Black College Students' Quest to Claim a Space of Their Own on PWI Campuses:

Strangers in a Strange Land

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Black students who attend PWIs often experience social exclusion on campus. To gain a greater understanding of this issue I conducted a qualitative research study that allowed me to gain insight of the difficulties that Black undergraduate students experience at PWIs.

The institutions in this study excluded Black students by not providing the space that would allow them to congregate safely and comfortably. Duquesne and Pitt did not provide the necessary resources for Black students, which created disparities and inequities. When college employees are not welcoming and supportive of Black students, it makes them feel excluded. When non-Black students are not welcoming, and in some instances are hostile towards Black students by being non-verbally aggressive, this also impedes Black students' feelings that they are a part of the campus community. There are other barriers that come between Black students because of how the institution values them as athletes and embraces them differently than students who are not athletes. Black fraternities and sororities were viewed as being more socially influential compared to other Black student organizations and informal Black student networks.

I gained a greater understanding of the implication that Black students at Duquesne and Pitt often feel that they are not welcomed and the importance of Black students having a safe space so that they can create a sense of belonging. My research also explored the importance of Black students interacting with each other for support purposes. This study is significant and unique because it provided information on the importance between a formal Black student association

(e.g., a Black student union) and an informal Black student association (i.e. a group of friends who are Black students and support each other but are not part of a formal Black student organization).

Through critical race theory and sense of belonging theories, it became clear that it was important for Black students to have autonomy to create a safe space on a PWI campus where they could congregate, network, and support each other. This safe space would allow them to be able to create a community of their own.

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Preface

I have been blessed with opportunities that are the result of the many generations that have paved the way for me. It is my responsibility that I add to the foundation and pave the way for future generations.

My wife and soulmate, Jeannine Ferguson, suggested that I apply to the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education doctoral program. She has always been the catalyst in my life for doing great things, and she keeps me inspired.

I would like to thank Dr. William Thomas my first advisor and the first faculty member I met in the School of Education. His class was the first class that I took as a doctoral student. Dr. Thomas shared great insight and life lessons with me the first time that I met him that will remain with me.

Dr. Michael Gunzehauser who later became my advisor and chair of my dissertation committee provided guidance and provided access to necessary resources when overcoming obstacles seemed almost impossible.

Dr. Shirley Biggs who served on my dissertation committee has been an excellent mentor for me, and she has inspired me to pursue the life long journey of being a scholar.

Dr. Jerome Taylor who served on my dissertation committee reminded me to stay focused on the purpose of my academic pursuits and how my accomplishments can be used to empower Black people.

Dr. Michael Quigley who served on my dissertation committee reminded me of the importance of exploring all theories related to my research topic even if I disagree with them, because opposing ideologies will make me well rounded.

Dr. Dana Thompson Dorsey who served on my dissertation committee kept me sharp by challenging me when I needed to be challenged. Dr. Thompson Dorsey constantly reminded me that my research is extremely important and that my commitment to the research is of great benefit to scholarship but also to the students who need to be heard.

1.0 Chapter 1

1.1 History of Barriers Set Against Black People in the Education System

Since the arrival of Africans to America during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Africans were deprived of their human rights and privileges. Enslaved Africans who tried to gain an education were punished severely as described by Cornelius (1983):

Slaves themselves believed they faced terrible punishments if whites discovered they could read and write. A common punishment for slaves who had attained more skills, according to blacks who were slaves as children in South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Mississippi, was amputation, as described by Doc Daniel Dowdy, a slave in Madison County, Georgia: "The first time you was caught trying to read or write, you was whipped with a cow-hide, the next time with a cat-o-nine-tails and the third time they cut the first jint [sic] offen [sic] your forefinger." Another Georgia ex-slave carried the story horrifyingly further: "If they caught you trying to write they would cut your finger off and if they caught you again they would cut your head off." (p. 174)

Plantation owners were threatened by enslaved Africans becoming literate because they would share the knowledge with other enslaved Africans (Cornelius, 1983). There is historical documentation, through Bly's (2008) research on the Thomas Jefferson Monticello slave plantation, about how enslaved Africans made efforts to learn despite obstacles placed in front of them and then shared their achievements with other enslaved Africans:

Judging from the artifacts, it seems likely that Jefferson afforded certain slaves the opportunity to achieve letters; they then shared what they learned with other slaves. It also

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seems apparent, however, that a number of Jefferson's people did not wait for their

master's approval when it came to learning how to read and write. Far from it: several

took it upon themselves to learn letters, and others passed on what they had learned. While

some used slates, others may have practiced their letters by writing in the dirt, which may

have proven to be a more effective surface than slates; the fact that slaves were learning to

read and write could easily be concealed with a sweep of the dust. (p. 286)

[1]Since the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Blacks in America have pursued education and strived

to overcome obstacles that were placed in their way to prevent them from gaining a quality

education experience.   The struggle for education did not end when Black people were

emancipated from chattel slavery. Yosso (2004) explained how it continued through the Jim Crow

era up to the present day. Yosso (2004) explained how the *Brown* decision did not seek to provide

an equal education for Black students but instead create integration which did not solve the

inequities in education for Black people. Yosso (2004) further explained that racial integration in

the education system was only to enhance the academic experience of White students:

> The unquestioned "standard" or "normative" point of reference reveals the basis for the
>
> diversity rationale. By their presence, students of color diversify otherwise White,
>
> homogeneous university campuses. This rationale centers White students as the standard
>
> or normative students. By default, students of color fulfill the role of enriching the learning
>
> environment for White students. The goal is not necessarily to provide access and equal

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[1] Some authors identified my target population as Black and some authors identified the population as African-American. I wanted to try to be as consistent with the term that the authors used while also keeping in mind that many Black people use these classifications interchangeably. I think this is a reflection of the issue that Black people, especially those who are descendants of U.S. slaves deal with, while working towards a common identity and name.

opportunities for students of color but to provide access to diverse groups so that White students can learn in a diverse context. (p. 14)

For many years, Black people have been excluded from resources and dominated in all areas of activity. This form of domination is described by Christian (2002) in a historical context:

On the contrary, White supremacy manifests in the social, economic, political and cultural history of European expansion and the development of the New World. It is a history and experience that has a life span of more than 5 centuries. At the dawn of a new millennium, it can be confidently started that the world continues to be largely maintained by various forms of White supremacy. (p. 180)

Black Americans have a history of being excluded from receiving an equitable education and other essential resources that would allow them to empower themselves. Despite Black people throughout history fighting to empower themselves, systemic factors exist in various activities that work to neutralize Black people. William A. Smith (2004) introduced the theory of racial battle fatigue (RBF) to identify how these systemic factors negatively affect Black people. Carter G. Woodson (1990/1933) captured the various tactics used specifically through the education system to neutralize Black people in his book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*:

The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies. If he happens to leave school after he masters the fundamentals, before he finishes high school or reaches college, he will naturally escape some of this bias and may recover in time to be of service to his people. (p. 2)

It is important that education systems and Black people be made aware of these issues so that they can complete their education and still be of service to their people.

1.2 Challenges Experienced by Black Students Who Attend PWIs

According to U.S. census data as of July 1, 2016, Black people represent 13.3% of the population, and Whites comprise 77.1%. This information reflects the fact that White people in the U.S. make up the majority of the population. As a result, much of the culture in the U.S. reflects customs and practices that represent the concerns of White people more than those of Black people. Not only are White people the majority in the population, but they also influence a great majority of policies and procedures that shape the lives of all of U.S. citizens. Due to this inequality in population and power, the needs of Black people go unmet in many instances. Davis (2015) explained how White people in America used their political superiority to subjugate Black people socially and economically:

> All ethnic/racial minorities and immigrant groups in America go through the struggle for political inclusion; however, the nature and intensity of the struggle for inclusion will vary from one ethnic or racial group to another. This is because the white political majority has a tendency to respond to ethnic and racial minorities based on the perceived level of threat posed to the white's control of the political system. (p. 233)

The crux of the matter is not just that Black people are smaller in population but that they do not have the power or influence to change their condition using one method through the guidance of a "great Black leader" opposed to collective, relentless resistance. A prime example of this issue was the presidency of Barack Obama. President Obama lacked the power even as president to effectively produce justice for Black Americans on a large scale. According to Alter (2013), that is partly because, on the policy side, he shied away from an agenda explicitly focused on Black needs. In a closed-door meeting in the White House's Roosevelt Room in 2011, Obama told Al Sharpton, Tom Joyner, Michael Eric Dyson, and other Black commentators that what

infuriated him were critics—an example was Cornel West—who said he was not Black enough: "If I go out there saying 'black, black, black,' do you think that will help black people?" He reminded the group that while nothing could get through Congress as part of a "black agenda," the achievements of his first two years had especially helped African-Americans. (Alter, 2013, para. 9)

This information demonstrates that the interests of White America was and still is the priority through policy and practice. It also emphasizes that powerful and elite Black people are still subjected by systematic White supremacy despite their individual achievements. Hamilton (2018) also cited how the issue was more about race than class:

Class does not protect black Americans from racism. Regardless of class status, black people have higher incarceration rates, lower incomes, less wealth, and worse health outcomes. Many politicians and academics continue to insist that education is the key to upward mobility, yet racial disparities persist even when black people attain high levels of education. Of course education is important in its own right, but it is not a panacea to address long-established racist structural barriers. (para. 2)

The meaning of the permanence of racism is that it is so interwoven in everyday life activities and it has been such a dominant existence in Black life for so long, that it can only cease to exist if it is intentionally dismantled. The analysis by Higgins (1992) of Derrick Bell's work regarding the permanence of racism is as follows:

Ultimately, Bell's description of racism as a permanent condition is calculated to lead not to despair but, perhaps ironically, to freedom-the freedom from false hope in the unrealized and perhaps unrealizable promise of racial justice. (p. 692)

The institution of higher education is a microcosm and reflection of the experiences of Black people with regard to inferior treatment in the U.S.. Particularly in the institution of higher education, there are two issues that occur. The first is the small population of Black people on campus; the second is the systematic policies and cultural norms that do not enhance the experience of Black students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), between 1976 and 2016 the population of Black undergraduate students increased from 10.0% to 14%, with a 1% decrease between 2011 and 2016.   Data presented by Johnson (2013) showed Black people representing 14% of the population and White students representing 68% of the population at PWIs.

Despite legislation and practices such as affirmative action, racial injustice on college campuses still exists. Due to racial injustices on college campuses not being rectified, students are disenfranchised and reactionary to these issues. According to Supiano (2015), due to racial incidents targeted towards African-American students at the University of Missouri at Columbia, unhappy student protesters formed a group called Concerned Student 1950 in reference to the first Black student at the university. The students launched a protest due to the allegations of racial incidents that went unchecked by university administration.   The University of Missouri issue highlights the reality that under the surface there has been an intense racial hostility that has existed for many years. This hostility has persisted as a result of the campus culture that does not challenge the marginalization experienced by Black students.

When the incident initially emerged and was brought to the attention of campus administration, it went unchecked. The situation did not gain mainstream attention, as described by Supiano (2015), until a graduate student started a hunger strike and the university's football team joined the movement. As a result, University of Missouri President, Timothy M. Wolfe,

stepped down and several hours later R. Bowen Loftin, the Chancellor of the Columbia campus, resigned. If the football team had not joined the movement and the graduate student did not go on a hunger strike, the University of Missouri incident would have probably been dismissed as many other racial incidents on college campuses have been over the years.

Some pundits argued that the University of Missouri incident was unique and a somewhat isolated incident. However, Brown (2015) reported a similar situation that included a hunger strike at Claremont McKenna College in California that led the dean of students to resign. As a result of the protests and hunger strike the president Hiram E. Chodosh stated that two positions would be created that would focus on student affairs and academic affairs. When administration simply creates positions the problem is not effectively addressed. Many of these instances have occurred because the culture on campus has allowed such a racist dynamic to exist for as long as it has. Positions should be created, but the culture must be changed. Changing the culture includes a concerted effort by administration and students.

Brown (2015) discussed how Dean of Students, Mary Spellman, was criticized due to her email response to an alleged racial incident. In the email Lisette Espinosa, a senior, brought her struggles as a working-class Latina student on campus, and Dean Spellman responded to Ms. Espinosa's email by saying, "We are working on how we can better serve students, especially those who don't fit our CMC mold." (Brown, 2015, para. 5). The issue was the meaning of the "CMC mold" (Claremont McKenna College) mentioned by Dean Spellman. The "CMC mold" represents a cultural dynamic that has existed within institutions of higher learning for many, many years. In fact, this mold or culture is held intact by administration and students on campus. It appears that the core of the cultural dynamic is based upon excluding the needs, wants, and best interest of Black students. This cultural dynamic leads Black students to feel as though they are

not a part of the campus and they therefore become withdrawn academically, mentally, and physically.

According to Brown (2015), Ms. Reyes said a list of demands were submitted to Mr. Chodosh, university president that were not responded to or acknowledged. The demands included a resource center and safe space for minority students, a "diversity chair" position, a mentoring program for new students of color and additional funding from the university for student organizations. Ms. Reyes said Mr. Chodosh has not fully adhered to the demands of the students. Ms. Reyes then went on to say that Mr. Chodosh said he will provide a "free-speech space," but Ms. Reyes said a "free-speech space was not what the students asked for." (Brown, 2015, para. 5). This is another example of the administration continuing the culture of isolation towards students of color, particularly Black students, because the university president either ignored their demands or simply refused to empathize with their plight.

Black college student protestors have various requests and demands, but the common theme is tied to a feeling of belongingness to the campus. Thomason (2015) described the demands by Black college student protestors due to the racial incidents taking place on campus in the following cases:

1. At the University of Missouri some of the requests by Concerned Student 1950 were as follows: the number of Black faculty increase to 10 percent by the 2017-2018 year, increase the number of Black students, and that Mr. Wolfe provided a handwritten apology. They wanted the Black student population to increase on campus so that they could feel they had presence. This request reflected the importance of Black students feeling that they had a space where they belonged on campus. If a Black student walked on campus and

perceived that they had a low representation on campus, they would feel as though they did not belong.

2. The requested solution for Yale University was that the residential community Calhoun College be renamed after people of color. When the facilities did not reflect the identity of Black students, they felt as though they were not a part of the campus. This request captured the importance that a sense of belonging not just be reflected within the student population but also via images and names on campus. A PWI institution can provide a sense of belonging for Black students by naming buildings and spaces that reflect their ancestors, identity and culture. Unfortunately, not enough names at PWI institutions reflected the identity and culture of Black students, which made Black students feel that they were not a part of the campus.

3. Due to the issues at Purdue University, the request was that the president, Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., apologize for not acknowledging the culture of racism on campus and a racial-awareness curriculum be created. Based on this request, silence was a representation of being complicit or at least not challenging the culture of racism on campus. As a result, the message that Black students might have inferred was that the institution either did not acknowledge the challenge that Black students were experiencing and they did not care or they subtly endorsed the culture of racism that existed.

4. For John Hopkins University, the demand was that the Center for Africana Studies be recognized as an academic department and that Black students who were accosted by students, faculty, and staff receive justice by holding the accusers accountable. This request was a reflection that Black students seek PWIs to acknowledge Africana studies

programs and provide a mediation process that would rectify any complaints or racism and racial hostility experienced by Black people.

5. Due to the practices at Georgetown University, students demanded that plaques be installed on unmarked graves of enslaved Africans, awareness be brought to the campus annually about the history of slavery that existed on campus, and that minority professors be recruited. This request further supported the need for Black students to have the opportunity to have their culture and ancestors acknowledged by the institution. It also reflected the need for institutional representatives to reflect the identity of Black students so that Black students felt that they belonged to the campus.

6. At the University of Kansas, students demanded that the university set goals to enhance minority recruitment. This request reflected the need for Black students to have a population on campus that would allow them to be able to establish and maintain a community on campus that they felt they belonged to. If there was a relatively small population of Black students on campus, it was difficult for them to be able to establish a campus community that could serve as a safe space for Black students.

7. As a result of issues at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, students demanded that "diversity space" be created that could allow minority students to feel comfortable. The request for a space of their own and a feeling of comfort was related to feeling as though they belonged on campus. This was especially important for a group of students who felt they were not included. This request reflected how not only was it necessary for Black students to have a population on campus but also a space reserved for Black students so that they can congregate and build on the community that they established so that Black students could feel they are a part of the campus.

8. At Harvard Law School, students demanded that the university seal be changed because it was the coat of arms of a family of slaveholders who endowed the first law professorship at Harvard. This request reflected the symbolic image of the institution that reminded Black students that they were once not welcome on campus, and, because this symbol was still embraced by the institution, Black students felt they were not given the same reverence or at least sense of belonging as students who were not Black.

According to Anderson and Svrluga (2016), three students at Claremont College in Southern California sparked a campus debate when they submitted a listing for a fourth roommate, and their request, which was for an off-campus house, asked that the fourth roommate be "POC only," an abbreviation for a person of color. One of the Black roommates mentioned that they did not want to live with a White person. There were some students who agreed with the request of the Black students to have what they identified as a "safe space" for Black students and students of color due to all of the racial incidents that were taking place across the country during recent times. The debate on this topic between students took place primarily via social media, particularly on Facebook. The President of Pitzer College, Melvin Oliver, who is an expert on racial inequality and a sociologist, criticized the debate that took place on Facebook. He is quoted as saying, "While Pitzer is a community of individuals passionately engaged in establishing intracultural safe spaces for marginalized groups, the Facebook post and several subsequent comments are inconsistent with our Mission and values" (Anderson & Svrluga, 2016, p. 2).

According to Anderson and Svrluga (2016), during the fall of 2015 there were 1,067 undergraduate students at Pitzer and 48 percent of that population identified as White, 15 percent identified as Hispanic, 9 percent identified as Asian-American, 9 percent identified as multiracial, and 5 percent of the population identified as African-American. The minority students on campus

explained how they regularly dealt with classmates who did not understand them or appear to be interested in learning about them and their background. African-American students experienced particular campus challenges on a campus such as Pitzer, because they are part of a smaller population compared to the other underrepresented racial groups.

Anderson and Svrluga (2016) cited the reflection of a student about their campus experience:

> We live in a world where the living circumstances of POC are grounded in racist social structures that we cannot opt out of. These conditions threaten the minds, bodies and souls of people of color both within and without the realms of higher education. We are fighting to exist. (para. 13)

Black students who attend PWIs are forced to deal with the feeling of isolation that they must endure daily from the dominant society. This experience can ultimately interfere with their academic advancement due to the toll that it takes on them. When Black students and other "students of color" request separate housing that is for "POC only," the criticism that goes against their request is that it is housing discrimination, which is illegal. This argument can be used to prevent Black students from having a safe living space on a PWI campus.

According to the literature there are two primary reasons why issues at PWIs such as Missouri and Pitzer occur. The first issue is a lack of social support for Black students by the dominant culture on campus and the institution itself. The second issue is a lack of a safe space for the purpose of Black students to be able to develop a sense of belonging on the college campus. Without addressing and rectifying these two issues, it would be difficult for a PWI to recruit, develop, and retain Black students.

1.2.1 Grit and Determination

Some scholars and practitioners believe that college students can be successful academically if they have the fortitude and determination to deal with the challenges that they are confronted with on the college campus. This determination is referred to by some scholars as grit (Datu, Yuen, & Chen, 2017). Grit is described as a positive characteristic for college students, particularly Black students. Datu et al. (2017) referenced a study conducted by Duckworth et al. (2007) where grit was a characteristic that reflects the passion and tenacious pursuit for academic success. Grit had a positive outcome on the grades of Black male students who attend PWIs according to Strayhorn (2013). While grit is identified as a positive characteristic, it has also come under criticism because it is practiced more in cultures that are individualist-based as opposed to cultures that are collectivist. This can lead one to infer that the concept of grit is based on a racist construct or at least culturally biased construct based on information presented by Datu et al. (2017). If the concept of grit is in fact culturally biased or racist, it cannot be used as an effective solution for Black students. Academic achievement is a method to measure progress of a student, but it does not consider the toll that is taken on the student resulting from an environment that is not culturally and racially inclusive.

1.2.2 Racial Battle Fatigue

Studies have shown that PWIs need to seek a more holistic approach for solving the feeling of exclusion that Black undergraduate students deal with. There may be some Black students that have the necessary grit to continue to achieve academic progress; however, grit does not provide a solution to a systematic problem. While some undergraduate Black students are able to persevere

due to grit, there are many who are dropping out. The ongoing social factors that interfere with Black students feeling connected to the campus must be identified and eradicated. Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011) explained the ongoing challenges that Black students experience as racial battle fatigue (RBF):

> RBF is an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that considers the increased levels of psychosocial stressors and subsequent psychological (e.g., frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, hopelessness), physiological (e.g., headache, backache, "butterflies," teeth grinding, high blood pressure, insomnia), and behavioral responses (e.g., stereotype threat, John Henryism, social withdrawal, self-doubt, ad dramatic change in diet) of fighting racial microaggressions in MEES (MEES stands for "mundane, extreme, environmental stress"). (p.68)

William A. Smith introduced the concept of RBF while examining the challenges that Black faculty experience at PWIs:

> Today, new foot soldiers (White students) matriculate every year in institutions of higher education, bringing with them sharply honed skills of stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about African Americans and Blacks as professors ranging from subtle to hostile. (p. 172)

These White foot soldiers that Smith described are not "lone wolves" acting independently but they are a product of a systemic dynamic.

> Furthermore, anti-Black attitudes are maintained and backed by a system of power and privilege, parceled out and remunerated by elite Whites, disproportionately benefiting all Whites. Yet discussions of race and the present-day effects of the legacies of racism and White supremacy remain very sensitive and volatile issues on the American racial fault lines. (Smith, 2004, p. 174)

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Smith described how there are many different individuals within the system of White supremacy that play a role that collectively results in the domination and injustices of Black people. This systemic phenomenon is rooted in the historical experience of Black people in the U.S. as described by Woodson (1990/1933). There have been other scholars that have analyzed the working components of this system of White supremacy in the education system. Lagarrett J. King (2017) explained how racism was practiced through educational curriculum design:

> For example, a 1934 history textbook analysis by Lawrence Reddick observed that Black people were portrayed as being content as slaves; they liked to "sing, dance, crack jokes, and laugh; admired bright colors, never in a hurry, and [were] always ready to let things go until the morrow." These examples illustrated a social studies curriculum mirroring a U.S. culture that elevated those considered to be White while simultaneously demeaning all of those considered to be Black. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that mainstream social studies textbooks began to eliminate text that was explicitly racist. (p.14)

This is an example of a systemic practice or racism, because its practice is tied into curriculum design, which creates stereotypes about Black people. These stereotypes that are taught to White students at a young age gives them the motive and justification to mistreat Black people. When these same stereotypes are taught to Black students, it could lead them to internalize an unhealthy self-identity that can result in racial battle fatigue at a young age.

Considering all of the symptoms caused by racial battle fatigue, an undergraduate Black student that has grit or does not have grit is forced to experience physical and psychological problems due to systematic racism persisting on campus, which could ultimately result in the student dropping out of college. Racism can be a major issue in interfering with the success of a Black student on campus. As Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, and Allen (2016) described, Black

male undergraduate students are structurally prevented from gaining a connection and a sense of belonging with the institution. Instead of PWIs expecting Black students to tough through systematic racism on campus, safe and welcoming environments need to be created on campus for Black students that will prevent them from experiencing psychological and physical trauma. These environments for Black students can allow them to actively take the lead on creating a welcoming community for Black students. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) discusses the challenges of racial battle fatigue as follows:

> For the military soldier, combat stress is the result of being placed in a foreign environment and having to be constantly on guard for imminent danger in less-than-ideal and life-threatening conditions. For African Americans, racial battle fatigue is the result of constant physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional coping with racial microaggressions in less-than-ideal and racially hostile or unsupportive environments (campus or otherwise). (p. 555)

Smith et al. (2007) conducted focus group interviews at six PWIs with 36 Black male college students. Through their research they identified specific examples experienced by Black male college students that reflect racial battle fatigue. Most of the situations experienced by these students reflected how they were racially profiled by campus police or local police while on campus. Negative interactions between Black people and the police is an issue; however, negative racial interactions between Black students and non-Black students need to be studied because these experiences can also lead to racial battle fatigue. As the literature suggest, racially supportive policies and environments are necessary for Black students on PWI campuses. Given the historical challenges of Black people in the U.S. critical race theory seeks to understand and change institutional practices that work against the progress of Black people and other people of color.

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1.2.3 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a form of race-based oppositional scholarship (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2005; Calmore, 1992; Liu, 2009; Love, 2004) and challenges Eurocentric values, such as White being normalized in the United States. As a theoretical framework, critical race theory examines the "unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines" (Taylor, 2009, p. 1).

The unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources must be closely analyzed so that justice can be produced, but more specifically scholarship must analyze how Black students are excluded on PWI campuses. College administrators, student life practitioners and Black students must creatively identify challenges that Black students experiences with regard to exclusion on PWIs and solutions to overcome these issues.

1.2.3.1 Whiteness as Property

Systemic practices have been established historically and maintained to the present day that provide advantages for White people and disadvantages for Black people in the U.S.. Thompson-Dorsey (2013) explained how White students have privileges that allow them to access property rights through education. These unjust practices do not provide equitable benefits and ownership of resources for Black students.

> Therefore, Harris (1993) proposed the 'property functions of whiteness to explicate the privileges and power that the law bestows on white people, which are equivalent to the legal rights given to other property owners. The property functions of whiteness are: (1) the right of disposition; (2) right to use and enjoyment; (3) reputation and status property; and (4) the right to exclude (Harris 1993). (Thompson-Dorsey, 2013, pp. 7-8)

These property rights also benefited White students in institutions of higher education, which provides them with a level of privilege and power over Black students. White students use their protected privilege, which is manifested through their property rights, to (1) focus on their right to reap an enriching academic experiences while ignoring the negative effect that this had on their Black peers, (2) expect to be the focus of attention while in the classroom, and (3) maintain racial segregation in the classroom and in social settings on campus (Bondi, 2012).

1.2.3.2 Permanence of Racism

The unjust systemic practice of racism influences many areas of activity according to DeCuir (2004) that ultimately decreases the quality of life for Black people:

> Furthermore, the notion of the permanence of racism suggests that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains. Such structures allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent Othering of people of color in all arenas, including education. (p. 27)

The tangible and intangible benefits awarded to White students through systemic White supremacy can impede White members of the campus community from actively working to produce justice on campus so that Black students can also receive an enriching educational experience. Harper (2012) identified the factors that are put into place which can prevent scholars from addressing this phenomenon:

> That is, students, faculty, and administrators reportedly adhered to an unwritten code of silence regarding racism, mostly to avoid making others feel uncomfortable. It is possible that those who submit their work for publication in higher education journals and elsewhere use semantic substitutes for racism to avoid causing discomfort to reviewers, editors, and readers. Unarguably, "hostile," "alienating," and other such words used to characterize

campus environments are not as emotionally loaded or politically risky as the term "racist."

(p. 23)

The mere existence of racism in and of itself is not only uncomfortable but can also decrease the quality of the academic experience for Black students and decrease the quality of life according to racial battle fatigue theory. Therefore, the priority of PWIs should be to work to dismantle racism on campus.

1.2.4 Conceptual Belonging Theory

As a result of these issues happening recently across the country, the topics of race, racism, and exclusion are very important particularly on PWI campuses. There is a wealth of research that identifies the importance of a college student feeling a sense of belonging to the campus so that the institution can retain them so they can complete their studies. Here are six examples. Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2013) explained how students of color have academic, cultural, and social experiences that are different from traditional college students. A different and more narrowly tailored solution must be applied to this different academic, cultural, and social experience. Morrow and Ackermann (2012) explained how sense of belonging, which identifies how connected students are to their university and can therefore determine if they are able to persist or not, is also related to academic progress. Using the concept of grit is an inferior way to identify academic progress, because it does not consider a practical approach for Black students to be able to persist collectively. Means and Pyne (2017) explained that campus spaces that allow minority students to feel authentic can increase their sense of belonging to the campus. Higher education administrators have to be willing to create safe spaces for Black students that will allow them to interact with other Black students, which can lead to them establishing support relationships and

ultimately creating a campus community. O'Keeffe (2013) argued that a sense of connection can exist if a student is able to develop a relationship with just one key person, which can also result in a significant impact on the student's decision to remain with the institution. Having a designated safe space where Black students can connect will allow them to meet with Black students that seek support networks. Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods (2007) described a sense of belonging as the end result of social and academic integration.

The research that focuses on the concept of grit is one-dimensional in the fact it considers the academic progress of Black students without assessing the benefit of social integration. Hausmann et al. (2007) referenced research that stated students who have a collective self-esteem are less likely to think about leaving the institution. If a student has self-confidence and they feel connected to the institution, they are more inclined to seek out tutorial support that will also help them integrate and excel academically.

According to Wilcox, Winn, and Fyvie-Gauld (2005), social support is beneficial for health and individual well-being. This support is effective when the student receives it from their peers and it has psychological impact on their adjustment as they find their space on the campus. It is extremely important for Black students to have this support base amongst each other, especially if they do not feel welcomed by the dominant culture on campus. If Black students do not receive this feeling from the campus community and they are not able to find this space with each other, not only will it interfere with their academic progress but it can also have a negative effect on their health psychologically and physically.

Wilcox et al. (2005) explained how the purpose of higher education is to develop the individual academically but also to create a sense of identity and a sense of belonging while the student finds their place on campus. For a new student of any race or ethnicity, navigating through

the world of higher education for the first time can be quite the challenge. This process is especially difficult for Black students who attend PWIs and feel like they are not a part of the campus community. This challenge is exacerbated when Black students lack a cohesive community with their peers on campus because they are not able to develop a shared identity and a sense of belonging. Wilcox et al. (2005) stated that peer support is essential for a student while they adjust to the academic and culture shock that comes along with adjusting to the life of higher learning. Peer support can help Black students deal with the problems that they face on campus as they adjust to higher education as well as the challenges that they will experience from the dominant culture on campus.

1.3 Research Inquiry and Data Collection

Based on the issues experienced by Black students on PWIs, I was compelled to engage in further review of the literature research and additional data collection. My literature review focused primarily on belonging theory, because it deals closely with the feeling of isolation and exclusion by Black students who attend PWIs and why it is important for them to have a sense of belonging.

In order to acquire a greater understanding from the knowledge gleaned from the literature, I also collected data from Black students in two PWIs based in southwestern Pennsylvania. As I collected data from these students, I utilized a mixed methods approach through quantitative data collection, which consisted of several survey questions asked and qualitative data collection, which consisted of interviews that I conducted at both institutions with students who self-identified as Black. My research question is twofold. The first part focused on Black students' perceptions of

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how their institution (the dominant student culture, faculty, and administration) made them feel. The second part focused on how interacting with their peers (other Black students through formal associations, (e.g., a Black student union) and informally with friends helped them feel as it related to being part of the campus.

Through my research, I gained a greater understanding of the implication that Black students at PWIs often feel that they are not welcomed by the institution and the importance of Black students having a safe space so that they can create a sense of belonging amongst themselves. My research also explored the notion of the importance of Black students interacting with each other on campus for support purposes. This research is significant and unique because it provides information on the importance between a formal Black student association (e.g., a Black student union and an informal Black student association) and a group of friends who are Black students and support each other but are not part of a formal Black student organization. This study allowed me to identify the value and impact of these associations to the students.

1.4 Personal Experience

My experience as a Black man who attended PWIs is similar to what the literature has disclosed. There were more Black students enrolled in my classes during my first couple of semesters in college. As I continued my studies, the number of Black students in my classes decreased. When I asked Black students who dropped out of college their reason for dropping out, the common response was, "College just isn't for me." I wondered what the meaning behind their statements was. My conjecture was that they were either not academically prepared, or there was some other issue that did not have a quantifiable answer. As a result, I have been interested in

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understanding the mysterious unquantifiable issues that they may not have been able to articulate. Often I felt that I was not part of the campus community due to campus culture that was based on the dominant racial group on campus, which happened to be White students. In class my professors seldom if ever discussed topics that piqued my interest as a Black student. Most of the discussion topics were from a Eurocentric perspective. School cultural programs sponsored by the institution did not focus on the perspective of Black students unless it was during Black History Month, and any programs that were sponsored by the institution then seemed to be about the Black slavery experience or oppression during Jim Crow. Black student union meetings allowed me to connect and identify with other Black students who shared similar beliefs that I had. My classes and campus activities did not reflect my identity as a Black person. There were few things within the curriculum that I could relate to. Most of the experiences within the curriculum that I could relate to were in classes that I took through the Africana Studies Department.

As a Black student on the campus of a PWI, I also felt excluded by the dominant culture on campus. In class I did not interact much with my White peers. I assume that it was because there was a cultural and identity barrier that existed between us, because we lacked insight about each other. I managed to connect more with the few Black students who were in my classes. The connection that I had with Black students allowed me to develop a support network that was beneficial both socially and academically. When there were activities on campus that were culturally based, members of the Black student union whom I knew would notify me about these programs. Attending these programs allowed me to develop a stronger sense of self and connect with other Black students who had the same challenges that I was experiencing and were seeking a connection with peers on campus that would support them socially.

These social connections that I managed to develop also helped me academically. As a result of me interacting with Black students in my class, we created study partners and study groups. If there was something that I did not understand academically, I felt comfortable approaching the one of the few Black students in my class and they would provide support for me so that I could overcome my academic challenge or they knew someone who could support me if they were not able to. The support that I received from them was reciprocated if they had an academic challenge, and I was strong on the particular topic.

My experience as a Black student was not unique during that time, and as I reflected on my undergraduate college years there were a number of other Black students who had the same experience that I had. This reflection compelled me to gain a greater understanding about the challenges of Black students who attend PWIs and learn how they can overcome these challenges through peer support networks that allow them to feel as though they belong to the campus.

In chapter two, my review of the literature provides insight about Black students not feeling that they are part of a PWI. The literature led me to focus on ideas that rooted in belonging theory and critical race theory. I also found research that compared cultural differences between PWIs and HBCUs and spoke on how HBCUs are culturally beneficial for Black students. Chapter three identifies my research population and research methods used to design my study, collect data, and analyze the results. In chapter four, I provide more detailed insight about my research population based on qualitative data that I collected from open-ended interview questions. This chapter provides further explanation about how Black students feel that they are excluded. In chapter five, I share things that can be done to empower Black students on a PWI campus through policy and practice.

2.0 Review of Related Research

Through my review of the literature, two dominant themes related to the experiences of Black students who attend PWIs arose: the marginalization of Black students on PWI campuses and the importance of Black students creating a community for themselves on a PWI campus.

2.1 Low Black College Enrollment Rate

Black students experience a range of challenges with regard to college preparation. These challenges can range from difficulty completing high school to feeling as though they are not part of the college campus, especially at PWIs. Strayhorn (2008) explained how 75% of White high school graduates enroll in college compared to 35-50% of African American high school graduates, and the majority of this population are typically concentrated at HBCUs, less selective four-year colleges and universities, and community colleges. This phenomenon provides a unique challenge for PWIs while striving to create an environment where their small population of Black students can feel that they are a part of the campus. Strayhorn (2008) described that in 2004, 1.5 million bachelor's degrees were received by college students, and less than 9% of those recipients were African American. These data reflect the low number of African American college graduates compared to other groups, but it should also lead college administrators to question the low graduation rate for African American students.

2.1.1 Stereotyped / Exclusion on Campus

Not only is it an issue when Black students feel that they are being stereotyped, it can also be a problem when they feel that they are excluded from their non-Black peers. Benton (2001) cited Saddlemire (1996) who identified how Black students were marginalized on PWI campuses by students from the dominant society:

> His [Saddlemire's] findings indicated white freshman had little or no contact with African Americans, yet they harbored negative assumptions about blacks and black culture. These students felt that black students intentionally secluded themselves from whites. Several indicated they rarely interacted with African Americans on their college campus. However, when these students did have positive interactions with black students, it was always stated as an exception. These exceptions that were mentioned were African Americans who culturally identified as white (Saddlemire, 1996)." (p. 23)

This notion described by Saddlemire explains how Black students are either expected by White students to assimilate or become excluded.

2.2 The "Chilly Climate" Experienced by Black Students on Campus Due to Racial Isolation

Strayhorn (2008) explained, "African Americans attending PWIs report feeling alienated, marginalized, socially isolated, unsupported, and unwelcomed by their peers and faculty members" (p. 502). As a result of the small number of Black students enrolling in institutions of higher education, especially PWIs, administrators must gain insight into what can attract Black

students to a PWI campus and what factors can influence them to feel as though they are not a part of the campus and therefore drop out. Strayhorn explored how Black students can be made to feel as though they do not belong to a campus community as a result of the four key factors: racism and discrimination experienced by Black students on campus, feeling of isolation, low representation on campus, feeling the need to assimilate, and an inadequate cultural representation. Black students in higher education experience systematic and cultural practices that make them feel as though they are not part of the dominant campus culture and campus society.

Linley (2018) discussed how diversity efforts are not benefiting Black students:

I anticipate that racially minoritized PSA's experience discrepancies and tension between their institution's dominant narrative about diversity and students' own lived experiences. I have formed this assumption based on nearly three decades of campus climate literature and research about racially minoritized students experiences of marginalization. (p. 22)

The resistance towards the status quo by Black students is something that is not embraced by the dominant society on campus.   When "harmonious inequality" was challenged by subordinate students the dominant groups on campus were compelled to defend their privilege and status (Hurtado, 1992, pg. 545).   Based on this research, it can be concluded that if White college students have an expectation that the institution of higher education would be for their purpose first and foremost, there will always be a resistance against any effort to change or interrupt the harmony that they have always expected to benefit from. Experiencing this resistance can lead Black students to feel excluded by the dominant demographic student group on college campuses. An example of this type of exclusion was captured through a study by Linley (2018) when an African American PSA explained how they were avoided by White students in the classroom.

Previous research indicates that African American undergraduates experience more racism while on campus compared to their non-African American peers (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Not only do many White students have limited experiences of racial discrimination, they are also not aware that interracial conflicts and tension exists. They are not aware of this tension because they are seeing it through a dominant racial, White perspective. According to Green (2016), research shows that Black students need to have more perseverance than their White counterparts on college campuses due to stereotypes and blatant racism that they experience inside and outside of the classroom.

Because White students are the dominant race on campus, they see the campus and the world through their worldview only. This is a privilege that White students are benefited based on the current cultural norms of higher education policies and practices. Worthington (2008) stated that White students reported having more positive perceptions within the university environment due to greater levels of cultural congruity compared to ethnic minority students. This also prevents White students from becoming aware of the experience of Black students and learning from the experience of Black students. It therefore perpetuates the existence of racism and discrimination experienced by Black students on college campuses and can result in their feeling of exclusion and ultimate departure.

Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Hagegdorn (1999) articulated, "Unlike other stressors, however, experiences of discrimination are considered unique in that they (a) are present only among minority students and (b) heighten the feeling of not belonging at the institution will spillover effect on a student's academic performance" (p. 135). The reality of racism, discrimination and a sense of not belonging experienced by Black students on PWI campuses negatively affects their connection to the college but also their academic performance.

2.2.1 A Feeling of Alienation by Black Students

The feeling of alienation can be much greater for a Black student if the Black student ratio on campus is extremely minimal. Through a qualitative research study, Museus (2008) described how students of color who attend PWIs have two options: acclimate to the dominant culture on campus and separate from their identity or seek membership in a racial subculture if the student wants to successfully adjust to being a member of the college campus. Not all Black students seek assimilation, and as a result it is important for college campuses to foster opportunities for racial subcultures to come into existence and acknowledge them, especially if it consists of a small population of Black students. Seifert, Drummond, and Pascarella (2006), explain how the research concludes that Black students excel cognitively and personally by attending an HBCU as opposed to attending a PWI (Seifert, et al., 2006, p. 187). It is not practical for Black students to only attend HBCU's, therefore, it is important for PWIs to develop a campus culture that is more inclusive towards Black students.

2.3 Cultural and Racial Alienation Leads to Increased Departure

This feeling of alienation not only prevents Black students from attending a culturally unaware or insensitive college campus, but it can also lead to their departure. Winkle-Wagner (2009) discovered that Black women on college campuses felt as though they were homeless, because they did not fit in, were alienated, were isolated, and could not assimilate with the predominant White environment or ascribe to the "ideal campus culture." This feeling of "homelessness" led to their academic decline or dropout. This is an example of the effects of

cultural alienation and how it is not only negative for the student but also the campus community due to an exodus of a significant population of students. This phenomenon is tied to a study conducted by Harper (2013) whereby onlyness is defined as "the psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group" (p. 189). A campus environment where there are very few Black faces and a feeling of isolation experienced by Black students can lead to a very stressful and mentally draining environment.

2.4 Dissatisfaction of Black Students on Campus Due to Being Marginalized

Black students reported the highest level of dissatisfaction on college campuses (Harper, 2013). The high levels are attributed to negative reputations that precede the universities they plan to attend. Many of the negative reflections and experiences were shared with the Black students by their family members and community members. This shared negative perception of the college environment felt by Black students and those who are connected to them is contagious and can make it difficult for PWIs to recruit and retain Black students.

Harper (2013) discussed a study that focused on the everyday experience of Black students on a large PWI campus. There were a total of 51 participants, and they logged their daily experiences, which were divided into four categories. The first category explained how White onlookers were suspicious or threatened by Black students. This reflected how Black students felt they were negatively perceived by the dominant society on campus. The second category identified verbal expressions laced with prejudice. These data confirm the perception of prejudice and racism against the Black students. The third category identified inadequate service by

university staff. These data demonstrate how their perception of discrimination and racism was practiced. The fourth category identified instances when Black students were mistaken for other Black students in a course or a White student not taking a seat next to a Black student. This reflects how the identity of Black students was not acknowledged or recognized by their peers on campus.

Harper (2013) also mentioned instances that involved Black students being asked by White campus safety officials to prove they are college students more than other students or White students asking the Black students where they can buy marijuana or other drugs. This is a prime example of how Black students felt that they did not belong to the college campus. This issue was not just practiced by only staff or students. It was systematic and practiced by many different groups on a college campus in many different facets.

Harper (2013) cited Sue et al.'s (2007) discussion on microaggressions: "commonplace daily verbal behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 194). Harper discussed how these occurrences are subtle yet happen very frequently. It is impossible for Black students to constantly experience such things and not have an outlet or a "safe space" that will allow them to collectively come together to encourage, support, and uplift each other academically, socially, and mentally.

Harper (2013) explained how Black students experience "racial battle fatigue" when they must consistently prove themselves and combat racial stereotypes. This mental onslaught experienced by Black students on PWI campuses can lead many of them to reject pursuing their education especially if they do not have a strong support base. Through further research conducted by Harper (2013) Black undergraduate men have the highest attrition rate compared to other demographic groups, with two thirds of this population not graduating. Harper (2013) clearly

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demonstrated the need for Black students to seek and provide support networks for each other so that they feel as though they have a space and community on the campus of a PWI that will welcome and support them.

Harper (2013) explained how, during the first weeks of the school year, students of color participate in what is described as a "campaign" to connect with newcomers on campus. During this process older students engage in conversation and interaction with new students to accomplish three things: (1) connect them with the other Black students on campus, (2) allow the new student to identify a support peer, (3) forewarn the new student of future potential experiences. This process clearly identified how Black students who have matriculated into higher levels of education realize the need to support those who are new to the campus so that new students feel as though they belong and have a support base. Harper (2013) described how older Black students also worked to recruit new students in Black/ethnic student organizations.

If a visible community does not exist on campus for Black students, they may feel as though they are not a part of the campus. Pittman and Richmond (2008) showed the greater the degree of affiliation that students have for the school the better they are able to adjust socially and therefore have higher levels of academic motivation and lower levels of depression on campus and attrition. If a student is not able to connect with the campus and they feel they do not belong or they are an outsider, it will be difficult for them to focus on their academics. The feeling of belonging for a student is sometimes taken for granted, yet it is the gateway to academic focus and academic excellence.

2.5 We Don't Belong Here / "College Just Isn't for Me"

Institutions of higher education must do more than just tell Black students that they belong and show them marketing images that portray the message; they must also create an environment where Black students both individually and collectively feel welcomed. Walton and Cohen (2007) presented the following, "These results suggest that belonging uncertainty need not involve a fear of being stereotyped or subjected to racial bias. Rather, it can take the form of a broader concern that 'people in my group do not belong'" (p. 87). Issues that involve blatant racism are obviously debilitating for the academic advancement of Black students who attend a PWI. However, the feeling of exclusion does not even have to be extreme. If a Black student does not see a clear community or a presence of Black students, they will feel that Black students do not belong on campus.

A situation that is as subtle as not having a visible community of Black students can affect enrollment and departure rates of Black students. Of course, if there is an apparent existence of racism being practiced on campus, it can have a detrimental impact on Black student enrollment and departure. Cabrera et al. (1999) explained that if students of color perceive that racism exists on the college campus, the chances of their withdrawal from the institution increases. This dynamic also has a negative effect on the students' social and academic adjustment to the institution. Therefore, PWIs have a twofold task to foster a visible community of Black students and to minimize, if not eradicate, the practice of racism and discrimination on campus.

2.6 Black Exodus from Higher Education

Allen (1988) showed that Black students leave the institution of higher learning for reasons besides graduation at a much greater rate than other racial and ethnic groups. In fact, they are twice as likely to drop out of college for academic reasons compared to White and Asian students. This is a clear indication that the issues that Black students deal with are much more severe than other racial and ethnic groups, and as a result they must be examined in both a historical context as well as a context that identifies the cultural racial component and racism against Black people. This dynamic can debilitate the progress of Black students racial battle fatigue (Franklin, 2011); Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

2.7 Low College Graduate Rate

According to Strayhorn (2008), one out of four African American men complete their degree, and in 2004 African Americans made up just 4% of the overall bachelor degree graduates. Strayhorn (2008) explained how only 30% of Black men who enroll in college complete their degree and the catalyst behind these numbers was dissatisfaction, which is ultimately because they did not feel connected to the campus community. Strayhorn (2008) referenced a study, conducted by Hamilton (2005), that examined the experience and success of 12 African American male college students which identified four key variables that added to their success. The four variables were feelings of attachment to the campus, personal/emotional adjustment to the campus, factors that enhance social adjustment, and having access to a strong support person. Strayhorn (2008) identified Black men who said that their involvement and leadership in a student club or

organization enhanced their skills and added value to their college experience. These were key components to Black students feeling that they were part of the campus.

2.8 Low High School Graduation and Low Black College Completion Rate

Institutions of higher education are already plagued with academic challenges that Black students have as a result of an insufficient education during primary and secondary education. These challenges are only further exacerbated when Black high school graduates enroll in PWIs, experience a feeling of exclusion, and lack a visible community. When Black students experience this it can lead to their departure from the institution.

The phenomenon of Black students withdrawing from college is not a common issue across the board. In fact, there are some institutions that are effective with attracting and retaining Black students. HBCUs are particularly effective when it comes to appealing to the cultural and social needs of Black students. Some of the methods used at HBCUs can be implemented at PWIs so that Black students feel that they have a shared community.

Harper (2013) explained how most of the published research about Black undergraduates at PWIs focus on the issues that interfere with their academic advancement. According to Harper, there is very little research on factors that enable academic achievement for Black undergraduates. Identifying the issues is essential for solving the problem; however, success stories should be highlighted so that PWIs can build on what works for Black students on campus. Furthermore, Harper explains how much of the research regarding Black undergraduates at PWIs focus on the negative factors that prevent and or interfere with the Black students sense of belonging on a

college campus rather than the factors that enhance their sense of belonging. It is important for PWIs to identify and learn best practices with regard to Black student populations.

2.9 Positive Attributes of an HBCU Environment for Black Students

Allen (1992) explained how Black students who attend Black colleges had a stronger self-image compared to those who attend White colleges. Black students on Black campuses described a feeling of being accepted and connected. He also described how Black males on Black campuses projected the same feelings as White males on White campuses, a feeling of pride and being "in charge." (Allen, 1992, p. 31).   Based on this finding, one can hypothesize that if Black students are given autonomy on a White campus and allowed to create an environment of their own, where their cultural practices and shared ideologies are not only acceptable but are also the norm, they should be able to establish a strong sense of self-worth and a strong shared identity on a PWI as they would at an HBCU.   Allen explained how Black universities historically provide both a positive social and psychological environment for Black students. One can infer from this research that despite important landmark court decisions such as *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 1954), affirmative action requirements and diversity initiatives, the U.S. is still racially segregated through economic, political, and social policies. If this conclusion is accurate, institutions of higher learning should treat Black college students as though they are truly separate and equal and have an environment on campus for White students where they can express their identity and have a community of their own and allow the same for Black students. This should be a common practice at PWIs until *de facto* segregation ceases to exist in institutions of higher learning. This type of practice will also not force the White students to feel

that they must integrate and sacrifice their cultural norms and worldview, and it will not lead the

Black students to believe that they must assimilate. Social and psychological support is necessary

for an optimal learning and developmental environment for Black students (Allen, 1992).

2.10 Are HBCUs More Effective at Developing Black Students Than PWIs, and If So,

Why?

According Seifert, Drummond, and Pascarella (2006), research indicates that African

American students excel cognitively and personally by attending HBCUs as opposed to attending

PWIs because of the "chilly climate" (Seifert, et al., 2006, p. 187). that African American students

experience at PWIs, which primarily results from social alienation. The data they collected

indicate that student–faculty contact and quality of non-classroom interactions with faculty is

greater for HBCUs and lower for research universities. Faculty interest in teaching and student

development is greater at HBCUs and lower at research universities. Cooperation among students

and course-related interaction with peers is greater at HBCUs and lower at regional institutions.

Influential interactions with other students and the quality of interactions with students is greater

at HBCUs and lower at research universities. Non-course-related interactions with peers is greater

at HBCUs and lower at regional institutions. Based on the significant difference in the data,

HBCUs provide a more inclusive and interactive environment for Black students compared to

research universities. Initially, HBCUs were designed for the purpose of fulfilling the cultural

needs of Black students. Many of these institutions embraced the cultural norms of Black students,

which allowed them to be who they were as they grew intellectually. Therefore, PWIs and larger

research based institutions should identify ways to embrace the cultural norms of Black students.

2.11 HBCUs Compared to PWIs and How Both Affect Black Students

Palmer and Gasman's (2008) research explained how an HBCU provides a culturally conducive environment for African American students, because it was an institution that was structured on social networks, both formal and informal, and established social capital for the student, which enhanced inclusiveness. An HBCU can provide a great learning experience for a Black college student; however, not all Black students are able to attend an HBCU. Therefore, it is important for PWIs to develop strategies and practices that will not only attract Black students to their campus but will also develop them socially and academically and graduate them. HBCUs clearly demonstrate that creating a strong racial identity is necessary for the development of Black college students as well as the need for social networks among students. The student development model that HBCUs use for Black students can also be used on a PWI campus for Black students microcosmically. Through this institutional practice, Black students who attend PWIs can be made to feel as though they belong on campus despite having a much smaller population compared to an HBCU.

2.12 Adjustment and Assimilation Process for Black Students / (Belonging Theory)

Pittman and Richman (2008) demonstrated that college students socially adjust much better to the campus community if they have a high degree of affiliation towards the university. This also decreases their chances of depression and increases their motivation, which helps with their retention and college completion. These data demonstrate that there must be a greater value placed on the campus environment for Black students so that they feel they are a part of the campus and

that they belong. The onus is placed on institutions of higher education to provide this type of space for Black students, because it is counterproductive to assume that all or even some Black students will adjust to the status quo of a PWI campus.

Black students who were adequately prepared for higher education while in high school and were accepted to a college and decided to stay enrolled were in some instances able to adjust to the environment, because they embraced or at least accepted the dominant cultural norms of the campus. Students are expected to become a part of the institution by assimilating to the norms of the dominant society according to Wolf-Wendel and Ruel (1999) and my understanding of their research assumes that those students who did not adhere to the dominant characteristics and norms had a difficult time being accepted and acquiring the "total student development" experience. Not only was the classroom teaching experience important for the development and retention of the student, but the overall college experience was essential for learning and development. Instead of expecting Black students to adjust or assimilate, higher education should create practices and spaces that allow Black students to feel as though they are a part of the campus and that they belong in all areas of campus activity.

2.13 Belonging Theory and a Sense of Belonging on Campus

The importance of the feeling of belonging for college students does not receive the attention that it should. Black college students' sense of belonging does not have the value placed on it that is needed. Strayhorn (2008) explained that scholars do not value the sense of belonging amongst Black students on college campuses and came to this conclusion: "Only recently have scholars placed research attention on the sense of belonging of Black students and, even then,

studies are only tangentially related to a sense of belonging" (p. 504). This seems as though it is too little too late with regard to the challenges that are experienced by Black college students on PWI campuses.

A student can be socially and academically developed if they feel they are an important part of the college. According to Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera (2008), a student's "sense of belonging" (Locks, et al., 2008, p. 258) to the college campus affects their desire to be engaged on campus and complete their education a "sense of belonging" can be acquired through a variety of social and academic interactions through campus membership associations as well as informal networks. This is why a student's association and interaction with peers on campus is essential to their development as a student. A common belief in higher education was based on the notion that a minority student would complete their education if they were to experience the stages of student departure and distance themselves from their home community so that they could focus on their campus community. Winkle-Wagner (2009) explained that the age old debate in student development theory pertaining to African American students has had two opposing sides. One side of the debate says that African American students must sever family and prior relationships to be successful while on campus, and the opposing arguments state that maintaining family and prior relationships is necessary for African American identity and the student's success.

2.14 Benefits of a Black Campus Community

The concept of Black students needing to sever family relationships was shared by Vince Tinto, a leading student development scholar through his work early in his career. This concept is counterproductive, because it requires the student to gradually lose their identity. For many

decades Tinto's theory was practiced by higher education institutions. Some scholars have abandoned this concept. In fact, Tinto (2006) in his more contemporary research explained that it is essential for a student to remain connected to their past community. If the student is not able to remain connected to their family, church or past community, a network of Black college students on campus can help to overcome these obstacles. This is a key example as to why colleges and universities should support Black student networks and associations both formal and informal and encourage Black students to identify who they are as well as their group challenges.

According to Person and Christensen (1996), 90 percent of the African American student population that they researched felt strongly about having a Black community on campus that supported their development through curricular and co-curricular programs. Person and Christensen conducted a questionnaire from 1973-1977 focusing on Black students at PWIs. The purpose was to identify the values, behaviors, and attitudes of Black students. Their study demonstrated that despite Black students coming from various backgrounds they were united through their Black identity. It would be beneficial to identify if Black students are still united through their identity. Black students have developed an oppositional culture as a defense mechanism not because they do not want to learn and grow intellectually but because they want to resist the institution that they view as oppressive. It is my hypothesis that this conclusion has not changed since Person and Christensen conducted this study in the 1970s. It's possible that there are more Black students who feel that they need a cohesive campus community. This Black student network or community would need to be based upon a common cultural identity.

2.15 Cultural Identity and Awareness

Museus (2008) explained the importance of cultural familiarity as of great importance for a racial and ethnic minority student, because it achieved three things. First, it allowed the student to connect with peers of similar cultural backgrounds. Second, it allowed the students to understand their experiences and struggles. Third, students of similar backgrounds could connect with their peers on a much deeper level. Museus explained how cultural familiarity and connection provided Black students with a foundation that would allow them to move beyond any cultural obstacles they faced. It is very possible for a PWI to foster a culture of inclusiveness for Black students through these steps, especially if Black students are allowed to practice these steps autonomously. This process can allow a Black student at a PWI to develop a "safe space" that will help them establish a shared culture with their peers and create a sense of belonging.

2.16 Positive Black Identity on Campus Through Associations

If Black college students who attend PWIs have an environment that allows them to develop an association. it can help them to establish a collective identity and support each other. This association will also provide them with the mettle that they need as they deal with isolation at a PWI. Rogers and Summers (2008) explained how African American students who are part of Greek-letter organizations that have strong in-group associations develop a stronger identity and therefore are more open to diversity and interacting with other cultures, races, and ethnicities on campus, whereas White Greek students who have a strong in-group association are not as open and accepting to other races and cultures. This is an example of how power and privilege can

interfere with the cultural acceptance of others. The privilege issue not only impedes the cultural development of the student; it can also affect the development of the other members of the campus community. Being dominant and being in a position of power and privilege can lead one to think that they are superior and therefore will not gain from interacting with others. The research conducted by Rogers and Summers is a prime example of how it not only benefits Black students when they interact with other Black students and gain a strong identity, but it can also benefit students from other racial and ethnic groups because Black students will be more inclined to interact with other students on campus when they have a secure sense of self. This sense of self is established through a cultural community that is shaped by and for Black students. Any experiences of exclusion can be combatted through the support of the cultural community that Black students belong to on campus. Johnson (2013) explains how peer mentoring programs can help Black students at PWIs by helping them to believe in their abilities to achieve their goals.

2.17 Black Support (Ethnic Group Clustering) / Connecting with Peers

Black students on campus viewed ethnic group clustering as an opportunity for cultural support in an environment where they feel alienated Hurtado (1992). However, White students viewed the ethnic group clustering of Black students as racial segregation. When groups of Black people come together outside of their own community questions will arise, especially if the organizing is not sanctioned by an institution. The White students were not familiar with seeing Black students unite for purposes of self-enrichment. Also, White students have historically had access to many of the programs and organizations that exist on a college campus and in the greater society, and as a result they were uncomfortable with this union and may have felt it would disrupt

the status quo that they were familiar with. Hurtado showed that institutions of higher education must design policies, programs and practices that meet the cultural needs of their students despite the resistance that can result from this effort. Their research specifically concentrates on how institutions of higher learning can meet the cultural needs of Black students by improving the campus racial environment and adjusting resources and rewards that are based on student centered priorities as frequent as possible. The essence of Black student degree completion is tied to a feeling of belonging to the campus through a shared cultural community with other Black students. If PWIs want to recruit, retain, and graduate Black students, the process of ensuring that Black students feel that they belong to the campus is essential.

Johnson et al. (2007) explained how degree completion and attainment abilities were based in large part on the students' ability to connect with peers and faculty. When a student was able to connect with peers and faculty outside of the classroom, the student could grow academically through a network of tutors and an academic support base. Johnson et al. (2007) discussed how students must feel that their presence on campus was recognized and was important by their peers, other students, and the entire college community. Being recognized and involved on campus was important for the development of Black students as well as relationship and rapport building among peers and faculty, which is extremely important for the development of Black students. This is another example of why many Black students do not feel as though they are a part of the campus, simply because they lack the necessary relationship and belonging component. Johnson et al. (2007) explained how African American students were less likely to report a strong sense of campus belonging compared to White students. This reflected the disconnect that Black students could have with some of their White educators. The challenge that White educators face is to overcome any racial barriers that exist while also being able to build a rapport with Black students.

It is possible for Black students to overcome many of these barriers that are on their path to academic success especially through a strong peer support network.

Strayhorn (2008) explained how studies have demonstrated that Black men who attend PWIs experienced difficulties when trying to establish relationships with others on campus. This was due to the lack of a sufficient population of Black students on campus. Strayhorn's study also reflected the disconnect that Black students experience on a PWI as well as the feeling of isolation.

2.18 Low Numbers and Low Sense of Belonging

Often students of color feel as though they are an anomaly on a PWI campus, especially when they do not see people who look like them. Walton and Cohen (2007) discussed how Black Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans view institutions of higher learning as non-inclusive, because their numbers are lower in these environments. Institutions of higher education appear as though they are designed to meet the need of a racially homogenous group of students. Walton and Cohen (2007) explained how students of color see their peers experiencing alienation on campus while White students reaped the benefits of social capital. This dynamic on college campuses can influence the psyche of Black students whereby they feel they are excluded. Walton and Cohen (2007) discussed data collected from Black students that explained how their perception with regard to a PWI campus can be articulated from the perspective of "people like me do not belong here." (Walton, 2007, p. 83). The visual of a small or nonexistent population of Black students on a campus can result in a Black student feeling as though they do not belong on a college campus. If a Black student is able to persevere through this feeling of isolation on a college campus there can be a host of other issues that they experience while they remain on campus.

2.19 Poor Campus Relationships = Negative Campus Outcomes

Freeman et al. (2007) explained the correlation between being excluded on campus and the negative mental symptoms that can come about due to being excluded:

Empirical studies support the suggestion that failure to form satisfactory interpersonal relationships in college is associated with outcomes such as depression, anxiety, suicide, criminality, and college freshmen attrition (Hoyle & Crawford, 1994; Tinto, 1987). If a Black student at a PWI remains on campus despite the feeling of isolation there are a host of consequences they may experience. However, fewer researchers have examined potential associations between the sense of belonging specifically and college students' academic motivation. (p. 205)

The correlation between the two should be analyzed, because often institutions of higher learning focus on academic achievement while overlooking the importance of a student having a healthy sense of belonging to a campus so that they can focus on their academics.

2.20 Student Development Theory, Race, and the Expectation of Assimilation

According to Patton, McEwen, Rendon, and Howard-Hamilton (2007), student development theory seeks to understand the attitudes, behaviors and norms of college students. Patton et al. (2007) explained how the topic of race has not been considered in student development theory. Patton et al. (2007) described how race should be considered in theories through a process, and the steps are as follows: (1) the researcher must ensure the theory is empirical; (2) they must know about the participants within the study; (3) the researcher must confront their personal bias

with regard to race and ethnicity. Patton et al. (2007) also explained how racism is based on privilege and power and these factors should be considered when discussing race. Much of the research that has been done regarding student development theory, college recruitment, college retention, etc. has excluded the topic of race. This practice has nonverbally endorsed cultural assimilation, racism, and minimal understanding of the experiences of Black students in particular. As a result, the research on these topics has not only been lackluster and have aided in an incomplete understanding how belonging theory with regard to Black students on a PWI campus.

Tierney (1999) discussed how the foundations of student development theory expects African American students to assimilate into the mainstream of the student demographic on college campuses which consists of White, upper-middle class, Protestant, heterosexual students. This expectation is to the benefit of the dominant privilege group on campus but to the detriment of the minority Black student population. This is another example of why it is important for scholars and researchers to be culturally aware and racially astute, especially with regard to matters that affect Black students.

Based on research summarized by Ogbu (2004), minorities who are oppressed are forced to assimilate into the dominant culture, and this assimilation process ultimately marginalizes them. According to Ogbu, black students understand that to lose their identity not only leads them to suppress who they are, but assimilation does not reward them with respect and acceptance. It only demonstrates that they have allowed themselves to become socially and academically oppressed. This dynamic simply makes Black students feel they are not part of the campus community and fuels their resistance towards PWIs.

2.21 Cultural Competence

Understanding and overcoming the cultural barriers that exist on a college campus is a process that can only be overcome systematically. The system of racism and its process was established through systematic and consistent means, and it must be overcome through a systematic and consistent approach. Coggins and Campbell (2008) explained how cultural competence can close the education-achievement gap. The four best practices that they identify are (1) integrate cultural competence into the learning curriculum, (2) be certain that research that is based in multicultural history is decoded properly, (3) understand that minority students benefit from a curriculum that reflects their history, (4) realize that a multicultural based education can provide great value for students. It appears that many researchers and scholars ignored the cultural differences that exist among students and as a result of this ignorance, research was conducted through an ethnocentric lens with the expectation that all students would assimilate to the findings of the research. In many academic research studies, Black students were both faceless and voiceless, and, as a result, the curriculum did not reflect differences that exist. The expectation was that Black students would assimilate to the findings of the majority group or they would simply remove themselves from the student population if they did not fit in the findings. As a result, policies and practices in higher education were not designed to meet the needs of minority students, especially Black students. Therefore, researchers must be more culturally aware of the racial differences that exist; this will shape the policies and practices to more effectively meet the needs of Black students. Coggins and Campbell (2008) argued that when research is more culturally aware, Black students can become academically successful, because institutional practices help them to become more included in the campus curriculum and community.

2.22 Quest for Non-traditional Black Associations

According to Harper and Quaye (2007), the reason African American male college students were not seen as being active in student organizations on campus was because they did not participate in the mainstream clubs that were acknowledged by college administrators. Harper and Quaye (2007) explained that African American men and other racial and ethnic minority students chose not to participate in mainstream campus organizations because of the traditionally structure and conceptualization of leadership. Mainstream organizations practice a singular leader approach rather than collective, and there is also the criticism of "acting White" by participating in a mainstream campus organization that is sanctioned by the institution. The structure of the organizations and associations that the Black students belonged to were not considered a part of the dominant campus society; they were therefore not acknowledged as being part of the typical student development program, and as a result, they did not get the same recognition and support as a traditional student club or association. Their data were gathered through a qualitative research study conducted at six public Midwestern universities. Campus administrators identified 32 18-22-year-old African American men who on average had a GPA of 3.32 and were not college student athletes. The majority of the men who participated in the study explained that they had to learn how to deal with White people in order to be able to comfortably participate in mainstream student organizations. These Black students who achieved academic and social success on campus explained how they felt the need to assimilate so that they could feel that they were a part of the campus community.

Flowers (2004) discussed how student campus involvement has a positive influence on the vocational, cognitive, and moral inspiration and development of the student. It is extremely important for scholars and educators to become conscious of the fact that there is a dichotomy that

exists within many Black students. The first is the desire to resist institutional policies and practices that are an extension of that which has historically oppressed them while also needing these same exact institutional policies and practices for their social and academic enrichment. For example, when a Black student struggles with this dichotomy it can limit their academic development and progress. This internal struggle for many Black students is not effectively resolved because many institutions were not designed to help Black students overcome these issues. This issue is the key catalyst to academic underachievement for Black students in college and the reason many of them do not complete their education.

2.23 Integration through Student Clubs

Guiffrida (2003) discussed how Tinto (1993) believed that students of color were able to become socially integrated in the institutions culture through student clubs, organizations and other formal forms of associations. The assumption was that the student would feel a connection to the campus through these associations. The question still remains, what type of association is more effective for Black students: a formal association or an informal association. Students are more comfortable interacting with the campus once they have become integrated in a formal ethnic enclave (Guiffrida, 2003). This enclave allows them to retain and nurture their ethnic identity while on campus and develop a sense of belonging. These results clearly demonstrated that cultural assimilation not only will interfere with the Black students' development but can also push them out of school. Guiffrida stated that African American student organizations provide an opportunity for African American students to withstand the challenges of being an African American student on campus through a strong ethnic network that shares a common group

experience. Guiffrida explained how African American student organizations provide an opportunity for the student to connect with faculty outside of the classroom and establish out of class relationships, which is essential to the students' overall sense of belonging and development. Guffrida clearly showed that for Black students who are not able to assimilate into the dominant culture this ethnic enclave can allow them to maintain a sense of racial identity and independence while also feeling as though they are a part of the campus through the connection with their peers. Not only is it important for students to be able to identify with and connect with their peers, but they must also feel they are a part of the campus community in order to want to stay enrolled in college and be an effective student. Johnson (2013) described how peer mentor programs have been found to be the most effective for Black undergraduate students especially through the support of upperclassmen peers.

2.24 Belonging Theory

Pittman and Richmond's (2008) research described how a sense of school belonging was more than just individual relationships but carried over to a sense of belonging and a connection with the larger campus community. A Black student would not necessarily feel connected to the campus through just a few individual connections and relationships with their peers. A community on campus that the student is connected to is what Pittman and Richmond were referring to.

Pittman and Richmond (2008) explained how a sense of belonging for a student on campus can also lead to a student perceiving their faculty as caring and can increase their involvement in campus organizations and activities. Based on the data, the perception of acceptance and belonging must be organizational and systematically viewed. Pittman and Richmond went on to say that

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students with greater perceptions of university belonging had greater participation in campus group activities. The question remains if formal group activities, e.g., a Black student organization, is more effective than an informal network, e.g., a group of friends who meet, talk, and support each other. The acceptance component is essential, but Strayhorn (2008) explained how a student's sense of belonging was based on the support that they received. Based on this information, the perception of belonging is not enough. There is also a need for the follow up of continued support.

Strayhorn (2008) described how sense of belonging is comprised of affective and cognitive elements:

An individual assesses his/her position or role in relation to the group (cognitive) which, in turn, results in a response, behavior, or outcome (affective). Sense of belonging, then, reflects the extent to which students feel connected, a part of, or stuck to a campus. (p. 505)

Therefore, the establishment of a sense of belonging is not one-dimensional. It is a multifaceted approach to creating a community environment that enhances the chances for student retention and graduation.

Strayhorn's (2008) emphasis was on the importance of Black students feeling that they are part of the campus community, which can be explained through belonging theory. Strayhorn's ideas regarding belonging theory are extremely important to my study; however, there are deep-rooted historical issues that explain why Black students feel that they do not belong to PWI campuses. For me to gain a greater sense on the plight of Black students who attend PWI campuses, it is important to equally analyze and apply race and racism in addition to belonging theory. I therefore found it necessary to analyze the experiences of my population through both the belonging theory and CRT. Belonging theory allowed me to understand the social consequences when Black students feel that they are not connected to the campus community.

CRT provides an opportunity for me to gain a deeper understanding how Black students feel excluded based on racial differences. An individual student or a group of students with a similar background can lack a sense of belonging and there can be a variety of things that make a Black student feel that they do not belong to a campus. Combining CRT and belonging theory gave me insight on how Black students feel excluded on PWI campuses where the core of this exclusion is based on their race.

Black undergraduate students that attend PWIs feel that they are alienated by the institution because of the way that faculty, staff, administration and non-Black students of the campus community interact with them. This feeling of exclusion can often result in Black students dropping out of college. The social disconnect between Black students and institutions of higher education is not an inherent characteristic of Black students. This phenomenon is a result of how the institution interacts with Black students or lack thereof. In fact, HBCUs are effective at making Black students feel as though they are part of the campus community. If HBCUs are able to make Black students feel connected to the campus community PWIs should also be able to create a feeling of inclusion and a sense of belonging for Black students. Black students can gain a sense of belonging on a PWI campus if they are able to create their own community. This community which can allow them to create a sense of belonging with their peers can allow them to overcome feelings of marginalization.

3.0 Methods

3.1 Purpose of the Study

During the fall 2014 and spring 2015 semester I conducted a pilot study. The purpose of the study was to identify the challenges that Black undergraduate students who attend a PWI experience. According to Harper and Quaye (2007), multiple studies have demonstrated that, compared to other racial groups, Black students experience lower levels of satisfaction in a racial campus climate and feel that they are treated differently based on their race. The goal of the pilot study was to assess the current challenges that Black undergraduate students experience and furthermore to assess their ability to persevere through the challenges when they interact with each other, establish a community on campus, and ultimately feel that they belong to the campus due to the network that they have established. In this chapter, I explain the results of the pilot study and how I collected data for this dissertation that reflects the experiences of Black students who attend PWIs. The focus of the study is Black students' perceptions of how they feel on predominantly White campuses.

3.2 Pilot Study

For my pilot study I used two PWIs located in southwestern Pennsylvania. Duquesne University was the first institution and the University of Pittsburgh was the second institution. My target population consisted of self-identified Black undergraduate students. I interviewed a total

of 31 students from Pitt; eight of them were members of the Black Action Society (BAS), and 23 of them were not members of BAS. At Duquesne, I interviewed a total of 15 students; nine were non-BSU Black Student Union members and six were BSU members. I interviewed a total of 46 students.

My pilot study, which was not part of my dissertation, allowed me to see the importance of using open-ended research questions for my dissertation so that I could gain a much greater understanding about my student population. My pilot study also gave me the opportunity to reflect on how my research questions should be reworded so that the students would be more comfortable sharing their voice.   The dominant themes that emerged from my pilot study were the following: at these two PWIs, Black students were stereotyped and experienced prejudice, Black students were excluded on campus, Black students felt disconnected from non-Black students, and Black students felt a sense of acceptance and community amongst other Black students. These dominant themes suggested that Black students felt that they did not belong to the Duquesne University and University of Pittsburgh campus communities.

3.3 Problem Statement

There are many racial incidents occurring across the country on college campuses. As a result of such a large racial divide in society, Black students who attend PWIs often feel the effects of racial tension. Prior research suggests that this dynamic leads many Black students to become withdrawn from the campus community and, as a result, drop out of college. This affects institutions of higher education due to tense campuses and declining enrollment, and it can prevent Black students from wanting to pursue their education. When institutions of higher education are

inclusive, it enhances the learning environment for all students. My research demonstrates how institutions that are inclusive and create a campus that makes Black students feel that they belong can have a greater outcome on students' involvement, development, and degree completion.

My study explains factors that led Black students to feel excluded at a PWI and how they can gain a sense of belonging amongst each other. My research focused on Black students' perceptions of experiences of inclusion and exclusion at two PWIs. I learned from their perspective how and when they feel excluded or included as well as how their interactions with each other help them handle feelings of exclusion. I have thoroughly examined the research that focuses on the challenges of Black students who attend PWIs. My survey and research questions are framed according to the common themes found in the literature. The data collected from my pilot study reflected concepts and themes found in the research. The questions that guided my research are:

1. What systematic experiences of inclusion and exclusion are reported by Black students who attend PWIs?

2. What are the challenges that Black students identify as significant for their persistence at a PWI?

3. In what experiences do Black students report that they feel welcome and excluded at PWIs?

4. How does a Black student support network provide a sense of belonging for Black students to help overcome these feelings of exclusion?

3.4 Setting

I collected data at Duquesne University and the University of Pittsburgh because they are both large PWIs with a significant population of Black undergraduate students on campus. My point of contact at Duquesne University was as an administrative assistant for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and the director. This office is approximately two doors down from the Black Student Union office. Many of the students who are members of the BSU also hang out in the ODI office. The administrative assistant agreed to help me inform students that I was conducting interviews for data collection. I interviewed students in the BSU office or in a quiet area in the lounge area.

The University of Pittsburgh staff and faculty agreed to help me recruit undergraduate Black students to interview for data collection. I interviewed students in the Africana Studies conference room, in a quite area in the department of Africana studies, and in other quiet areas on campus.

For doctoral research purposes I focused on PWIs in the city of Pittsburgh. I used Pittsburgh because of the social challenges that the Black population of Pittsburgh experiences. According to statistical atlats.com (2018) Black people represent 24.3% of the population in the city of Pittsburgh. The Black community in Pittsburgh not only deals with racial injustice but also economic issues.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* explained how Black professionals who migrate from other cities with a larger population of Black people such as Washington D.C. or Atlanta have a difficult time adjusting to Pittsburgh due to limited number of affluent Black people in Pittsburgh. Grant (2017) of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote:

'We can't tell you where the black middle-class neighborhoods are because they don't exist,' according to Tim Stevens, civil rights activist and chairman and CEO of the Black Political Empowerment Project, a social justice organization based in Pittsburgh's Hill District" (p. 4).

The lack of middle-class Black neighborhoods in Pittsburgh is evidence of the racial injustice experienced by Black Pittsburghers. The issues on PWI campuses in Pittsburgh may serve as a symbolic representation of the overall challenges for Black people in the city of Pittsburgh. The article captures the workings of systematic racism and how it is not isolated to one area or life activity. Therefore, if racism permeates policies and practices in the city, one can conclude that it will also have an effect on institutions of higher education within the city.

According to Duquesne University Institutional Research and Planning during the fall 2017 semester, there were a total of 5,998 undergraduate students of which 4,773 (81.3%) were White. There were a total of 318 Black undergraduate students. Out of this total population, 151 of those students were Black men and 167 were Black women. Undergraduate Black students at Duquesne University represented 4.7% of the total undergraduate population (College Factual, n.d.).

According to the Office of Institutional Research at the University of Pittsburgh, during the fall 2017 semester there were a total population of 19,326 undergraduate students of which 13,848 (71.7%) were White. There were a total of 984 Black undergraduate students. Undergraduate Black students at the University of Pittsburgh represented 5.1% of the total undergraduate population (University of Pittsburgh, 2020).

3.4.1 Researcher Subjectivity

As I collected data for my dissertation, I focused on the challenges of Black students who attend PWIs. I utilized the University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University as I did for my pilot study. I conducted a total of 35 interviews, 24 students from Pitt and 11 students from Duquesne. Each interview took approximately one hour on average which allowed me to acquire approximately 35 hours of audio-recordings. My interview questions were grounded in the literature based on belonging theory. Each interview was recorded with an electronic recording device and then transcribed by the professional transcriptionist whom I used for my pilot study. I then analyzed my interviews and then identified consistent themes and concepts that exist so that I could explain. I only used interviews so that I could gain a more thorough insight from my respondents. This allowed me to produce a high-quality study. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), before conducting research it should be determined if the topic is suitable for qualitative research. There are three things that Rubin and Rubin cited. First, if concepts need to be illuminated, qualitative research can help with that. I sought to get a greater understanding as to why Black students did not feel that they were a part of the campus community. Secondly, Rubin and Rubin stated that if the literature does not explain the problem, qualitative research can help with this issue. In light of the current racial crisis across the country as well as racial tension on college campuses, a greater understanding needs to be gained about how Black students feel on campus. Finally, Rubin and Rubin described how qualitative research provides greater insight for collected quantitative data. Due to a population of Black people not enrolling in higher education and a population dropping out of college, the stories of these students must be understood and shared.

I have experience conducting interviews through data that I collected from my pilot study. The experience from my pilot study prepared me for data collection towards my dissertation. I have the ability to connect with the population that I am researching, because I have a similar history as the population that I'm researching by once being a Black undergraduate student who attended a PWI. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described the rapport between researcher and respondent as being very important, "Trust increases as people see that you share a common background with them" (p. 92). I also have the ability to connect with my research population due to being a faculty member, advisor for the Black Student Union at the college where I teach, and interacting with Black undergraduate students for the past 10 years and being passionate about this topic. I have made connections with faculty and staff at both institutions so that they could introduce me to potential respondents. Rubin and Rubin (2005) also explained that if someone vouches for the researcher, the respondents' trust will increase. My professional experience and ability to connect with Black undergraduate students allowed me to establish a rapport with respondents in a way that encouraged them to welcome me into their world so that I could gain a more thorough understanding of the challenges that Black students experience at a PWI.

Mertens (2005) explained that credibility can be established through triangulation, because it allows the researcher to collect data from different sources or from different methods to analyze the consistency of the data. I used the triangulation method by using both open-ended and dichotomous-choice interview questions as well as using two different PWIs to determine if the results were similar at both institutions as well as to identify the various dimensions that existed within this phenomenon. I used the constructivist interpretative process while collecting data. Mertens (2005) explained that the constructivist researcher must be conscious to not impose their imagination on the data. A constructivist researcher can avoid bias by using appropriate language

with their respondents to ensure that they are not leading conclusions but instead allowing the respondent to thoroughly articulate their own interpretations. While collecting data, I asked respondents open-ended questions, and if I was uncertain about a word they used or a way it was described I asked them to provide an example. My respondents and I were similar based on our race, but we are from different generations. My generation may not have used the same terms or articulated them the same as my respondents; therefore, it was important that I allowed them to give meaning to their words.

3.5 Methodology

My method for data collection was face-to-face interviews. I created a list of key questions that I used to focus on (see Appendix D); however, I also engaged the students in detail so that I could further probe them. My source for interview data collection was Rubin and Rubin's (2005) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. During the interview I used a digital audio recorder to audio-record the interviews, which were then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

3.5.1 Data Collection

I interviewed a total of 35 students, 11 students from Duquesne and 24 students from Pitt. Each interview was conducted for at least one hour so that I could gather adequate insight about the challenges that Black students experience. Each interview was conducted only once. The interview style was conversational, which helped the student feel comfortable engaging in an open

discussion with me. My focus during the interview was the students' perception on how the university interacts with them, how White students interact with them as well as other non-Black students, and how Black students interact with each other. I was careful to not lead the student to any conclusion by asking them probing questions based on their perspective while not interjecting my experiences on to them. I used an electronic recorder to record the interviews. The recorded interviews were uploaded to a computer and emailed to a professional transcriptionist. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), the interview structure shapes the way the respondent provides data. Rubin and Rubin described one interview structure as tree and branch. Through this model the research problem is separated into more or less equal parts with a main question for each part. Rubin and Rubin identified the interview to a tree and the trunk as the research problem with each branch as a main question. Following this model, the interviewer asks the main question for each branch and then asks follow up questions to gain more depth and richness. Rubin and Rubin explained that main questions for the tree-and-branch model need to be logically related so that transitions between the main questions make sense to the interviewee. I used this interview method because it allowed me to identify the relationship between my research questions. My interview questions were opened-ended and semi-structured, which allowed the respondent to provide greater depth of their experience. While conducting interviews during my pilot study, my interview questions were very structured, and I read directly from my list of questions. Using a more semi-structured approach in the dissertation allowed me to gain greater insight from the Black students that I interviewed.

After analyzing my data I followed primary themes/concepts that I identified. The four themes that I focused on were (1) how Black students see themselves, (2) how Black students feel the institution sees and interacts with them, (3) how Black students feel White students and non-

Black students see and interact with them (4) how Black students see and interact with each other and, (5) how interactions among the student groups affect them as a members of the campus community. I also related their responses back to current literature and reached conclusions based on any similar patterns from their responses that in some way relate to the literature.

I used an emic interpretive research perspective. The research approach conducted by a researcher with an emic perspective is grounded in the insider perspective (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). The goal of the emic researcher is to understand a cultural phenomenon through the lens of the respondent cultural group. Morris et al. (1999) also explained how the emic researcher understands the cultural experience as a system that is interconnected. The experiences of Black students are shaped not only by the institution of higher education but also other students on campus. As a result, the cultural experiences of Black students occur in reaction to the campus community culture. Therefore my research was able to get a greater understanding about the interactions among Black students with regard to feelings of exclusion and inclusion but of equal importance were the interactions that Black students have with the campus community. Using of the emic approach allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding about the challenges that Black students experience on a PWI college campus. As I am a Black graduate student and was once a Black undergraduate college student, my respondents were able to relate to me. We established a rapport when I introduced myself to the respondents before starting the interview. I informed them that I wanted to gain a greater understanding about the experiences of what it is like to be an undergraduate college student at a PWI. I will limit bias in my research interpretation through the use of published research that can be used to represent the etic (outsider) perspective.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described how data can be analyzed by creating middle-level theory that expands on the data collected from interviews and relates it to the literature. The second

approach is to examine interviews and see the relationship between interviews and core themes. The third approach is to connect the research to published literature. Finally, Rubin and Rubin explained that data can be identified through concepts and themes that relate to each other. I used the approach that identified the relationship between interviews and core themes. Rubin and Rubin explained that the purpose of coding is that it allows the researcher to reflect on labeled concepts and identify their collective implications. I used my research questions to label the concepts. This allowed me to thoroughly organize and present my data. I identified the issues that were raised by the students that were the most serious and most commonly expressed. This process is described as sorting and ranking (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Once the interviews were transcribed and printed, I organized the responses according to their themes, and I highlighted key concepts within the theme. Each highlighted marker represented a different theme. My dissertation is comprised of core concepts within each theme.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a typology is a set of related concepts. They explained how concepts and themes can be identified through common language used during the interview process. Similar words that are used by different respondents can reflect a concept. These concepts together can create a typology. I identified similar words that were used by my respondents after carefully reading transcribed notes. Once I identified and highlighted common words used by different respondents, I used these words to connect them to a concept. Concepts that are related to my research questions were used to establish a typology.

3.5.2 Indicators of Quality

Mertens (2003) identified reliability the following way:

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Researchers can use several approaches to determine the reliability of a particular data collection instrument. Two of the most common approaches involve the use of repeated measures (e.g., tests-retest and parallel forms) and calculation of internal consistency (e.g., coefficient alpha or Kuder Richardson formulas). (p. 349)

Mertens (2003) described three key indicators of quality that were related to my study as follows: community, attention to voice, and reciprocity. Mertens explained that the researcher must know the community well enough to be able to positively connect the research to a positive action within the community. Because I was a part of this community as an undergraduate student, I have an awareness about their plight. Mertens (2003) identified attention to voice as an opportunity for the researcher to give a voice to the voiceless and include those who are marginalized. The population that I researched are marginalized and through in-depth interview questions I provided an opportunity for them to express their deepest thoughts and share their experiences and challenges. Mertens (2003) said that reciprocity is an establishment of trust and mutuality between the researcher and the respondents. The gatekeepers who provided access for me have also provided an opportunity for me to introduce myself to potential respondents so that they can get to know me and my reason for conducting research. This allowed me to establish trust with potential respondents.

Shenton (2004) presented a number of components that help a qualitative researcher establish trust, three of which are closely related to my study: familiarity with the culture, qualification of the investigator, and examination of previous research. The first factor, familiarity with the culture, is what helped me identify the issue. Due to me being a part of the culture, I am familiar with the challenges that Black students who attend PWIs experience. My experience as undergraduate Black student at a PWI allowed me to gain the qualification as someone who was

an insider with regard to this matter. Through my doctoral studies I have been able to gain a greater understanding of the Black undergraduate experience on a PWI campus.

3.5.3 Limitations

One of my limitations was that I am closely connected to this population and the issue, because their issue was something that I had experienced. I had to be mindful of this connection and not allow it to interfere with my data collection, analysis, and interpretations. As a result of my compassion with this topic and heightened sense of awareness of importance of neutrality, I was very thorough with making a connection to the issue that I uncovered from the students to the literature related to this topic.

With regard to belonging theory, another challenge that I was confronted with while collecting data was collecting data from Black students who are under the impression that we live in a colorblind society and there are not difficulties for Black people and Black college students in particular. When I experienced this type of issue I would ask the student that I was interviewing if there are certain problems or challenges that Black students might have in common. Instead of focusing the questions on how racism harms Black students, I reframed the narrative so that the student could identify common experiences and challenges shared by students who happen to be Black. I compared these responses to the responses shared by students who determined that racism is the core problem of Black students, which allowed me to identify similarities between the two responses.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Introduction

For this chapter, I selected excerpts from students' interviews that related to my research themes. I sectioned this chapter based on my research themes: (1) How Black students see themselves, (2) How Black students feels the institution feels and interacts with them, (3) How Black students feel non-Black and White students see and interact with them, (4) How Black students see and interact with each other, (5) How interactions among the students groups affect them as a member of the campus community.

The sample population consisted of undergraduate Black college students from two different PWIs. The students ranged from freshmen to seniors; they were enrolled in a variety of majors. There were males and females from both institutions. I interviewed a total of 35 students, 11 from Duquesne and 24 from Pitt. The population consisted of Black students who were members of Black Greek organizations, Black student athletes, and mainstream Black students. They explained their relationship with their campus and other students on campus both Black and non-Black.

Table 1. Duquesne University Participant Demographics

Student Number	Student Name	Gender	Class
1	Whitley	Female	Freshman
2	Samantha	Female	Freshman
3	Nell	Female	Sophomore

(Table 1 continued)

4	Naomi	Female	Junior
5	Cree	Female	Sophomore
6	Shaharrazad	Female	Sophomore
7	Stephen	Male	Junior
8	Jussie	Male	Freshman
9	Lauryn	Female	Freshman
10	Molly	Female	Sophomore
11	Deion	Male	Junior

Table 2. University of Pittsburgh Participant Demographics

Student Name	Gender	Class
Melody	Female	Not Identified
Vanessa	Female	Not Identified
Jay	Male	Not Senior
Vivica	Female	Senior
Christopher	Male	Senior
Ricky	Male	Senior
Laurence	Male	Senior
Curtis	Male	Senior
Ashley	Female	Not Identified
Michael	Male	Not Identified
Jada	Female	Freshman

Table 2 (continued)

Steve	Male	Freshman
Daryl	Male	Junior
Keisha	Female	Sophomore
Zoey	Female	Junior
Nia	Female	Senior
Kadeem	Male	Senior
Assata	Female	Sophomore
Erykah	Female	Sophomore

4.2 Summary of Results

4.2.1 How Black Students See Themselves

While researching Black students at two PWIs through the belonging theory theoretical framework, I first wanted to understand how Black students see themselves. It was important for me to get a good understanding as to how Black students saw themselves individually and collectively as a group to get a better understanding regarding their connection to the campus community or lack thereof.

4.2.1.1 Challenge of Being Black at a PWI

Black undergraduate college students who attend a PWI can experience marginalization and exclusion from the institution and the dominant campus community. If these issues are not

addressed appropriately, they can lead a Black student to feel that they are not part of the campus community and therefore want to drop out. There are Black students who feel that they are outsiders on a PWI campus and therefore are expected to accept the reality of being excluded. Black students feel that they do not fit into the campus community, they have to prove themselves, and they need support but are not receiving it and are therefore oppressed. As one student explained:

(**Duquesne - Molly – female - sophomore**) *I just feel like there's always this need to kind of prove yourself, especially in the sciences.*

If Black students feel that there are expectations for them to be something that they are not or they are not at least accepted for who they are it can lead them to feel that they are not welcome on campus. Black students who decide not to drop out may feel that the only way for them to continue with their education is to cope with being marginalized.

(**Duquesne - Jussie – male - freshman**) *but I feel like we, as minority students, have to be okay with being vulnerable even though it's really uncomfortable to be vulnerable in a room of people who don't look like you or don't have the same experiences as you, but we also have to be confident that what we're saying is our truth,.*

For Black students to know that they are in an oppressive situation but to not have the necessary support to deal with this dynamic, the most effective way for them to cope with their reality yet still have a sense of semblance especially for new students on campus is through a community. This community, which can serve as a support system, is established and maintained by Black students.

(**Pitt – Vanessa - female – not identified**) *Belonging in this community, and how we don't have the support system and there's a need for support, and so that's why Black Pitt*

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predominantly stays connected with one another, and they don't really venture out to Greek

life and white social life, just because they don't fit in.

There were three students from two separate PWIs who explained how there are a set of challenges that are unique to Black students who attend PWIs that can range from feeling that they have to prove themselves to feeling vulnerable. These are just some of the experiences that make them feel that they are not part of the campus community and therefore need to create their own community.

4.2.1.2 Need for a Community Safe Space

Some of the Black students explained how they need space on campus that would allow them to be who they are without being judged and to feel accepted. Two students explained what a safe space is and how having their own space allows them to feel that they can be who they are.

(**Duquesne – Samantha – female - freshman**) *It's as simple as it goes, like a community is a place where you feel at home, a place where you can be accepted, a place where you can voice your opinions and not be judged, a place where you can pretty much be open and it's usually filled with people that have similar values as you, morals, and were raised to the same ideologies as you, and look like you - that's an important, important element.*

Another student explained why a safe space is essential for Black students:

(**Pitt – Nia – female - senior**) *A safe space, in general, is somewhere where you can be yourself and share your opinions, ask whatever questions unfiltered, and the expectation is no one will judge you for it or kind of crucify you for it. Most times, a safe space, you need it, because the topics that are going to be discussed are controversial, so it's basically going to be you want to be able to just be yourself, open, and completely exposed without being judged for it.*

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If I was just to think about safe space in general, it's like you come back, and if you have a Black roommate, there's a better chance that she can help you braid your hair, or if it's a dude, he can help cut your hair. That type of cultural experience, or maybe that you guys decide you want to do a movie night, and you guys are going to want to watch the same movie because of cultural background, or maybe you make a reference to a quote out of Friday *or* Next Friday*, and your roommate gets it because they're also Black and they have that culture.*

These two students explained what a safe space is and how it is important for Black students to feel at home and welcomed. They also explained how a specific area where Black students can congregate can allow them to develop a sense of community and belonging on a PWI campus. The need to have a safe space is a reflection of the isolation experienced by Black students.

4.2.1.3 Description of the Black Campus Community

The effects of isolation felt by individual Black students has a shared group reaction. There was a clear intention by some of the students interviewed to congregate and interact primarily with Black students. When many different individual Black students experienced the same type of isolation, it was not a personal issue but it became a group issue. When the individual Black students came together to form a community due to being excluded by non-Black students and the institution, not only did they have a shared cultural identity but they also had a common issue that they were affected by. To thoroughly understand the dynamic of Black students on a PWI campus, it was important to analyze individual as well as group experiences. Some of the students were able to identify and define the structure of the Black community on campus and discuss some of the common practices within the Black campus community. The Black community on campus was comprised of Black student clubs and organizations, Black student athletes, and Black students

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who were not members of clubs and organizations or were not athletes. A major issue that was identified within the community was interracial dating and interracial relationships between Black men and White women on campus.

A female student described the "Black Pitt" campus community as follows:

(**Pitt – Lisa – female –junior**) *So, Black Pitt is basically people who are in all of the Black organizations on campus. I mean not all of them, but all of the Black people are in all of the Black organizations on campus, so that includes Black Greek life, BAS, ASO, CLASA, all of the other Black clubs, that would be NESBE, which is the National Society for Black Engineers, they all do events together, and they all have joint events, or people are usually in multiple - if they're in one Black club, they'll usually be in multiple Black clubs. So, everyone in Black Pitt is kind of just lumped together.*

If you look at Black Pitt, they don't date White…I don't know if it's they specifically intend to not date White people, but they don't date White people, for the most part, but in the Black athlete space, they all date White people.

The Black student organizations were the glue that held together the Black campus community. It appeared that the Black campus community reacted to the feeling of being marginalized by separating itself from the dominant campus community. Black students explained that their feeling of marginalization was also a result of a low student population on PWI campuses. The desire for Black students to stick together appeared to be a reflection of the low enrollment of Black students on campus.

4.2.1.4 Importance of Being Around People You Can Identify with Culturally

Black students expressed the expectation and interest to see other Black students on campus, but, due to the low numbers of Black students, they expressed the need for Black students who are on campus to interact with each other.

(Pitt – Jonathan - male - senior) *I was expecting there would be a larger Black presence, and I was somewhat let down by that, but I kind of expected that, because there's those percentages of Black students on campus.*

(Pitt - Ricky – male - senior) *There's not a predominate Black community here, and it's not so much like you can go to one part of the campus and you'll find all of the Black kids.*

The two students explained that when they arrived to campus they were actively seeking out Black students but were discouraged after seeing such a small number in population. The discouragement due to the low representation of Black students on campus was a common response by the interviewees. Most of the students interviewed talked about how they wanted to see more Black students when they arrived on campus. The constant visual reminder of not having many Black students could make Black students feel unwelcomed and excluded. Because Black students are lower in number, a Black community on campus could help them feel that they belong or at least have a presence on campus.

4.2.1.5 The Need to Feel Welcomed

Black students said that it was necessary to have a Black community on campus and believed this community could help them adjust. Two students explained how a Black community could help Black students.

(Pitt – Zoey - female - junior) *So, being here and being around other Black people, it feels good to know people have your back, but also, it's like we're all fighting for the same*

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thing, we're all going out for everything, so as much as we support each other....So if I
wouldn't have found my friends, I would have felt extremely left out because I can't relate
to everything that happened.

(Duquesne – Nell - female - sophomore) *I think that's a community, like us sticking*
together and helping each other and giving each other resources or helping each other,
encouragement, that's a community.

There was a need for a Black community at the two PWI campuses as well as a need for a support network for Black students. *The support network helps students deal with challenges that they may experience while on campus such as feeling excluded by staff, faculty or non-Black students.* In addition to low enrollment, Black students also felt that it was important for them to stick together and support each other due to the racial marginalization that they experienced on campus. The support that Black students got from each other provided them with a sense of community; however, it still did not protect them from feeling excluded by non-Black members of the campus community. Black students explained that the exclusion was due to their image, and the exclusion practices were done by both non-Black students as well as faculty and staff.

(Pitt – Erykah - female - sophomore) *I would say now that I've met other students who identify as being Black, I feel more welcome on campus; however, I still tend to second guess myself walking into classrooms. When classes first start in the semester, I'll be a little bit uncomfortable if I wear my hair a certain way, or dress a certain way, because I feel like students who don't identify as Black might view me in a negative way.*

Black students felt they were not welcomed due to their attire or the way they wore their hair, especially when there were no other Black students in their presence. As I explain in more

detail later in this chapter, this uncomfortable feeling was due to interactions that they had with non-Black students on campus or negative interactions with faculty and / or staff.

4.2.1.6 Challenges That Exist Within the Community

There were a few key indicators that created issues within the Black community on campus. These issues could impede on Black students' sense of belonging on a PWI campus, because they interfered with the development of a Black community on campus. Some of the issues were interracial dating and a hierarchy within the Black community on campus.

Interracial relationships was a potential issue with the Black campus community, because it causes a rift between Black students, which can interfere with their sense of belonging.

> **(Pitt – Erykah - female - sophomore)**, explained: *Also, with the interracial dating, I know that's also a big problem on campus, and I know a lot of girls, especially with the athletes, think that they don't see Black women on campus at all, they just see White women, which causes a rift in the community. I just feel like the Black community should come together as a whole and maybe have more discussions, get everything out in the open without a bunch of heated arguments, allow everyone a chance to talk, maybe allow Black men to answer to why this is happening.*

Black students who attended the two PWIs felt that it was very important for Black students to stick together, but Black women felt that the many relationships between Black men and White women undermined the value and presence of Black women and unity within the Black community on campus. Some of the Black students explained that it was not only the interracial relationships between Black men and White women but also how some Black students identified more with White students than other Black students. The sense of community and belongingness was also tied to a shared sense of identity. If this shared sense of identity was lacking problems occurred.

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(**Duquesne – Lauryn – female - freshman**) *Our community here is very weak, and a lot of Black students will only hang out with White students.*

Some Black students on campus did not embrace the Black identity on campus, or they choose not to be an active member in the Black campus community. In some instances, there were Black students who assimilated with White students on campus, which caused tension within the Black campus community.

(**Duquesne – Shaharrazad - female - sophomore**) *There's like the Black people who want to be White, so they're in the White Greeks, they go to the White people parties, they're in White world, so it's like they're not going to come out because they don't feel like what Black organizations talk about and discuss in our open discussions pertains to them, because it's just like, "Oh, I'm cool with White people, so that's not for me," and then it's just like the Black males, they're athletes, so White girls are kissing their ass, they feel like they're up on a pedestal, so they're like, "I'm not going to come out because that has nothing to do with me. They love me," and stuff like that, but they don't understand once you step off this campus, White people don't give a fuck about you.*

This student's words represent a common view that other students expressed, including some of the athletes themselves, who indicated that they were accepted, but only as athletes. Some of the Black students explained how their sense of belonging was weak when they felt excluded by the institution and White students directly, but they also felt that their sense of belonging was lessened when other Black students did not want to interact with them but instead preferred to interact with White students. This was especially problematic when Black male athletes dated White female students on campus. This was a reflection of Black students to want to belong to a community but also have other Black students not want to belong to the community.

(Pitt – Melody – female - freshman) *It's kind of disappointing because I feel like it's harder for us to come together for some reason. I don't know, I feel like we are in constant competition with each other, inside of our own race, and trying to give people…it's just a lot of competition with our own race. I don't know how to explain it, but we just need to find a way to come together and unite more in a positive way.*

Many of the Black students explained that they were expecting to see a larger number of Black students on campus but were surprised when they arrived and noticed that there were not that many. When these students realized that there were not many Black students on campus and they did not receive the warm welcome that they expected from the institution and from non-Black students, they felt uncomfortable and began to experience a feeling of vulnerability. Due to feeling vulnerable, Black students explained the need for a Black community on the PWI campus that would serve as a support system and allow Black students to assemble in a safe space. Black students who attended the two PWIs were going to have a unique set of challenges. These challenges were because of how Black students viewed themselves as an outsider on campus, because of low enrollment of Black students, and because of the need for a Black community on campus to feel less vulnerable and safer. This unique challenge was also a reaction to how Black students felt the institution saw and interacted with them.

Students at both institutions felt that Black students did not fit in on campus and were not welcomed. A similarity at both institutions was that Black male athletes interacted more with White students compared to other students. At both institutions, the consensus was that Black male athletes were in interracial relationships more than other Black students within the Black campus community. Black female students at both institutions said that this high number of

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relationships between Black male athletes and White female students caused tension within the Black campus community.

A student who was both an athlete and a member of a fraternity shared a very detailed account of his experiences on campus as a Black male student athlete who was also a member of a fraternity. He explained not only how he interacted with other members of the campus community but also how he and other Black male athletes on campus interacted with Black women on campus. This student discussed the challenges that Black male student athletes dealt with on their college campus.

> **(Duquesne – Deion – male - junior)** Gerald: Okay, alright. Do you feel that campus activities meet your needs, reflect your interests as a student?
>
> Deion: *I'm not going to lie, I probably wouldn't go to campus activities anyway because I think they're corny all the time, so, I don't really know. Sophomore year I knew they had movie night in front of college hall, but I think that's kind of corny. I could just watch movies in my room.*
>
> Gerald: What about on campus? Are most of the men in the fraternity student athletes, or is it 50/50, or mostly not athletes?
>
> Deion: *My fraternity, me and all my line brothers, we all play football. My prophytes, the line before us, fall of '16, two played football, one ran track, so yeah, I guess that's…I guess on average most of them are athletes, but I wouldn't say we're based on athletes, because my prophytes' prophytes, summer '15, [Inaudible 19:13] he didn't play a sport, and then before that, some played sports, like it's not really all athletes, I wouldn't say it's all athletes.*

Gerald: Okay, what do you know about the Black Student Union? Are you a member, or do you participate in any of their programs and activities?

Deion: *I try to go to some of their events every once in a while. I'm not a member of it, just for the simple fact that like I'm just always busy all the time, and then on top of that, I'm a part of the NPAC at Pitt because my organization was founded - my chapter was founded at Pitt, so I'm part of NPAC there, so, between meetings there, football, classes, school, all of that, I've never really been able to become a member of our BSU or anything like that, so.*

Gerald: Okay. What was it that you participate in at Pitt?

Deion: *The NPAC, the National Panhellenic Council.*

Gerald: Okay, what does that talk about?

Deion: *That's the Divine 9, all the Black frats and sororities, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Alpha Phi Alpha, Sigma Gamma Roe, Iota Phi Beta, Zeta Phi Beta.*

Gerald: And that's a national network?

Deion: *Yeah.*

Gerald: And there's a chapter in Pittsburgh that based at the University of Pittsburgh that allows the Black fraternities and sororities to come together and network with each other?

Gerald: Okay. So, talking to students yesterday, there was something that came up for discussion - I wasn't even thinking that it would be mentioned. Some of the students mentioned it, and because they mentioned it, I wanted to get a better understanding of it. So, the overall theme of the discussion was Black men on the college campus, and it focused on…there's not that many Black men on the college campus, one, the other thing

that was mentioned is that Black men on the college campus are not involved in Black organizations or Black issues or movements, the other thing that was mentioned was that Black men on the campus have either a disrespect or do not interact with Black women on campus, or don't date Black women on campus, but date White women…

Deion: *I know exactly who said that.*

Gerald: …on campus, and then, there's a rift between Black men and Black women on campus.

Deion: *I hope you use my interview - I hope you use this part of my interview.*

Gerald: I'm going to - and one thing I did want to say is it was multiple people, it wasn't just one person.

Deion: *I know, I know, I know, I know exactly what little group of people said that.*

Gerald: And can you talk about that, because I want to hear what you have to say.

Deion: *It's not the fact that we don't like to date the Black women on campus, it's just like they said, there's not enough of us, there's not enough of them, so let's say there's five of them and there's five of us. If I tried to talk to one of them and it doesn't work out, then what? Am I going to try to talk to her friend? No. Am I going to talk to another Black girl? No, because she knows I tried to talk to her and then what? So, I don't want to say they make it harder for themselves, because if I try to talk to one I can't talk to another, but that's what it is, just like with any - I don't want to say it's a Black thing, but it is, for the simple fact that we're Black. So, they...the Black women on campus, they read too deeply into things. If there's 110, or if there's 1,000 Doritos out there, if there's 1,000 Nacho Cheese Doritos out there and there's only like 10 Cool Ranch Doritos, and I eat one Cool Ranch Dorito and then I eat a Nacho Cheese Dorito, all of the Cool Ranch Doritos are*

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gone, but there's 1,000 Nacho Cheese Doritos left, so there's not really many to pick from.

If I talk to one Black girl, all of the Black girls will know about it, and so if I talk to another

one, then it's going to be even harder, and if doesn't work out, then what?

Gerald: Okay.

Deion: *And, my friend's probably trying to talk to her, my teammate's probably trying to*

talk to her too, so, it makes it harder. If I mess with one, I can't mess with another one, so

that's really, that's really what the issue is, not that we don't want to mess with them.

Gerald: Okay. Now, let me ask you this, outside of like dating and relationships, another

thing that came up was that they really don't want to support things that Black women are

doing, and there are people that said…

Deion: *The Black men on this campus are in stuff already. We are athletes, we are doing*

other stuff. We have a lot of other stuff to worry about, so them trying to...like the Black

women on campus trying to force us to care about stuff that we don't have time to care

about really is not going to help the issue, and that's where the rift in the relationship

comes from. Like, if I'm waking up at five o'clock in the morning to go run and lift and do

this and this and this, and then I'm going to class right after that, and doing this, and this,

and this, at nine o'clock I'm not going to want to come to your meeting to talk about

something that's probably going to make me mad.

Gerald: Let me ask you this question: what can be done - can anything be done to bridge

the gap between Black men and Black women on campus?

Deion: *To bridge the gap?*

Gerald: You do think there's a rift though, is that right? Would you say that?

Deion: *Yeah, I think there's a little disconnect, but I feel like there's a little disconnect between Black women and Black men in society, period, because yes, the Black woman is the strongest person on earth because they have to make sure that the Black man is strong and they have to make sure that their self is strong, and yes, sometimes Black men don't really care about Black women, but that's not the case at this school, that's not the case. If there were…if this was a HBCU, we wouldn't be talking about this. We wouldn't be having this problem right now, because there's enough for everybody, there's enough to go around - like potato chips, you can't have just one. So, me personally, I'm going to marry a Black woman. That's going to happen. But right now, if the ratio is one Black girl to ten White girls, and it doesn't work out with that one Black girl, obviously I have to have one in other fantasies, I guess, if that's what you want to call it.*

Gerald: Okay, so you're saying there's more options, because there's bigger populations.

Deion: *There's definitely more options, just for the simple fact this is a predominantly White institute.*

Gerald: Okay. So then, what do you think can be done here at this campus to solve that issue, or can it be solved?

Deion: *I don't think there's like a specific thing that can be solved, I just think that everybody has to get out of their own way. Everybody has to stop getting mad over the littlest stuff, like okay, yes, we might not come to every little event that you guys may throw, but that's because we're going through a lot more stuff, and since we're talking about it - and I hope you use this part too - they want us to come to their events and help them and support them and do this, and this, and this, but how often do they come to football games and support us? How often do they check on us and say, "Hey, how you doing? How you*

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feeling? Are you good? Are you okay? How's your mental health?" because mental health

is one of the biggest issues in Black men. How often do they just sit down and talk to us

instead of saying, "Oh, they don't want to date us, they don't want to talk to us, they don't

want to come to our events"? I don't want to say they're being selfish, but that's a part of

it. They want us to go out of our way to help them, but they don't go out of their own way

to help themselves or even check on us.

Deion from Duquesne highlighted three issues that are the catalyst to the issues of Black men and Black women on campus. First, he explained that, due to the low number of Black students on campus, it was difficult for Black men and Black women to have a variety of dating options and, as a result, conflict can result due to the limited options. The second point that he focused on was that the institution that they attended was the root of their problem, because if they attended an HBCU instead of a PWI there would be more dating and relationship options that they could choose from. The third key issue that the student pointed out was how Black men were accused of not supporting Black women on campus but Black women were doing what they could to support Black men on campus who were dealing with many different mental health challenges.

4.2.2 How Black Students Feel the Institution Sees and Interacts with Them

When asked if the institution made the student feel welcome 11 out of the 35 students surveyed responded no. The majority of the students who responded in the positive that the institution made them feel welcome were analyzing the question through the lens of an individual perspective. As a result, their individual interaction with the institution has been one that has made them feel welcomed. However when the question is based on the group experience the response was starkly different.
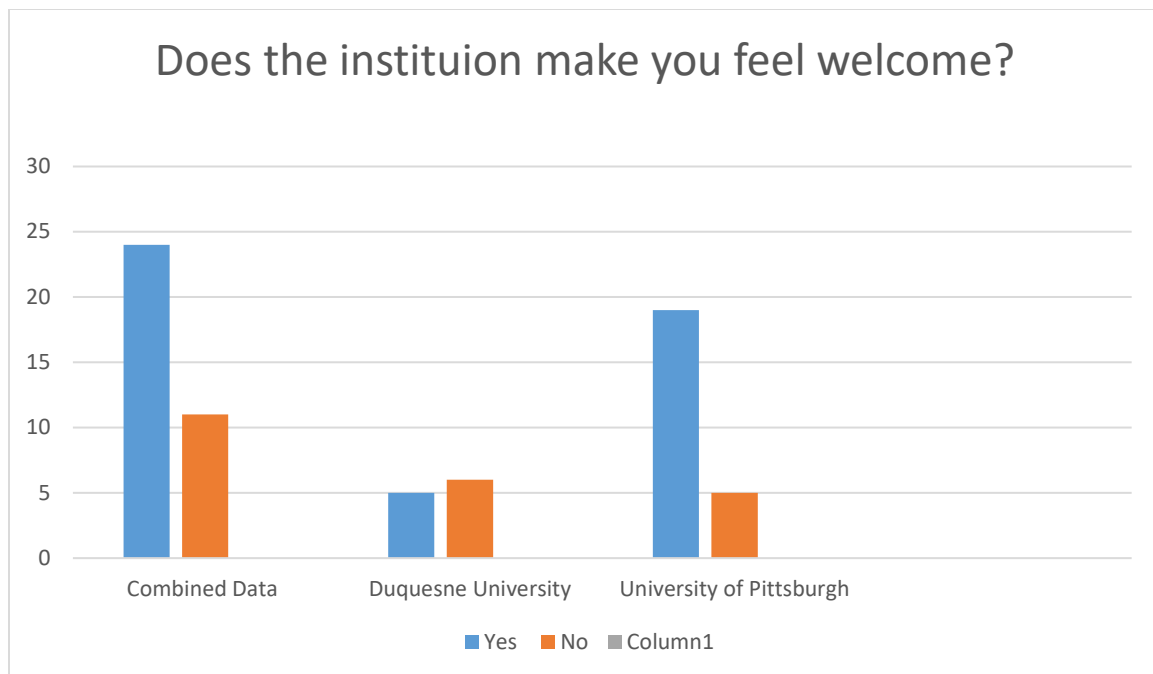
Figure 1. Individual Sense of Belonging

When asked if the institution made Black students feel welcomed, 25 out of 33 students surveyed responded no. The majority of the students felt that the institution was not welcoming to the collective population of Black students. This response reflected how PWIs could make an individual Black student feel welcomed but make the Black student population feel unwelcomed.

(The discrepancy between the Figure 1 and Figure 2 is hard to interpret, but because individual Black students felt that nothing blatant happened to them in particular; they probably felt that they were not treated differently and they may have wanted to escape the reality of their individual victimization. By Black students saying that they felt they were welcomed by the institution but Black students as a whole were not welcomed, they were mentally able to remove themselves from being an outcast on campus. When students were asked about the challenges of Black people, they seemed to be more comfortable talking about it in the group context but when they discussed individual exclusion their non-verbal cues projected more discomfort.)

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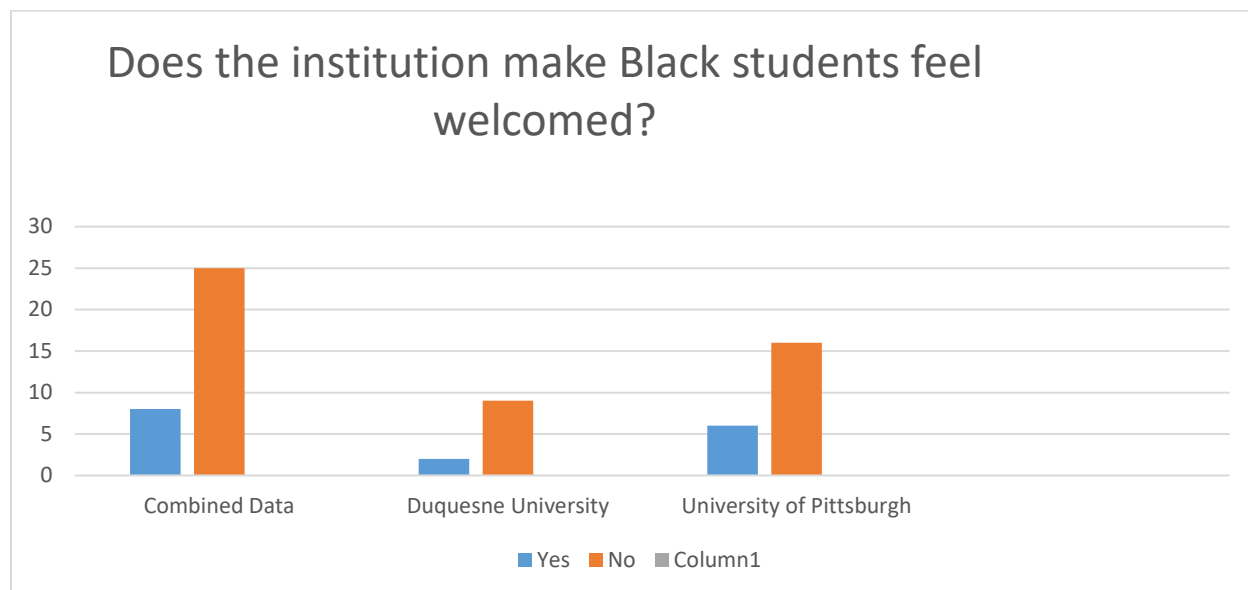
Figure 2. Group Sense of Belonging

Black students whom I interviewed from both institutions explained how the institution did not include them in campus activities and programs. They discussed how the practice of non-inclusion is something that they experienced both inside of the classroom and outside of the classroom. They felt that student programs catered more to White student interests at the expense of the interest of Black students.

> **(Duquesne - Whitley – female - freshman)** *Have like events that cater more to us rather than having this office do everything. Like, there was a pageant and it's not very inclusive, like a Miss Duquesne pageant, and usually it's by invite only, and there was maybe one or two Black women, if that, in the pageant, and so like an organization here, they started a Miss Black Duquesne pageant, so that was like a thing that we had to start ourselves because we were feeling as if we weren't being included enough in a certain aspect.*

Not only were Black students excluded through campus activities and events; they also felt excluded while in the classroom. At Duquesne there was a student who experienced a feeling of exclusion by their professor. A Black student was used as a joke in the class by the professor in front of her peers. The student explained how this instance by a representative of the way the institution made her feel.

> **(Duquesne - Cree – female - sophomore)** *Well, one that didn't get me as mad was uh, I was in my global business class, and my teacher came up to me. He was going around asking everybody like, what's your name, and I didn't want him to spell my name wrong, so I told him, and he was like, "Yeah, unfortunately for you, there's not a lot of people…" he said it in like a sarcastic way, he said like, "Fortunately for you, there's not a lot of people that look like you in this class, so I know who you are," being sarcastic, because I was the only Black person. There was one other Black person, but he wasn't there yet, and he was a male. And then, he asked me, I had braids in my ID, and he was like, "Yeah, can you try to keep your hair the same?" and I was like, "What?" and he was like, "What do you have in your picture? Are those cornrows or something?" I was like, "They're braids," and he was like, "Yeah, can you try to wear it the same, so I know who you are?" And I was like, "No." I didn't find it funny at all, so, yeah, it bothered me. I know he was just trying to joke around with me, but it's like, you don't know what you're talking about, so don't even say it.*

These instances made Black students feel unwelcomed both inside and outside of the classroom, especially a situation such as this when a Black student was publicly disrespected and their cultural identity was sarcastically described.

(Duquesne - Lauryn – female - freshman) *I'm used to being the only person who looks like me in the class. I'm used to having to deal with ignorant comments made by teachers, I think we have like an African-American history class, and it's taught by some foreign White girl. Her last name is something long and intricate, but she's teaching it. I'm not about to take an African-American history class with a White girl teaching it, who's not even from here. And, anybody else who is Black, they're usually not professors,...*

There were students who experienced professors saying ignorant things about them based on their cultural identity in front of the classroom. Not only did Black students feel excluded because their enrollment was low on campus, but the feeling of marginalization was exacerbated when professors singled out Black students, made racially insensitive remarks, and used the only Black student in the class as the punchline for their jokes.

The low number of Black students in the classroom and the low representation of Black people on campus in and of itself, was a large part of the issue that made Black students feel unwelcomed and uncomfortable. There were many issues that resulted from this phenomenon alone without even being used as a joke in the classroom.

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *It's just like when you walk into a classroom, you may see one or two other Black people. You rarely get a Black teacher, you rarely see Black faculty or Black staff besides outside of the kitchen and cleaning, you don't see Black staff and faculty that much. That makes students very uncomfortable, because it's like this is how you see me in the future. You don't see me working at your university, you see me becoming broke and having to clean or having to cook, like that's my only worth.*

Black students could also feel excluded if there was a campus event hosted by White students with low attendance by Black students.

(Duquesne - Cree – female - sophomore) *They have stuff like the Greek Week, but it's not for the Black Greeks, it's for the White Greeks, and it's a separation, but the Black groups are still welcome, it's like, well, that's for the White Greeks, but the Black ones, we're really not going to do anything, they can have their fun for the week.*

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *It just seems like everything is kind of divided, like Greek life is divided, you have the Black Greeks, you have the White Greeks, the pageant that Duquesne holds every year is only for White people, because you have to be invited by White Greek life to participate in it.*

PWIs that cater solely to the needs of White students on campus do so to the detriment of Black students, which further leads to the feeling of exclusion towards Black students.

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *I feel like when they try to book a large event space, and when they put their organization, they're like, "Oh, White people, they're cool, we can trust them," but if they see a Black organization, they're like, "Oh, you need to get permission from a vice president to use this space," or "You need to fill out 20 forms just to let us know," and stuff like that, and also, I noticed that White organizations have outside food a lot easier at their events than the Black organizations do on campus, it's just like they want to give us a hard time to see if we're going to put in the work or not.*

The many challenges and obstacles that were put in the way of Black students could often discourage them from striving to demand programs and a safe space that would benefit them. It

was essential for Black students to have a designated safe space where they could gather and feel a sense of unity considering the marginalization that they experienced.

(Duquesne - Jussie – male - freshman) *No, I don't. The only time I feel welcome is in that space.*

Gerald: What space is that?

Jussie: The Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Gerald: Okay, okay. What is it about that space that makes you feel welcome?

Jussie: It's an all-Black space. Just things that just put a magnifying glass on your Blackness, when we already walk into rooms and count like, "Okay, there's five Black people in this space," and colleges or institutions thinking that they have to keep saying, "Okay, there's one more Black person here," that's tiring and that makes us feel like - I feel like that makes me feel more like just a number than a student, because how many times do you count how many White students are in the room, even though that's the norm? Another few little things, like what music's played at events.

Jussie: Like for welcome week, I know my freshman year welcome week, there was no music that any Black - that generally a Black student wanted to listen to, and just to see the majority of White students have a good time,

Gerald: So, you feel like the Office of Diversity and Inclusion doesn't have the influence or power that it should have to be able to fully represent Black students, is that what you think?

Jussie: Yeah, no. I feel like an office as important as that, how small it is, that should be one of the biggest offices in the university, because if Duquesne is all about diversity and

inclusion, because that's their new motto and that's the biggest issue they're tackling, why

isn't that office bigger? Why isn't there more staff?

The relatively low number of Black students on campus and the treatment of exclusion by

the dominant campus community not only made Black students feel excluded but it could also be

physically draining for Black students. These feelings of exclusion were not only a result of the

low enrollment of Black undergraduate students, but it could also be something as subtle as the

type of music that was played at campus events that did not reflect the interest of Black students.

If Black students were not receiving the necessary resources and support that would meet their

specific needs, then they would feel that they lacked value to the campus community.

> **(Pitt -Assata – female - sophomore)** *The organization. The organization was suspended*
>
> *for five years, but what I'm trying to figure out is why there have been numerous times*
>
> *when all of these White sororities and fraternities have done some crazy ass shit, but*
>
> *nobody checks them. They'll be suspended for like three weeks, social probation for three*
>
> *weeks, and they're good. Alpha Kappa Alpha is…I can't even pledge anymore. I can't*
>
> *pledge anymore.*

This student described a situation when a double standard approach was used in terms of

how the institution treated Black student organizations opposed to White student organizations,

because punishments and infractions were stricter towards Black student organizations. A practice

such as this made Black students feel that they had second citizen status on campus and therefore

lost their connection to the campus.

> *Assata: That's what I'm saying, but they're still here, living and breathing, but we're no*
>
> *longer. AKA can't be on campus any more. They're suspended for five years. This makes*
>
> *me so upset.*

According to TribLive.com the University of Pittsburgh sorority chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha was suspended due to an alleged hazing incident that involved approximately a dozen young women (Martines & Lindstrom, 2018). According to the report, one of the women said she was bruised due to the incident. Kenyon Bonner, University of Pittsburgh Vice Provost and Dean of Students explained that the sorority was suspended because Pitt had a zero-tolerance policy with regard to hazing (Martines & Lindstrom, 2018).

Black students discussed how situations such as this made them feel that they did not belong because not only was there a different set of rules applied to Black students for their infraction, but the punishment was more severe.

> **(Pitt – Steve - male - freshman)** *So, I guess you can say there isn't the sense of belonging for sure, but it is something that I've been used to for most of my life, it's something that I've kind of adjusted to.*
>
> *So, I guess saying promoting Black activities and promoting Black clubs and things like that I think would definitely help.*

There were Black students who felt that they were unable to change the situation and, therefore, had to adjust to the feeling of exclusion that existed on a PWI campus for Black students.

4.2.2.1 Lack of Resources Available or Provided for Black Students' Needs

Black students who attended the two PWIs also said that their PWIs did not provide them with specific resources and support such as funding for programs that were organized by Black students or programs that were made available for Black students. Black students also said that because there was a shortage of Black professors, advisors, and mentors, they were not receiving the support that they should from the institution.

There were specific resources and support that Black students said they needed that should be provided by the institution that could ultimately help them feel that they were part of the institution. When these essential resources were not provided for Black students, their conjecture was the institution did not care about Black students.

(Pitt - Laurence – male - senior) *Establishing like the Black Student Union and opening it up more, advertising it more.*

(Pitt - Michael – male – not identified)

More official Black events, I think would help, but I also don't know about the specifics of Black events,

Michael: They could advertise it, they could put it out there for people to see, that would be great, but I never see the university itself advertise those things. It's usually students who run the things who are the ones who are advertising it for Black students, but for everyone else, for the whole campus, the university advertises it and puts it up, so you know about it. For the Black students, you don't always see it, you don't always know. I think the university could be behind that, have its back.

Instances such as this led Black students to feel that there was a double standard between Black students and other students. As a result, Black students felt that they were not part of the institution, because they were not treated like other students on campus due to a lack of a promotion from the institution for Black events.

4.2.2.2 Subculture/Sub-community Black Campus Community

Black students expressed the need to create their own community on campus, because they were not made to feel at one with the campus community, which may have lead them to be separate from the dominant campus community.

(Pitt - Kadeem – male - senior)

There's definitely a Black community - I don't want to knock the Black community here at Pitt, but it's us, it's not a part of the university. You know what I mean? It's not integrated into the fabric that makes up Pitt. It's kind of like, here's Pitt, and here's Black Pitt that functions within Pitt....

Kadeem: The White students, it's their university. It's Pitt, there's no white Pitt, it's just Pitt for them. I feel there's Black Pitt, there's Indian Pitt, there's Asian Pitt, but for the White students, it's just Pitt.

There's a Black subculture that has been created at the University of Pittsburgh because the institution was not working with Black students to create a visible community on campus that was openly welcomed by the institution. As a result, some of the Black students on campus formed a network that was made up solely of Black students for Black students. When the institution spoke of its culture without including the Black community in its culture or at least acknowledging the Black community, it alienated the Black students, which leads Black students to feel separate from the institution. This issue was addressed by different students at both institutions through something as subtle as songs that the Black students want to hear not being played at campus events but songs that are more popular among White students being played frequently at campus events and activities.

4.2.2.3 A Black Campus Community Hierarchy Created by the Institution

The PWIs in this study had influence on the cultural dynamics within the Black campus community that prevented Black students from collectively having full autonomy of shaping their community on campus and exacerbated problems.

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(Duquesne - Stephen – male - junior)

I'm on the football team, so I already have a sense of belonging, because even if like, the White students here don't really ban with me, I've got White friends on the football team, White teammates that I'm close....

This student explained how his feeling of belonging was based on the acceptance of the White students on campus or his White teammates. Through his involvement in football, he was able to gain a sense of belonging. This was an individualized sense of belonging that was achieved due to a Black student's athletic ability; however, this type of acceptance was not beneficial collectively for Black students on campus. It could actually add more insult to injury by making the Black students who were not athletes feel that they were part of a sub-group, because they were not athletes and the only way to gain acceptance into the dominant campus community was through athletics.

This type of treatment could also cause division between Black students on campus, Black student non-athletes, and Black student-athletes.

(Pitt - Keisha – female –sophomore)

Probably just having more organizations, different organizations, for Black folks. I know there's the African clubs, and various African fraternities on campus, but they're not really engrained in campus, per se, where most of the student population doesn't really recognize that they're there or know that they're there.

The students described how the overall treatment of Black students on campus by the institution shaped cultural norms that existed within the Black campus community. Black students who were on sports teams expressed how they had a great sense of belonging, whereas Black

students who were not athletes did not express the same sense of belonging. Due to this dynamic, there could be tension within the Black campus community between athletes and non-athletes.

Many of the Black students explained how they felt underrepresented on campus, and this was because the institution was not welcoming to Black students. Some of the respondents explained that the only space where they felt welcomed was locations that were designated specifically for Black students such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion or areas that were used by Black student organizations. Due to the low number of Black students on campus, there were only a few Black students in class and some of the Black students explained that they felt singled out by their professors while in class. For example, some Black students shared stories about how they were expected to speak for the entire Black race, or there were instances when their professors would ask the Black students questions or make a joke in front of the class about their name, their hair, or cultural artifacts and practices of Black people. Black students explained that they felt the institution did not welcome them, because Black events on campus did not receive the support that they needed such as funding and advertising. However, Black students felt that the institution catered to the needs of White students with regard to events and programs organized by students. Black students at Duquesne explained how campus beauty pageants were primarily made up of White contestants and a lot of funding and advertising support was provided by the institution, whereas Black beauty pageants on campus were not supported by the institution but more so the students. Some of the Black students explained how there was a double standard with regard to the treatment of Greek organizations on campus. They explained how White Greek organizations were excused for inappropriate behavior but Black Greek organizations were punished more severely than White Greek organization for inappropriate behavior.

Based on the respondents between the two institutions, it seemed that Black students on the campus of Duquesne University experienced more scrutiny compared to the Black students at the University of Pittsburgh. Duquesne University had a smaller population of students compared to the University of Pittsburgh, and, as a result, the Black student population at Duquesne was much smaller than at Pitt. It was more difficult for Black students at Duquesne University to blend in with other students, because there was a lower number of students and less diversity. Black students at Duquesne were on the radar more often and every move that they made could be watched closely by White students.

4.2.3 How Black Students Feel White and Non-Black students See and Interact with Them

Black students explained how they felt that they were not welcomed by non-Black students through daily interactions. Black students interviewed described microaggressions, such as being stared at by White students, that they were faced to deal with on a regular basis. When asked if non-Black students made Black students feel welcome, 20 out of 35 students surveyed responded yes. When asked if non-Black students made Black students feel welcomed, 13 out of 35 students surveyed responded no. Two students provided vague answers that were neither a direct yes nor a direct no.
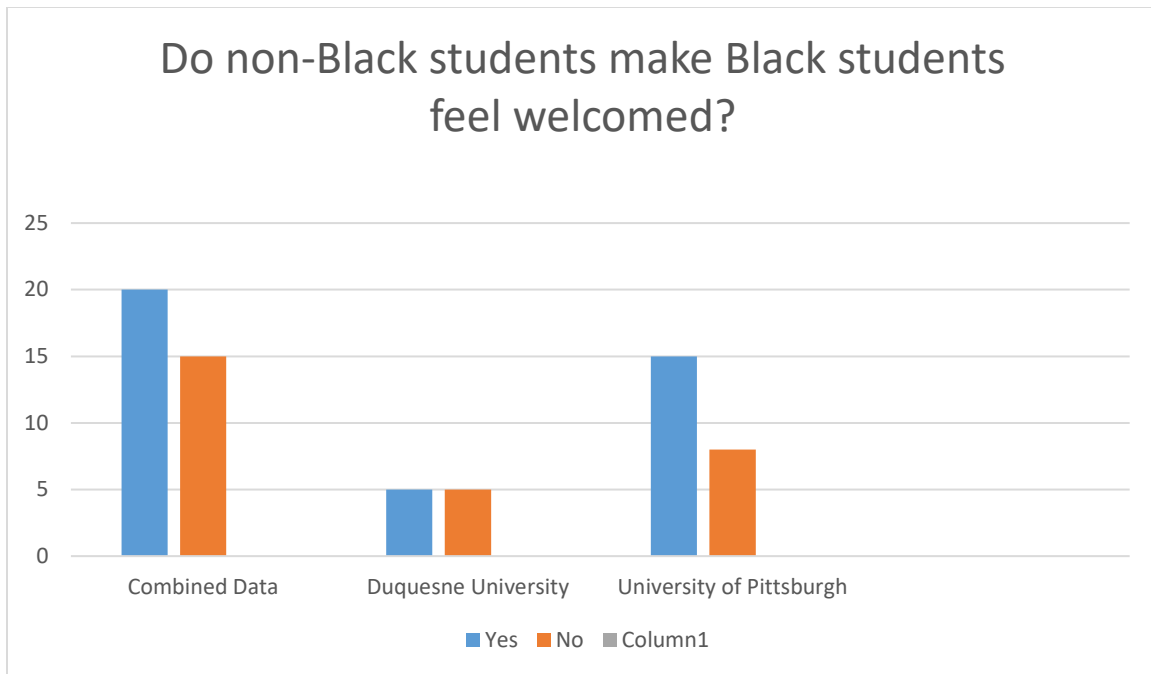
Figure 3. Sense of Belonging from non-Black students

Some Black students explained how the mere cultural disconnect makes it difficult for Black students to be able to connect with non-Black students.

> **(Duquesne - Whitley – female - freshman)** *You have to make the effort to find other Black people on campus to relate to, because not everyone who are non-Black students will be able to relate to your own experiences and backgrounds.*

> **(Duquesne - Cree – female - sophomore)** *it's not the school itself, it's the students and the faculty, like your presence makes you feel awkward, like it makes them feel awkward or uncomfortable or something. Like, when I'm in a class, people are always staring at me, or my professors just say random stuff.…*

It could be more than just a mere cultural disconnect that ranged from intrigue to non-verbal hostility. Black students were able to identify systematic practices by the institution that affected them such as a lack of support for Black events. There were also individual daily practices by White students and faculty that negatively affected Black students.

(Duquesne - Naomi – female - junior) *So, I guess I might just feel unwelcome just by certain looks or by like the feelings I get from people, briefly, and then they get to know me.*

Gerald: Okay how would you describe the looks, or how do the looks make you feel?

Naomi: Kind of just like I'm like some exotic animal almost, I would describe the looks as just looking a little fascinated almost, but also like a little bit like, I don't want to say scared, but I would say more fascinated, and I kind of feel like I'm being stared at like I'm some kind of like, I don't know, like some kind of exotic creature.

Gerald: Okay. Is it more White men, or White women, or both the same?

Naomi: White women.

Gerald: White women?

Naomi: Hmm. I don't…sometimes I feel like the White men don't even look my way, it's just like I'm a wall.

This student explained how she was invisible to White male students for the most part, but she received unwanted attention from White female students.

Gerald: But it's more White women that stare at you like that?

Naomi: Hmm.

Gerald: Okay. And, from your conjecture, when they were staring at you like that, if you had to pick, would you say it's either in admiration, envy, or maybe just like almost as if to say, "What is she doing?"

Naomi: I think it's…I try to make myself believe it's admiration just because I don't really like negativity, and there's like also comments that I get, like when…am I allowed to talk about like different experiences?

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Gerald: Sure, go right ahead, go right ahead.

Naomi: Okay, so, like, I was at a party, probably in the beginning of this year, and this White girl came up to me, probably in our group of friends, but like for some reason came to me, and she was like, "Oh my gosh, you're so beautiful, but I would never say that if I wasn't drunk," like that's the words that came out of her mouth, and I was like, "Why? You don't have to be scared to say it," and she was like, "Oh my gosh, you made me feel so much better, like next time I think maybe I'll say something," but I had never met her before, but she, like, she just came up to me and said that, and it just always stuck with me because I don't understand, maybe it's like how they think, like they don't know if they can, because they think we're aggressive or something like that, I don't know.

Gerald: How did it make you feel, when that happened?

Naomi: I mean it made me feel good to an extent, but it's also like, why do you think I'm so aggressive if I'm not even, like I was not even in an aggressive manner, I was walking up steps, and she stopped me, so like I'm not even doing anything, so why would you need to be scared? It's just a stereotype that's gone too far.

This was an example of a passive aggressive interaction that took place between a Black student and a White student. As a result of this interaction, the Black student was furthermore made to feel unwelcomed because the White student either lacked the sensitivity or awareness that her "compliment" would come across as disrespectful and unwelcoming, because the only reason the White student complimented the Black student was because she was drunk. This interaction also reflected the cultural disconnect between the White student and the Black student, because the White student classified the Black student as unapproachable and aggressive.

(Pitt - Ashley – female – not identified) *I get looks sometimes, like stares when you go into certain places when you travel with your friends who are also black, as in sometimes I can see White people staring at my group of friends when we walk around, just kind of…that's just kind of it.…*

(Pitt - Vivica – female – not identified) *I feel like some people kind of look at you with a tint of disdain, like you shouldn't be here. I notice a few people that I talk to…*

Gerald: Are these White people?

Vivica: Yeah, White people.

Gerald: Are they men and women, or just men, or just women, generally?

Vivica: Generally men,

This Black student's conjecture was based on the notion that White students who stared at them felt that they did not belong on campus. It was non-verbal while also passive aggressive.

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *Like, they just swarm around you sometimes, like if you're sitting on the field and there's no one out there, all of the sudden 40 or 50 White people just coming around you, and you're just sitting, and they all circle you and stuff, they're all in your space, like, "Why are you this close to me, and we've got a whole football field to sit on?" And you can just feel like their presence, and you can feel the eyes looking at you, like burning in your back, like I don't understand why you're here on campus, period.*

It's non-verbal. They just come, they sit, they stare, they talk loudly to their friends and stuff, but they won't speak to you, they won't interact with you. They'll just look at you and be like, "Eh," and then go back to what they're doing. They don't want to get to know you.

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The stare, it's a mix of jealousy and caution. I just feel like when I walk around them and they're staring at me and they have nice stuff out and stuff, they're like, "Oh, let me be cautious, because this Black girl might take it," and it's just like I have the same stuff that you have, it's not more, and you don't know my background to know where I come from, what I do, you've seen stuff, you stereotype me as soon as I walk into the room, and then it's just like if I'm out at a party or something and they're staring, it's just like, "Oh, she thinks she's cute," like, "Who are you? You shouldn't even be here. This is our area," and stuff like that, and I'm just like, "I got sent the party invite just like you, so obviously somebody wanted me here the way they wanted you here," and I just feel like when they stare, they don't understand how much it hurts, and stuff like that.

You can just tell that they don't feel comfortable when you walk into a room, and it's just like, now you don't feel comfortable, because they're uncomfortable.

This was also a reflection of how the White students felt that their territory was being invaded by Black students, which, as a result, made Black students feel that they were not welcomed on campus.

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *Yes, definitely like, especially if a group of Black women are out together, and you see one White girl, the White girl will stare them down.*

Shaharrazad*: They'll tell the football players, "Don't invite Black girls," "If your Black friend isn't on a sports team, don't invite them," stuff like that. You can tell that they clearly see the athletes as a higher up in the Black community and that they feel intimidated when other Black people are around that they don't know, because it's just like, "I know the Black athletes but I don't know this Black girl, so I don't feel safe around her."*

…they'll post on Snapchat and stuff, like "I'm going out," and I'm like, "Where are you

going?" and it's like, "The person told me not to give out the address?" "Not to give out

the address to anyone, or just Black women?"

Don't give it out to Black girls.'"

This encounter described by the student transpired from looks of hostility to intended acts of exclusion by White students towards Black students. The student described how this dynamic made Black students feel uncomfortable. The Black students explained how these hostile encounters would be non-verbal looks to acts of marginalization and ultimately verbal assaults. A campus culture of anti-Blackness would result in actions such as this occurring.

(Duquesne - Jussie – male - freshman) *Like I know that in my freshman year, none of my RAs did something for Black history month. They did something for every month, every month, and they did something for St. Patrick's Day, and they made the whole entire month…they did something for St. Patrick's Day and they did something stupid for February, it was like come on, you know it's Black history month, this is what it takes up.*

This was an example of how non-Black students marginalize Black students through their actions especially if the non-Black students are in a position of authority such as a resident assistant (RA). Through this role as an RA, the White student was viewed as a representative of the institution, and because the White RA was able to exclude the interest of Black students and get away with it Black students felt that they were powerless.

This could make Black students feel that their feeling of marginalization was a collaborative effort between the institution and individual White students. In this situation, the institution selected an RA that was not only insensitive to the needs of Black students but also undermined the sense of cultural belongingness for the Black students in the dormitory.

(Pitt - Jay – male - senior) *Well, yeah, because I was called the "n" word while I was pledging, and I almost walked out.*

This instance was an example of a culture of exclusion and disrespect towards Black students that would make White students not only feel comfortable non-verbally disrespecting Black students but also making verbal insults.

(Pitt - Christopher – male - senior) *I guess just like in a house party scene or going to certain bars, I feel like everyone notices that I'm the only Black person there and kind of treats me as such. It's not poorly, just kind of differently, they don't see much as just another person of the group, I think they identify me as the Black person at the party.*
I feel kind of isolated, definitely. You don't feel like yourself, and I think that pushes you to be in Black social groups a lot more, because you feel like you just aren't really…you can never really be a part of any other group, because they just don't ever treat you as an individual. They just treat you as random Black person number whatever.

This student explained that if the interaction between White students and Black students was not based on hostility, Black students would still have a disconnect and, as a result, not feel like they belonged to the campus community. Because Black students were not viewed or treated as individuals by non-Black students, they felt disconnected from the campus community, which led them to establish a separate network or community on campus.

(Pitt – Jada – female - freshman) *I never feel welcomed by a White man, if that makes sense. I feel like it should be more Black representatives around, so they can make Black people feel welcome. If there's White people everywhere, even though they might not be racist, you'll still feel out of place. That's not your place. If there's a room full of White people and a Black person comes in, he's immediately out of place.*

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This sentiment represents the feeling of exclusion that Black students felt on campus and why they desired to have a Black community on campus that would allow them to have a space where they felt welcomed.

(Pitt - Daryl – male - junior) *There's not really an identifiable White community on campus, because it's majority White, so they don't have the need to form a community, because you can't just not…if you walk up to a random person, chances are they'll be White, so there's no real need to form a community, but I guess there could be Greek life, like regular Greek life, because for the most part it is White…*

Because White students were the majority population at PWIs, their race was not a factor for them. At PWIs White students' identity was reflected throughout the campus, and they had more privileges than Black students. The reason that there was not a need for White students to create a community in the sense that Black students felt the need to was because the overall campus community was based on the White student experience.

Black students not only felt that the institution did not welcome them, but many of the Black students interviewed also said that they felt non-Black students, and more specifically White students, did not make them feel welcomed. The overall consensus by the Black students was that they felt White students could not relate to them. This feeling of not being welcomed by White students and being unable to have a connection with White students, according to the Black students, was because White students did not acknowledge the culture of Black students. Black students felt that White students acknowledged cultural experiences by other groups on campus, but they did not acknowledge the cultural experiences of Black students on campus. Because Black students felt that White students did not acknowledge them culturally, they felt unwelcomed and awkward around White students. It was not only the lack of acknowledgement of Black

students by White students, but it was more so hostility that Black students experienced while around White students. This hostility was very seldom overt. In fact, while interviewing Black students, a small number of them stated that their hostility was overt. One Black student said that he was called the N-word by a White fraternity while he was pledging to join the White fraternity. The majority of the hostile encounters experienced by Black students from White students was rather covert and subtle. These hostile encounters were often non-verbal passive aggressive interactions from White students towards Black students. One of the most frequent acts of non-verbal passive aggressive encounters from White students towards Black students was when White students stared at Black students. There were several instances when Black female students explained how they were stared at by White students. Based on the data, the overwhelming majority of students who said they were stared at by White students were Black female students. The Black female students explained how it was a combination of both White male and White female students who stared at them.

Black students that were interviewed at Pitt and Duquesne both had interactions with non-Black students that made them feel as though they were not welcomed. Black students at both institutions had experiences that made them feel unwelcomed because of non-verbal passive aggressive interactions that were usually a stare from a non-Black student. This was something that was mentioned multiple times by Black students at both institutions.

4.2.4 How Black Students See and Interact with Each Other

When asked: Do Black students make you feel welcome? 29 out of 31 students surveyed responded yes, and two responded no.

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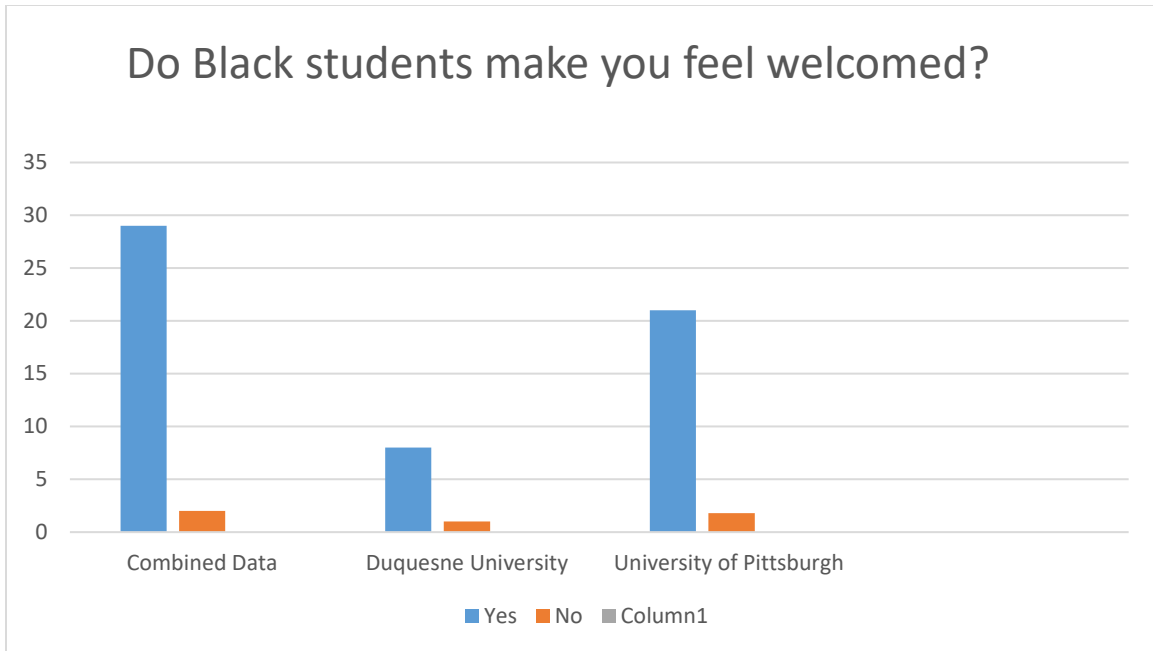
Figure 4. Sense of Belonging from other Black students

When asked: Does interacting with Black students help you socially? 30 out of 33 students surveyed responded yes, and three responded no.
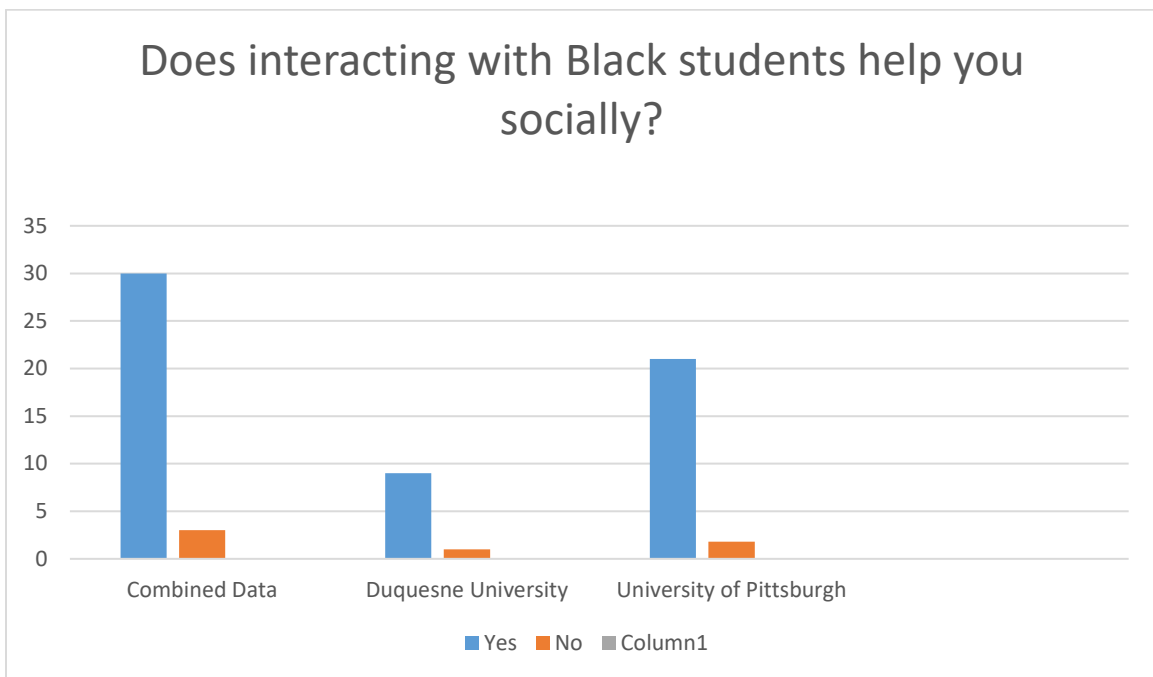
Figure 5. Social support from other Black students

When asked: Does interacting with Black students help you academically? 28 out of 34 students surveyed responded yes, and six responded no.

Figure 6. Academic support from other Black students

When asked: Does interacting with Black students make you want to remain enrolled in this institution? 30 out of 35 students surveyed responded yes, and and responded no.

Figure 7. Retention by interacting with other Black students

When asked: Will interacting with Black students help you to graduate? 28 out of 34 students surveyed responded yes and 6 responded no.

Figure 8. Achieving graduation by interacting with other Black students

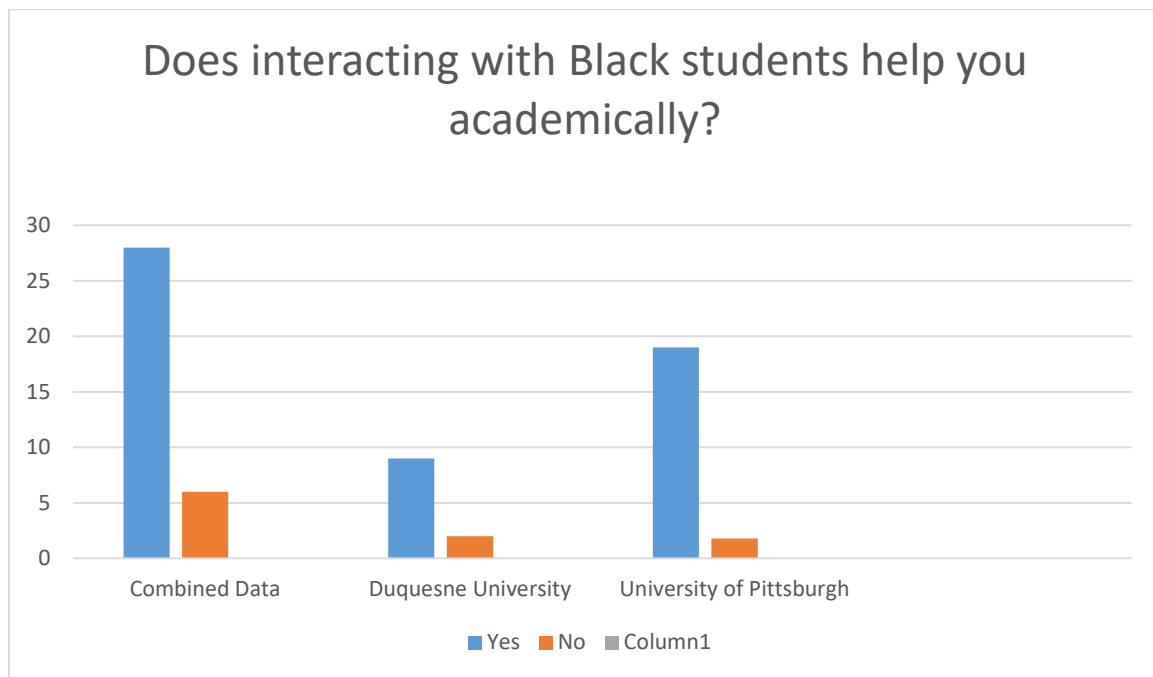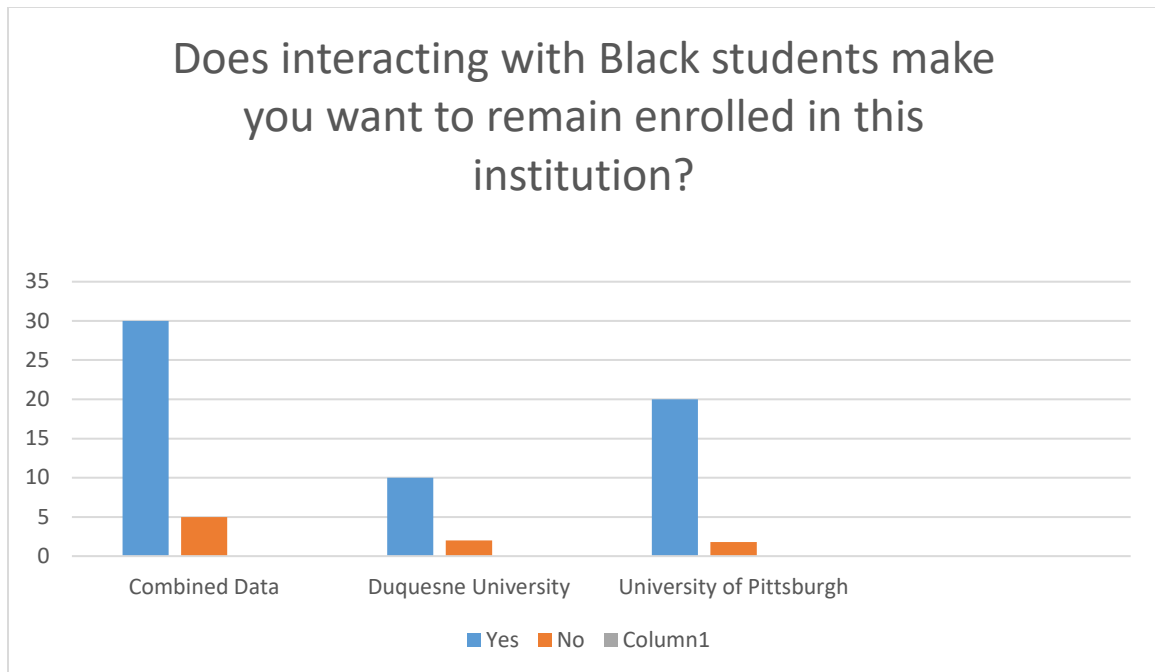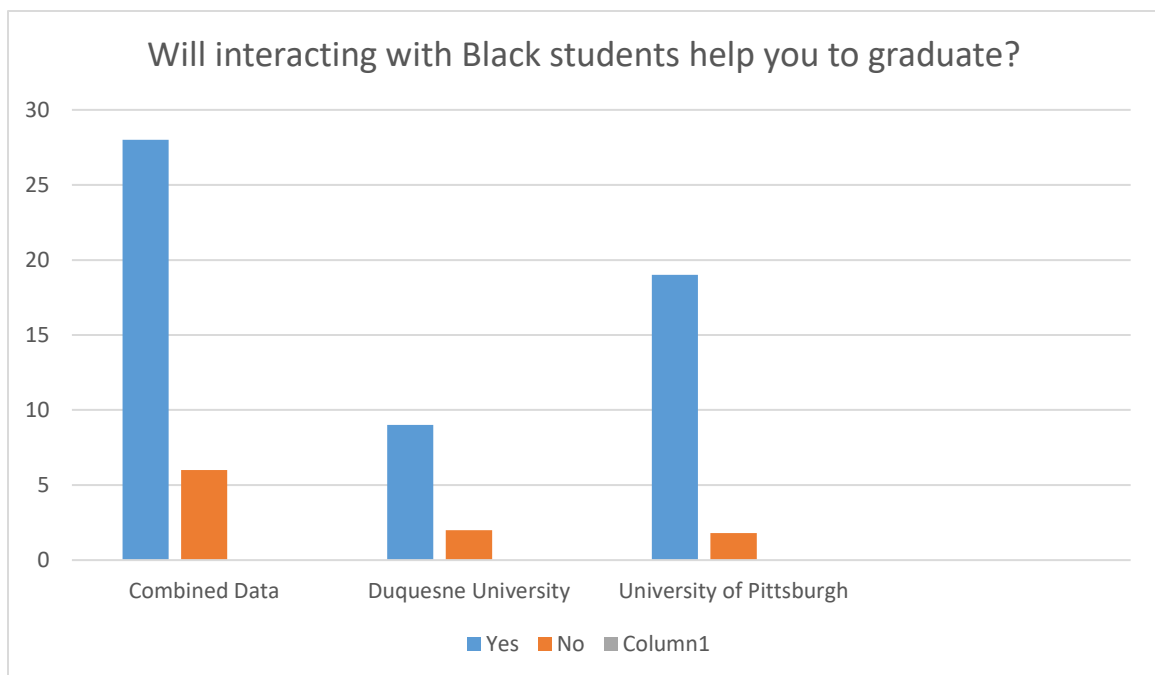**(Duquesne - Whitley – female - freshman)** *What are some things that the Black organizations do that make you feel welcome on campus? Respondent: They definitely empower the Black community more or at least are more welcoming to Black students and make us feel comfortable there.*

This student's reflection shows that not only did Black students want a community, but they found a structured, organized community that was advocating on behalf of Black students more effective.

(Duquesne - Nell – female -sophomore) *Gerald: Okay. So, are you more comfortable reaching out to older Black students for help than you are older White students for help?*
Nell: Yes.
Gerald: Why is that?
Nell: Because older Black students have been there, and yes, older White students have been there, but it's a different type of been there.

A similar racial experience allows Black students to connect more effectively than a Black student and a White student. If a Black campus community was established and maintained at a PWI, there was a greater opportunity for Black students to be able to find other Black students who were willing to mentor Black students who are new to the campus. If Black campus communities were non-existent, interactions such as this were few and far between.

(Duquesne - Whitley – female - freshman) *You'll see the Black campus if there's an event, but I don't think there's like a solid Black community, because I just feel like being at a predominantly White institute, and some of us having different views about being at a predominantly White institute, kind of like separates us sometimes, so it's kind of like we're together because we know we have to be, but sometimes we don't want to be, so it's like split up into different groups.*

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This student described the Black campus community as an association that was forced to interact with each other so that they felt that they belonged out of necessity and therefore could cause fractions within the community. The establishment of a Black community on a PWI campus was a reaction by Black students from being excluded by the dominant community on campus; when Black students are forced together and unresolved differences are not addressed issues such as this occur.

> **(Pitt - Curtis – male - senior)** *Gerald: Okay, alright. So, whose responsibility do you think it would be to create and maintain this Black community on campus?*
>
> *Curtis: I think it's more on the students. I think it's like during the first few weeks, it'd be good for them to have things to have around campus to put it out there more.*

There have been a number of instances when the institution did not put forth much effort to attempt to establish and maintain a strong Black campus community. As a result, Black students felt that if a Black community were to exist, they were the only ones that could make it happen. It was important for Black students to still have demands from the institution with regard to how they were treated and also create a system of accountability for delivery of those demands.

> **(Pitt - Michael – male – not identified)** *Gerald: Okay. What is it that makes you feel welcome?*
>
> *Michael: My friends that I made here. Without them, I'd feel out of place.*

Black students gained their sense of belonging from their friends who were Black or a Black community on campus that they felt connected to. This Black community would not exist if it were not for the Black students being the catalyst behind it. When the students established the community, they could create both a sense of belongingness and a sense of ownership.

(Pitt - Daryl – male - junior) *There's some people in Black Action Society that just like having a place with a bunch of Black people, because of course this is a predominantly White institution, so you can't really find them unless you go to these Black spaces, but there's other people that take being Black, per se, to another level, and other people will treat it as Black Action Society is an HBCU or something, where it's predominantly Black and they'll be like, "You have White friends? Why?" or things like that, like you don't have to interact with White people on a daily basis or anything.*

This was a reaction by some Black students that resulted from the stress of them being marginalized on a PWI campus. As a result, they became completely oppositional to any type of interaction with White students, which was impossible because the reality was that they were matriculating at a PWI.

There were challenges that existed within the Black campus community that could interfere with them developing a strong, supportive community and therefore be able to establish a greater sense of belonging. One of the challenges was the Black campus community social and hierarchal structure, which was a reflection of the dominant campus culture's influence on the Black campus community. The Black campus community interaction dynamic mimics the relationship that the institution has with the Black campus community. Black networks within the Black campus community were ranked in the same way that the institution prioritizes Black students.

(Pitt - Nia – female - senior) *Anyone, Greek or not Greek. They get them, because the girls also play into this "Greek men are better" sort of ideal.*
Gerald: These are women who are Greeks, or those who are not Greeks, or both?
Nia: Both. Black women and both who knew them beforehand.

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This is an example of how the way Black students see themselves was a reflection of how the institution saw Black students collectively. The PWIs in this study had a biased view of Black students, and therefore Black students had a self-image that needed to be authentic rather than influenced by the perspective of the institution or the dominant campus community. If Black students had their own space alone they could begin to work to establish a more beneficial self-identity and create a healthy sense of belongingness amongst each other.

> *Gerald: Have you ever experienced or witnessed a group of Black students on the campus confront the Black Greeks about what they're doing in a way like, "Hey, look, you're making us feel a certain way, we don't like this, let's try to come together"?*
>
> *Nia: Heck no, because first of all, that would be one time when all of the Greeks would unite on that, and it would just cause a huge fight, and for what reason? At the end of the day, the Black Greeks can only bother you as much as you let them bother you. So, if someone told me, "Oh, we're going to go have a big intervention with the Greeks," I'd be like, "Eh, not interested."*

The challenge for Black students lay in the roots that PWIs planted within the culture of a Black campus community. The roots of a hierarchical structure within the Black campus community were very strong, yet these roots were not empowering the entire Black campus community equitably. The phenomenon created by these roots planted by PWIs led not only to a false sense of belonging for some Black sub-groups of the Black campus community, but it also created friction and disconnection between Black student networks. Not only did Black students need the autonomy to create their own community on campus, but they needed to fast from their system the "junk food diet" of elitism and divisiveness that was fed to them by the PWI mentality of how a Black community on campus should exist.

(Pitt - Assata – female - sophomore) *Okay, so the community is very small. Everyone knows everybody. I could go down the line...majority of Black students on this campus, I already know them by name and I've only been here for a year. I know their business or whatever's going around, I probably know it, just because there's so few of us. We all go to the same parties, we all hang out together, I guess. BAS is a really big part of Black Pitt, yeah. That's Black Pitt, we call it. What else? The Caribbean Student Association, it's part of Black Pitt too. What else? There are certain clubs at Pitt that are known as being part of Black Pitt, there's even a Black senate group chat where all of the presidents of all of the Black student organizations meet amongst themselves and talk about collaborating on events.*

Assata: Greeks don't go to football parties. That just doesn't connect. They never cross paths. The athletes and Greek life...I guess you could say there's a Black hierarchy. You have your regular students, then you have your Greeks, then you have your football players. The football players cater to everyone. The majority of football players are Black. Then, you have the Greeks, which cater to the majority Black students, who are...I don't want to say the bottom of the totem pole, because it's not like we're nothing, but as far as platforms and being seen, yeah.

Gerald: So, who would be at the top of the hierarchy?

Assata: The Black Pitt football players. The Black Pitt athletes. More so football and basketball. More so football over basketball.

Each of the separate social sub-networks within the Black community were ranked or regarded as more prestigious than one of the other networks because of how the institution and the White students on campus valued them. This social stratification within the Black campus

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community was not constructive with regard to the development of Black students on campus, because it created barriers and friction among Black students.

Black students explained how when they were around other Black students they felt more welcomed on campus, especially if the Black students were their friends. It was the Black students who created and maintained the existence of a Black community on the PWI campus. Despite the need for a Black community on campus and the Black students feeling more comfortable when they were around other Black students, there were issues within the Black campus community. Some of the Black students explained these issues being hierarchal, and this hierarchy being a reflection of how the institution and White students rank the value of Black students on campus. Some of the Black students explained that at the top of the hierarchy were the Black student athletes, particularly football players and basketball players. Under the football players and basketball players were the Black students who were members of Black Greek fraternities and sororities, and at the bottom of the rank were mainstream Black students.

Black students at both institutions explained how Black students working together empowered the Black campus community, and there was a need for Black spaces on campus for Black students. Black students at Duquesne explained how the Black community on campus became visible when there were events on campus that were sponsored by Black student networks. The Black campus community at Pitt seemed to have a more visible hierarchy with regard to Black student networks compared to Duquesne. The reason Pitt had a more visible hierarchy was probably due to Pitt having more Black students and having more Black students who were members of sports teams and Black Greek organizations than Duquesne. The networks within the Black community were described as beneficial, because they brought Black students together while also problematic because they created a hierarchy. Black students at both institutions

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described how there was not only a rift between Black students because of social networks, but a larger number of students explained how the greatest divide was between Black men and Black women on campus. The disconnect that existed between Black men and Black women was one of the greatest challenges within the community that students said they felt needed to be resolved.

4.2.5 How Interactions Among the Student Groups Affect Them as a Member of the Campus Community

There were many students who explained how important Black student organizations were with regard to establishing and maintaining the Black campus community, especially the role that the BSU served in making this happen.

(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore) *I feel like the student organizations are very helpful in the sense that they allow you a safe place to express yourself, to meet new people, and to just be able to fellowship and come together a lot.*

(Duquesne - Jussie – male - freshman) *I think we have really good…we have really great student organizations because we have really good Black students, or students that make up those organizations. I think they could be ran better if we had more advisors, and that really speaks to the staff here at Duquesne. There aren't that many Black faculty members, so we all have the same advisors, and that's a problem because I think our agendas get kind of mixed up when you have the same people leading them, or the school treating them all the same.*

Active participation by Black students but the limited support provided by the institution for the Black campus community resulted in Black students feeling that the institution was not welcoming to them. This was an example of the institutions' systematic practice that negatively

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affected Black students on campus. It appeared to Black students that, because the institution did not make it a priority to recruit and hire Black staff, there was not a priority by the institution to provide a larger pool of potential advisors and mentors for Black students on campus, which was something that Black students have expressed that they need.

> **(Duquesne – Deion – male - junior)** *Gerald: What makes you feel welcome here on campus at Duquesne University?*
>
> *Deion: Um, the organizations I have joined and being part of like, the summer program I joined NAACP, BSU, Ebony Women, I'm a part of the ODI office, and it's just…it's just organizations for me to meet other Black students and be a part of like, the like Black culture.*
>
> **(Pitt – Christopher – male - senior)** *Gerald: Okay. What do you think about BAS, ASO, and then also CSO, Caribbean Student Organization? What do you think about those types of organizations on campus?*
>
> *Christopher: I think they're really nice. They really…it definitely adds to, like we talked earlier, to the Black community on campus. It's a great way to meet other Black students, talk to people with very similar backgrounds.*

Black student organizations served as the catalyst for the Black campus community through uniting Black students on campus. A formal organization on campus such as a BSU provided the foundation for the Black community.   With the visibility of Black student organizations on campus, they were able to attract Black students and provide the necessary platforms for them to interact and network with each other.

> **(Pitt - Erykah – female - sophomore)** *On campus, it's pretty difficult to find people who I feel belong in the same group as I do, and for this reason, I try to just make friends with*

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people who are in the Black Student Union, because that's most of the people I know who can probably relate to some of the same challenges that I do. When I first walk into classes, I usually look around, and I'm probably the only Black student, or one of the few Black students in the class, which is kind of uncomfortable, but that's the nature at Pitt.

(Pitt - Curtis – male - senior) *Gerald: Okay, okay, I got you. I know you mentioned Pitt's Black Student Union, which is known as the Black Action Society. Do you think Black students should get involved in that organization?*

Curtis: Yeah. Even if you don't really know much about it, you should join it, and being more involved in those kinds of things and open up your eyes, and you'll know you have a group of people you can talk to if there's any issues you encounter while you're here, and if people come in and join it, there'll be a larger group - Student organizations are not only effective for social networking purposes but they also serve as support networks for Black students who are having a hard time on campus.

(Pitt - Daryl – male - junior) *Gerald: How significant are Black student organizations on campus, in other words, BAS?*

They're pretty significant. I think that's the Black community, per se. I mean, the official Black community. Of course, Black people talk to other Black people, but there won't be any official Black communities, per se, and that will be fine.…

but I think the biggest tension is BAS, because they're such a powerhouse they kind of…I want to say…they're not selfish, but a lot of their resources go towards them and their initiatives when there a lot of Black students are involved in CLASA or in ASO or NESBE that also want to be heard and also want their initiatives to get pushed.

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This is another issue of the inaccurate and unhealthy view of Black students held by PWIs and how resources are distributed inequitably for and among Black student networks on campus.

(Pitt - Kadeem – male - senior) *To me, the Black frats gotta do better. They've gotta do better, because to me, there's only a handful of Black freshmen that come to this school. Even if they don't want to join the frat, even if they don't want to do anything, you should be there, you should be their older brother, they should be their older brother.*
Gerald: Even if they're not a frat brother?
Kadeem: You should be accepted into them. That should be the hub. If you need guidance, you can go talk to this, that, and the third...
You don't have to join the club. You don't have to be part of the group to be a part of the community. So, that's what they don't develop. They develop a group, not a community. A lot of these Black clubs, they develop groups, not communities. A group is closed off. Groups function independently. Community is the whole of that, and that's my thing.

While it was necessary to have a formal Black student organization or network, it was equally important for Black campus community organizations to dismantle any barriers or hierarchies that existed within the community for the purpose of community advancement. If a Black student interacted with the Black community but was not affiliated with a specific Black student organization, they should not be ostracized because that created friction within the Black campus community.

(Pitt - Assata – female - sophomore) *Respondent: It would be BAS hosting it, it wouldn't be like a school-wide thing. It would be BAS doing their...there's a Black homecoming, that's cool, it's a separate homecoming catered toward Black people that BAS does. That's pretty cool. But, anything Black people-oriented is the majority hosted by the Black Student*

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Association. If there was no Black Student Association, I'm pretty sure Pitt just wouldn't do it, or wouldn't try to host something like that.

(Pitt - Erykah – female - sophomore) *I feel that most of the events I go to that are centered towards the Black students are held either by the Black Student Association or by other minority organizations.*

I think that we should work together more, and if the university helped kind of mediate it, I think it would make a bigger impact. But, I think those organizations do a great job of creating a Black community.

Some of the students interviewed explained that it was important for Black student organizations to facilitate the advancement of the Black community on campus, but the institution needed to assist with their advancement. Respondents expressed how the institution must provide the resources and policies that the Black student networks needed to become established and sustainable such as meeting spaces where the students feel safe and funds to provide programs that meet the needs of Black students. They discussed how Black students should have carte blanche to put forth their agenda as long as it did not directly violate any laws or institution policies.

Black students who were interviewed explained that Black student organizations such as Black Student unions were effective because they strove to create a safe and welcoming space for Black students on campus. Many of the Black students interviewed believed that it was important for Black students to be involved in Black student organizations. There were some Black students who expressed the need for Black Greek organizations to do more on campus to serve and empower the Black student population, which included both Black Greek members and non-Greek Black students equally.

The Black students at both institutions described the Black student organizations such as the Black Student Unions as being very important, because they provided a space for Black students to gather and feel that they belong to the campus. Both institutions identified the Black Student unions as the glue that held the Black community together. There were two criticisms of Black Student organizations at Pitt and Duquesne, which were: the need for more resources to be allocated to the Black student organizations such as funds for events, advertisement of Black campus events and more mentors for Black student organizations. One of the students at Pitt criticized some of the Black student organizations, specifically the Black fraternities, by saying that they should try to reach out to and support more Black students even those who were not members of fraternities. This student explained that just because a Black student did not want to pledge to join a fraternity, that should not prevent them from being able to network with those Black students who were in a fraternity, be mentored by older Black students who were in fraternities, and to be able to network with Black students if they were in a Black Greek organization or not.

5.0 Conclusions and Implications

5.1 A Proper Education vs. a Mis-Education

In spite of all the challenges experienced by Black students, it is important for the institution along with Black students to seek effective polces that support cultural enrichment for Black students on campus and a sense of belonging. This approach must provide full autonomy for Black students so that they can use their voice to redirect their path in a way that benefits them. Carter G. Woodson (1933) captures the importance of this in his book *The Mis-Education of the Negro*:

> The chief difficulty with the education of the Negro is that it has been largely imitation resulting in the enslavement of his mind. Somebody outside of the race has desired to try out on Negroes some experiment which interested him and his coworkers; and Negroes, being objects of charity, have received them cordially and have done what they required. In fact, the keynote in the education of the Negro has been to do what he is told to do. Any Negro who has learned to do this is well prepared to function in the American social order as others would have him. (p. 134)

In contemporary times, Black students may not be doing exactly what they are told, but they do internalize perceptions about each other and interact with each other in some instances in a way that they think White people interact with them or want them to be. This phenomenon is detrimental to the Black campus community, because there are internal issues that will result from the systemic practices and symptoms of oppression that Black people experience from White society due to racism. Instead of Black students mimicking hierarchical barriers established by

systemic racism, it is important for Black students to have the autonomy to create their own community on a PWI campus based on their cultural standards, a cultural community that will enrich Black students.

5.2 Summary of the Results

I used the following four themes to analyze the challenges that Black students experience while attending a PWI campus: (1) how Black students see themselves, (2) how Black students feel the institution sees and interacts with them, (3) how Black students feel White students and non-Black students see and interact with them, (4) how Black students see and interact with each other, and (5) how interactions among the student groups affect them as a members of the campus community.

There were several themes that I identified through the data analysis. One of these theme was the need for Black students to have a community on campus, because they felt excluded by the institution and excluded by non-Black students on campus. Black students also explained how being with other Black students made them feel welcomed.

5.2.1 Racism on Campus

According Seifert, Drummond, and Pascarella (2006), research indicates that Black students excel cognitively and personally by attending a HBCU as opposed to attending a PWI because of the "chilly climate" (Seifert, et al., 2006, p. 187) that Black students experience at PWIs, primarily resulting from social alienation. Not all Black students are able to reap the social

and cultural benefits that come along with attending an HBCU, and as a result many Black students must be prepared for the social alienation challenges that come along with attending a PWI and understand how to overcome these challenges. The study that I conducted focused on this particular issue.

It was important for me to examine this issue through a critical race theory lens to gain a thorough understanding of the unequal distribution of resources on a PWI campus, which led me to see how this practice resulted in Black students feeling that they did not belong on campus. Students whom I interviewed talked about how they did not get the resources for programs and services that should have been allocated to enhance the experience of Black students simply because they are Black. Not only were resources inequitably distributed to Black students, but the level of support they received was mediocre at best. For example, Black students were not provided a safe space by the institution despite requests for a safe space for Black students presented to the institution. The maldistribution of resources for Black students at these two PWIs was exactly why critical race theory was necessary for me to understand why the Black students believed that they did not belong. It was not because of their social status on campus or their families' socio-economic status, but instead the deciding factor was their racial classification. The data that I presented clearly shows that the Black students on the PWI campus of all types of backgrounds were subject to either marginalization or expected assimilation while they were on campus.

This study allowed me to gain a greater insight into the multifaceted challenges of Black undergraduate college students. Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2013) explained how students of color have academic, cultural, and social experiences that are different from White college students. The root of Black students' issues was a result of the feeling of marginalization that they experienced

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on campus. Strayhorn (2008) explained, "African Americans attending PWIs report feeling alienated, marginalized, socially isolated, unsupported, and unwelcomed by their peers and faculty members" (p. 502). The Black students whom I interviewed explained how their challenges were systemic, because their problem did not only come from one factor on campus but instead they felt excluded not only by the institution and faculty but also their non-Black peers.

As discussed in chapter two, racial battle fatigue (RBF) deals with issues such as frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, hopelessness, and resentment, and the direct physical effects include high blood pressure, headaches, backaches, and insomnia. Feelings of exclusion that many of the Black students dealt with were symptoms of RBF. The passive aggressive insults that Black students were getting from White students and the lack of support from the institution were consistent with the physical symptoms that come along with RBF.

Walton and Cohen (2007) showed how belonging uncertainty did not have to be extreme, it could be as simple as when Black students feel that they do not belong. There were many students whom I interviewed who explained how they felt excluded when they arrived to campus because there was a very small number of Black students on campus. There were Black students who explained that they were constantly on guard, because they were either stereotyped by their professors or White peers on campus. Some of the students explained that their professors stereotyped them either because of their name or the way they wore their hair or dressed. They were also stereotyped by their professors when topics that related to Black people were presented in class and they were expected to represent the entire Black race through their individual perspective. Black students explained how they were on guard with White students, because of the hostile, subtle way that White students interacted with them through stares that made them feel that they didn't belong on campus.

The data that I collected are similar to what is described as RBF, because the constant stress that Black students experienced due to being marginalized caused both mental and physical issues with them. Students explained that the exclusion started out as a mental strain but having to deal with this treatment daily gave them headaches and left them feeling physically exhausted. This issue is not only detrimental to Black students, but it can also have a negative effect on the institution. If Black students are experiencing problems on campus that are leading them to be both physically and mentally ill due to issues that exist on campus, the institution will also suffer when it comes to things such as recruitment, learning, and retention of Black students.

Museus (2008) described how students of color who attend PWIs have two options: acclimate to the dominant culture on campus and separate from their identity or seek membership in a racial subculture if the student wants to successfully adjust to being a member of the college campus. Some of my respondents were accepted into the dominant campus culture to a certain degree such as the Black student athletes whom I interviewed. The Black student athletes may not have completely assimilated culturally, but they were at least welcomed into spaces that the other Black students were excluded from. The Black student athlete may not have needed to completely separate from their Black identity entirely, but they at least had to identify first as a student athlete and then identify as a Black student athlete in order to gain a sense of belonging on campus. For example, one of the Black female students explained how a Black male student was able to attend a party on campus that was hosted by White students, but the Black male student was not allowed to bring any Black female students to the party. Another example was when a Black male student football player explained how he had a sense of belonging because he excelled on the football team, and he was therefore embraced by the dominant campus community. This was a reflection of critical race theory particularly the tenet that identifies Whiteness as property (Hiraldo, 2010)

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via possession, use and enjoyment, disposition and exclusion. In this situation, the Black athlete was expected to assimilate to the cultural norms and acceptance of White students, but White students were not expected to assimilate to the cultural norms of Black students. The mentality was one where White students believed that the Black athlete must excel at sports and conform to White cultural standards while on campus in order to receive social acceptance and status that the other Black students on campus would not have access to.   This practice leads to Black students of all backgrounds not feeling that they belong to the campus community, because there is an expectation that they must conform to the standards of the White students. An effective learning environment must be inclusive to all members of the campus community both inside and outside of the classroom.

Some of the Black students were not complicit with the practices of exclusion and expected assimilation of Black students while on campus. As a result, these students decided to resist the feeling of marginalization by creating an active Black community on campus. By the fact that these students were working to combat the role of second class citizen on campus by forming a Black community they are challenging the status quo. When "harmonious inequality" was challenged by Black students, the dominant racial groups on campus were compelled to defend their privilege and status (Hurtado, 1992, p. 545). My research found that Black students experienced acts of hostility from White students. While interviewing Black female students, I encountered a number of interviews where they explained how White students engaged in non-verbal passive aggressive psychological combat against Black students by staring at them. In reference to Hurtado's, research it appeared that White students were non-verbally trying to intimidate Black female students through stares to ensure that the system of "harmonious inequality" (Hurtado, 1992, p. 545) was not challenged.

5.2.2 Sense of Belonging for Black Students

Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods (2007) described a sense of belonging as the end result of social and academic integration. Black students whom I interviewed did not feel that they belonged to the campus community, because they were not socially accepted by the institution, faculty and staff, and non-Black students.

As a result of Black students not feeling that they are accepted for who they were, they strived to create a safe space that would allow them to have a sense of belonging. Means and Pyne (2017) explained that campus spaces that allow minority students to feel authentic can increase their sense of belonging to the campus. The safe space in this study was created through the interaction of other Black students who shared the goal of creating and maintaining a safe space for Black students on campus. O'Keeffe (2013) explained that a sense of connection can exist if a student is able to develop a relationship with just one key person, which can also result in a significant impact on the student's decision to remain with the institution. Through my research, it was not just one key individual that helped Black students feel connected to the campus but instead a group of friends who were Black or better yet a Black community on campus.

Some of the Black students whom I interviewed explained that they were shocked when they arrived to campus for the first time and there was a very small number of Black students on campus. Wilcox et al. (2005) stated that peer support is essential for a student while they adjust to the academic and culture shock that comes along with adjusting to the life of higher learning. This initial reality of a small number of Black peers on campus made some of my respondents feel uncomfortable upon their arrival to campus, because they felt that they would lack the support that they needed to pursue their education and they felt Black people were not welcomed on campus due to the low enrollment. If there is low representation of Black students on campus, the

institution will have a difficult time attracting and recruiting Black students. This cyclical phenomenon perpetuates the underrepresentation and feeling of belonging of Black students at PWIs.

Pittman and Richman (2008) demonstrated that college students socially adjust much better to the campus community if they have a high degree of affiliation towards the university. Their research explains why my respondents valued having a Black community on campus; without a community that made them feel welcomed it would be much more difficult for them to adjust in spite of the many challenges that resulted from systematic racism. The Black students in my study strived to create a community on campus so that they could have an affiliation with the university.

According to Person and Christensen (1996), 90 percent of the African American student population that they researched felt strongly about having a Black community on campus that supported their development through curricular and co-curricular programs. This study reflected my research in that the majority of my respondents felt that it was imperative to have a Black community on campus. Many of the students whom I interviewed explained that the Black community on campus provided a support basis for them socially and academically. They explained that they were supported socially because they had peers on campus whom they could relate to culturally and that made them feel comfortable. Black students explained that they were supported academically, because if they were struggling in a class they had other Black students on campus that would encourage them to continue to pursue their education despite challenges and would also study with them to do well academically. PWIs are not able to solve all of the issues of Black students, but they should support Black students as they work to create self-help networks and safe spaces on campus.

Museus (2008) explained the great importance of cultural familiarity for a racial and ethnic minority student, because it achieves three things; first, it allows the student to connect with peers of similar cultural backgrounds. Second, it allows the students to understand their experiences and struggles. Third, students of similar backgrounds can connect with their peers on a much deeper level. My respondents explained that a Black campus community must be created by Black students, consist of Black students, and focus on of the needs of Black students, which relates to the cultural familiarity identified by Museus. The students whom I interviewed explained that they were able to connect much better with the campus culturally when there was a population of Black students that they could relate to. Black students explained that when they were together they were able to identify common experiences and challenges, which helped them to understand their issues much better. The need to have peers that Black students could identify with compelled them to create a Black community on campus at a PWI. Because PWIs are not inherently designed for the development of strong, close knit Black communities on campus, Black students experienced challenges while working to establish a Black community on campus. Some of the challenges that Black students experienced while working to create a Black community on campus were disconnection and friction between certain Black sub-cultural groups such as a disconnect between Back students who were members of Greek organizations and Black students who were not involved in Greek organizations, between Black student athletes and Black students who were not athletes, between Black women and Black men who dated White women. These fractions within the Black campus community were a reflection of how PWIs interacted with Black students and valued Black students. Black students who were not members of Greek organizations felt that they did not have access to the same resources as those who were members of Greek organizations. Black students who were not athletes felt that they were not valued by the institution and their

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White peers in the same way that Black student athletes were valued. This was because PWIs were not designed to be inclusive of all-Black students, and therefore Black students need to work to create a feeling of inclusion and belonging despite these challenges that oppose a synergetic Black community on campus.

One of the students that I interviewed **(Pitt - Erykah – female - sophomore)** explained that once she met other students who identified as being Black she felt more welcomed on campus, despite feeling as though she was an outsider when around the larger campus community.

5.2.3 Excluded by Non-Black students

Black students explained the importance of having a community on campus due to being marginalized by the majority student population on campus. Black students explained that they did not feel that they were part of the campus and not welcomed because they were very few in numbers. If Black students feel that non-Black students target them negatively, they will not feel welcomed on campus.   PWIs are not able to control the actions of non-Black students, but they can provide a safe space on campus for Black students so that they can create a community environment where they will feel that they can belong.

According to Smith (2016):

In the athlete-student stereotype, Black males are believed to be on campus as athletes exclusively to entertain through sports and not as students with academic merits. Linking to the stereotype of Black men as individuals to be feared, the athlete stereotype holds Black male physicality as a defining characteristic viewed in a "positive" manner when used to create school spirit. (p. 11)

This phenomenon is what shapes the internal structure of the Black student campus community, which results in Black athletes being at the top of the hierarchy of the Black community because they play a role in enhancing the school spirt but they are not rewarded for being contributors to the culture of the Black community on campus. This issue not only led to the stressors of the Black student athlete to comply, but it made Black students who were not athletes feel that they were not valued because they were not seen as directly enhancing school spirit. It also caused a rift between Black students who were athletes and those who were not athletes.

A student **(Pitt - Assata – female - sophomore)** described the hierarchy amongst the Black campus community as the athletes being at the top of the hierarchy, the students who were members of Black Greek organizations being just under the athletes, and the other Black students being at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Whiteness as property explains how racism results in White people feeling that they have a sense of ownership and privilege that should be provided exclusively for them. The dynamic described by **(Pitt - Assata – female - sophomore)** was an example of Whiteness as property, because the Black campus community hierarchy structure is a reflection of how White members of the campus community view Black students. Another example of Whiteness as property on a more individual level was a situation that **(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore)** shared. When **(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore)** explained how when a Black male football player was invited to a party by a White female student who instructed the Black male student not to bring any Black females or other Black students to the party who were not athletes, she was exercising her White property rights. In this instance, she wanted to use her position of White dominance and privilege to tell the Black athlete that he could come to the party,

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but he was expected to exclude other Black students if he wanted to enjoy what the White students had access to and what they could offer him at the party.

Harris (1993) described how the objective of Whiteness as property is to exclude Black people:

The right to exclude was the central principle, too, of whiteness as identity, for mainly whiteness has been characterized, not by an inherent unifying characteristic, but by the exclusion of others deemed to be "not white." The possessors of whiteness were granted the legal right to exclude others from the privileges inhering in whiteness; whiteness became an exclusive club whose membership was closely and grudgingly guarded. (p. 9)

The situation explained by **(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore)** was a prime example as to how the White female student exercised her Whiteness as a property, because she understood that Black students were excluded from the party and that she had the ability to decide who would have access to the party and who would not based on race. In this particular instance, it was not legal authority that compelled the White female student to decide to exclude Black female students but a cultural practice of excluding Black students.

In Clark's (1995) critique of Professor Derrick Bell's thesis on the permanence of racism, he explained how Black progress, which is minimal, is based on satisfying the interest of White people. The incident described by **(Duquesne - Shaharrazad – female - sophomore)** showed how the permanence of racism was based on the interest of White people, the White female student who expected that Black females not be permitted access to the party by the Black football player, ultimately provided the Black male athlete with a superficial sense of belonging amongst the White students at the party. The Black male athlete was required to fulfill the White female student's

interest at the expense of Black students in order for him to be one of the few Black students accepted by the White students.

5.2.4 Excluded by the Institution

Some of the students interviewed explained that the institution did not make them feel welcomed, because they did not receive an adequate amount of support and they feel that White students received a more significant amount of support compared to Black students. Black students explained that resources were not distributed fairly, and policies were not equitably established, which could improve the conditions for Black people. Issues such as this resulted in Black students feeling that they were not welcomed by the institution. Black students explained that they experienced verbal and non-verbal "shots" directed towards them from White students.

Another student whom I interviewed (**Duquesne - Cree – female - sophomore**) captured both Whiteness as property and the permanence of racism through her experience when her White professor singled her out in class and publicly questioned her about her hairstyle and, in jest, asked her not to change her hairstyle so that he could recognize her, which led to embarrassment for the student. The permanence of racism aspect of this incident was how the professor publicly wanted to practice racial dominance on the Black students, which would reinforce White supremacy in the minds of the White students. Public displays of passive aggressive White dominance such as this could influence White students to participate in the maintenance of White supremacy.

Whiteness as property is systemic because it is practiced consistently not only by individual students but also through the institution. DeCuir (2004) explained how "Whiteness as property" was reinforced through the institution's practices and policies, which influences the way that individual students conduct themselves.

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A possible result of how the institutions in this study practiced Whiteness as property was the low enrollment of Black students on PWI campuses. Several of the Black students whom I interviewed made reference to the low number of Black students on campus. Christian (2002) explained how White supremacy strives to maintain domination through a stronger presence through a higher population.

As with Wright (1985/1992), Welsing (1991) turned the key tenet of White supremacy on its head, which espoused the notion of Black inferiority to contend that the behavior of White supremacists is related fundamentally to a fear of their global numerical minority status. For Welsing, this was the reason people of color were largely excluded from positions of power throughout the Western world.

According to Christian (2002) if PWIs have a lower number of Black students on campus, not only will the White students feel more comfortable by having a majority presence but they can also have more control over the Black students on campus through practices of exclusion. This could provide some explanation as to why there has consistently been a practice of having low enrollment of Black students on PWI campuses instead of increasing their numbers and presence.

5.2.5 Community of Black Students

The Black students in this study explained how interacting with other Black students helped them to feel that they were welcomed on campus, especially through the work of BSUs. If Black students are able to gain a sense of belonging on a college campus, they must have a Black community so that they can identify with their peers. However, the students also discussed the challenges that existed within the Black campus community. According to Griffith et al (2019) PWIs have a history of excluding Black students and many Black students feel that their culture is

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not well represented. Griffith (2019) also explained that by Black students being few on a PWI campus, they feel the pressure to challenge negative stereotypes about Black people. Griffith (2019, p. 123) explained how one of the students interviewed explained that due to her being one of the few Black students on campus, she focused on what she wore to class so that she did not reinforce negative stereotypes about Black people. If a Black student feels that they constantly need to combat negative stereotypes that they experience on campus, they are not dedicating the necessary time to enrichment purposes. The feeling of exclusion and constant conflict will make them feel that they are not part of the institution and therefore become withdrawn or want to drop out. Duquesne University had a much lower population of Black students compared to Pitt, and the Black students at Duquesne appeared to be more isolated. Duquesne had a total of 5,998 undergraduate students in the fall of 2017, 318 (4.7%) were Black. Pitt had a total of 19, 326 during the fall 2017 semester, 984 (5.1%) were Black. In fact, many of the Black students at Duquesne said that Black male students in particular kept to themselves. If PWIs were more inclusive to Black students or at least had space reserved for Black students to establish a community, they would not feel the need to isolate themselves from the campus or from each other. Black students would at least have a sense of belonging in this space that is designated for them with resources that they need in close proximity to this space.

The perception of the students in this study was that Black male student athletes were embraced by PWIs, but the feeling of exclusion was just as severe or maybe even more severe for the Black athletes, which clearly demonstrates that race is the deciding factor in the exclusion of Black students at PWIs.

According to Cooper (2015),

Coupled with these factors Black male college athletes were more likely to express feelings of isolation on campus, poor or nonexistent relationships with professors, and encounter experiences with racial discrimination on campus and the surrounding community. The collective findings from these initial studies generated awareness of the unique challenge Black male college athletes face before college enrollment as well as throughout their postsecondary experiences. (p. 133)

Despite Black athletes being considered a benefit for school spirit and viewed by Black athletes as being at the top of the social Black hierarchy in this study, Black athletes still feel marginalized. According to Cooper (2015), one student athlete explained that, to be accepted as part of the team, he must sacrifice his own beliefs and feelings and conform to the majority standard. On the surface, it appears that Black athletes are reaping the benefits of campus celebrity status because they are acknowledged and embraced by the institution and the dominant campus population, but Black athletes have to sacrifice who they are so that they can temporarily experience pseudo-acceptance by the dominant campus community. If Black athletes, who were considered to be at the top of the Black social status on campus in this study, are not accepted, then the other Black students will not feel that they have a chance to even assimilate and gain a sense of belonging with the campus community.

There are other studies that support the fact that Black students are still marginalized, which is not an issue of status but a racial exclusion issue (Singer, 2016, p. 1088). Both Bobby and Mark, two respondents in Singer's study, expressed an awareness of how racial stereotypes by university stakeholders can lead to treatment discrimination against African American male athletes. Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) asserted treatment discrimination occurs when individuals or members of a particular group experience negative behaviors directed toward them

in organizational contexts. Bobby and Mark alluded to the differential treatment of African American male athletes by college professors who unfairly judged and labeled them as lazy, troublemakers, and not serious students because of their physical appearance (e.g., skin color, height and size, clothing). They also shared how White academic support staff within the athletic department treated them differently than their White teammates by attempting to schedule them and other African American male athletes for classes they did not need to take but gave the White athletes classes that advanced them toward graduation. According to Singer (2016), Black students expressed frustration due to the double standard treatment that they received, which was harsher than that of their White peers.

The data demonstrate why Black students need to organize an agenda that will empower them on PWI campuses, because they are treated differently from White students. PWIs need to allow Black students to have carte blanche with regard to identifying what they need so that they can produce justice for themselves on campus and establish a safe space community. These resources should be provided in a way that will aide them in solving their problems and enrich their development socially on campus. The institution should work to establish policies that will dismantle the cultural pecking order amongst Black students on PWI campuses, which is a reflection of the symptoms of racism. PWIs should base the action for change according to what Black students need and not try to influence Black culture on campus (e.g. allow or create a pecking order amongst Black students).

It is important for Black students, and especially Black student organizations, to be more inclusive and supportive to each other so that the cultural community on campus can be strengthened. Kadeem (**Pitt male - senior**) described how the Black student organizations and clubs on campus functioned more as groups instead of a community, because they existed to

support their membership instead of supporting both members and non-members who were Black. The contrast that Kadeem made about putting more emphasis on establishing a Black community instead of Black clubs is important, because if a Black student does not have membership in a specific Black club they should still be a part of the community, which should provide a cultural connection for all Black students regardless of club membership or lack thereof. All Black students should feel welcomed to be a part of the Black community on campus that focuses on establishing and maintaining cultural cohesion for all Black students on PWI campuses.

While I was collecting data, the Black students never mentioned their interaction with White students as ones where they served as allies or advocates to Black students with regard to racial issues on campus. It seemed that White students actually ignored the issues of Black students or participated in practices that would make Black students feel unwelcomed. There were also very few scenarios mentioned when White staff or professors served as advocates for Black students to produce racial justice or inclusion on campus. In my professional opinion, the reason that White students, staff, and faculty chose not to serve as committed advocates and allies for Black students was because it goes against the benefits of White privilege, and, as a result, they would rather avoid the consequences that come along with assuming that role and responsibility.

I expected to see the relationship dynamic or lack thereof between White students and Black students that resulted in a lack of interaction, tension, and in some instances conflict of some sort due to the history of conflict between White people and Black people in the U.S.. I was not expecting to see the hierarchy within the Black campus community and the various sub-group tensions that existed, especially because Black students as a group were already marginalized and already did not feel welcomed by the institution. It appeared that Black students internalized the

mistreatment that they were experiencing by manifesting roles within the hierarchy that was projected on them by PWI mentality.

I think that the issues that were shared by Black students were based on their perception as a result of their experiences, which was also their reality. In most instances what Black students did was a reaction to the systemic injustice that they were experiencing. It is imperative that PWIs create a safe space designated for Black students to create a sense of community. The safe space would be more than just a tool for escapism but instead an environment for Black students to be able to interact with each other and begin to establish culture of cohesiveness and resistance against oppression.

5.3 Implications for Professional Practice

It is difficult for PWIs to change the thought pattern of non-Black students with regard to how they view and interact with Black students. However, PWIs can engage in more in-depth discussions with Black students to identify what their needs are and be sure that they are distributing resources more equitably. Student development professionals at PWIs also need to build off of the desire for Black students to want to interact with each other and establish communities. This can be achieved by having designated areas where Black students can congregate and interact with each other. If a PWI has a Black Student Union (BSU), the administration should designate a specific space for Black students. Of course, having a BSU would make such a project much easier to accomplish, but if there is not a specific organization for Black students, the institution should provide a safe space that allows Black students to congregate, share ideas, network, support each other, and have a list of resources that includes

counselors and mentors on campus that have agreed to be available for Black students on campus. Due to Black students having limited support resources, PWIs should hire or designate someone to facilitate this process for Black students. This role should be solely for the development of Black students. Black students should have some input as to who will serve in this role and also be able to provide development and feedback for the person serving in the role.

McGee (2015) explained how important it is for Black students to have autonomy while working towards creating a community and a sense of belonging on a PWI campus.

However, when trying to convince policymakers and educators of the need to fully understand the mental health issues these students face, we have encountered a general lack of empathy, and they often shift blame to the students and their families. Thus, the life experiences of African American college students often are marginalized, minimized, or ignored. We argue that researchers who study race and racism - CRT scholars, in particular – should also address mental health and wellness as they fight for political, economic, educational, and social change. In light of these realities, we call on universities to create mechanisms that will allow Black students to temporarily remove their racial battle armor and, further, to pledge to provide protected spaces where these students can engage in collective and individual healing. (p. 509)

McGee (2015) explained how important it is for PWIs to use nontraditional methods in a committed way, to work to heal Black students:

The process of healing from racial battle fatigue and institutional racism requires significant internal commitment and external support. Instead of relying on traditional notions of human will and resilience, our work needs to be centered on strategies that prevent burnout and that reject the adoption of traditional ways of coping. (p. 510)

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A safe space for Black students and resources allocated for events, workshops, and individual and group counseling by counselors who thoroughly understand the plight of Black students is just a means to an end for creating a culture on campus that will enrich Black students and help them gain a sense of belonging. This culture can be used to empower Black students as they navigate through the challenges of PWIs. Black student organizations can be the catalyst for creating and maintaining the culture on campus.

PWIs can also utilize the culture of inclusion and nurturing that is practiced by HBCUs. HBCUs were designed to not only attract Black students to enroll but to also embrace and nurture them once they arrived to campus. It was important for the institution to include Black students in campus activities so that they feel that they belong. Not only should Black students be included, but campus activities should reflect Black culture. Due to all of the issues that the exclusion of Black students creates, it important to make every effort for these practices to be changed or at least have a separate community or safe space where Black students can feel that they belong. Black students should have a great amount of influence on how the safe space and programs represent them and meet their needs. The most important resource needed to bring about this change is Black students leading the change. Once the issues of limited resources for Black students has been addressed and a safe space is made available for them to establish a community, the internal barriers must be rectified if the Black campus community expects to establish and maintain healthy interactions. When Black students who attend a PWI autonomously create a Black campus community, they need to also create a code of conduct with regard to how they will interact with each other to prevent or at least minimize conflict that will happen between Black students individually and Black student networks.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

Research that has been presented demonstrates that Black undergraduate students who attend a PWI have a unique set of challenges. My research has identified those challenges as being two primary issues. The first issue is systematic exclusion from the institution, faculty and staff and non-Black peers. The second issue is the limited amount of resources that Black students receive to overcome their unique challenges. Previous literature has demonstrated that Black students desire a community of their own on campus, and they have a sense of belongingness and a support system when they have a community on campus. My findings have affirmed this literature in the sense that many of the participants expressed the need to have a community of Black students on campus that can serve as a support base. The literature explained how a community on campus can help a student to gain a sense of belonging and have a connection to the campus. My respondents explained how they felt connected and more comfortable on campus through friendships that they had with Black peers and a Black campus community.

Through this study, I found that some of the issues that exist within the Black community on campus are the relationship dynamics between three rivalries: Black men vs. Black women, Black athletes vs. non-athletes, and Black Greeks vs. non-Greek Black students. The tension that exists between Black men and Black women on campus seemed to cause a rift within the Black community on campus. Some of the challenges within this dynamic were that the Black women felt that the Black men were not supportive, and the Black women felt that too many Black men were in interracial relationships, particularly Black men who were athletes. The second issue that needs to be examined more closely is the different treatment by the institution between Black athletes vs. Black non-athletes and the way these two groups interact with each other. Finally the relationship between Black Greek organizations and Black students who were not members of

fraternities and sororities needs to be further explored due to some students making reference to the tension that exists sometimes between these populations. It is important to gain a much greater understanding about these issues, because they can prevent the Black campus community from being fully cohesive.

The veil needs to be removed from the root of the problem if PWIs want to create a welcoming learning environment for Black students. The root of the problem, according to Harper (2012), is racism and racist institutional norms that results in the various other symptoms experienced by Black students on PWI campuses. PWIs need to gain a much deeper understanding as to how systemic racism shapes the experiences of Black students on campus through racial battle fatigue and how they internalize racism and interact with each other. The systemic practice that interferes with Black students' sense of belonging is racism. Racism's interference of Black students' sense of belonging occurs when Black students interact with the institution, non-Black students, and through conflicts that exist between Black students based on the Black campus community hierarchy.

I was not able to access Black students who dropped out to determine if these issues resulted in their departure. I need to gain a greater understanding about the conflict that exists between Black male students and Black female students. The hierarchy that exists between the Black campus community Black student athletes, Black Greek organizations and average Black students also needs to be further researched. Data that I collected need to be compared to responses from White students. A study such as this would provide greater insight about how White students at a PWI view Black students. We can gain an understanding about the challenges of White students on campus to see if they compare or contrast to the experiences of Black students on

campus, and we can further explore issues such as the claim of Black students that they were stared

at by White students.

Appendix A Duquesne University Office of Diversity and Inclusion Letter of Support for

IRB Approval

Jeff Mallory
Assistant Vice President
Diversity, Inclusion and Student Advancement
Phone (412) 396-1117
E-mail: malloryj@duq.edu

April 16, 2018

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

Thank you for seeking approval to recruit students from Duquesne University for participation in your dissertation study. On behalf of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, we have determined that we are able to fulfill your request, pending approval from the Duquesne University IRB process. We would also ask for a copy of Pitt's IRB approval letter to be produced, before we provide access to our students.

Please let me know when you have received approval and are ready to approach our students to help with your dissertation study. We appreciate the chance to work with you on this critical project.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Jeff Mallory
Duquesne University
Assistant Vice President
Diversity, Inclusion and Student Advancement

Education for the Mind, Heart and Spirit

Appendix B Duquesne University IRB Approval Letter

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282
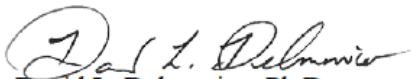
April 18, 2018

To Whom it May Concern:

Duquesne University gives Mr. Gerald Ferguson, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, permission to recruit students and gather data for his upcoming research projected titled: *Belong Theory and Black Students at Primarily White Institutions.*

Dr. Jeff Mallory has granted permission for Mr. Ferguson to collect data in his respective unit at Duquesne University.

Approval for using Duquesne's campus as a data collection site is contingent on Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Pittsburgh.

Sincerely,

David L. Delmonico, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board, Chair

cc: Dr. Jeff Mallory
    Julie Christy, IRB Administrator

Appendix C University of Pittsburgh IRB Approval Letter

University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

Memorandum

To: Gerald Ferguson

From: Sue Beers

Date: 4/23/2018

IRB#:   PRO18030112

Subject: Belonging Theory & Black Students at PWI's

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Please note the following information:

- Investigators should consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might alter the exempt status. Use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" link displayed on study workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- It is important to close your study when finished by using the "**Study Completed**" link displayed on the study workspace.
- Exempt studies will be archived after 3 years unless you choose to extend the study. If your study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has

made the determination that your project met one of the required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

 The purpose of this research study is to identify the challenges that Black undergraduate student experience at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) of higher education. I will interview 12-15 undergraduate Black college students at the University of Pittsburgh. Each interview will take approximately 25-30 minutes. The questions will be open ended and you (the student) will be asked to identify age, race and discuss your experience as a Black student on campus at Pitt. Participants will not receive any payment for their involvement in the study. Confidentiality will be maintained by using a pseudonym for each interview. The interview will be audio recorded on an electronic device and stored on a flash drive that will be secured under lock and key. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from this project at any time. This study is being conducted by Gerald Ferguson who can be reached at (412) 780-3546 if you have any questions.

Appendix D Dissertation Interview Questions

Dissertation Interview Questions

#1.

* What are your experiences as a Black student on campus?

#2

*Do you feel welcomed on campus?

*Do you feel that campus activities meet your needs (reflect your interests) as a student?

#3

* What makes you feel welcomed on campus?

*How do these things make you feel welcomed?

*What are some things that the college does which can make Black students feel unwelcomed?

*What are some things that the college does not do which can make Black students feel unwelcomed?

*What are some things that other students do that will make Black students feel unwelcomed?

*What are some things that the college can do to make Black students feel welcomed?

*What are some things that other students can do to make Black students feel welcomed?

#4

*Were you expecting the university to do something that will make you feel welcomed but they have not provided it?

*What can the university do to make you feel more welcomed?

#5

*What are some things that you think will make Black students feel welcomed?

*Why do you think these things will make Black students feel welcomed?

#6

*How do you feel about student organizations on your campus?

*How do you feel about Black student organizations on your campus?

*If the student doesn't mention BSU during the interview I'll ask them what they think about BSU's.

1. **Does this institution make you feel welcomed?**
2. **Does this institution make Black students feel welcomed?**
3. **Do non-Black students make you feel welcomed?**
4. **Do Black students make you feel welcomed?**
5. **Does interacting with Black students help you socially?**
6. **Does interacting with Black students help you academically?**
7. **Will interacting with Black students make you want to remain enrolled in this institution?**
8. **Will interacting with Black student help you to graduate?**

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