacle that makes it difficult to stay in college because they were unaware and unprepared for the social struggles that attending a predominantly white college brings. What makes this situation compelling is when they leave their institution that first semester and return back home. Personally, I never knew how much my community meant to me until I left. Returning back home often time gave me so much pain and discomfort. I had the privilege to leave home and when I first came back I was shell-shocked by the differences I had to face. This was the first instance in my life where I am experiencing privilege, exposure to perspectives and spaces different than my own and excess resources. I witnessed a possible change in my social class. I was surrounded by plenty of privileged and accessible resources and here I am back in my apartment and neighborhood, in a neighborhood containing a lack of resources because of systematic forces that make it so. For me, this felt uncomfortable. I became upset at my personal circumstances and I didn't know how to navigate the two worlds I am becoming accustomed to. Overall, I learned to embrace myself and reach a place where I believe in my success. That success is destined and attainable for not only me but for anyone regardless of what neighborhood one may come from. I was challenged in my adaptation into a new institution, learning new social norms, expectations, and perspectives. My experiences in college

and navigating back and forth allowed me to grow in ways I would have never expected and I am sincerely proud of my journey from where I was before to where I am now. One thing I know for sure is that I now exist to help my community. I exist to become the teachers and the mentors that supported me in my moments of struggle, who were able help me see my life more than what I thought it would be. This project gave me more insight on how I can better support students within these communities and prepare them for their next stages of life. College is a point where all students can reach and succeed regardless of where we come from.

I was curious on what this transition looks like for others. What does it means for individuals to come from these neighborhoods and attend predominantly white institutions? What does it look like to enter into white spaces where all you were exposed to were spaces that physically and culturally looked like you? What does it mean for a student from an under-resourced background when they step into a predominantly white institution with resources and opportunities that they never knew existed? More importantly, how do they feel when they go back home? How do they see their world? Here we will focus on what it means to come from low-income racially segregated backgrounds and attend white colleges and universities. Understanding these situations will shed light on the issues that black and brown students from these environments specifically face in managing these transitions and what we can do to support their transition and increase their enrollment in higher education. The specificity of this transition matters. Their stories matter. This project will highlight efforts in trying to understand their transitional processes and help them navigate what seems to be two different worlds.

Introduction: Defining These Worlds

College is a key moment in an individual's life where they focus on themselves and their personal development. It is this period where they leave their homes and families to begin college and take on adult responsibilities (McAdams et al. 2006, Stephenson-Abetz et al. 2012). Students temporarily leave their world and enter into a new world different from their own. By *worlds* one is referring to the "cultural knowledge and behavior found within the boundaries of the students' families, peer groups, and schools (Phelan et al. 1991:225). This is based on the understanding that each world contains values and beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to insiders" (Phelan et al. 1991:225). Race and ethnicity plays a role in the identification of these worlds and how individuals participating within them navigate them. Along the lines of defining worlds, ethnicity refers to the customs, language, social views usually associated with a particular ethnic group (Spencer et al. 1991). These definitions can run across lines of racial and socioeconomic boundaries where such identifications may generate their own notions of cultural worlds and boundaries. With this in mind, what kind of world exist in low-income racially segregated communities? What are the norms, customs, values, and attitudes that exist within them? Moreover, how do students from segregated backgrounds navigate a new world, a new set of values, actions, expectations, beliefs, and norms that may conflict with their own? Interest is shown in how students navigate these conditions in specifically looking at how youth navigate their worlds, confront mismatches and build connections across worlds (Cooper 2011). Though studies have explored transition to college for marginalized groups, insight should be provided on how students from these backgrounds who are Black, African-American and/or Hispanic/Latinx grapple with their transition to white institutions and navigation back to their

home environment. How do they juggle with their own identity in managing their exposure to a different world?

Racial Segregation in New York City

The college students in this study identified as coming from New York City neighborhoods that are low income-and racially segregated. The history of racial segregation serves as a major mark of inequality in the United States. Race and class interchangeably are essential in the formation .of communities that serve to benefit or hinder those who can have access within these spaces. To segregate means to separate groups of people with differing characteristics (Browne 2016). To racially segregate means to do so on the premise of racial/ethnic identity through institutional practices. More specifically, segregation has a history of racial discrimination where these places "represent not only residential separation by race, color, religion, and/or class, but also a fragmentation of the social order through domination and subjugation sustained by compulsion and ideology" (Varady 2005:49). Race, in particular, has a "master status by which residential patterns are defined" and affects one's ability to assimilate into other neighborhoods (Crowder 1999:81). The assimilation of Black individuals becomes halted because of stereotypes and discriminatory practices held by whites, real estate agents, and local governments (Crowder 1999:81). These actors are able to reinforce racial segregation through hidden housing practices that served to segregate people of color. Many methods of doing so were barriers of assimilation such as "racial covenants; racial zoning; violence or threats of violence; preemptive purchase; various petty harassments; implicit or explicit collusion by realtors, banks, mortgage lenders, and other lending agencies; and, in the not-so-distant past, the Federal Housing Administration

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(FHA) and other Federal agencies" (Kain 1968:177). New York City is an example because racial segregation in "homogeneous" black neighborhoods restricted "the free movement of racial ethnic groups" as was the case for Haitian immigrants coming into New York City (Laguerre 1984:64) The neighborhood rating system and city zoning policies all contributed to the enhancement of racial segregation in NYC neighborhoods.[1] Despite New York City's diversity, it is currently one of the more segregated cities in the United States where only "26 percent of New Yorkers live in meaningfully integrated neighborhoods."[2] The New York Times points out how "highly segregated pockets exist in all five boroughs: Latinos in the Bronx and Manhattan; whites in Manhattan and on Staten Island; blacks and whites in Brooklyn; and Asians, blacks and Latinos in Queens."[3] Segregation particularly black-white segregation has slightly decreased overtime but is still steady because "systematic discrimination in the housing market has not ended, and for the most part it is not prosecuted" (Logan and Stults 2011:21). At the same time, "Americans do not want to believe that discrimination still exists" even though minorities in the housing market continue to be treated differently than whites (Logan and Stults 2011:21). Segregation is formulated because of the discrimination and prejudice experience by minorities in America particularly through nativism, based on difference owing to nationality and racism, based on differences believed to be permanent and innate (Waters 2014:144).

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[1] Purnell, Brian & Jeanne Theoharis, 2017. "How New York City Became the Capital of Jim Crow North." Retrieved April 21, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/08/23/how-new-york-city-became-the-capital-of-the-jim-crow-north/?utm_term=.636d2fe19d03).

[2] Lander, Brad. 2018. "Desegregating NYC: Twelve Steps Towards A More Inclusive City." Retrieved on April 21, 2019 (https://council.nyc.gov/brad-lander/new-council-report-outlines-12-steps-toward-desegregating-nyc-2/), pp 7.

[3] The New York Times. 2016. "What It's Like to Live in Segregated New York." Retrieved April 21, 2019 (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/04/13/nyregion/segregation-and-new-york-city.html).

Additionally, Mary C. Waters (2014:144) states how the demography and history of New York City entails a deep history of racial inequality that shapes the lives of these demographics where:

 "the large African American and native Puerto Rican communities in the city are highly segregated from whites, with substandard schools, high crime rates, high rates of imprisonment, unemployment, and health inequality." All of which "reinforces racial stereotypes associating race with crime, drugs, lack of education, violence, and hopelessness. Thus non white immigrants enter a city that remains deeply unequal in terms of race, highly segregated, and occasionally hostile. (Waters 2014:144).

As a result, we can see how racial segregation was evident through residential patterns and how such patterns resulted in the isolation of different ethnic groups into many neighborhoods in New York City. These spaces struggle because they may not contain the resources necessary for its sustainability in comparison to white neighborhoods. Zoning was an example of an exclusionary practice that created limited opportunities for the poor and minorities to reside in better neighborhoods and have access to better public and private goods (Massey et al. 2009).

Additionally, Massey, Condran, and Denton (1987:42) state that patterns of residential segregation across racial and economic lines have separated ethnic groups, specifically blacks, and white individuals into two different environments, "one that is poor, crime-ridden, unhealthy, unsafe, and educationally inferior" while the other is "markedly richer, safer, healthier, and educationally superior" (Massey, Condran, and Denton 1987:42). Every group moves into cities for purposes of better opportunities and sustained networks, however, the practice of segregation is able to keep these individuals within clustered and isolated places. Residential practices within New York City are enabled through the premise of race and creates a situation where their race and ethnicity impacts their ability to migrate into other white neighborhoods due to the assumptions and stereotypes of their identity. Such an outcome results in racial residential

segregation or simply racial segregation through residential means. In this project, racial

segregation will be defined as the process of excluding groups through the implications of race

and, at the same time, utilizing systematic methods of physical separation designed to segregate

individuals into racially monolithic neighborhoods. It involves the difficulty of minorities being

placed in a world containing segregated structures and inequalities with difficulty moving into

other neighborhoods.

Effects of Racial Segregation on Educational Experiences in New York City

Education is one of the strongest forces that dictate one's social position and outcome in

American society. Many of those who believe in education are empowered by its ability to

increase life quality, access to resources, as well as provide to the individual an "enlightened

citizenry" where such individuals are able to share common values of American freedom

(Sweetland 1996:341). Through hard work and meritocracy, American society deeply believes in

the personal efforts of the citizen and how these efforts alone dictate the outcome of the citizen's

life. This perspective is significant because higher education equals higher wages which creates

more access to resources and higher life quality. A report conducted by the Bureau of Labor

Statistics called "Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment" show how those

with a high school degree make on average $712 median usual weekly earnings while those who

attain a bachelor's degree earn $1,173 weekly earnings.[4] The difference of $461 is noteworthy

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[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S Department of Labor. 2018. "Employment Projections, Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment." Retrieved on April 21, 2019 (https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/unemployment-earnings-education.htm).

for many individuals who long for a secure future. The more finances one is able to accumulate, the more access and affordability is available for those who can gain it. Subsequently, Americans value the notion that education provides equal opportunity for students from all backgrounds regardless of what status or position they are in. Their social status is reflected on the level of education they have attained in their lifetime (Moore 2004). Students are "confident that they are deserving of their reward - be it power, authority, status, and/or wealth - because it has been the product of their talent and effort" that got them to where they are now (Liu 2011:384). Anyone can achieve upward mobility. All it takes is dedication and hard work to get yourself to where you want to go and education will give you the opportunity to do so.

On the other hand, educational institutions have consistently excluded groups of people from its structural privileges and access to higher life quality. Education in low-income racially segregated communities tell a different story. Particularly in New York City, it's schooling system is considered one of the most segregated in the United States where "across the 32 community school districts in New York City, 19 had 10% or less white students in 2010, which included all districts in the Bronx, two-thirds of the districts in Brooklyn (central to north districts), half of the districts in Manhattan (northern districts), and only two-fifths of the districts in Queens (southeast districts)" (Kucsera with Orfield 2014; viii). At the same time, New York City schools themselves are more economically and racially segregated than the neighborhoods with high-poverty neighborhoods being overwhelming Black and Latino and school enrollment in hundreds of school reflecting this reality.[5] Students attending minority-segregated schools do

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[5] Hemphill, Clara, Nicole, Mader. 2018. "Segregated Schools in Integrated Neighborhoods: The City's Schools are Even More Divided than Our Housing." *Center for New York City Affairs*. Retrieved April 24, 2019 (http://www.centernyc.org/segregatedschools).

not receive the same quality education than majority-white schools (Warkentien 2015). Patterns of residential and school segregation in the United States have changed but have been "inconsistent across time and place in both their pace and direction", in addition to the reality that state and school districts did little to reduce racial segregation (Reardon and Owens 2014:1). Studies have highlighted the link between residential areas and neighborhood influence on the educational outcome of adolescents growing up in specific communities. Generally, children in struggling neighborhoods had poorer education outcomes than children in affluent communities (Boardman and Onge 2005; Anderson et al. 2014; Martens et al. 2014). Residential area is important in determining risk behaviors, educational outcomes, and integration within families, schools, and churches (Boardman and Onge 2005). Consequently, children who live in more affluent neighborhoods had higher results of achievement (Anderson et al. 2014). We see a disparity between these communities and justification is more than just the school itself. It is the reality that opportunities and resources are not equally distributed in space. Some neighborhoods have "safer streets, higher home values, better services, more effective schools, and more supportive peer environments, all of which affects their socioeconomic situations and ability to access such benefits (Massey 2001). Students from segregated communities suffer from lower quality instruction and fewer neighborhood resources and services (Massey and Fischer 2006). The lack of resources present in low-income racially segregated communities may affect the overall quality of education within the institutions. Public school districts for example are funded by community property taxes and if such income levels are not sufficient enough to help fund these schools, we see an increasing lack of resources for students who reside within these structures (Quillian 2014). If these students do not receive the resources needed to thrive in

school, it becomes more difficult for them to excel and compete with students from other districts with a higher abundance of resources and privileges.

Racial Segregation and Transition Into Predominantly White Institutions

College can be seen as an institution, a setting designed to shape and cultivate the experience of the individuals who participate within them. They work as institutions that focus on how they acquire the stability that allows them to be recognizable as institutions in the first place and displays to us what occurs within an institution, what shapes it, and most importantly how we experience them (Ahmed 2012). These experiences may or may not benefit students who step within its structures and systems. Even beyond the disparities that students from low-income racially segregated backgrounds may face in K-12 schooling, struggles may persist as they transition from high school into higher education, particularly at a 4 year college/university. These students enter college and, typically, are less academically prepared than their classmates, in addition to, their transition from racially isolated settings which may not prepare them socially and psychologically for the college environment (Ehrmann 2007). They may encounter behaviors, norms, and attitudes in college that may be unfamiliar to their own that may affect their academic performance and feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Massey and Fischer 2006). Within Predominantly White Institutions, race and class play an essential role in how they experiences institutions. African-American students, for example, who attend PWI institutions especially in rural locations may feel disoriented when living in these spaces, adjusting to rural life and interacting with students from mostly rural and suburban areas (Woldoff et al. 2011). As a result, students of color and low-income students may have feelings of isolation and alienation

when faced with the challenge of adapting to a culture contrary to their own values and beliefs (Serena 2016). Residential location affects a college student's ability to interact with racial-ethnic groups especially those from segregated environments who are less likely to have frequent contact with people from different races and ethnicities (Massey and Denton 1993). Underrepresented students at PWI institutions face a situation where they are distant from family and home and "must learn how to live in a rural atmosphere with a larger, White community of people who have had minimal exposure to and familiarity with Black people and urban culture" (Woldoff et al. 2011:1054). These struggles may affect their relationships back home, issues of socialization may occur at the institution, and confusion can be apparent in figuring out ways to behave and navigate in different social spaces (Aries and Seider 2005). What is significant to highlight in this comparison is that students experience institutions differently based on the characteristics and dynamics of the institution they attend. For students of color at predominantly White institutions they face space differently because they are in an environment where they feel that they can't take space there (Ali 2018). Prior school and neighborhood segregation differentiate the experiences of Black, African American and Latinx students at selective colleges where parental education, academic preparation, social preparation and environment play a significant role in college GPA (Massey and Fischer 2006). A strong association is evident between students who grew up in segregated schools and neighborhoods between the ages of 6 and 18 and diminished academic performance in the first three terms of college (Massey and Fischer, 2006). Segregation continues to affect even the most successful students growing up in racially segregated, high-minority communities (Ehrmann 2007). In addition, Black, African-American and Latinx students who grew up in racially segregated cities

are more likely than White and Asian students to experience stressful life events, leading to greater involvement in family affairs, family stress, poorer health, which conflicts with time studying and performing academically in the classroom (Charles et al. 2004). In terms of maneuvering on a new college campus, it is not only the effect of residential segregation alone that creates conflicts for students from these backgrounds but, additionally, it is the social contexts of segregation that foster stereotypes, attitudes, that have consequences on the upward mobility of students (Quillian 2014). Their experiences and feelings of belonging at their campus should be approached in looking at how their social worlds are confronted at the institution and most importantly how the institution interacts with such a presence.

Education and Identity

Identity has always been an integral factor of education. Students learn to understand themselves, and understand their place in the world. Identity can be seen as "the idea of the self understood within and against the social context, a means by which the individual is categorized and located as part of, or set apart from, recognized social, political, and cultural groups" (Rodas 2015:103). Identity involves becoming a part of something intentionally and unintentionally and creates a presence in our social world that is distinguishable from other groups. Identity is not static, it is an ongoing experience containing socio-dynamic, racialized and historical constructs (Berry and Candis 2013). The education environment becomes a place where students are able to develop their identities because it is understood as a "system of vocational training external conditions" that provide "integration of student's sociocultural and individual experience" (Gabdrakhmanova et al. 2016: 97). The relationship between education and identity is seen as a "joint activity and

relations promoting the implementation of both individual and social goals of education" (Gabdrakhmanova et al. 2016:97). In other words, educational spaces serve to enhance the identity of the students within them. The social goals of both the student and the institution are aligned to a fruitful collaboration between both cultures and backgrounds which can strengthen the presence of the educational system. This can be evident in so many forms such as but limited to: traditions, norms, rules, style of life, culture, student comprehensible of their role in the institution, social activities, and many more (Gabdrakhmanova et al. 2016:98).

However, complications can occur when one's identity is not evident in the educational environments or spaces one stepped into. Education enhances the culture and norms of white students and because of the lack of diverse identities in school curricula and establishments minority groups such as African Americans face *cultural gaps* where they experience "theoretical, conceptual, and practical disconnects and spaces between the culture (values, traditions, customs, beliefs, etc.)" between themselves and the educational institutions they attend (Berry and Candis 2013:46). All of which can result in identity conflicts and can affect their ability to persist in higher education (Berry and Candis 2013). The institutional environments they step into may be different from the environment they grew up. Difficulties can emerge in their ability to manage such identity shifts during this time period in college. Many authors have written on their experiences on identity conflicts specifically with growing up in a segregated community and their experience transitioning within educational spaces. Pamela Lewis (2016) in her novel *Teaching While Black: A New Voice on Race and Education in New York City* talks about her experience growing up in the South Bronx and her transition from Fordham University into the NYC Teaching Fellows Program (Lewis, 2016). Though the

premise of this book focuses more on her transition into adulthood as a teacher, she briefly

mentions how she handled these identity shifts during her time at Fordham University. At first,

she felt inadequate being the token Black person at her institution but, after a while, mentions

that she embraced the identities she cultivated growing up in the world of the South Bronx while

navigating her institution (Lewis 2016). Lewis (2016:4) opens up on her experience navigating

these two spaces:

"Many had never seen an educated sister from the hood. Some came from towns where there were no black people in sight. Some had black friends, but not my type of black. I was unforgivably urban in both my choice of language as well as in my attire, meaning I said it like I meant it and had no qualms about using words like dope or wack while eloquently expressing my views about Plato's Republic, laissez-faire economics, or early feminist tropology in Victorian literature." (Lewis 2016:4)

We have an example of an individual who transitioned from, as she describes, the "hood" and

into higher education. She tells us about the racial demographics of the spaces she was in during

her time at Fordham and how different they were from her identity formed in the neighborhood

she came from. Lewis mentions how some people never saw her "type of black" (Lewis 2016:4)

and this reached a point where at first she felt "inadequate for the first time" but now she is

"unforgivably urban" in her identity and expression (Lewis 2016:4). Here we see one of many

examples of an individual from a segregated community transitioning into a predominantly white

institution and how this person navigates these identities and worlds. The bouncing between

worlds created a outcome where she had difficulty adapting to the world she entered into but

afterwards decided to maintain the attitudes, behaviors, norms, and language she believed made

up a huge part of the world she lived in prior to college.

Additionally, a Mexican-American author Richard Rodriguez in his novel *Hunger of Memory* provides us his autobiography on what it means to grow up as a student who learned English as a second language and how such situations shifted his being both in and outside the classroom (Rodriguez 1982). He mentions his navigation of both school and home through the significance of language and how his exposure to new language affected his identity. More specifically, he talks about the reality of academic and career success. Rodriguez (1982:47) reflects on his twenty years of schooling experience and came to the following conclusion:

"A primary reason for my success in the classroom was that I couldn't forget that schooling was changing me and separating me from the life I enjoyed before becoming a student." (Rodriguez 1982:47)

Rodriguez states how his journey to success in academia has created an outcome where success became very disconnecting for him, disconnecting from the world he grew up in as he saw "how far [he] had moved from [his] past" (Rodriguez 1982:48). From elementary school to the end of his education, he notices this disconnection between his world and the new one. At some point, Rodriguez recalls in the third grade how he "became more tactful, careful to keep separate the two very different worlds" in which he lived in (Rodriguez 1982:47). He struggled to navigate these identities based on the environments he entered into. Here, we see another instance where an individual attempted to maneuver two different worlds he stepped into, and how this maneuvering affected his identity in the future.

Furthermore, when it comes to navigating two worlds, students who escape a world they grew up may be conflicted as they come to understand how different this new environment is. Such comprehension may be difficult to fathom for these students given the fact that they must

navigate this new world while situations back home may still be the same. Though students from

segregated backgrounds can leave their communities, their social networks may still live in

segregated communities and continue to live in such minority-dominant settings (Massey and

Fischer 2006). This may affect their identity development and ability to persist in higher

education because they face a situation where they are maintaining two different settings. A key

question to ask will be then how do they handle the switches and transitions between these

environments?

Research Question

My senior project will explore the transition to college and space navigation of college students

of color at predominantly white institutions who come from low-income racially segregated

communities. What this transition entails is one of the focal points of this study as well as what it

means for these individuals to go back and forth between these different spaces. This topic will

highlight the experiences of college students from these backgrounds in answering the following

questions:

1. What is the transition to a predominantly white institution like for Black, African-
   American and/or Hispanic/Latinx students who come from low-income and racially
   segregated communities?

2. What are their experiences like when they navigate between their neighborhoods and
   their institutions?

Answering these questions will allow me to shed light on the effects of racial segregation and its

long term effects that it may have on the identity development of a college student, specifically if

they reside in an environment very different than their own. These points will also highlight the connection between space and identity and its effects on college persistence. It will allow me to have a deeper insight on the unique experiences that many students go through in higher education and question the role of the institution in helping to create approaches beneficial to students from these backgrounds so they are able to persist in higher education.

Research Methods and Organization

For this project, I recruited and interviewed 9 college students that identify as Black, African-America and/or Hispanic/Latinx who come from low-income racially segregated communities and attend predominantly white institutions. A large majority of respondents came from the Bronx and Queens while two of them came from Manhattan neighborhoods specifically Harlem and Washington Heights. All of them identified as coming from low-income racially segregated neighborhoods in New York City and identified as being either Black, African-American and or Hispanic/Latinx. They all came from different boroughs in New York City and attended different predominantly white institutions. My control variables were their race/ethnicity, their low-income racially segregated neighborhoods, and the predominantly white institutions they attended. Seeing the wide range of these stories from college students who come from similar background neighborhoods will enable me to highlight their navigations and how each institution cultivates this transition from their neighborhood.

Name	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Pronouns	Neighborhood
Brianna	Black	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Queens
Julie	Black/Dominican	Female	She/Her/Hers	Bronx
Jessica	Mixed (Puerto Rican/ Black)	Female	She/Her/Hers	Queens
Justyn	Hispanic/Puerto Rican	Male/ Cisgender	He/Him/His	Bronx
Angel	Black, Afro Caribbean Latinx	Genderqueer	They/Them/Theirs	Bronx
Christopher	Afro-Latino/ Honduras	Heterosexual Male	He/Him/His	Bronx
Cassandra	Latina	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Washington Heights
Ashley	Black/Guyanese-American	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Queens
Jeremiah	African-American	Male	He/Him/His	Harlem

All interview questions served to highlight the experiences of these college students from their neighborhoods, their transition into college and navigating these two environments. The demographics section is important in highlight the background of these participants and why these identity backgrounds matter for their transition. Participants in each in-person interview were asked the same questions. This is to highlight similarities and differences of experiences within each category. All of the information based on their answers were organized into trends and outlier perspectives that were spread into each of the four chapters.

1. Tell me about yourself.
      A. What is your gender?
      B. What is your race/ethnicity?
      C. Are you a first-generation college student?

D. What is your age?

E. Any other information that identifies who you are.

2.. Where are you from? Where is your neighborhood located?

3. Tell me about your community/neighborhood?

A. "Describe the racial makeup of your neighborhood."

B. How did you come to live there? Why did you choose to live there?

C. What do you like or dislike most about your neighborhood?

D. What are the challenges that your neighborhood is currently facing?

E. Do you feel attached to your neighborhood? Why or why not?

4. Tell me about your high school experiences.

A. How was your high school experience like overall academically and socially?

B. Did you feel like your high school prepared you for college?

5. Why did you want to go to college? Was college emphasizing to you growing up?

6. What were your first impressions of your college? (Academically and socially?)

7. Tell me about your college culture. What do you like or dislike about your college?

8. Do you feel a part of the college community? Why or why not?

9. Do these experiences at college affect your studies at all?

10. What is it like going back home? Do you look forward to returning to your neighborhood?

11. Is college different from your neighborhood? Yes or no? Why?

12. How do you feel when you have to return back to college?

13. Do you notice any personal changes since going to college? (within yourself?)

14. Do you see your home life and neighborhood differently since leaving school? (cultural changes?)

15. After attending college, did your feelings of attachment change? Yes or No? Why?

16. How do you adapt and navigate the spaces within your college?

17. Do you intend on returning to your neighborhood after you graduate?

18. What are your aspirations for the future?

The introduction provides a brief analysis and knowledge on racial segregation and its impact on education and predominantly white institutions. It also gives a general introduction to the significance of education and identity using the examples of two authors Richard Rodriguez and Pamela Lewis on their experience navigating their world and the college world. The introduction exists to give a general idea of the experiences that my participants in this study go through and paints a small picture on their worldly experiences. This is so that the reader has this background knowledge as we learn about their experience navigating two worlds.

Chapter 1 of this project looks at the experiences of my college students in their neighborhoods. This chapter gives the reader an idea of their world before we see them transition into higher education. Seeing their viewpoints on how they view their neighborhood, both what they like or dislike, gives weight on how they navigate the spaces within them. I use Berger and Luckmann's theories of subjective reality and socialization to describe their relationship to their neighborhood specifically in understanding how these experiences showcase how they were socialized in their community and how their subjective reality of their neighborhood allows us to see one of many realities on what it can mean to live within these spaces.

Chapter 2 emphasizes the transition. It focuses on the first impressions of their college and their experiences in adapting into these spaces. I noted three trends that were evident in their answers: Things Are Different: Living Within White Spaces, Borders Between Our Own People: The College Borderland, and Physical Culture Shock. I argue that these trends, except for physical culture shock, serve to highlight the effects of Sara Ahmed's theory of institutional whiteness. Within this I also introduce Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderland Theory to explain the inclusion and exclusion of minority spaces or borders within a college institution. This chapter

answers the first research question on what it is like stepping into predominantly white institutions.

Chapter 3 looks at the respondents' insight of navigating two worlds. It explores the trends on how the participants have to navigate their neighborhood and predominantly white institution. I approach this by asking them how they feel going back to their neighborhood and if they see their neighborhood and college differently. To enhance this experience, I work with Randall Collin's Sociological Eye and Place Identity to describe this navigation in explaining how they viewed their neighborhood differently and how they have to now change their place identity at home to adjust to these navigations. All of which resulted in mixed feelings from the participants.

To end off, I conclude by summarizing the main points and findings of each chapter. I expressed what I found throughout the project and mention their high school variety and transition into PWIs. I state to my audience my respondent's aspirations to let them know that they are much bigger than the struggles they endured in both worlds. I provide policy approaches to address this conflict and give research recommendations on topics that should be further discussed in the future.

1

A Piece of Their World: A Subjective Reality and Socialization

The college students in this study opened up to me on what Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann would call their subjective reality, "the reality of every life" shown through the individual's interactions with others in that environment or society (Berger and Luckmann 1967:169). The theory argues that members of a society are not born into society but are socialized into it through individual behaviors and influences by their own environment (Berger and Luckmann 1967). This process is done through socialization which involves the ways in which individuals are constructed into a being needed to thrive in that environment and in the wider society (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Socialization is done both through the primary or the secondary with primary being understood as the first influence of socializing through childhood and secondary being influences that continue to impact the individual even after this process (Berger and Luckmann 1967). These modes of socialization, primary or secondary, contribute to the establishment of that space, which then becomes defined by the human interactions within them. We are taught behavioral values pertain to the society and the communities we are raised in. We know not to touch a hot stove because we are socialized to believe that doing so will burn your hand (and obviously it will if you touch it). Socialization includes the process of helping an individual become socially ready to navigate their environment around them and, inevitably the wider society as a whole (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Neighborhoods are an example of such a space where socialization occurs. Subjective reality and neighborhoods go hand and hand because individuals are born into a social

environment where they encounter significant others who are given the task of socializing the individual into society (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Their interaction with their neighborhood serves to provide a socialized form of knowledge that the individual will internalize as their subjective reality, and become a lens of their world. Through their thoughts and actions, their world is defined by experiences and interactions in their neighborhood. These experiences are as real as the nature of the world around them. In other words, their daily encounters within their neighborhood or what they consider to be their world provides the meaning of what it means to exist within that setting. Their subjective reality translates into the multiple realities that exist in that environment. Studying everyday life matters because we will be able to further understand social phenomenons present within society specifically through the subjective perspective of the individual being understood (Douglas 1970). Knowledge from these sources is important because we will be able to reach a point of integrity of the social phenomena by looking at the human behaviors, actions, and thoughts of the individual within a given place (Douglas 1970).

Every story we hear and every narrative we speak contains a reality specific to the ways we interact with everything around us. This influence can involve our experiences with other people, other perspectives, and other places. For the focus of this project, we will explore the influence of our interactions with our neighborhoods as a measure of reality. More specifically, I am curious to explore how the subjective reality of the individual corresponds with many realities on what it means to live within that given setting. Neighborhoods serve as an example of such space where one's reality is shaped by their environment. The interactions between the two forces present the reality of the overall neighborhood and what it means to be a part of it. Keeping this in mind, these college students who come from low-income racially segregated

neighborhoods in New York City stated their subjective realities within their neighborhoods, specifically on their social observations and how they navigated its spaces and structures. Their relationship to their neighborhood shed light on what it means to live within these environments. At the same time, even though their subjective realities can show us what it means to live within such spaces, it does not shape the entirety of the neighborhood. Although objective reality can translate into subjective, there is always more objective reality "available than is actually internalized in any individual consciousness" (Berger and Luckmann 1967:153). Their experiences show a piece of their world, and a piece of their reality growing up in their New York City neighborhoods both in how they experience it and how they were socialized within it. Thankfully, I am privileged to express their stories.

What Do You Like About Your Neighborhood?

Conventionally, neighborhoods are places within a given area where people live and have distinguished boundaries that differentiate one neighborhood from another (Smith 2015). They are typically understood as places where people live and reside together through housing arrangements and, in the case of New York City, urban city planning. However, neighborhoods should be understood as not only places of residency but environments with limitless ever-changing boundaries and social constructions that shape the meaning of places for residents within this setting (Coulton 2012). Neighborhoods are unique in their ability to embody similarities but also be different from another. This is due to the establishment of culture within these communities where people in these environments inhibit "learned and shared human patterns or models for living" (Damen 1987:367). These patterns and behaviors are meant to

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distinguish "one category of people from another" (Hofstede 1984:51). I asked my respondents what they like about their neighborhood and all of them reported that, in some way shape or form, they appreciated the culture and diversity present in their neighborhoods. They mentioned the racial/ethnic similarities that exist in their environment. They enjoyed the fact that their neighborhoods are synonymous with their culture and race. They appreciate the community in their neighborhoods evident in the physical and social institutions created whether it be in their social interactions with others, the food, or in the household. This was because of the fact that many, but not all, of the participants, had grown up in these neighborhoods their whole life or at least have been in that community for a long period of time before moving into another. Their interactions with family and culture in that neighborhood become the measure to which they become socialized into that community. More specifically, these measures become internalized as forms of their subjective reality due to the "understanding of one's fellowmen" and "the apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:130). Their socialization and membership within that community allow them to appreciate the spaces similar to their identity.

Brianna, from Queens, expresses the importance of her neighborhood and how synonymous it is with her own cultural beliefs. She mentions that her neighborhood "is important to her identity" through the behaviors and social norms that reside within the culture she identifies with. It is a place where she can express who she is as a Caribbean individual in a space that is most relatable and comfortable for her. The reason why that is the case is that she has lived there her entire life.

Brianna - I lived there all my life...I love the fact that it's Caribbean because like being Jamaican is really important to my identity and...I like it! I like being able to walk down my block and get curry goat and rice...when I walk into a place I feel very like at home, very comfortable.

At any point, she can go to any part of her neighborhood to indulge in "curry goat and rice", a meal that she holds close to her culture and is essential to her identity. The overall environment such as the food is very important to her and highlights how comfortable she is in that neighborhood, feeling very much at home. Brianna is an example of a resident who grew up internalizing and appreciating the cultural beliefs and the racial/ethnic social relations of her neighborhood. Similarly, Cassandra, a college student from Washington Heights, also expresses her connection to her neighborhood through cultural and ethnic relations stating she likes that she can go anywhere and speak Spanish. For Cassandra, her ability to speak Spanish is an essential part of who she is and even though she personally is not Dominican she was heavily influenced by Dominican culture and feels a part of it.

Cassandra - I live in a predominantly Dominican neighborhood…I have heavy Dominican influence…I like that I can go anywhere and speak Spanish.

She likes that she can enter into any institution or setting and be able to speak the Spanish language. She is able to connect with many people, understand their culture, and cultivate it as a part of her own. In her case, she appreciates the culture of her neighborhood through the ways in which speaking Spanish allows access to different kinds of interests and values, creating a feeling of community for her, an enhanced sense of belonging, and a place she can call home. Language is an example of a mode of behavior that can establish culture and community in a given space because it is not only the means of communication among members of society but, in the expression of culture, language conveys (Sirbu 2015). Cassandra was able to become a

part of her community through her ability to speak Spanish. Her situation showcases the importance of language in helping to formulate community and how the structure of neighborhoods help to enhance this purpose. Language can serve as the method of communicating values and identity within a space that can be celebrated and appreciated.

Additionally, Jeremiah, from Harlem, likes his neighborhood because even though it is undergoing gentrification, it is a safe and comfortable space because people "look like" him and his community contains a lot of cultures he identifies with. His appreciation of his neighborhood has to do with its culture and how that culture impacted his growth and development as an individual. Not to mention that his community "molded" him into the person he is now.

Jeremiah - I like that my neighborhood is still, even though it has been gentrified a lot, it's still a lot of culture and there's still a lot of people who look like me. There are a lot of people who are examples who can influence me in a positive way.

Through Jeremiah's experience, the similarity between neighborhood characteristics and individual characteristics create a relationship of positive influence and mentorship for his community. This is because of collective socialization where residents establish multiple social ties with each other, all of which is due to the tasks of helping the individual become socialized and influenced within that society (Simons et al. 2004:271). In the case of all the respondents, the culture within the community and the residents within them assisted in the socialization of that individual within the neighborhood. This was evident in Brianna's familiarity with the goods and services in her neighborhood, the presence of language for Cassandra, and the positive neighborhood influences of Jeremiah. They all feel a part of the community and gain a deep appreciation for their neighborhood because of its cultural convenience and diversity, all of which they were socialized and accustomed to.

Overall, when asked the question on what the participants like about their neighborhood, all of them stated how much they appreciate the culture and diversity their neighborhood had. Although all neighborhoods differently, low-income racially segregated communities may contain elements of culture that can be interchangeable from one community to another. Each respondent had a different influence on their neighborhood and these perspectives on cultural convenience entail a subjective reality on what it means to appreciate a neighborhood that contains the resources and spaces one become socialized in. They enjoyed it because the neighborhood itself caters to the identity of the individual who identifies with this demographic background. Identity is an important factor in becoming socialized in a space because it contributes to the membership of a community and provides a social presence in society. (Berger and Luckmann 1967). In more general terms, neighborhoods are unique in their identity formation of individuals in these spaces and those who grew up within these environments hold cultures and social norms specific to that identity. Culture is cultivated within a neighborhood through the actions of the residents who shape the behavioral patterns of that environment and with enough effort we have the establishment of a community, people who share the same or similar basic interests (Rifkin et al. 1988). Communities formulate a space of comfortability and establish relationships with those who have similar interests. They are able to express their values, their culture, and their personal interests. In doing so, they create a space where residents feel like they belong because they see parts of themselves and what they express not only personally but environmentally as well. This process creates a form of socialization in which other residents can appreciate and admire that world too. To some extent, they all cultivate and

maintain their own worlds. This is the process through which socialization becomes real and subjective realities can become as objective to those within these same structures and spaces.

What Do You Dislike About Your Neighborhood?

Along with asking the participants what they like about their neighborhood, I also asked them what they disliked about it. Their answers gave insight into their experiences in looking at how they interact with their neighborhood. They expressed how they disliked the (1) social problems that existed within their neighborhood whether it be poverty, crime, violence, or personal inequalities, (2) schools in the neighborhood and lack of educational fundings in many of these institutions, and (3) the prevalence of gentrification in their communities. These trends will be mentioned as we break down their experience in their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Social Problems

Social problems can be defined as a "social condition" containing negative consequences for individuals, our social world, and our physical world, in addition to, how these problems affect social institutions e.g education, economy, family, or economy (Leon-Guerrero 2015). Social problems within these communities are not a result of "individual failures but rather is rooted in society" (Leon-Guerrero 2015:7). Many of the social problems prevalent in low-income racially segregated communities are a result of institutional struggles established that resulted in these problems in the first place. For example, Royster points out racial discrimination and racial preferences play a definitive role in who is able to gain access into specific resources and opportunities and such opportunities are confined within segregated networks (Royster 2003). This case applies to those who live with low-income racially segregated communities where they

are secluded into a community that does not contain the resources necessary to help them thrive, all of which were held within white networks and spaces.

Furthermore, social problems within the neighborhood can have a prominent impact on the outcome of those living in these areas, all of which can stem from individual interactions and institutional forces. Many causes of social neighborhood problems such as crime results from systematic issues of poverty, inequality, segregation, job access, residential instability, evictions, and many more.[6] Exposure to violence and crimes damages the health and development of victims, families, entire minorities, and low-income and racial and ethnicities are disproportionately affected by these outcomes.[7] In many cases, crime, violence, and poverty can be geographically concentrated in particular neighborhoods through which the demographic most affected can be applied.[8] These causes are a result of institutional forces that served to segregate people of color into these spaces and strip away the resources needed to thrive such as implementing zoning practices (Taylor 2014) and segregated networks of resources by race (Royster 2003).

Justyn, from the South Bronx, speaks about his insight growing up in his neighborhood. He appreciated the convenience his neighborhood provided particularly with public transportation. Although I did not ask him what he disliked about his neighborhood, he mentioned how his community is "exposed to poverty, exposed to crime, or exposed to different

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[6] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research. 2016. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime." In *Evidence Matters.* Retrieved April 22, 2019 (https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight2.html).

[7] *Ibid*

[8] *Ibid*

illnesses." This exposure has been a battle growing up because of how prevalent it was in his

neighborhood, to the point where residents, including himself, witnessed it and heard it. Justyn's

insight on his neighborhood highlights the social problems that his neighborhood faces and how

these social problems can affect individuals within the community. Although he did not

particularly express how these social problems can affect residents as they grow up, he definitely

hinted at the notion that exposure to these social problems can take a toll on the development of

individuals growing up in that neighborhood through the idea of the "battle."

Justyn - I live in the Bronx. It's mostly Puerto Rican but I think a lot of is Black, Caribbean, and Latino. A lot of people in the Bronx are exposed to poverty, exposed to crime, or exposed to different illnesses whether it be cancer-related…Growing up, it's definitely been a battle because there's crime going on in the street. You witness it. You hear it.

The battle of being able to navigate these experiences and still go about your business as a

resident within the area. The battle of doing what is necessary to avoid such situations (as anyone

would) in order to survive and thrive in such communities.

Additionally, Jessica, from Queens, states her appreciation of the cultural relations

evident in her neighborhood. Before moving out into a new neighborhood, Jessica spent a large

portion of her life in Queens, particularly an area she considered as "the more dangerous part of

[her] community." She mentioned the prevalence of crime, specifically shootouts, and gang

activity that went on in her neighborhood and spoke about how she was affected by this lifestyle

even though she was not a part of it personally. She recalls a story of her and her mom where

gang members were throwing rocks at her window and her mother responds by telling her to

ignore her. As she puts it, "every environment" she came from contained some sort of violence

and gang activity that was out of her control.

Jessica - I lived in the more dangerous part of my community..so there's like shootouts every night and like a lot of gang activity. I've actually went to school on the crip side but I lived on the blood side so that was some type of problem. There was actually a funny story *chuckles* a time where my mom moved us to the other part of the train tracks which means down the road and these gang members started bothering us and like throwing rocks at our windows and my mom was like kind of like ignore it...Every environment I came from, that's the type of environment I come from. It's a lot of violence and gang activity.

Keeping this in mind, Jessica emphasizes how she adjusted to these situations in her community through her ability to become "desensitized" to not only the violence that occurs there but just the overall conditions that people from low-income racially segregated communities endure. She recalls a story when she was with a group of people she knew who stayed at a place that was "messy." She realized she had this desensitization when interacting with this group who came from a different world than her. She reacted differently than she did to the circumstances in the neighborhood. This desensitization allowed her to become "used to" these conditions and gave her ability to "deal with situations better than they would" in looking at the fact that this group had not interacted with such conditions before and came from more "privileged" backgrounds.

Jessica - The shootouts…it's whatever…I'm like desensitized to certain things and I guess I appreciate that...I went on a trip earlier in the year and we went to this place and there was a group of us. It's wasn't like the best situation. It was like messy but growing up in the ghetto this was the way I lived so like I didn't really mind it. I was used to it. I was like this is pretty cool… but a lot of the other kids that grew up in like really polished neighborhoods and were very privileged, they were not happy. They were complaining and they were like oh my god I can't sleep here this is horrible. I don't know. I was able to deal with situations better than they would.

Jessica's experience in her neighborhood highlights not only the social problems that existed within but how she reacted in response to these circumstances. She learned to become desensitized to the conflicts that arose in their neighborhood and through her experience with the group of people she knew, she realized how "adjusted" she was to the crimes that occurred in her community. She thought that she "was able to deal with the situation better than they would",

better than people from privileged backgrounds. Given this reality, she guesses she appreciates that.

Moreover, these college students expressed how neighborhood social problems were one of the key parts of their neighborhood that they disliked. Residents like Justyn and Jessica expressed not only the dynamics of their neighborhood but how they observed and interpreted it. The experience and knowledge they stated with how they handled these social problems and noticed them emphasize a form of localized knowledge that is generational and "is learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1967:84). Justyn's battle and Jessica's desensitization to the struggles of their neighborhood serve as key details in understanding how such reactions are formed by the socialized knowledge of how to maneuver within their neighborhood given these social problems. More specifically, their socialization of how they viewed their neighborhood result in a "desirability that contributes to one's own well-being" in Jessica's circumstance versus Justyn who underwent a mode of internalization, "an aspect of cultural transmission that affects preferences of the neighborhood" (Bowles and Gintis H 2011). Jessica's mom telling her to "ignore it" can be an example of how their subjective reality can translate to the reality of what it can mean to live in that community and expresses how they were socialized to maintain their presence in the community. Their reactions expressed how they socialized themselves in regard to their neighborhood social problems. To an extent, this instance serves to highlight how such knowledge exists within her and within her community. Their stories show us a piece of the reality of what occurs within low-income racially segregated communities. This includes what participants such as Brianna, Cassandra, and Jeremiah and the rest of them said about what they

liked about their communities, a place they feel connects with their own sense of identity and contains within it convenience that caters to their personal needs. Their subjective encounters with their community show the objectivity of the neighborhood specifically how others may navigate its spaces.

Underfunded Schools

New York City has one of the most segregated school systems in the nation due in part to its choice system that created class segregation and racial isolation between white middle-class families and low- income Black and Hispanic residents.[9] Admission into NYC schools relies on "auditions, or scores on a one-day, high-stakes test, or top performance on statewide exams, or portfolios of middle school work" and the problem with this criteria is the reality that, given those who live in racially segregated and low-income communities, they may contain schools that do not have the resources to prepare their students for admission into these high schools or into college.[10] Families with the resources to send their child to a better school have the option to do so because of their ability to send their child to an environment that contains the resources necessary to prepare them for the next step in their educational career but what about those who don't have such luxury? As mentioned before, one's residential area has a significant impact on determining their educational outcomes and integration with schools, families, culture, and many other institutions (Boardman and Onge 2005). For the respondents, issues of schooling within their neighborhood was another trend found on why the participants disliked their neighborhood.

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[9] The Editorial Board. "Confronting Segregation in New York City Schools." Retrieved April 22, 2019 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/15/opinion/school-segregation-nyc.html).

[10] *Ibid*

Many of the participants did not personally attend the schools they mention are struggling within their neighborhood but they passionately spoke about how much these schools are struggling within their neighborhood and how they wish to make a change about it.

Returning to Justyn, when talking about his neighborhood he mentioned how much he dislikes the lack of investment in the education of his community specifically through the lack of funds/money and resources to provide to kids growing up in these communities. He talks about the fact that there are tons of schools but not a lot of school safety for these kids.

In addition, there are not a lot of "attractions" for people to like school. These attractions could be the resources that cater to the academic and social needs and interests. This is evident when Justyn expresses how there is "not enough education" within these multiple schools.

Justyn - What I dislike I would say is the lack of investment of funds and…education because like we have a library but it's poorly funded...There's multiple schools and there's not a lot of school safety…There's not a lot of attractions for people to like school…There's not enough education, It's more of that you just get out of school.

Brianna - I dislike the fact that I feel like the schools are underfunded and under-resourced. I think that there's so much potential in the kids there that's unrealized and it really makes me sad...I would say that is the most important issue that I see. That and maybe like gang violence but even that wasn't as bad because it's normalized.

Justyn's insight tells us his community contains schools that are not properly funded and doesn't contain enough school safety that will help keep them safe within these schools. In addition, Brianna also voiced her concern with the schools in her neighborhood even though she did not attend them personally. She expresses how the schools in her Queens community are "underfunded and under-resourced", how there is "so much potential in the kids there that's unrealized" and how such outcomes makes her sad. In her mind, this is the most important problem that she sees in her community. She loves the culture and loves where she comes from

but she finds schooling as a big problem that she would like to address. She mentions how gang

violence occurs in her community but it wasn't as bad because it was "normalized." She notices

how schools can truly impact the lives of kids within her neighborhood but do not have the funds

or the resources to do so. This was a common trend found amongst the participants when asking

them what they dislike about their neighborhood. Their individual perspectives give insight into

the subjective reality of what can occur in many schools in their neighborhood and their

observations shed light on the institutional conflicts that low-income racially segregated

communities face regarding schooling and education. They were passionate to express how

important schooling was and how much of an impact it can create if the resources and funds

were present to not only educate, empower, and guide these children but keep them safe and

protected as well.

Gentrification

Last but not least, gentrification was another aspect of the neighborhood the respondents

disliked. Gentrification is defined as a term "to describe neighborhoods that start off

predominantly occupied by households of relatively low socioeconomic status, and then

experience an inflow of higher socioeconomic status households" (NYU Furman Center 2015:4).

This term was coined by British sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to highlight changes in working-

class London neighborhoods and now this term is being applied to urban landscapes

like New York City to describe neighborhood changes, rising incomes, changing racial

composition, and, most knowingly, the "displacement of original residents" (NYU Furman

Center 2015:4). Gentrification tailors its effort into "reviving" buildings and structures within

low- income racially segregated communities. However, the impact of gentrification is well known to literature and residents alike in many of New York City's urban neighborhoods and other similar cities. Residential displacement is one of the primary dangers because residents can be displaced due to "housing demolition, ownership conversion of rental units, increased housing costs (rents, taxes), landlord harassment and evictions" (Newman and Wyly 2006:27). Those who work to battle these effects of displacement often are the ones who have been displaced themselves (Newman and Wyly 2006). Many of the residents, due to lack of affordability, have to leave their neighborhoods they grew up in due to these conditions. It creates a situation where residents who lived there for long periods of time now leave due to gentrification. This social problem is an ongoing issue that many residents face in New York City are facing and is especially a conflict when residents from low-income racially segregated neighborhoods have to leave their own neighborhoods or have to deal with changing structures that impact how they maneuver and live within their communities. The participants vocalized their concern with gentrification in their neighborhoods. Not only are they worried about the displacement that residents within their neighborhoods have faced but, interestingly enough, they disliked the cultural changes that are occurring within their neighborhood as well.

Jeremiah mentions how "people are getting driven out by their circumstances out of their own control, due to property rising, the property of hospital bills, the cost of hospitals, expenses, even the supermarkets" He is very detailed in explaining how gentrification impacted his community not only in housing but also how it impacted the cost of services necessary to thrive within his neighborhood. Not only are people from his neighborhood moving out because of rising property cost but such increases also impacted the costs of many services needed for these

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residents such as hospital bills. He mentioned how the supermarkets are increasing their prices

and selling "certain stuff" too expensive for the original residents to attain. Gentrification, from

Jeremiah's eyes, impacts not only the housing units and living circumstances of the residents but

its placement also impact the goods and services being sold within this neighborhood. Goods and

services such as hospital bills increase due to the development of these higher socioeconomic

households and such demand require an increased cost to the services in the neighborhood which

may not be affordable for the residents who have been living there (NYU Furman Center 2015).

In the reality of Jeremiah, gentrification has the influence of not only impacting the housing

conditions of these residents but also the cost of the goods and services within the neighborhood

as well. Prices of these goods and services will increase, new stores may be developed, all of

which can be affordable to those who move into these newly developed housing units but the

original residents are left to wonder and figure out where they have to get such resources

elsewhere because they are just too expensive.

*Jeremiah- I don't like that a lot of people are getting driven out by circumstances out of their own
control, due to property rising, the property of hospital bills, the cost of hospital bills, costs,
expenses, even the supermarkets.*

Moreover, Cassandra feels a similar impact in her neighborhood as well and see gentrification as

a "double-edged sword." For her, she likes that her neighborhood contains nice stores and little

businesses but the key detail she points out is that such stores and businesses are "not for us." By

us, Cassandra is referring to the residents of her neighborhood who have been there for a long

period of time. There are stores and businesses in her neighborhood considered not for her and

her community and she notices how the little businesses can't last anymore. This is frustrating

for her because her family members have "little stores" that they go to for goods and services

that are no longer there because "it's hard to see" such changes in her community. Overall, her

frustration is present because she doesn't feel like it is a "part of [her] control."

Cassandra - I dislike that it is being gentrified…I know there's a double-edged sword of
gentrification like you know I think it's fair that we have nice little stores but not for us
necessarily and all the little business can't last anymore so it's very frustrating for me because
my mom and stepfather have little stores and so like I know its hard but it's hard to see it. Idk I
feel like it's frustrating but it doesn't feel like a part of my control.

Cassandra's subjective reality entails how gentrification created a situation where it is difficult to

find the resources needed for her and her family given the changes of the distribution of goods

and services within them. The little stores that her mom and stepfather use to go to may not be

available and the little businesses that were present within her neighborhood are no longer there.

This becomes frustrating because residents now have to figure out where to get their goods and

services. It may be the case that these goods and services are cultural because Cassandra's

community comprises of resources that cater to the Dominican influence present there. These

resources may not be as apparent once gentrification kicks in and create different resources that

may be in opposition to what the community needs. Because of these differences, frustration

builds up as the case was for Cassandra.

The insight of the respondents conveyed how gentrification is a significant social

problem with low-income racially segregated communities and how its prevalence is frustrating

for residents who have been in the community for a long period of time. Their feelings of

frustration stem from how the reality of how "after years of fighting to improve their

neighborhoods during periods of severe disinvestment, now that the neighborhoods are

improving, these residents won't be able to stay" (Newman and Wyly 2006:45). This is a

significant conflict because they established social bases and social processes within their

neighborhood that serve to reaffirm the subjective reality of the neighborhood and the

socialization of those within its structures (Berger and Luckmann 1967). In other words, they

created tangible structures and places that served to reaffirm the identity and reality, or social

world, of the community. This can be done through the creation of stores, the maintenance of

social networks and ties, or the simply establishment of community and the resources that serve

to maintain it. However, gentrification brings in new realities, new resources, and new social

bases that are different from what the community established. This results in the displacement of

both the residents and the culture present in that neighborhood. People like Cassandra are

starting to realize that these resources are "not for us."

Their Subjective Realities

Their insight about their neighborhood, both what they liked and disliked about it, served to

highlight their subjective realities of what it can mean to grow up within these spaces. More

specifically, the perspectives they held and the ways in which they respond to situations within

their neighborhood can shed light on how others, who grew up in these spaces, may view or react

within their neighborhood. It showcases such realities can translate into the different perspectives

and behavioral aspects of how other residents in the neighborhood may function. These

perspectives, in themselves, are the ways in which they were socialized to behave in that

community. The social problems evident in the community and the ways in which they

responded to these social problems show us that such problems objectively do exist within the

community. This applies to how they viewed social problems, underfunded schools, and gentrification as well. At the same time, the benefits of their neighborhood such as cultural convenience is another subjective reality that translates into the objective. The beauty of their cultures within the neighborhood and the social norms they relate to embody the reality of living within that community and being socialized within it. Berger and Luckmann (1967:33) would argue that the individual's encounters with their world help shape the dynamics of the environment they reside in and how the everyday life subjectively interpreted by individuals is "meaningful to them as a coherent world" that is objective to them (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 33). Their subjective realities are formed through their socialization processes in which they come to understand how they navigate their neighborhoods both in what they like and dislike it. This is because socialization is imperative in fostering a meaningful experience for which a subjective reality, an understanding of one's social world in relation to an environment can exist (Berger and Luckmann 1967). These worlds are the neighborhoods they grew up in and how they came to understand them throughout their lives. Despite the conflicts that are real within these communities due to institutional forces out of their own control, their individual encounters highlight multiple realities of being within that neighborhood based on the trends shown in this chapter. This chapter has described for us many realities of what it can be like coming from a low-income racially segregated community in New York City. Their realities opened our eyes to what is going on within the neighborhood in different shapes and forms. Some more relevant than others. All in all, "what is real outside corresponds to what is real within" (Berger and Luckmann 1967:153).

2

Transitioning Into A New World: The Effects of Institutional Whiteness

In the previous chapter we saw the subjective realities of college students from low-income racially segregated communities and how they were socialized within these spaces. Their perspective showed us possibilities on what it can be like to grow up within these environments. We also noticed how they were socialized into a space in which they learned and internalized the cultural and social aspects pertain to their identity. This entailed the cultural convenience of their neighborhood but also the environmental conflicts they had to navigate as well. What they liked and disliked about their neighborhood all contributed to the socialization within their spaces. Additionally, their viewpoints and behaviors pinpoint how they internalized their socialization in the ways in which they carried themselves in their neighborhoods. Keeping this in mind, what happens when they step outside of their socialized world and into a new one? Transitioning from their neighborhood, these students have walked into an institution, a setting that contains social activities containing feelings, perspectives, and insight of people in a communal setting (Hayes 1926). An institution is a space where reoccurring social patterns and behaviors that are valued in that community are its foundation. They exist to create an environment that caters to the personal interests, personalities, and viewpoints of the people within them. Simply put, they act as umbrellas under a social structure of human behavior and valued norms. Just like how the neighborhoods the participants were from contain many forms of institutions, so do the colleges they transition to. Colleges fulfill this same purpose where they work to create institutions that dictate its social norms and behaviors they believe best fits the space. Sara Ahmed (2012:29)

points out how authorities "make an institution into a body or machine...each assumed to have their own function or purpose" (Ahmed 2012:29). In other words, colleges and universities contain systems of governance whether it be faculty, donors, or administration that help cultivate and determine what is valuable behavior, knowledge and social patterns within their institution. This can be in the curriculums developed, in the events hosted, in the policies created, in the mission of the college, the social interactions of the students admitted by the college, and many more. Given this, it is important that we see institutions as not only fixed spaces but as spaces that are constantly reaffirmed because these settings are always acquiring "the regularity and stability that allows them to be recognizable as institutions in the first place" (Ahmed 2012:21). The problem arises when an individual who steps into that space finds their own behaviors or perspectives deemed as invaluable, misunderstood, or nonexistent. This is the case for minority college students attending predominantly white institutions. Predominantly white institutions (PWI) are defined as institutions of higher learning where white students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment and/or the institution itself can be historically white (M. Christopher Brown II and T. Elon Dancy II 2010). For low-income Black, African-American, or Hispanic college students, they become the minority within this space. They not only have to concern themselves with adapting into this new environment, they must also learn how to navigate a space that historically has not considered their identity or background. African-Americans at PWI environments feel "alienated and hyper-visible due to their race, and perceiving a hostile racial climate on campus has been associated with lower academic adjustment, performance, and college persistence" (Chavous 2002:143). A similar circumstance applies to many underrepresented groups on campus including Hispanic undergraduates where

they "face additional challenges and impediments that are exacerbated by their academic preparation and personal characteristics such as SES and being first generation" (Laird et al. 2007:41). This is the case because they are becoming a part of an institution that caters to the social activity of white individuals. Ahmed states "when we describe institutions as being white, we point to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others (Ahmed 2012:35). White institutions exist to the social world of those who are white. This may include interests, behaviors, perceptions, and viewpoints of the world around them. Those who haven't been socialized or don't have the physical traits to be socialized within these spaces find their existence as a challenge to the institution. To attend a predominantly white institution is to have your form of knowledge, behavior, or social activity deemed as unconsidered, or misunderstood. They are predominantly white for this reason and thus, we have what Ahmed calls institutional whiteness (Ahmed 2012).

These college students bring with them their subjective realities[11] of their neighborhood as they transition into a new world, the predominantly white institution. Transitioning into any new environment can prove as a challenge for many. However, in predominantly white institutions, the social patterns and spaces of white students is the behavior being understood as valuable to the college. I asked the participants their first impressions of their college/university and I was able to note four common trends in the answers they provided. These minority students highlighted their experiences in dealing with white spaces (students and faculty alike), struggled with relations to students of their similar identity and others endured a physical culture shock upon entering into a new space. Here we will look at how institutional whiteness seeps into the

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[11] *See Chapter 1 page 23-25*

experiences of the students and its effects on their experiences at the college. Minority college students in this chapter will be defined as the demographic of low-income Black, African-American, and/or Hispanic/Latinx students based on the identification of the respondents.

Things Are Different: Living Within White Spaces

The participants entered into their predominantly white institutions realizing how different the space was from their neighborhood. Many of them are a part of a scholarship program that cater to college students who come from financially challenged backgrounds. These scholarship programs created summer academies where all students admitted into the program come together for sessions that help them prepare for their adjustment into the college. When they arrived on campus, feelings of excitement and appreciation were presented in seeing college for the first time. During the summer, interacting with other students from the scholarship program did not cause them any conflict and they enjoyed the fact that there were other people who look similar to them and came from a similar background. For this moment in time, they enjoyed their first impressions of college. However, their perception of their college started to change once the rest of the student population arrived on campus.

Justyn stepped into his institution through the scholarship program and realized how different his school was from his neighborhood and background. He conveyed his arrival to campus as shocking because he noticed the "rich people", "white people", and "well educated people" within the institution. He expresses how different school was from his neighborhood and the realities he knew before stepping into it. He reflected on his upbringing as he expressed how he didn't come from the neighborhoods or the "good schools" his peers came from and realized

his position in a place where people don't look like him. Justyn's observations made him questioned whether his college was the right place for him. His mixed emotions resulted in the comparison of both worlds, all of which affected his sense of belonging at the school due to the lack of relation of his identity and his cultural background with that of the institution. He felt alienated within these spaces. As he expressed, it took him "2 years of hell" to feel like he belonged there.

Justyn - These first impressions were rich people, white people, well educated people. Just people who are different from me…the first impressions really for me was this school's white, this school's rich, this school is different the neighborhood is different and literally everything was just literally attached to the white culture…It made me feel about different, and me myself and I that I was different and that was because I didn't come from this neighborhood or I didn't go to a good school or like I came from [a neighborhood] people sagging pants who carried guns and I was like did I come from the worst of the worst or am I just lucky enough to be here or like what's going on so I think it played in my mind like did I deserve to be here? Do I just want to go home to study at CUNY? My friends go there. So like it was just a mixed of emotions on being here…like do you belong here? Do you deserve to be here but your culture doesn't fit here on campus? You're not wanted. You're not welcomed. People don't look like you. It was tough for me to feel that I belong here..It took me to the end of my sophomore year that wow like I belong here. It took a good 2 years, four semesters, to realize I belonged here..It took 2 years of hell to realize…

In like manner, Jessica, from Queens, also felt this sense of alienation due to environmental and cultural differences. Jessica came from a high school that was predominantly white and she expressed how culturally different it was from her neighborhood. Before speaking about her college experiences, Jessica realized such cultural and racial/ethnic disparities at her high school. She maintained that, even though her school prepared her for college academically, socially she felt disconnected with the student body she was sharing space with. College was the place where she wanted more diversity that didn't reflect her experiences in high school. However, she arrived into college noticing how the college was not white but "very white" to the point where

she felt white too. Her reaction to this situation was disappointment. She expressed the lack of diversity present on her campus and how the institutional whiteness present within the space affect her sense of belonging at the college. She articulated the lack of Latinx identity within the student body and explains the importance of this space because there is a connection "to the culture, to the music, and the language." For her, having such spaces made her feel at home but without such spaces, she felt isolated. She felt she had to change herself and "adapt" to her environment.

Jessica - …Very white. I felt white too…I thought it was going to be a very diverse campus and it wasn't …The fact there is no latinos here is really hard because you have a connect to the culture, and the music, and the language even though I didn't speak it I still kinda felt at home so not having that there made me feel pretty isolated. I felt like I had to change, to adapt to my environment.

Her isolation created a circumstance where she had to learn the culture, the norms, and the expectations of the institutionally white space she was residing in. In the tone of her voice, it is possible that this was a result that she did not look forward to because she expressed her need for cultural and ethnic relation at her college and her expectation to step into the college but not find such institutions. Her longing for a diverse college experience ever since high school resulted in her disappointment in having to change herself and adapt to the expectations and norms of the institution. When it came to her academic prosperity and well-being at the college, this is what she felt she had to do.

At the same time, being a minority in this type of environment can not only include the minority observing such disparities in the space but also the space observing the presence of the minority. To be a minority at a predominantly white institution is to be "watched extensively" pointed out by Jeremiah in reflecting on his experience being "black" at his college. He noticed

how he was watched by where he sat, what he did, and in many cases saw how he was viewed as

" an aggressive threat which [he found] funny because [he] is one of the nicest people [he]

knows." Given these experiences, he expressed how he never felt alone at his college because of

upperclassmen of color who were able to help create space for him, though there were moments

he felt down because of the added pressures of the institutions to perform well. Additionally, he

appreciates college because he can feel validated in his interests.

Jeremiah - I felt validated in my interests..at college there was no resistance to...explore my interests..that was the one positive thing about college..the negative thing about college was that I guess there was resistance but it just wasn't from black people…what I didn't like about college was, the white people here made me feel as though I was under a lens…Different than before because even though I was under a lens around my own people growing up in Harlem, the lens were different, the lens was that I was other and I wasn't validated in certain aspects..at the beginning and end of the day I was still one of them I was still black…but for here like I felt that being black at college meant being watched, watched extensively, watched where I sit at, watched what activities I played on my own time. I would be looked on as an aggressive threat which I find funny because I'm literally one of the nicest people I know…so yeah I didn't like that…with all the scrutiny there was always people here to understand me…a lot of that was due to…guys setting the example and creating space for us to be a part of before we even got here… seniors, the upperclassmen before us.

The insight of Jessica, Justyn, and Jeremiah allows us to understand the significance of what it

can feel like to come from a world containing your culture and socialized norms and then

stepping into a world where such spaces do not exist. Their feelings of shock stem from the

reality that they now have to adjust within a world that does not comprise of spaces that make up

who they are as individuals, both in the student body and under the structured institution. As

minority students in a white space, their experience highlights the reality that such students face

greater socio-cultural difficulties than white students because of "first the cultural dominance of

white, middle-class values on campus, pressuring minority students to acquire white, middle-

class values and to reject their own, and second ethnic isolation resulting from being a small

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proportion of the student body" (Loo and Rolison 1986:64-65). Justyn, Jessica, and Jeremiah were confronted with the cultural mismatch of their own values with that of the institution. Because they were a smaller proportion of the student body, it was difficult for them to find their personal social values in these spaces resulting in their feelings of belonging and alienation at the college. Hyper-awareness of this reality was evident on both sides of the table, from the minority student and from the institution. Justyn and Jessica had to watch their institution and the institution watched Jeremiah because of the difference between the values of both social worlds. By values, reference is made to the formation of perspectives and norms that primarily and secondarily socialized the individual into society or the setting in which they resided in previously (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Identity is crucial in the socialization of the person and is specifically influenced by where they are from (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Minorities who come from low-income racially segregated communities and attend PWIs, they found the lack of representation of their social world within the institution and have to navigate a cultural mismatch between their world and the world of the college.

Furthermore, being a minority at an institutionally white space not only results in feelings of alienation but can affect physical and mental well-being of minorities within these spaces. Ashley, is a college student from Queens who came from a neighborhood that struggled with underfunded schooling and catcalling from men in the neighborhood. She came from a place that was also culturally rich in her Caribbean identity as well. When she explained her experience transitioning into the institution, she thought the summer program was "cool" but when she came back to college for the fall term she realized how different things truly were from her personal background. She noticed the racial tensions that existed on her college campus directly from that

first semester she enrolled at the institution. She states how her college caters to the activities and

interests of white students at her school rather than minorities. This is to the extent where

minority students have to create their own events that cater to their background and interests.

This is interesting to point out given the fact that Ashley mentions her college does "this fake

whole diversity thing which is not even true." With this, she says how she doesn't like anything

about her college culture because of these incidents and hints at the reality that her college is not

as supportive in helping with the needs of minorities or addressing racial tensions.

Ashley - I never visited the school before I got there…I ain't never been around no white people before and I don't know. I'm nervous and when I go there. I mean it was cool.. When I went through the program, it was really Black and Latino students so I was like ok this is gonna be cool, and it was going to be for a month so this is cool. But then when I got to school, in the fall, it was like really different. Things were different. There was a whole bunch of, you know, white kids in class…It was a lot of racial tension at my school and there is still a lot of racial tension. So like my very first semester there was like this racist cartoon image that was on our paper. I felt like I was through into hell…There is like a racial incident every semester at my school..I don't really like anything about my college culture. I have to be 100 percent honest…My school caters to the culture whatever that means, you know of like white people..They are more catered towards things that they do and like we create our own events. The school as a whole doesn't create events that cater to minorities so we create our own basically….My college as a whole like they just do this fake whole diversity thing which is not even true. It's like not real. So it's like the community is kinda like fake from the administration all the way down to the students..

Ashley sums her experience up by saying she has gone "through hell" on her campus college. At

some point later on in the interview, she recalls her spring 2018 semester that she describes as

"one of the worst semesters" of her life because not only did her program director pass away but

during this time one of the white students on campus made a social media post saying "lynching

all "n****s tonight." She said how the college did nothing to address this incident and she and

other minorities on campus received severe threats on campus as a result of their backlash.

During these moments, she felt unsafe and drained to the point where she just would not go to

class. Other students felt this way as well. Ashley describes how such experiences do in fact

"affect a student's mental health especially with trying to...cope in going to class and studying

and doing their work." She emphasizes how it is "impossible" to be going through these

experiences in your environment and still be able to perform well in college courses.

*Ashley - Spring 18 probably had to be one of the worst semester of my life because my program director passed away and then right before that this white girl made a post saying "lynching n*****s tonight" and that caused a really big outrage and the president didn't do anything about that and they were saying how it wasn't a hate speech, like it was people from a committee posting on Facebook saying they were gonna come out here and shoot us and had pictures posting of their guns and stuff like that. It was crazy. You know there was a lot of stuff going on back to back to back and like it was just a lot for me because sometimes I would just not go to class..A lot of people weren't going to class and my program director passed away. It was just a lot going on and it really does affect a student's mental health especially with trying to like cope in going to class and studying and doing their work. It's kinda like impossible to be going through that in your environment and also be expected to do well in class.*

Ashley's impressions on campus reveals another effect of how institutional whiteness can affect

the studies of students who may not be welcomed within its spaces and structures. According to

her, such experiences take a toll on the mental well-being of not only herself but many other

minority students around as well. When minority students face academic difficulties at PWIs,

conventionally it can be a result of academic preparation, but it can also include differences

"socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds between their backgrounds and that of white students"

(Loo and Rolison 1986:65). More specifically, we find that her encounter with a racially

discriminatory space generated in a psychological and biological stress response (Levy et al.

2016). Examples of these stress responses include emotions like anger, frustration and coping

responses that help manage one's thoughts, or ideas based on a stressful moment (Levy et al.

2016). We found that these responses can affect their academic performance, and affect their

physical/mental well-being at the college because of these forms of stress they face due to residing within discriminatory institutions (Levy et al. 2016).

Moreover, institutional whiteness creates another effect for these students where they experience incidents that directly attack their identity at the institution. Without the support of the institution they reside in and its ability to understand these students, it can affect their outcome in their classes. Their experiences at their college highlight how those within the space do not bring into consideration the feelings or reactions of these minority students. White institutions that catered to the social world and cultural background of white students may enable some more than others to harbor feelings and perceptions of other identities opposite to their own. Those who benefit within them can harbor them perceptions whether negative or discriminatory can not be challenged since they live in an institution structured for them. In other words, all of the insight of the interviewees showcased a central theme: the ways in which the norms and perceptions of a white individual in power can shape how institutions and the spaces within them are made. Institutional whiteness becomes real and creates the effect we saw in this section because that individual or group of people have the power to shape a social environment as they see fit. Whiteness is only apparent to those who do not inhabit it or get used to its "inhabitance" (Ahmed 2012:35) It is real to those who step in that space. They realize the space is not welcoming or inviting to them in ways that are not only racist and exclusionary but also uncomfortable and isolating. They are forced to confront the disconnects that invalidate their presence within the institution. Consequently, they felt alienated and saw their academic performance hindered. They become emotionally drained trying to manage themselves within these spaces. The shaping within itself can result in the internalizing of prejudices, norms, and

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spaces that only cater to those who are white. The construction of this setting then creates an outcome where white students can feel unchallenged and can maintain their beliefs. The predominantly white institution was not designed for the minority's perspective, representation, or values.

Power is essential in this relationship because institutional whiteness is constantly reaffirmed through the structures of governance and authority who help to validate their value system within the space and racism becomes a key outcome in the construction of institutional whiteness (Ahmed 2012). The racist incidents minority students endured reflect how racism "is not simply prejudice against different races, but is a product of power differentials" and is embedded in socially constructed and systemic structures (Robinson 2013:227). Racist discourse allows for some people to prosper over others and allows the ability of one race to "dominate other races based on upon the logic of superiority and inferiority", all of which is evident in "systems and structures that perpetuate, maintain, and recreate the divisions" (Robinson 2013:227). This shows how institutional whiteness in alignment with racism occurs because the structure of the institution itself may not contain the spaces that will combat the conflicts minority students face. Because of the lack of their ethnic representation within the institution, it creates a space where white students, some but not all who carry these notions, can freely demonstrate their beliefs without conflict or ridicule. Additionally the right to exclude within these spaces stem from the formation of whiteness being characterized not "by an inherent unifying characteristic, but by the exclusion of others deemed to be not white" (Harris 1993:1736). Its presence maintains this purpose and power is the key influence between this relationship that helps to maintain this affirmation of institutional whiteness and the production

of racism. Those in power who are white create a space where the values and norms of what they learned are evident in the institutions they formulated. Racism becomes possible at the institution because its structures have been socialized where racism can take place, specifically the perspectives, stereotypes and viewpoints of other minorities or anyone who is non-white. They are so well ingrained into these spaces that it creates a sense of isolation for outsiders who step into these spaces. Examples of these situations can start with cultural disconnects, lack of representation in different social spaces, events, or classrooms, and can reach as far as racial incidents similar to what Ashley endured. Due to these outcomes, these students have to create their own spaces they feel they can belong in. Jeremiah's insight shows how he found upperclass minority students who supported him in his navigation through college and Ashley's insight tells us how minority students have to create their own events and spaces on campus. These students have struggled to adapt within these spaces because power is constantly at play in determining what is valuable or not through the experiences of minority students on their campus. Jessica recalls a racial incident that highlights the connection between institutional whiteness and power/ authority It showcases the importance of how power helps to reaffirm institutional whiteness in looking at how situations are handled. Her experience tells us how the influence of power can keep colleges institutionally white and how this circumstances affect the well-being of college students like herself within these environments.

Jessica - I'm a music major so we were all required to be in a choir. Freshmen year I was required to audition for a choir on campus and I've been there since then. I've had some problems specifically with micro aggressions from the conductor. He's a white cisgender male from high socioeconomic stance and great education so you know how that goes..This particular situation is directly after the Hate You Give movie came out..so I just saw that movie two days before so I really connected with that movie..and just thinking about my family and thinking about myself, I was in my feelings that day. We were starting a new sheet of music and one of the

music was a Negro Spiritual which I don't mind. We have done them in the past and they were great..the choir requested that. I didn't have a problem in the past but this song in particular, the lyrics were very personal. They were "sun up sun down, picking that cotton; sunup to sundown, work for the master; sunup to sundown, chains and shackles; no more auction block for me." So…I didn't know how to feel..the lyrics were very personal..so cringe…I personally felt some type of way..[and] I don't really agree with it…so I volunteered myself to talk to the professor about it. So I sent him an email..and I talked to multiple people because sometimes I can come off a bit strong and when I got a reply back it was very negative very combative and aggressive and he basically told me that my opinion doesn't matter because he's the conductor. Whatever he says goes and that I was being offensive because I brought up the situation…it became a big thing and now there was an investigation going on and before the end of it, he kicked me out of the choir. He told me that… I was being racist towards him. [The conductor said] You're only doing this because I'm white and I'm sure if the conductor was black you would not have said anything. That was the first situation where being a person of color really affected my situation. It affected my mood. I had people who were behind me and all of the sudden they were saying this is too much for me. [People] I don't want to have to deal with this because it's affecting me. So I had to deal with it myself. There were administrations and students who were like there but I was emotionally drained. There were moments where I didn't want to get up in the morning because I would be too tired to the point where I was crying sometimes and I felt that I was alone and I felt that I had to let it pass by because this would be another situation where a white person would be able to assert their power inappropriately and get away with it. He left saying that he needed a medical leave and this was my last semester and I think he did that intentionally. He had the power.

Borders Between Our Own People: The College Borderland

In addition to mentioning their interactions with white spaces at their college, the participants also expressed their interactions with college students of their own similar identity. Through the experiences of the respondents, minorities within institutionally white settings created bordered spaces that serve to include or exclude any members in a given setting, sometimes being members of who they relate to. Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderland Theory from her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* utilizes the notion of borders and the borderland to present the consciousness of those who have to navigate different two cultures and worlds (Anzaldúa 2012).

Her theory entails the significance of how borders whether it be physical, symbolic, or discursive "emerges a psychology of hybridity located in the bodies of women of color: the notion of mestiza consciousness which entails how women of mixed ancestry work to make sense of find "home and alienation in multiple, overlapping places" (Ayala 2009:72;Anzaldúa 2012). Borders can be defined as social, geographical, and/or political formations that are constantly reconstructed by these influences and by those within the space (Orozco-Mendoza 2008). They can also be seen as spaces containing political, social, and cultural distinctions all bounded into the existence of networks and interactions across them (Leonardo 2009). All of these borders exist within a given land that formulate the borderland.

Using the borderland theory, I argue that college is a setting where student borderlands are developed. It is a place where identities and social interests "grate up against each other causing new identities to be formed" (Camacho 2016). College allows for students to create borders that help them navigate their transition into higher education. Each student joins a space, intentionally and unintentionally, that serves to create relation to other students within the same land. As a result, the mixing of groups results in community establishment and places of relation. Many college students enter into college to be involved with clubs, organizations, or spaces that satisfy their interest and validate who they are as individuals, all of which are strongly encouraged by many institutions to help "enrich their college experience" (Brooks 2019). The borders themselves can include spaces with intended social purposes that cater to the interest of the student population in various regimes of identity that include race, class, background, religion, and many more. It can also entails personal interests such as hobbies, community impact, religion, identity, race. Though spaces and organizations exist on campus too cater to the

interests of the student population, this may be a conflict for students at predominantly white

institutions because they may not see such representation of their own interests at the institution.

Consequently, they establish safe spaces where students can freely express themselves, their

views, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes without ridicule and risk, that serve to combat the effects

of attending predominantly white colleges (Holley and Steiner 2005). These safe spaces are

evidently shown in many initiatives on college campuses such as projects, organizations, clubs,

day-to-day interactions, and Greek Life. Shown below is an image of what this theory generally

entails on the college borderlands and the interaction of different students between them at a

predominantly white institution.

Predominantly White Institution

White organizations Clubs Initiatives (spaces containing predominantly white students)	Black organizations	LGBTQIA+ organizations	Other organizations such as but not limited to identity, religion, hobbies, skills, Career, community service, and many more
	A college student		
	Latinx organizations	Asian organizations	
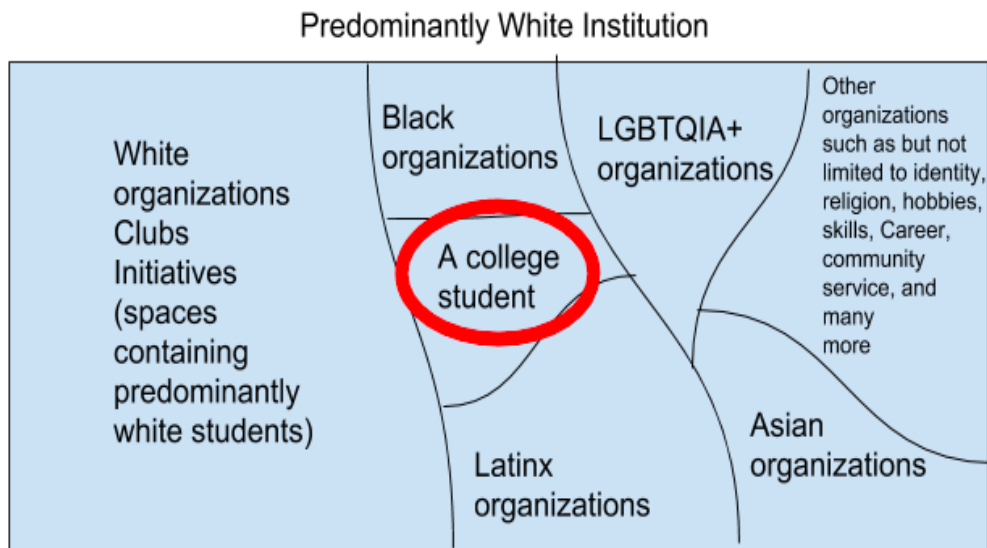
They notice a larger majority of organizations are majority white and also sees the

different organizations that exist that may cater to his, her, or their identity, personal background,

and interests. They can decide to enter into any border they choose, or navigate between multiple

borders. At the same time, the borders themselves and the participants within them can decide

whether they wish to accept that college student into their space. Both dynamics work together to create the establishment of the college borderland. The denial of entry into a border is impactful because within a borderland, all borders have the existence of social gatekeepers who "determine the extent of the administrative and control processes" (Newman 2003:22). Those within the borders have the power to include or exclude whoever they wish into their space. Those within the space are the gatekeepers who have that power to make such decisions. Keeping this in mind, their power gives them the ability to shape their environment and admission criteria in that space.

Like any college student, minority students interact with the college borderlands and work to understand themselves through these interactions. However, the respondent's insight explained how the added pressure and experience of creating such spaces created an outcome that translates into specific perceptions and narratives of minority identity that become established by the students and embedded into the admissions of the borderlands. The social gatekeepers have the power to partake in the inclusion of some minorities but the exclusion of affiliations and identities to which we belong" (Newman 2003:22) and if the social gatekeepers find that you do not fit that affiliation, identity, or narrative, admittance would be denied into that space. Those who did not fit that narrative, those who had to pick and choose which organization to be a part of, and those who came in with other minority students but found that they all separated once the semester started all faced the impact of minority college borderlands. The reality for many of the participants was that some minority borders were more exclusive than others.

Christopher speaks about his experience entering into his school and how the group of people he came in with through his scholarship program no longer interact with each other. He

noticed how the environment, his college atmosphere, "affected everybody and our relationships" where "everyone started acting different" once they all "got mixed in." By mixed in, Christopher is referring to the start of the semester where white students and the rest of the student population arrive on the college campus. Through this situation, he saw the relationships with other black students he formed in that summer changing where these same students would exit the group, form their own cliques and wouldn't return to the social group they first interacted with. Christopher seemed confused at this phenomenon and did not understand why this happened, why people similar to him decided to branch off when he feels that minority students have to stick together in a predominantly white space. However, he began to realize how his situation was not unique itself. He observed how every cohort of scholarship students the college brings in go through the same situation and eventually the same outcome. He stated how "every summer they bring kids in, they come in as a family and when you go through years at college, everybody goes their own way." This is a conflicting and important issue to him because as a Black student he understands that Black students can interact with whoever they want to but believes that there always has to be that foundation, "that one thing to go back to, that circle," and, at his institution, that wasn't there. He describes this outcome and adds on that the advisors in his program don't help either and look like they are "in a sunken place." The phrase "sunken place" was used in Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* which represents "the helplessness and powerless feeling many Black Americans experience day-to-day, in a society controlled by whites where they are used for what they offer but never allowed to embrace who they truly are."[12] Avery Salumbides points out how the sunken place can include the inability to combat racism or

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[12] Salumbides, Avery. 2017. "The Sunken Place," Retrieved April 21, 2019 (https://journeys.dartmouth.edu/feministguidetogetout/2017/05/24/sunken-place/).

inequality in certain settings such as the workplace because so many black characters have to

manage the power of white society and any action that goes against the expectations of this

society could affect their status and their position.[13] Through Christopher's experience, it was

difficult for him to navigate his institution because the original group of people he came in with

dispersed into borderlands that he couldn't gain access to. At the same time, he saw how his

advisors of color were in a sunken place and didn't support him in overcoming these conflicts.

Christopher - …when I first got to [college] I was happy. I was like wow I made it! I really did it! All this hard work paid off! I made it and then that was during the same. We all came in during the summer. Then after when school started thats when my eyes really got pen so like who was who and how the campus moved. For the summer it was just like everybody. We all from the Bronx, we from where we from and it's cool. We all black but when we got mixed in, I started to notice how the environment affected everybody and our relationships. Everyone started acting different. So like instead of us getting more closer, we all ending up getting more separated and it makes no sense. Some of the black kids went to hang out with the Asian kids not that there is anything wrong with that but they wouldn't talk to us..It was just like inner problems. Everyone just found their own cliche and in my head I thought we going to be all family but it didn't end up working like that. Everyone moves their own way. I thought this was just with us but it happens with every class. Every summer they bring kids in, they come in as a family and when you go through your years at [college], everybody goes their own way and I understand that but I felt that we always have that one thing to go back to, that circle, but it's not like that here. Unfortunately, The advisors here do no justice. They look like they in a sunken place…You need people who can get you out.

Julie also expressed a similar circumstance at her institution as well. Julie is a college

student who grew up in a low-income neighborhood from the Bronx. Upon entering her

university, she was amazed at seeing a college campus and was wowed by the opportunity to

attend college. She appreciated the fact that her school was bigger and have such diverse

interests. However, what she disliked about the culture was that it was very "divided." She saw

how the Black, Latinx, and Asian organizations are all in "competition with each other" rather

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13 *Ibid*

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than being a more "unified campus." She expresses how upsetting this situation makes her

considering the fact that she is attending a predominantly white institution and such a division

does not help the position of minorities at the college.

Furthermore, Angel, born and raised in the Bronx, emphasizes the presence of greek life

on their college campus. They mentions the involvement of the diverse organizations on their

campus saying how such organizations can come together briefly to organize social events and

projects. However, they realized overtime that each organization formed their own cliques that

are noticeable not only for them but for those who are not involved in Greek life on campus.

Angel expresses their frustration on students asking them about their relationship with other

fraternities and how they wish to not be associated with these perspectives. Entering a greek

organization of color automatically came with perspectives and labels that they had to manage

once entering into that bordered space. As a result they are asked to address topics and situations

about their fraternity that they do not prefer to do. Their experience explains how borders can be

competitive towards each other.

Julie - What I dislike about the culture here is that it is very divided. Everyone here is in competition with each other like Greek life like student organizations. it's like Latin organizations, Black organizations. Asian organizations, just like different groups of ethnicities and races and there's such a big division. And that's why I get upset because like we could be doing so much more..but like be doing the most things to get people to join things. I don't know. I don't like that at all. I wish we were a more unified campus.

Angel - My college is 70 percent Greek…you get on to campus then you meet all the frats and then at the end..you're moving into one of the frats..that would be your freshmen dorm..It's a very greek, in particular a white greek system like we do have Divine 9 and NPHC but its still white greek dominant…organizations…who, for the first protest on campus,..there was a lot of spearheading and organizing behind it so for me that was something I liked as just when we saw like brief unity for like any of the non white frats..how unified they were and how like much they were able to get shit done for the better of the campus. And then something I didn't like was

ultimately what that does is it creates a lot of cliques, so it would be like if you were in this greek house you are generally associated with this other greek house so from my experience for a short time now I was a member of [fraternity]. I think one of the first questions that people ask me was…oh how's your relationship with this sorority because it was like a sorority we usually paired with and I'm like .I don't want to be associated like that with people..You can ask me literally anything else…It's very much cliques like even just like if you're not greek…People always thought there was cliques between international and domestic students, for me that was always more justified..culture shock on how to navigate.

Julie and Angel's circumstance highlights how different borders in a borderland interact with each other and define their relationships with one another, all of which can affect one's presence and well-being at the institution. Entering a specific border can come with a label in which you must carry with you the viewpoints of that border from others in the borderland and whichever space you decide to step into, you observe how competitive each border can be with one another. Borders have the ability to expand, or dissolve as the case was for Christopher in which the space he was a part of initially was deconstructed and other minority students he created a connection with navigated into other borders he didn't have access to.

Furthermore, borderlands can exist not only in wider spaces but can occur in day-to-day interactions and personal challenges on the identity of the individual. The college student has to figure out which border and space they feel most comfortable in. However, this becomes a significant issue if those within the borders decide to exclude the prospective student who wishes to join. Jessica, upon entering the college, already experienced conflicts in navigating white spaces and noticed that many students of her identity and culture were not present at the college. On top of this, she struggled in the ways minority students viewed her presence on the campus. She expressed how "she was more accepted by white people than by my own people" and the reasons why were because they considered her not "black enough", and "latino enough." In

navigating her college borderland, Jessica struggled with gaining admittance and acceptance into the different spaces present at her college. For many of these spaces, her identity did not align with the expectation of what that form of identity should be on campus. She struggled with finding a safe space where she felt she can help combat the conflicts she faced at her college.

Jessica - I had a similar experience in terms of like I was viewed and accepted. felt like I have been accepted more by white people than by my own people for black people because I've been told I'm not black enough, for latinos I'm not latino enough, and for white people Im just like this mixed girl that says weird things sometimes…*laughs*

Her insight is unique in that borderlands have the impact of create a requirement of what kind of person should be admitted into their space. Those maintaining these borders have the authority to define the social standard and identity of who steps into their space and for Jessica's case, we see how this criteria can be oppressive and discriminatory based on the context of her skin color because blackness has to look or act a certain way. This same case applies to Latin identity where being latinx has to look or act a certain way in order to step into the space.

Ultimately, the experiences of these respondents reveal the effect of institutional whiteness amongst minority spaces within the institution. Minority students create safe spaces that cater to their identity and their culture because they reside in a world where they feel they have to disconnect themselves from their cultural background and learn the behaviors and attitudes of white mainstream culture (Arroyo and Zigler 1995). They retaliate by creating their own bordered spaces that serve to embrace their cultural background and racial identity. These borders serve to include or exclude appropriately and establish a sense separate identities in a space where these identities can be embraced through the "maintenance of the border" (Newman 2003:15). However, we found that, in doing so, some minority spaces and

borders were more exclusive than others through the ways they socially construct minority identity in admittance into their spaces. This was evidently shown in the identity of the college student and/or the organizations or spaces that the individual steps into. Borders create the effect of fixating "socially constructed territorial identities, creating walls, barriers, where a single functional space existed" (Newman 2003:16). In the minority borderlands, the effects of institutional whiteness created an outcome that strictly defined how that specific minority identity should be perceived in an institution where such representation is lacking. This results in a pattern of ethnic separatism which encompasses the dissociation and social separation of other ethnic identities into different spaces both inside and outside the borders. Creating minority spaces in an institutionally white space involves establishing an identity of a social group of persons who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and are labeled the in-group; persons who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group" (Stets and Burke 2000:225). Ethnic separatism and minority borderlands exist within these spaces due to a minority student's ability to understand their own identity based on the social categories they belong in (Stets & Burke 2000). Since minority identities are multifaceted, those with the power to establish bordered spaces understand self-identity in their own fashion and can include or exclude other similar members based on these qualifications to identify with the individual or the space in which the authority establishes. This is evident because borders establish a place of otherness that have the ability to create a sense of belonging "to a common interest group, sharing specific values, social status and identities" (Newman 2003:15). Based on the experiences of the interviewees, these diverse identities can result in intra-group competition, evaluation of identity from the individual to societal, and the dispersement of individual into other bordered spaces in

which the others does not have access to. The insight of minority borderlands and ethnic

separatism amongst the respondents showcase a broader reality of many students of color at

predominantly white institutions that feel as though ethnic minority groups separate from each

other and do not "sense a collaborative effort to interact, unite, and form coalitions" (Jones et al.

2002:29). This is especially true for bicultural students who reported not feeling accepted into

these spaces because they did not look ethnic or racial enough (Jones et al. 2002:29).

This is an effect for minority students because they have to manage two conflicting issues that

are (1) adapting into a predominantly white institution and find spaces where their identity can

be represented and (2) navigating bordered spaces that existed within minority communities that

prompt competition amongst each other, define what it means to be that specific minority

identity, and/or establish spaces that the individual student can not step into. Trying to navigate

both conflicts is a challenge and many of them reported feelings of frustrating in attempting to

manage their own situations of the minority college borderlands.

Physical Culture Shock

Another significant trend evident was how much the respondents missed the convenience of their

neighborhoods in New York City. Many of them experience what will be called a physical

culture shock, a form of culture shock that focuses on the differences between the old world and

the new world. Conventionally, culture shocks take up many different forms and meanings. It is

defined as the "loss of emotional equilibrium suffered when one relocate from one culture to an

entirely different environment."[14] All of these students endured culture shock specifically with

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[14] Johnson, Aleta. 2019. "Culture Shock." Retrieved April 21, 2019 (https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/
support/counseling-and-psychological-services/index.php?q=culture-shock).

race, and class. In a similar fashion, others felt this shock in the physical space they resided in terms of the differing goods and services between their neighborhood and their college.

Angel upon entering their college realized a culture shock where they can no longer rely on public transit to get places. People approached them asking for a ride but they said no because they don't accept rides from strangers. They state that given the public transit that is always available in their neighborhood and New York City, it is suspicious to get into a car with a stranger. The only exception is if someone takes a "taxi or Uber." Jeremiah also had this similar realization where when he first arrived to campus, he noticed it was in the "middle of nowhere" and he found that there are no 24 hour eating services and no public transportation. He expressed this circumstance as frustrating for him in his transition to his college. His needs, that he grew accustomed to in his neighborhood, can no longer be met in the space he resides in now. Both Angel and Jeremiah realize how much they miss the big transit in New York City and how accessible public transportation was. In contrast to their college, there are less things to do and this was an added frustration to their transition in higher education.

For Brianna, she dislikes the social life at her college in terms of how inaccessible things are and how there is nothing to do. Brianna wishes "there was more stuff to do around college" and expressed her interests in museums and poetry events, something she doesn't find apparent at her school. She also wishes that she had better access to New York City.

Brianna - I don't like the social life at [college] that much. I wish there was more stuff like to do around [college] like even just..I don't know. I like museums. I like slam poetry, stuff like that. I like going to cyphers and parks. I wish we had that or even like better access to the city in general. That's what I dislike the most…not much to do.

Angel - …so essentially it was just a bit of culture shock at first so like in New York City you have public transit..but people here are like oh you know you have to drive everywhere…so that was a big transition. People don't think about how you actually adjust your living when you have to live with public transit. How do you adjust your living to where it's not public transit? …I still don't know how to drive to this day. People know me in town as that guy that walks everywhere..It would be like Walmart is an hour walk..This is the summer! So they would just see like me walk the full hour and I think the first time I did that I was so surprised…multiple cars stopped by and was like…do you want a ride somewhere and I'm like nah I'm good. Because for me it was a moment…going into cars with strangers does not seem like a smart idea like generally…it supports that New Yorkers don't talk to anyone..essentially don't look at anyone… This seems weird to just stop at the middle of the road..It was weird to me based on growing up in public transit and like not around people with cars so for me it would be weird if someone with a car that wasn't a taxi or Uber was like hey do you need a ride somewhere? No that's weird no.

Jeremiah - my first impressions when I got to [college] was that this is in the middle of nowhere, that this is not the city, that there is no public transportation that is every 5-10 minutes, theres no 24 hour eating service, and the accumulation of simply those two things made [college] very very frustrating for me. That I didn't like [college] because I couldn't eat whenever I eat and I couldn't get around whenever I want, because I didn't have a car.

These moments show us the impact of physical culture shock, moving from one physically accustomed world into a brand new one. Their adjustment process of the college from home resulted in feelings of frustration because of their reactions and feelings of the cultural cues they know "so well from home are lacking."[15] These cultural cues are the spaces and social institutions embedded in the neighborhood such as public transportation. This was a huge trend in asking about their first impressions of college. It is a noted trend because transportation is important to communities and transportation equity can affect "our overall health and environments" (Carter et al. 2013). It affects people's ability to get from one place to another,

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[15] University of North Carolina at Greensboro. 2019. "Dealing With Culture Shock." Retrieved from April 21, 2019 (https://studyabroad.uncg.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.ViewLink&Parent_ID=A80D5B59-AA4D-15A6-E5DDC6A5F2566BDE&Link_ID=B2E2ACBC-E64C-9B58-6BC68A8B2295E9FF).

and having transportation equity allows for the different circumstances of different people to be catered to. Given such, it is a necessity in New York City neighborhoods and because of their upbringing in these environments, it was difficult adjusting their living and figuring out a way to readjust their personal needs that they accumulated growing up such as their need for transportation. This same effect can be present on campus as well where Brianna stated how she wishes there was better access to New York City and more things to do at her college and around the neighborhood.

Though the effect of institutional whiteness may not be as present in the direct insight of these respondents, it is important to pinpoint the effect of physical culture shock on the transition from NYC moving from a low-income racially segregated neighborhoods to colleges and universities in suburban or rural areas. More studies should highlight what it means for minority college students from these backgrounds to experience feelings of physical culture shock and how they should adjust and navigate these feelings as they adapt within predominantly white institutions. In addition, studies should also explore the importance of transportation and community events for college students who have limited access to a car and come from different environments.

The Effects of Institutional Whiteness

In transitioning into predominantly white institutions, these college students entered into a space they appreciate and can take advantage of its resources. At the same time, they transition into the predominantly white institution and struggled with (1) living in institutionally white spaces (2) the exclusion of minority students by other minorities within bordered spaces, (3) physical

culture shock coming from their NYC neighborhood. Institutional whiteness is present in the first two of these instances while the third highlights another form of culture shock these students faced as they transitioned into their colleges. Institutional whiteness is embedded in every fiber of the college through academia, social interactions, and structural constructions such as culture. Its presence seeps into the lives of these students and challenges their identity and background because institutional whiteness is not accustomed to the experiences and perspectives of minority students. Those who benefit from institutional whiteness, who's perspectives and background are structurally designed for them, demonstrate a form of power and influence over those who do not have such power. This is because "white bodies become somatic norms within spaces" and those who are nonwhite "can feel out of place" (Ahmed 2012:38). Additionally, institutional whiteness and white bodies become the institutional norm at the college where its presence becomes the "rules or norms of conduct enforced by an institution (Ahmed 2012:38). Given this, it creates the outcome where minority students feel shocked and alienated within that space. It creates the outcome where their experiences at their white colleges affects their studies. It creates the outcome where minority students cultivate their own bordered spaces and can possibly exclude others even of similar identity. For those who have power and comfortability in that institution, they can make decisions that do not take into consideration the experiences of minority students and, in many cases, invalidate their experiences. Institutional whiteness entails the white institutional presence of culture, perspectives, and ideologies, all of which affect minority students because the space itself has historically lacked minority representation and a multicultural presence (Gusa 2010).

Therefore, we have highlighted how college students from low-income racially segregated communities transition into predominantly white institutions to find the effects of institutional whiteness resulting in (1) feelings of alienation and sense of belonging, (2) affecting their academic performance because of the emotional toil it can take to manage academic and social issues while trying to perform well in class and (3) while creating safe spaces for minority students, it can create a situation where minorities can be exclusive towards each other through specific narratives and definitions of what it means to be a specific identity and invited into that bordered space. In addition, these situations create competition and cliques amongst other diverse organizations in the college borderland of spaces and others find their own spaces dispersing into other borders they can not access or feel comfortable accessing. We have also noted a transitional effect from neighborhood to college on many students expressing feelings of physical cultural shock because of the physical differences between their New York City neighborhoods and the college itself. The reason why these feelings exist is because they came from a world where many of them were not accustomed to the culture of institutional whiteness and, thus, stepping into this space resulted in various forms of shock that affected their sense of belonging at the college and negatively affected their grades as they endure through different situations on their college both within white spaces, physical spaces, and minority spaces.

3

Going Back And Forth: Awakening the Sociological Eye and Place Identity

Throughout the project, we saw the background of the college student's neighborhood and their transition into predominantly white institutions. We saw how their identity was shaped by both the environments they were socialized in and environments that were different from themselves. The construction of identity within both spaces are done in a way that is fixed to the environments they are in and such places shape how they carry themselves. In our lives, we construct a place identity that is approximate to the spaces we reside in. These place identities are assembled by the environments particularly through their behaviors and mindset of those who are navigating them. Place identity refers to the phenomenon of observation and interpretation of the environment, comprising of two elements which are (1) memories, values, thoughts, ideas, and settings and (2) the relationship between different settings such as home, neighborhood, and school (Qazimi 2014:307). It explores how identity evolves as individuals "differentiate themselves from other people" and at the same time, develops as they learn to see themselves as "distinct from, but related to the physical environment" (Qazimi 2014:307). This identity is constructed where "social and environmental skills are learned and leases are formed" that the individual will "evaluate and recognize" later on especially in contrasting places (Qazimi 2014:307). The relationship between place and identity is imperative in understanding how individuals come to identify who they are and the trajectory of their personal development. We grow within a space we feel we belong but what happens when we step out of that environment and into a new one? A key question to explore is "why do we feel that we belong in some places

and not in others" (Gieseking et al. 2014)? Surely, this is one of the primary questions being explored here in this project.

What we find is that "place and identity are inextricably bound to one another" specifically in "creating distinctive environmental autobiographies, the narratives we hold from the memories of those spaces and places that shaped us" (Gieseking et al. 2014). We develop environmental autobiographies, based on the experiences and interactions with our environments. Simply put, place identities includes our relationship to the places we come from. It entails how we behave within it, how we think and view it, and how we adapt within it. For those who have to navigate different environments, it is possible that they may have to develop different narratives and modes of behaviors depending on which setting they are in. They behavior in a certain manner in one setting and differently in another. These students came from their community and entered into a new place they had to adapt into. More specifically, they arrived in an environment where they had to alter parts of their own identity in order to navigate their transition into the predominantly white institution. This was a significant effect that these students faced, being able to cross into a new world and figure out methods of behavior, and perspectives in order to maintain their position at the institution.

They get a moment away from this new world and return to the old one and what was found was that every respondent, intentionally or unintentionally attained what Randall Collins would call the sociological eye (Collins 1998). This eye is the ability to look at the world around us and analyze its social patterns and behaviors (Collins 1998). Collins points out how the sociological eye is a phenomenon that allows for the individual to see "suggestions of social movements mobilizing or winding down" that "becomes a clue to the larger patterns of

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society" (Collins 1998:3). More importantly, a sociological eye enables you to see what others may not notice. It allows you to look beneath the surface of a situation and discern social patterns (Collins 1998). These college students returned to their original worlds and saw their neighborhood differently. They gained insight of their environment they haven't noticed before and these observations resulted in a shifting of their place identity in their original world. These observations are the sociological eye that allows for the creation of a sociological imagination, the ability to connect what is happening in their own lives and "in the lives of other individuals to social patterns in the larger society" (Korgen et al. 2019:6). Their sociological imagination becomes applicable in reflecting on their own transitions and their interaction with their neighborhood. It is through these observations that place identity is born and constructed, through their behaviors and viewpoints of their worlds. Their observations resulted in their behavioral adaptation of their navigation between both settings. The focal point of this chapter will explore what it was like for them to go back home to their neighborhood after entering into college, but not graduating, and if they see their home life and neighborhood differently ever since they started attending school. Their insight will examine the relationship between their sociological eye/imagination and their place identity in their transition from their predominantly white institutions back to their neighborhoods and understand what it was like going back and forth between two worlds. The sociological eye and sociological imagination will be used interchangeably and will embody what it means for these students to see things differently in their worldly navigations and argue that it is this influence that shapes the respondents place identity at home.

Going Back Home: Attaining the Sociological Eye

Going back home was an enjoyable moment for many but eye opening for all. When I asked these individuals what it was like going back home, some of them explained how going back was great in terms of interacting with family and indulging in the cultural convenience of their neighborhood. It was also an opportunity to step away from that space which was comforting for some of them. However, every single student returned to their neighborhood and saw their environment differently. They gained this sociological eye, an ability to see what others may not see, and observe a different reality of their neighborhood (Collins 1998). I found that these college students when returning home (1) enjoyed going back and appreciated it, (2) saw their navigation as an outlet or escape from one world or the other, and (3) gained a realization and perspective of their neighborhood that they haven't seen before coming to college. All of these trends showcase different versions of the sociological eye and how their ability to compare worlds and reflect on their experiences resulted in the common trends shown here.

Enjoying Home

Cassandra - Every time I never not looked forward to coming home…I used to come home a lot..I was comparing a lot. I miss my family. I miss my mother, my brother. That was a big thing for me. I miss my mother's cooking a lot. I grew up barely eating American central cuisines..

Julie - Honestly I was because I missed home a lot..I miss like the stores, the bodegas like just seeing the same people…like oh hey what's up! I was actually really looking forward to it but yea thats it.

Most respondents enjoyed returning to their neighborhood specifically to see their families and to interact with people and culture in their neighborhood. Julie looked forward to going home

whenever she had the chance to do so. She expressed how she missed "the stores, the bodegas" and "seeing the same people" that she can greet. Coming from a new world and heading back into the old one, she liked her community for its comfort and familiarity and gained a deeper sense of appreciation for it. This was also the case for Cassandra as well where she mentions how she "never not looked forward to coming home." She says how she misses her family, specifically her mother and brother which was a "big thing" for her. She also misses her home meals as well. For Cassandra and Julie, going home was always great because they can return to their communities that contain cultures they can relate to. Cassandra can return to her household and interact with her family again with whom she developed close relationships with. Her family means a lot to her and family is an important factor in a college student's ability to transition into college. For Latinx students like herself, family is one of the key factors in providing support and assisting in the transition into their first year and beyond (Hurtado et al. 1996). What is seen here is the role of her culture and how embedded it is within her life through the context of her neighborhood and her family. A similar situation goes for Julie as well where she can return to her neighborhood and interact with the familiar institutions there and the people she has known for a while. She feels that she can be herself within these spaces, in contrast to her college. As a result she looked forward to going back home.

In the examples of Cassandra and Julie, their appreciation of their neighborhood and home life give insight to what happens when college students step away from home and enter into a world containing institutions where minority students feel alienated due to unfamiliar norms, values, and expectations dominate within the institution as a whole (Hurtado et al. 1996; Bennett and Okinaka 1990). Their sociological eye was apparent through comparison, through

the ability to notice the conditions at school and neighborhood, in turn appreciate their neighborhood and family more. In Cassandra words, she "was comparing a lot" of her life at college and her life at home and through these comparisons she missed what she felt was lacking in her life and that was her family, her culture, and a piece of her identity. Julie had a deep appreciation of her neighborhood through the comparison of her experiences at her college and her neighborhood. Many of the respondents when asking them what it was like going back home stated that they appreciated it for such reasons. In the examples of Julie and Cassandra, and many other respondents who enjoyed returning home, they not only missed their families and the structures of their neighborhood but what they really missed was a culture, and an identity they can see in their environment. Their sociological eye allowed them to make such comparisons and entailed the appreciation of their neighborhood and home life.

Navigation As An Outlet

While some respondents felt going back home was relieving, others saw it as an outlet or, to be frank, an escape from college and vice versa. When it was time to leave campus, some were very excited to head home because they had an opportunity to leave their college campus and others felt that when they got home they wanted to go back to school already. In the case of Ashley she enjoyed going back home because she gets to interact with a comfortable space and familiar culture. At the same time, she saw home as an escape from the conflicts she faced at her institution. Going home was an opportunity to leave her college atmosphere, to take a break from an environment that she describes as "a mess." She breaks down why her college environment is

within such a state by emphasizing not only the racial incidents she endured at the institution[16] but also the reality that minority students on her college campus struggle with community, specifically the Black and Latinx community. Ashley expresses how one of her friends created an event specifically for Black women but noticed how such an event resulted in an "outbreak between different communities felt like they were being left out." This is significant to her because as she emphasizes, "there is nothing for black women, no club, no sorority, like nothing where black women can have their own space." Seeing this backlash from her own community resulted in "a lot of drama." Her experience highlights another example of minority borderlands where minority college students establish spaces, communities and/or organizations that determine their presence within a space and how they choose to interact or accept one another even one of their own.[17] Given these situations, she felt that going home was an outlet for all the issues she faced on her campus and even though home might not be "greatest" she would prefer to be home than at the college. In comparing both spaces, Ashley felt going home relieve her of the conflicts she endured at her institutions if only for a brief while. Though home itself is not free of conflict given her experiences walking in her neighborhood where men would cat call her and invade her space. Still, she prefers to be home even though it is not greatest.

Ashley - I love going home you know because I hate my school so much so even though coming home to where I live is not the greatest thing in the world, I just rather come home here than be there with that mess because it's really a mess. I feel like [home] it is an outlet away from my school like it's just a lot that goes on. On top of like all the racial problems that they have there's also a lot of problems within the minority community so it's overbearing honestly…one of the most well known [issues] is between the Black and Latin communities like one semester one of my friends did like a event called sister 2 sister and it was an event for black women because at our school there's nothing for black women, no club, no sorority, like nothing where black

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[16] *See Chapter 2 page 50-53*

[17] *See Chapter 2 page 56-59*

women can have their own space and that caused a big outbreak between different communities because people felt like they were being left out and stuff like that…it's really like a lot of drama.

On the other hand, we find a reverse situation for Brianna where college was an outlet and an escape from home. Although Brianna also enjoys going home where she can eat good food in her neighborhood and in her household she emphasizes how she wanted to return to school. Brianna states how independent she can be at her college and how this is a significant value that she might not have at home. She mentions how she "loves being at home but it's definitely a transition, you get a lot of agency and autonomy being here [at college] kinda like on your own, you can do or say whatever you want." She feels that this navigation is annoying and frustrating for her. More specifically, it is frustrating that there may not be much similarity between her behavior at home versus her behavior at college. Brianna benefits from the advantage of attending college away from home. College allows for an individual to foster your one's own independence because due to entering into a space outside of the individual's comfort zone and, as result, learning new skills and expanding horizons.[18] In her case, she could not hold on to such perspectives at home as she felt more restricted in what she wanted to do.

Brianna - surprisingly when I was home..I actually wanted to go back to school. Just because like I said I come from a Caribbean household and there's not as much privacy, we barely close doors so it was just like where are you going? what time are you coming back? Omg! I just want to get up and go like or even like having people over and that was just really annoying for me but after first semester like this is not it. …I love being at home but it's definitely a transition.You get a lot of agency and autonomy being here [at college] kinda like on your own, you can do or say whatever you want..when I go back home it's still like I'm still a baby. It's annoying its like very frustrating…

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[18] Vista College. 2014. "Should You Stay Home or Go Away to College?" Retrieved March 25, 2019 (https://www.vistacollege.edu/blog/resources/should-you-stay-home-or-go-away-to-college/).

Her insight shows us what it means for college students to return from an independent environment and back into an environment that is more restricting for them. The shift in the worlds can be frustrating and having to switch on and off different parts of yourself and your identity can be frustrating for students like Brianna and Ashley. Their place identity shifts slightly, specifically in how they view and compare these spaces. This is because place identity is constructed "from the multiple ways in which place functions to provide a sense of belonging, construct meaning, foster attachments, and mediate change" (Gieseking et al. 2014). Ashley's escape from college due to the conflicts she faced in it and Brianna's preference of returning to school for independence serves to highlight this reality on how their place identity changed because of their exposure to a new world. The ways in which they view it changed and, because of these viewpoints, they navigate their neighborhood differently than before. Subsequently, their place identity at home has changed or shifted slightly. All in all, going back home was enjoyable but navigating these places served as outlets to escape one world or another. These experiences embody how going back and forth between home/neighborhood and predominantly white institutions can serve as forms of escape or opportunities to step out of these settings. Similar to those who enjoyed going back home, their sociological eye was evident in their ability to compare these settings which consequently establish ideological ground work on their position within the environment and their identity within these places. Their place identity was altered by the changing perception of their neighborhood after navigating two worlds.

A Realization: Detachment, Shock, and Guilt

For some students, going back home gave them a realization of the different worlds they came in and they attain the sociological eye because of their ability to compare two specific worlds that are different from each other. Justyn explains how he enjoyed going home because it is a comfort zone but realized, as time passed on, home felt "nothing but like another issue, another dynamic, another vibe, it was just like another thing" and he didn't "a part of it anymore." Navigating his neighborhood and his predominantly white institution made him feel more "disconnected" and detached" to his neighborhood. He explains why by expressing how you become familiar with a different environment and inevitably a different world. He became accustomed to the "new school, the new community" and became familiar with the new community. As a result, he felt that he lost "that sense in New York."

Justyn - I wanted to be in my safety net I wanted to be in my comfort zone…I wanted to be with my moms..but I think as the years went on this made me realized that home was nothing but like another issue, another dynamic, another vibe, it was just like another thing, I didn't feel like I was a part of it anymore, you feel detached, you feel disconnected…you come on the weekends, you not really there for long periods of time…everything you know, you learning about the new school, the new community, the new vibe…I was getting familiar with the Boston area but you lose that sense in New York…at Boston that's where you are at.

One would ask what would it mean to lose a sense? Here Justyn describes his place attachment to his South Bronx neighborhood, defined as the bond between a person and a place that embodies an emotional content specifically the relationship of closeness between the individual and the community they interact with (Oktay et al. 2009). In his case, he felt more detached to his neighborhood because he has been away from it for such a long period of time. He learns to adapt to a new community and spends so much time there he felt disconnected to his original

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world at home. The emotional bond he established with the Bronx prior to college changed

because of his long distancing traveling between college and home. Though the place attachment

and bond for Justyn is still evident regardless, his reality shows that the more time he spent

elsewhere the more he learned the norms and customs of that space rather than his own. This is

the sense that he refers to that he lost in New York City.

Moreover, besides the feeling of detachment emphasized by Justyn, shock was another

feeling expressed by one of the students as well. Jeremiah's experience going back home was eye

opening and frankly "a culture shock"[19] even though he was already familiar with the social

problems at home and in his neighborhood. More specifically, he was shocked that all of the

things he learned in college directly applied to him, how systematic oppression applied to him

and his family. Such realizations he found struck him deeply. He was truly shocked to learn

about the realities of his community particularly in understanding why these conflicts exists in

the first place. His vision "increased" and "widened." His exposure to college made him realize

that such problems were not to blame from the people themselves but from the reality of living in

a community where its resources were stripped away due to racial residential patterns of

segregation and, at the same time, issues of gentrification.[20] Ultimately, it boggles his mind that

all of the issues can be traced to "the systematic neglect of black people."

Jeremiah - Whenever I went home it was sort of like a culture shock in that although I always noticed the issues I had back home with my mother and my family and everything, I especially felt them when I first went back during college and that..Damn I don't even know how to explain this I was just. I was shocked at how the learn that I learned in college directly applied to me. Systematic oppression directly applied to me like certain people not having resources because of certain administrations and the government directly applied to me and my family and it sorta hit

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[19] *See Chapter 2 page 68-69*

[20] *See Chapter 2 page 37-38*

me really deeply. Um I wouldn't say I was depressed but I was definitely struck by it. And I felt like that an added sense of responsibility for my community and for my family and for the well-being of my community. *Sighs* Um when I say struck I mean that. hold on I'm thinking. When I see struck I mean my perception of the problems in my neighborhood. It increased and it widened in that like I realized..growing up in my neighborhood I blamed certain people for certain problems but I realized that like none of us were to blame for our circumstances . That we were robbed of our resources which domino affected every problem in our lives even socially that like some people in my neighborhood parents broke up because they were fighting over money like it's just crazy how everything can be tracked to like one bill or like everything can be tracked down to the systematic neglect of black people so yea..

In this moment, we not only see the sociological eye being awakened but we learn one of the factors as to how it becomes awakened. The sociological eye and imagination comes into play in understanding "what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society" (Mills 1967:5). Having a new environmental experience can lead to you looking at your original space with a different lens. Jeremiah has been exposed to a world containing institutions and culture different than his own. Such an analysis create a comparison between worlds and shocks him because he learns what is lacking especially within his low-income racially segregated community. He is keenly aware of the disparities and understands the source of these problems. For college students like Jeremiah who attend predominantly white institutions, coming back to this community opened his eyes to the struggles that exist as well as the source of these struggles. These realizations generate this cultural shock, cultural shock in the sense of comparing cultures within both worlds and noticing what is lacking within his community.

Furthermore, Jessica was also culturally shocked upon returning home but her sociological eye transformed from observation to internalized feeling, the feeling of guilt. Her eye created conflict for her. When asking her if she looked forward to returning home, she

answered yes and no. Yes because her family is there but no because of the social problems that exists both within the neighborhood and her family. She explains the social problems that exists within her family specifically with her mother regarding health and money and expresses her subjective reality[21] of growing up in her neighborhood. She also mentions how much the education system in her community in Queens is "disheartening" and worries about her siblings in the community. Seeing the issues that exist at home while attending college was very frustrating for her and "going back home can be a bit depressing because at college [she] always [has] that option." She can get food whenever she wants, go to the gym whenever she wants, and get the best quality education. Given this, Jessica feels guilty that she can "go back to this glamorous place" containing good food, a gym, the best education, and "all these opportunities to travel" and how they, meaning her family, do not.

Her sociological eye and her imagination both hit her deeply to the point where she felt guilty that such comparisons of both worlds even exist. Her comparison specifically is looking at the reality of growing up with less resources that are present at her institution.

Jessica - Um yes and no. Yes because my family is there. No because of everything else. Um well I live in [New York City neighborhood] so I don't deal with the poverty look of my neighborhood but my mom is a single mother and I actually live with my father in my life but he doesn't really take care of us when we got older…so my mom took care of me mainly…My mom has diabetes and she can't afford health care so she has to pay out of pocket whenever she has to go to a doctor's appointment and her health is really important so she has to pay to go to the gym so that she has to make sure that she can control her sugar…She also is really low on money so that translate into not paying bills on time or not having food for extended periods of time. Um I also have my cousin who lives with me because she was kicked out of her house. So that's another thing that my mom has to pay for so going back home sometimes can be a little bit depressing because here at college I always have that option. I always have the one place to stay or I have a friend that can get me food but going back home people next to me are worried about that because it's not always there. Um when I go to visit my siblings back in [Queens] like there's

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[21] *Jessica's neighborhood experience on Chapter 1 pp. 32-34*

always that fear that um that something can happened to them or something can happen to me. While I'm there it's just dangerous obviously and my siblings I don't have to really worry about them.. just like seeing their education system is disheartening because I want the best for them and they don't have it and coming back and forth is really hard because I feel guilty that I get to go back to this glamorous place that I get the best education, I get good food. I have a gym .. and like I have all these opportunities to travel and they do not and that just makes me feel really guilty.

Her eye compares the blessings and resources of both spaces and analyzes the abundance of such in her neighborhood and college. Jessica's sociological eye is less about noticing what others can not see (assuming that her family can also see the same struggles she mentions) and more through the lens of the social-world model, the ability to "recognize persistent patterns that work to create disadvantages for certain groups in society, resulting in institutional discrimination" (Korgen and White 2014:2). She compares her circumstance at home to college and is able to notice the disparities in her own community, similar to Jeremiah who noticed the systems and structures neglecting Black people in his community. Moreover, in the case of the respondents, their eye becomes awakened because of their navigation, because of their ability to compare what they have or don't have in college and home. Their comparisons translated to create to feelings of shock, realization, and reflection and analyze their communities through a social-world model. Jessica as well as the rest of the respondents looked at their home life and saw how different it was before. They have the ability to step out of this world and gain the sociological eye to be able to analyze the social patterns of their first world and make comparisons to other ones. The individual understands their own experience "by becoming aware of those of all individuals in her circumstances" (Mills 1967:5). In other words, these students understand their position as college students not only in their personal journey to success to

reach this point but also the ability to compare their worlds to each other because they are institutionally so different.

Ultimately, many of them enjoyed going home. They enjoyed seeing family and interacting with their neighborhood. Some students mentioned their navigation as an outlet for each other. Ashley had to escape from her college and Brianna preferred to return to her school when it was time. Their experiences at home were enjoyable but they would prefer to be in one world or the another. Furthermore, the majority of students viewed going back home as a realization, specifically a realization involving detachment, shock, and guilt towards their low-income racially segregated communities. A key question to answer would be how do they handle these feelings and navigations?

Seeing Neighborhood and College Differently: Sociological Eye and Place Identity

Having this eye caused a shift in not only their viewpoints and awareness of their neighborhood but also in the ways in which they behave and navigate their neighborhood once attending college. I asked them if they viewed their neighborhood/home life differently ever since attending college. Two key trends were evident in their answers. They emphasized how (1) they have to physically and mentally adjust their behavior at home and college, and (2) they began to see their neighborhood in a new light. These answers embody how they internalized their navigation and work to adapt to the transitions between both worlds. Theoretically, we found that the attainment of their sociological eye resulted in the readjustment of their place identity within both worlds.

Changing Behaviors

Place identity exists because individuals come to interpret and understand the environments they are located in whether it growing up within such spaces or stepping outside of them and into new ones. Place identity is evident through the ways in which a person's sense of self is "characterized by growth and change in response to a changing physical and social world" (Proshansky et al. 1983:59). For students coming from low-income racially segregated communities, their place identities were in response to their realities growing up in their communities. and we found that their place identities were challenged back home, specifically in the ways they view their neighborhood and how they act upon these viewpoints. More specifically, the sociological eye became the framework that help prompted this shifting place identity. In doing so, many of them had mixed feelings about managing these two different spaces.

Ashley, for example, saw her home life and her college very differently. At college, she can walk at any times of the night and she can feel safe and "free" on her college campus versus at home she can't do any of those behaviors. For her, this is frustrating because she enjoys hanging out with friends but has to behave in a certain matter because at home, "people will prey on you because you don't look like you know where you're going at night" especially if you're a woman "here in New York City." However, at college she feels more free to do what she likes and she expresses how "it's sad" that she has to "behave two completely different ways when [she goes] back and forth."

Ashley - Very different. My school..very calm, very quiet..You can walk at any times of the night. People leave their doors open…it's very like a free community..but you know when you come home especially as a woman..I can't walk all around the place..I can't do that..like I can't leave

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my door open. like different things I can do at college that I know that I can't do here..like back home..So I mean it sucks honestly because I just went out last night. It's so scary like…I try to look at my location on my phone and put it away..because like some people will prey on you because you don't look like you know where you're going at night..You know like follow you or whatever..experiences of women here in New York City versus [college] where like more things are freer for you..It's sad that I have to behave two completely different ways..when I go back and forth.

This is a reality she has grown accustomed to during her time in college and in many instances she felt sad and frustrated that she has to navigate these behaviors in both settings. Her place identity functions "to underwrite personal identities" and 'render actions or activities intelligible" while at the same time expressing her "tastes and preferences" (Dixon and Durrheim 2000:28). In other words, the changing of behaviors between both spaces make her frustrated because she feels that her self-identity has to exist differently between them. Her navigation allows her to place judgment within both worlds and create a preference on how she wishes to behave and what actions she would perform. In Ashley's case, she wishes to be more free at home like she is at college but she can not do so because of the experiences of catcalling in New York City neighborhoods. For her going to college and realizing this freedom frustrated her because this was an action and behavior she preferred to do but just couldn't in her first world.

Similarly, Christopher also expresses this aspect of place identity through his insight on his "senses" going back home after attending college. For him, seeing his neighborhood and college differently was evident through his description of his neighborhood as a place where people "are just stuck and they want to get out but they can't." He describes how he doesn't use his senses in college versus when he is in his neighborhood. By Christopher's senses he refers to his behavior navigating his community. He states how "in the streets [he] was getting tested just

by walking and [he] has to be observant, like your body language, like your tone" but at college

he doesn't need to use these skills as much. He found that he had to tone down his aggression

that he accumulated navigating his neighborhood in order to adapt within his predominantly

white institution. But when he goes back home he has "to turn every sense up and it's weird" for

him to do so.

Christopher - Everybody just be like oh you doing your thing! Show the world that there are good people in the South Bronx. They always support me. Other than that, the neighborhood is the same thing. People be on the corner doing the same corner. They just stuck and they want to get out but they can't…When I walk the college campus, I don't really like use my senses. My instincts..that I use when I was in the neighborhood, I don't use..When I go into an interview nowadays I'm more on point. In the streets I was getting tested just by walking and I have to be observant, like your body language like your tone but here like my skills don't be tested as much so those skills I have noticed that my skills are dwindling a little because I don't interact with these people as much..It's just not the same Like my natural aggression when I got here it's not that I was too aggressive but they just thought I was too aggressive but like coming from where we come from it's regular. I had to tone down a lot of myself to adjust to the campus and in doing so I felt like I lost a lot of myself, so basically what I'm saying is when Im on campus I tone it down and when I'm back home I have to turn every sense up and it's weird. Um I just feel..I don't know. Here I just feel like it's not really helping me grow.

Overall, through his experience of navigating these environments, he found that it didn't help

him grow as an individual. It seems as if this is something he does naturally. Similar to Ashley,

changing his behavior between college and home was conflicting. It was conflicting that he had

to readjust his place identity at college and home, specifically trying to return to the behaviors he

was performing before attending college. Place is important in this because they "serve as

symbols of people's' memories and values and thereby make the experience of place more

personal, more intimate" (IV Hull Brace R. et al. 1994:118). With these meanings comes the

readjustment of their place identity which shapes how they behaviorally navigate these

environments and influenced by their perception and attitudes of these spaces. In the case of

Christopher, coming from one world, he felt his "senses" (behavior and place identity at home) were "dwindling" because he has been away from this environment for a long period of time. Ashley's place identity was challenged because of how different these two worlds were. She had the freedom to behave one way in college and a completely different way in her neighborhood and this place identity

In like manner, place identity influences how individuals behave in completely new environments as well. Julie's perspective shows the impact of how an established place identity was challenged when stepping into a new place or world. Her differing views between her neighborhood and college were evident in the reality of coming from spaces in racially segregated communities, where she is used to being around people of her race/ethnicity and culture, and stepping into white spaces at her institution. She emphasizes how growing up she was accustomed to interacting with different people of color whether it be Black or Latino and even some white people in private neighborhoods in the Bronx who were relatable as well. However, she expresses how it is awkward "coming from the hood and going to school with people who are from the hood as well" who don't experience what it is like to interact with Caucasian people. She finds it awkward because she may not relate to them.

Julie - Yes, because you know like…just seeing so many Caucasian people walking on campus is kinda like okay you get use to it..You get to see so many of them and like just the different types of them that you see I've since different types of Black People, Latino people, just people of color. I've seen many different people of color and just being here is like okay you gotta get use to it. I don't know it was different coming to see that here. It took me a minute to like you know be okay with it. Um because like it's kinda awkward you know coming from the hood and going to school with people who are from the hood as well. You know we don't experience that. I never experienced that. I went to school in [a neighborhood in the Bronx] for high school but even though…those were private neighborhoods the kids from there they were still very..just relatable to me. I don't know…when you don't relate to someone much and you don't really have much in

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common with them and think from a different ethnicity or background, it kinda made me
uncomfortable because I felt like I had to mask myself to be comfortable.

This behavioral value she finds is important and because she was in a space where she felt she could not relate to people of different ethnicities. It made her uncomfortable because she felt that she "had to mask [herself] to be comfortable. Julie's insight shows us how place identity is shaped by not only physical conditions but social ones such as memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and feelings in relation to that space (Proshansky et al. 1983). Her perspective that people like herself are not accustomed to interacting with white people and white spaces resulted in the action of masking[22] herself in order to be comfortable with these newly discovered spaces. Julie felt that she couldn't reveal her true character that she felt she expressed back in her neighborhood. The relationship between place and identity is evident in looking at how the definition of ourselves is symbolized and shaped by the qualities of the place we feel we belong to (Qazimi 2014). Her place identity was challenged and as a result she felt she had to mask parts of herself essential to her identity and culture. She stated social descriptors that play part in the properties of place-identity such as social, class, personality (Proshansky et al. 1983) and in our case, race, culture, and neighborhood. The absence of specific social descriptors evident in her neighborhood made her reshape her place identity by masking herself within the institution.

 Ultimately, all of the respondents in some way, shape, or form had to change their behaviors based on the environment they stepped into. Their place identity was challenged because its formation grows out of direct interactions with the physical environment and

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[22]to mask is to disguise one's true character or intentions (Merriam-Webster Online, 2019).

transformed by cognitive processes" (Proshansky et al. 1983). Their place identity was their relationship between themselves and their neighborhood in how they had to behave differently in each environment. They had to behave in one world differently than another and their sociological eye became the lens to which they adjust their place identity. The eye gives them the observation and analysis needed to make judgments of their worlds and decide how to internalize them accordingly. For college students like Christopher, Ashley, and Julie, they had to change parts of themselves because these worlds were very different from each other. This was one way college students from low-income racially segregated communities who go to PWI colleges have to navigate two worlds.

Seeing Things In a New Light: Place Identity and the Sociological Imagination

Place identity also affects the individual's changing viewpoints within that environment as well. These viewpoints stem from the attainment of the sociological eye and are fueled by the sociological imagination. Keeping this in mind, these observations then formulate the place identity of the given environment they are residing it. Their "constructions of place are oriented to the performance of a range of social actions [such as] blaming, justifying, derogating, excusing, excluding and all of the other things people do with words" (Dixon and Durrheim 2000:32-33). In our case, the respondents are not blaming, derogating, excusing, excluding nor or they justifying the aspects of their environment. They simply just see things in a new light. Their attainment of the sociological eye allows them to see things not apparent to them before stepping into college.

Justyn reacted to his navigation through the ways in which he questions his community. He recalls a moment where he goes to the library to do work and realized how people from his neighborhood come here and do everything else but read the books available there. He states how "this sucks because no one is telling them here are some good education books to read or here are books about your neighborhood" and they "don't have access to watch youtube or music." Justyn emphasizes how he started looking at things from different lenses and started questioning things within his neighborhood. Given this, he makes "sure that people are aware of these questions so that they are aware of what's going on." This was the case when Justyn looks at the prices of things in the neighborhood, looks at food deserts, and states a moment with his friends who spoke about the career of teaching. Interestingly enough, he ends by saying how "it sucks that [he has] to live with these questions alone" and he "can't look at things the same way [he] looked at them before."

Justyn - …what is going on here, you know what I'm saying, so like I was talking about the school stuff in our community. So like I don't have a printer anymore and I went to the library a couple of weeks ago and sit there to do my work and this I was like damn people come here and they start messing around. They get on computers and watch youtube and I'm like that's great because its free but I'm also like it sucks because no one is telling them here are some good education books to read or here are books about your neighborhood or like this is why the library truly exists because people in the community they don't have access to watch youtube or music..so I start looking at things from different lenses and like I started questioning things people like…its annoying. A couple of days ago I went out with my old friends in high school and we was just talking in general and we was saying what do you want to do in the future..and I said I think I wanna do teaching and He just laughed like haha teaching what is that and I couldn't argue with him because Im like what has become of us..I say that I don't look at them differently. I don't like at the neighborhood differently. I just question things and I make sure that people are aware of these questions so that they are aware of what's going on..it's been stuff like that. Looking at the prices of things, looking at food deserts and I'm like wow. It sucks that I have to live with these questions alone. I just can't look at things the same way I looked at them before.

Seeing things differently now, he is more observant of his neighborhood and everything in it. Coming from his institution, he was exposed to a different world, a different institution containing different norms, values, and expectations. Now going back and forth, he found himself being more observant and questioning different aspects of his neighborhood and the people within them. He gained the sociological eye and the imagination to make these comparisons, all of which resulted in the changing of his place identity at home. The factor that influenced this change was the outcome of his navigation "in response to a changing physical and social world" (Proshansky et al. 1983). The change in itself is shown through the sociological eye allowing him to reconsider how he maneuvers and understands his original world whether it be in the library or in conversation with his friends on the career of teaching. His sociological eye allowed him to see social patterns and behaviors that others may not see (Collins 1998).

Moreover, Angel has these observations as well. Their eye allowed them to understand the changes in prices within their neighborhood and the reason why these price changes exist in the first place. Their narrative focuses on how they has always noticed these changes before attending college but after they started taking African studies, Women Gender Sexuality studies, and sociology courses, their perspective of the neighborhood became more transparent for them. They were able to answer many questions and observations of the neighborhood that they couldn't before.

Angel - ...taking some African Studies, taking some WGSS courses (Women Gender Sexuality Studies), and then just taking like, sociology, my perspective of my neighborhood was like, just like how I understand the way my neighborhood interacts with itself, and like understanding prices and like for me one of the weirdest things I noticed while in high school was like different Kennedy Fried Chickens have different prices, this was something I noticed..I didn't really

understand why that was happening until after I came back from college and understand that oh wait whenever you see changes in prices you also see changes in rent prices, changes in drug use, especially because all of them are 24 hours it was the weirdest thing for me, like in a week it would go from $3.00 to 3 for $3.00 and it was like looking at other people's rent, all of the people's rents are increasing at the same time so its like for me that's something that blew my mind, wait this Kennedy is not the same price, seeing how prices in different parts of my neighborhood like interacting with each other, understanding how my own rent interacts with other people's rent…

For both Angel and Justyn, their experiences navigating two worlds allowed them to view their neighborhood in a new light. Their eye and their imagination allowed them to take a step back and see the bigger picture of the dynamics of their neighborhoods. Justyn's moment in the library and the way he questions different people and aspects about his community stems from the attainment of the eye and, as a result, the readjustment of their place identity within the setting. This was the case also with Angel who, in taking African studies, gender and sexuality courses, and sociology, began to see how the neighborhood interacts with itself such as changes in prices because of changes in rent. Their observation and imagination enable them to "understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (Mills 1967:5).

Furthermore, other college students felt what Jeremiah calls a "heightened" vision of their neighborhood. Jeremiah and Brianna both noticed everything in their neighborhood more than before and maintain a deep appreciation for it. (as well as the rest of the respondents) Brianna states how "when you get so used to being at home everything gets drowned out, like the life and what is around you" [but] coming back now [she]is in tune with what is happening around [her] and is "more appreciative, like even seeing someone performing in the subway,

[she] more likely to stop and be like this is cool. All in all, she "appreciative everything" and pays "attention more" to everything in her neighborhood.

Brianna - …I miss college and home, it's a double edge sword. It's very vibrant when I go back, I hear everything more like even like walking through the streets, like when you get so used to being at home everything gets drowned out, like the life and what is around you, when you in the city you get so used to it but when I'm back at home I hear every ambulance, every car, every person shouting, I'm in tune with what is happening around me, I'm more appreciative, like even seeing someone performing in the subway, i'm more likely to stop and be like this is cool…I feel like I appreciative everything,..I paid attention more

With Jeremiah, he felt being home allowed him to see "a lot of intrinsic details that [he would] miss growing up." He analyzes situations with his neighborhood and his family and is able to look beyond why these situations occur in the first place. Within his heightened ability, however, his opinion of his neighborhood "hasn't changed."

Jeremiah - Yes and no, Yes in that like I felt my vision has heightened, that my perception has heightened from before college and now I see everything more so. I noticed a lot of intrinsic details that I'd miss growing up…For example my mom arguing over funds with my dad. My cousin saying that he doesn't want to go school because he's scared he might get jumped…I noticed everything to a heightened ability but no it has changed because its always been there and my opinion of them hasn't changed. That like I still love my cousins. I still love my mom. I still wanna provide for them. That my opinion of anything about my neighborhood hasn't changed.

Both Jeremiah and Brianna, as well as other respondents, appreciate their neighborhood for what it is even with their heightened vision and their ability to see things in a new light. The sociological eye they awakened made them analyze and internalize social patterns within their neighborhood. Such observations shaped their place identity within the environment because of their process of "thinking and talking about places through a process of distancing which allows for reflection and appreciation of places" (Proshansky et al 1983). Their exposure to a new

world, the white institution, allowed them to make these comparisons of their neighborhood and become aware of the social patterns and circumstances that existed within them.

Overall, all of the respondents when going back and forth expressed how they see their neighborhood in a new light. Like Justyn said, they have a different lens in which to look at their community and maneuver them, which is their sociological eye and/or their imagination. These methods of maneuvering are how place identity becomes constructed and reconstructed within these environments. The factor that influence these changes was the exposure to a different world, to different institutions, that had them question the world they grew up in. Since these worlds can be different from each other and, to an extent, containing more inequalities and less resources than their other world at the college, they were able to notice these details within their communities whether it be the resources, the social patterns, the inequalities, or the analysis of their own personal experiences. Their navigation of two worlds specifically coming from their socialized world and attending college (being exposed to new worldly perspectives and identity spaces), gave them the ability to see their own life and their neighborhood differently and act accordingly to these differences.

Conclusion: Going Back and Forth Between College and Their Neighborhood

This chapter has shown the presence of place identity and how the attainment of the sociological eye becomes possible through a college student's transitions between their PWI colleges and their low-income racially segregated neighborhoods. Their navigation of these two different worlds highlight the extent to which the sociological eye or the sociological imagination serves to reshape the place identity of the individual who has returned into the world they left. For

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students who come from low-income racially segregated communities in New York City, all of them awakened the sociological eye in some way shape or form. This was because of their exposure to worldly norms and realities different than their own. They established a comparison between these worlds once they returned their own environment they were first exposed to growing up. Place identity within their first world was already evident but is now challenged and reshaped because of their exposure to the other world, the predominantly white institution. They now adapt and change the way they navigate, behave, or observe their neighborhood in the growing phases of their life. Place identity here is the shaping of these conditions, in which our viewpoints and observations can affect the ways we move within our communities. It is the management of their place identity and the sociological eye that answers the second research question on what it is like for them to go back and forth between their predominantly white institution and their low-income racially segregated neighborhoods.

Moreover, the findings in this chapter reveal that place identity is not only fixated to the settings we were socialized in but can include "the associations and feelings that we have, when we hear and see a particular space" (Qazimi 2014:307). Their changing perception of their neighborhood because of their transitions resulted in the change of their place identity back home. This place identity was established in understanding how they were socialized within their communities both primarily and secondarily (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Once they stepped into a new world, these identities were challenged both by the worlds themselves and their sociological eye in comparing both institutions.

While returning home is fulfilling for many of them, all of the different feelings expressed by these students showcase what it feels like to navigate two different worlds. Some

gained a different realization of their neighborhood whether it be in the form of shock, guilt, or conflicting attachment to their neighborhood. A few of them viewed their worlds as an outlet from each other in their exposure to different institutions. Many of them felt they had to change their behaviors, or place identity, in order to adapt to their navigation. However, all of them saw their neighborhood in a new light, differently than before (more analytical of different aspects of their environment).

Theory side, these students went back to their neighborhood and had a different feeling about it. They were able to step back and see aspects about their neighborhood they never saw before and this is because they were exposed to different norms, expectations, and institutions within their PWI colleges. This exposure led them to challenge and question different parts of their neighborhood whether it be the resources, or lack thereof, the behaviors of the community, or their own personal navigation. Feelings of frustration and uncertainty were expressed in going through these experiences. However, I would think that navigating two worlds for them is something they have to do for the sake of their own success or the success of their families and communities. These respondents may serve as examples of other college students who face similar circumstances in trying to understand their own place as individuals both in their neighborhood, in their college, and in their personal trajectories because these settings are so different from one another. Their feelings explain what it was for them to navigate two worlds.

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I Came To Make A Difference!

To navigate two worlds as a college student from this background is the feeling of seeing one

world and another as two different environments. These worlds are different from each other

through the culture, through the institutions, and through the identity of the individual. For these

students, they felt they had to navigate and manage two different worlds. By navigation and

managing, reference is made to their place identity, their ability to understand themselves as

growing individuals and how they interact and behave with their environment. It was important

for me to highlight the experiences of college students from low-income racially segregated

communities because they come from an environment that contained localized culture and

knowledge specific to that community. The beauty of their neighborhood stems from its culture

and diversity, all of which the respondents appreciated deeply. At the same time, these

neighborhoods struggled with neighborhood social problems like crime and discrimination (both

personally and institutionally), gentrification, and under resourced school systems within the

community. For these students, growing up in these neighborhoods meant living in communities

that "offers lower quality schools, fewer economic opportunities, and more violence."[23] For those

who come from wealthy families, it is possible that they come from neighborhoods that contain

"well-resourced schools, having access to economic opportunities through advantaged social

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[23] Sharkey, R. 2013. "Rich Neighborhoods, Poor Neighborhoods: How Segregation Threatens Social Mobility." *The Brookings Institution*. Accessed April 7, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2013/12/05/rich-neighborhood-poor-neighborhood-how-segregation-threatens-social-mobility/

networks, and being shielded from the social problems that arise in poorer communities."[24] However, we found that it is not the fault of the neighborhood itself in the presence of these problems but rather is a reflection of the institutional discriminatory practices that separated individuals and resources into segregated residential areas through racial premises (Taylor 2014).

Given the reality of their neighborhood experiences, this is the reason why I was curious in exploring their transition into predominantly white institutions and their feelings between their neighborhood and college, particularly a white college They come from communities that proved more difficult for them to transition into higher education. Stepping into the institution, they reported many social challenges in their navigation within white spaces as well as other minority spaces already established there. Some also felt a physical culture shock in their transition. Going back and forth between college and their neighborhood, they gained a different understanding of their neighborhood they didn't expected to gain. They are more cognitive of their environment and of themselves in their navigation between these spaces. When it came to these circumstances, the following conclusions were made about their experience into a different world and navigating two worlds:

Chapter 2 Summary: A Piece Of Their World: A Subjective Reality
Their subjective realities highlight the experiences of what it is like to grow up in their neighborhoods, what it is like to have culture they can relate to within their communities and to be in spaces that are relatable and convenient for them, and what it is like to experience social problems like crime, gentrification and struggling schools. Their perspectives highlighted how they previously navigated their communities and how they saw their community based on their socialization within it. Their insight on the characteristics of their neighborhood showcase a piece of their world on growing up in such communities. Emphasis is placed on the word "piece" because this is not to assume that these characteristics alone defined these environments because multiple realities can exist within that world. However, it is important to note the trends in their experiences in their neighborhood as they begin to transition into higher education. It is also

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[24] *Ibid*

important to note how their insight expresses how they were socialized to view and navigate this world before attending college.

Chapter 3 Summary: Transitioning Into A New World: The Effects of Institutional Whiteness
Upon transitioning into their predominantly white spaces, they had trouble adjusting into the institutionally white spaces because they came into a world different from their own. The institutional whiteness embedded within the college seeped into their daily interactions with their white peers and faculty and find their own perspectives being invalidated and underrepresented. The effects of which involve feeling a sense of alienation in the spaces here, and difficulty in managing academic work because of the social stress accumulated from navigating such environments. In addition, many of them struggled to adapt within similar identity spaces like their own due to the establishment of borders, levels of inclusion or exclusion, between these spaces. Finally, another noted effect was the physical culture shock they experienced in trying to adjust in college. This is what it was like to transition into a predominantly white institution from a low-income racially segregated community.

Chapter 4 Summary: Going Back and Forth: Attaining the Sociological Eye and Place Identity
When going back and forth between neighborhood and PWI, they gained a sociological eye/ imagination, or a different and awakened understanding of their neighborhood ever since leaving it. Their place identities at home were challenged and adapted to adjust to their navigation between both spaces because of their new awareness of their neighborhood. In other words, they felt they had to change how they behave within their neighborhood because of the new eye they attained, which enables them to more observant of different characteristics of their environment. This observation resulted in a readjustment of how they navigate their neighborhood specifically through their personal behaviors within their community and the ways in which in they see it differently, all of which encompasses the shifting of their place identity.

Theory was utilized to understand the social phenomenon of their experiences, and create

another explanation as to what entails their experiences. However, it was their experience alone

that give us the significance of this project and shed light on similar experiences that other

minority students from these backgrounds may face. Going through these transitions allowed

them to confront parts of themselves and resulted in their personal changes throughout their

college experience. These personal changes involved their ability to adapt and navigate these

spaces as well as formulate aspirations about their future.

Interestingly enough, although the participants in this study came from similar neighborhoods, there was variety in the type of high schools they attended. Some came from public high schools in their community, and many of them came from private schools and boarding schools. Discussion can be made on which of school is deemed beneficial for a student transitioning into college. However, given these differences in schooling, all of these students struggled in navigating their predominantly white institution and their neighborhood. I found that all of them struggled in transitioning into their institution even though some of them came from predominantly white spaces before college. They all struggled navigating white spaces at their institution, bordered minority spaces, and their experiences in their neighborhood. They all attained the sociological eye, observed their neighborhoods, and readjusted their place identity. When it comes to navigating two worlds, this is how it feels for students from these backgrounds to undergo this process.

One would ask what was the factor that influenced these changes during their navigation, would it be the changes in environment or the changes in themselves? The answer is both. Their environment can influence their interactions with other people, influence their own behavior and motivations to act as well as their mood.[25] In like manner, these students grow and develop in their adaptation to college spaces specifically in their ability to develop competence, manage emotions, establish identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, clarifying purposes such as career and life goals, and developing integrity or wholeness, in other words, living with

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[25] Kreitzer, Mary Jo. 2019. "What Impact Does the Environment Have On Us?" University of Minnesota. Accessed April 7, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/ healing-environment/what-impact-does-environment-have-us

uncertainties and establishing a meaningful life.[26] Both forces are working hand and hand to cultivate their transitional processes and is the primary influence that affects their ability to navigate both worlds. They are growing and developing into adults through their exposure to a new environment, new institutions that allow them to internalize new perspectives, norms, and values. Their exposure to this environment is a result of their ability to learn something new about themselves through the moments they spend in these spaces and the struggles they faced and overcame. They adapt to their environment and grow in ways they did not perceive. They felt stronger, more focused, and felt clarity in their purpose in college. Through their ability to navigate two worlds, they know what they aspire to become in the future.

Aspirations for the Future: I Came To Make A Difference!

The very last question I asked my respondents as they reflected on their experiences navigating two worlds is what their aspirations are for the future once they graduate college. The purpose of asking this question was to learn why these students decide to attend college and what they intend to take away from their time in it. All of them responded with a perspective, career, or value that they have of cultivating an impact on a community and/or making a difference in the lives of many. More specifically, all of the respondents came to college to make a difference within themselves, for their families and for their communities. They expressed the impact they wish to make in their community and towards others who experience similar inequalities or struggles they faced. Angel, Ashley, Cassandra, and Justyn are examples of students who wish to impact their community through education. Angel's passion to teach students how to navigate

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26 Landino, R. 2018. "Growth and Change Through the College Years." *Psych Central*. Accessed on April 7, 2019, Retrieved from https://psychcentral.com/lib/growth-and-change-through-the-college-years/

college and create awareness of different issues in their community highlights perspectives that they had to learn themselves. Given the leadership position they are in now, they now have the ability to pass this knowledge on to students from their similar background and community. Ashley wants to receive a master's degree in education so that she can teach in her community and eventually open an after-school program. Cassandra and Justyn wish to return to their community to become teachers as well. Cassandra wants to pass on the influence of teacher support she receives to her future students as was the case for Justyn as well. Interestingly enough, Justyn, while doing this work, expresses how making this impact can be a "battle" because you can see a disconnect between your world and the world of the students because you were able to step out of that environment. Given this, he works daily to makes sure that he is able to pass on perspectives and insight that are accessible and approachable for the students he serves.

Furthermore, Brianna and Christopher express how they are unsure of what they want to do specifically in the future but know for sure that they wish to help people in their community. Brianna emphasizes that this is her "purpose in life" and Christopher states that whatever he does in life he wants to make sure that he gives "back to the people that sacrificed for" him. Though they understandably did not state a specific career path, their passion and mission will lead to the right direction of cultivating such work. For Jeremiah, his aspirations involve taking care of his friends and family. He wants to make sure that people he cares about are "sustained" emotionally, mentally, and financially. He is also passionate about film which he intends to do on his personal time while he fulfills this purpose. Julie wants to become an influencer and create a platform for perspectives involving different social conversations and politics. Jessica's

aspiration of being a music therapist allows her to allow musical artists to be integrated into

communities, in addition to, having an aspiration to work with "immigrants, refugees, people in

halfway hoes, [and] prisoners readjusting into society." All in all, she wants to "make people

similar as much as [she] can."

Subsequently, variety of their answers were given based on the ways in which they want

to impact their communities but all of them wanted to make an impact and help those in less

fortunate circumstances. Usually, these needs are specific to their experiences in reflecting on

what they felt was lacking in their own lives and in the lives of others. Of course, this does not

always have to be the case. They are deeply passionate in giving back to their community

because of their own realities and personal experiences in navigating two worlds. Looking at

their aspirations, they may gain a sense of purpose and self-fulfillment as a result. Their

experience during this process, many cases being stressful and confronting, resulted in their

adaptation of these spaces and a purpose to help those in need. The navigation alone does not

dictate their reasoning for having these aspirations but the culmination of who they are as well as

their interactions with their environment (place identity) created a outcome that allowed this

sense of purpose to be enhanced. They overcame the situations they faced. They are stronger and

wiser. They pass this wisdom onto people similar to them and providing a helping hand in their

communities. This is one effect of what it means to come from low-income racially segregated

neighborhoods and attend predominantly white institutions and also be African-American, Black,

and/or Latinx, which is to have stronger purpose in giving and helping those in need.

Angel - ...I want to stay and combat gentrification like within my neighborhood but also in the
more short term becoming an educational counselor in order to help students like talk to students
about these issues…I want to help people understand and parents particularly because a lot of

the people I would be working with are first-generation so for them their parents don't understand what it is like for them to go to their school in the United States or college so..for me to help them understand its like yea at the end…they have to understand why they are going and you're beginning and end is going to be drastically different and that is okay! It's okay not to be the same person! It's gonna be hard at times...You will have cried, you will have screamed. You will have done all these things but then you have to also look at the things that made you smile, made you laugh, things you're proud of and your accomplishments...I just want to help students understand thats it is gonna be hard and we are going to get through it. People are there to help you..

Ashley - Right now I'm getting my bachelors in English and my masters in education. I feel like I owe it to the people that I'm gonna help in the future to teach first and to like, although I grew up this environment and I know what it's like being in school in your city, I want to be able to teach to get a perspective on a teacher you know..before I go on to do education and education policy. So I'm gonna teach for a couple of years and I wanna get my doctorate but I really just don't know where I will fit that in but it's something I wanna do...I also want to open an after school program which I hope to be in every borough at some point..and that's I want to do but I know... there's a lot of things I wanna do but sometimes I get overwhelmed. I just have to remind myself to take it step by step.

Brianna - I don't know what I wanna be but I definitely wanna help people like I think that's my purpose in life to help, is to educate something and help with something but I just don't know what that looks like yet. I'm really interested in girls education so I think it is leading up to that or maybe like human rights/law..I need to help people I just don't know what that looks like.

Cassandra - I plan on being a music teacher. I always wanted to be a teacher. I think mostly because of teachers that I've had that changed my life...I had a lot of teachers like that just throughout middle school and high school that really pushed me to find out what I was passionate in and believed in me and I really want to do that for someone.

Christopher - I have a lot of things that I want to do in my life...Whatever I do in life I just wanna make sure that I give back to the people that sacrificed for me. If I owe anything I wanna make sure I'm giving back. I don't know exactly what I want to do but I do know that I wanna give back. I just wanna help back that are like me, to get out because I know like it's a trap. Like you could really get stuck and you don't' even know like when I was in the neighborhood I didn't see none of that stuff but now that I'm out of it I see that it's a trap. It's setup so that you don't get out.

Jeremiah - A lot of my close friends at [college] wanna change the world and a part of me does feel the shame that aspirations don't change that far. I would like to change that in the future but I don't know if it will. My personal aspirations is to make sure that my family and friends are

sustained, mentally speaking, emotionally speaking, financially speaking. As long as they are content in life I'm contend and you know personally is for me to be sustained for me to be happy and for me that means working out, going to the gym, ether making music on the side or making films or acting from time to time or creating some type of content. I told my friends I don't really care. I can have a 9-5 office job and then after from 5pm on I can film for my youtube channel like no matter what I'm gonna do what makes me happy. What should be prioritized is me providing for myself so as long as I'm providing for myself and my family and friend immediately...that's it for me. That's my aspirations in life so far.

Jessica - I'm studying to be a music therapist so my aspirations are to help my clients feel more integrated into the community through music therapy. It's not something that's studied or practiced much but that's one of the reasons why I want to go to [another state] because they have something called community music therapy there. It's essentially using music therapy to help integrate your clients into a community whether it be because they have a disability or something. So I really want to work with immigrants, refugees, people in halfway homes, prisoners readjusting into society, so stuff like that, I also really wanna move out of this country and become a citizen in Europe and get a fairer education in another country *laughs* I want to go back to school. I love learning, So like to make people smile as much as I can.

Julie - I want to be like I said an influencer. I wanna be very active within all forms of community, you know like..LGBT community, campus life, not even campus but like bringing awareness to different types of things you know like politics..I do hope to work in some sort of like TV industry like for example BuzzFeed...They are very active and very quote on quote "woke" about things going on today. Like we read things off of their websites and you know that's what people like now and you know like I wanna please people. And you may not always please people and I do want them to capture people's attention on what I say even if they don't agree with it. They are still gonna like try to understand or they are still going to read it even from my point of view because everybody's point of view is different. My thoughts are not the same as your thoughts and I want people to see that.

Justyn - ...I wanna come back here and teach and I wanna come back here and open a school...I wanna come back to the Bronx. I wanna live in the Bronx. Sometimes..when I speak to students.. [they say] what are you talking about? I don't get what you're talking about or can you explain that or I don't see it the way you do. It's valid because..I went to a pretty good school..I can check my privilege there but I'm also also it's like I also look at what they do on the side and what they do on their free time I'm just like it's normal because its like there are people out there advocating for you, working for you and stuff like and you're not seeing that so it becomes a battle..

Policy Approaches

This study has highlighted the effects of what it means to come from low-income racially

segregated communities and attend predominantly white institutions, specifically in their

transition into a different world. Respondents expressed how attending predominantly white

spaces did in fact affect their studies where they either could not attend class, or many of them

tried to ignore its effect on their studies but were still indirectly affected. For these students, their

encounters to social, emotional and physical conflicts at the institution as well as familial

problems can affect their academic performance and outcomes (Pariat et al. 2014). The insight of

the respondents show how they encountered social issues of racism, micro-aggressions, and

sense of belonging in PWI colleges both in white spaces and spaces of their own (racial, ethnic

identity). Given this, it is clear that approaches might be taken to help address the transitional

struggles these students face at predominantly white colleges and universities. Using Loo and

Rolison's approach (1986:74), it is beneficial for colleges and universities to implement

educational recommendations that can benefit and support these students:

These recommendations include: (1) creating and supporting residential, social, and academic communities within the university that provide culturally supportive environments for minority students while making the larger university a more culturally pluralistic system; (2) increasing the proportion of ethnic minority representation among students and faculty; (3) strengthening the student support services for minorities; (4) contributing to the socio economic betterment of ethnic populations in order to eliminate the class gap between white and minority members; and (5) countering racism among administrators, faculty, and students to create a more comfortable learning environment for ethnic minority students (Loo & Rolison 1986:74).

These approaches address the macro, meso, and micro interactions they have with the institution

and the spaces within them. All of these approaches whether it be creating supportive

environments, culturally pluralistic systems, increasing representation for ethnic minorities

among students and faculty, strengthening the student support systems, closing socioeconomic barriers, and countering racism, all create a safe space where students can be themselves, feel embraced and excel in their coursework. The benefit of safe spaces allows for students to navigate spaces they feel they can exist in and feel validated.[27] These approaches are specific in addressing the conflicts these students faced particularly in looking at the effects of institutional whiteness and what it means for them to go back and forth between their neighborhood and college. The benefit of students attending college and feel validated is that it creates a space for them to focus on their personal journeys and interests. It can allow them to take full advantage of the resources present at the institution. Additionally, it is also important to create a space where students from these backgrounds can check in on their navigation between neighborhood and college. A space where they can express their feelings of navigating two worlds and how they can manage these feelings of how they view their neighborhood and how they interact with it. The scholarship programs many of the come from should not be the only form of support they receive at the predominantly white institution. The institution itself should include themselves in this work of providing an inclusive space and safe environment for all students of color but especially those who come from low-income racially segregated neighborhoods. They should listen to the needs and wants of the nonwhite bodies and the voices of the minority students who exist on their campus to grow and prosper both as students and individuals. In order to do so, they must be supported and their culture must be present within the space by giving them the comfortability to express it in the first place without ridicule or criticism from those who don't understand it. Let them be who they are while growing into the person they want to be.

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[27] *See Chapter 2 pp. 58*

__Further Studies__

My contribution to the study of transition to college for minority students focuses on the importance of environments and how environments are essential in facilitating and maintaining one's ability to adapt and persist in a new world. More specifically, it explores the impact of how the presence of college and predominantly white institutions in a minority student's life affects them outside of the college environment and into their personal lives and socialization. How the influences and exposure to a new world affects their personal development as they grow and learn during their time in school. This study has highlighted what it means for minority students to leave their unique world and enter into a new world that lacked the representation and perspectives from the previous setting. Such transitions allowed them to see their community in a new light. Their race, the institutions they stepped into and their place identity were primary factors that facilitated this navigation between both worlds. However, there were many other factors that, unfortunately, could not have been mentioned given the time allotted for the creation of this project. In looking at the influence of navigation between one's low-income racially segregated neighborhood and their predominantly white institution, further studies should explore (1) how gender and race intersect and influence their transition and adaptation from their neighborhood to predominantly white institutions and (2) how stress in relation to social circumstances in neighborhoods and colleges affect their ability to persist in higher education. Additionally, studies should explore (3) how exposure to more resources affect their social navigation when coming from a community where such resources may not apparent, (4) how family dynamics in combination with neighborhood experiences affect their navigation between both environments, (5) the influence of their high school experiences in their ability to navigate

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between neighborhood and college, and last but not least (6) their feelings of attachment towards their neighborhood in their process of navigating two worlds.

Their experiences matter greatly and their insight shows us what it means to navigate two worlds, what it means to for minority college students from low-income racially segregated communities to navigate predominantly white institutions. These environments were intentionally selected due to the fact that these students came from a separate environment containing different racial, economic, and cultural spaces from their colleges. Stepping into a different world and navigating two worlds was a phenomenon apparent in the lives of these students and steps must be taken to support their process of going back and forth between these worlds.

I want to say thank you to the respondents for taking time out of their day to express their voices and their personal stories. Your stories mean the world to the black and brown students that feel the same experiences you did but whose voices were not heard or mentioned. This senior project is dedicated to you and them, to those grew up in these communities to show them that you are not alone in your struggles and your presence mean the world to those who look like you and relate to you. Thank you all for passing the torch. An eternity of blessings await you, your families, and the communities you serve.

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