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#AdultingWhileBlack: Encountering in the Campus Climate and the Formation of Racialized Adult Identity Among Traditional-Age Black College Students

by

Sarah Nana Kutten

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership: Postsecondary Education

Dissertation Committee:
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Portland State University
2020

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Abstract

The college years represent a time when traditional-age students transition from adolescence to adulthood. During this period, many Black students encounter racist campus climates that can hinder their academic success and lead to marginalization and departure. Educational scholars have long understood the relationship between identity development and college student success, yet adult identity models often fall short for Black students because they do not consider the impacts of racism on development. As such, Black students face systemic, organizational, and individual racist encounters in higher education that keep them from fully engaging in the college experience and their personal development. This study sought to understand how campus climate, racial identity, and adult identity intersect in the Black college student experience. Using a Critical Race Theory framework, this basic qualitative study utilized interviews with 10 Black students at a public, four-year university in the Pacific Northwest. Their counternarratives led to the creation of the model of Black Critical Conscientization, a dynamic process by which Black students encounter racism in the campus environment, make meaning of their experiences, and activate their Black adult identity within the context of their social world. The results are intended to provide educational leaders with a model to better understand how Black students conceptualize identity and navigate campus through this lens. Implications for practice challenge personnel to apply this knowledge and use the model on their campuses to address racist climates, policy

barriers, and marginalizing practices in support of Black student success in higher education.

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One of my favorite quotes that I go back to time and again is, “when you walk with purpose, you collide with destiny” (Berry, 2013). I have used the quote in many contexts of my life and always found it a powerful reminder of centering oneself in the journey toward achieving one’s dreams. In the process of writing this work I have been pushed to the limits mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. There were times when imposter syndrome crept in, when I questioned the value of my research, and when I felt guilty about how my personal sacrifice toward a doctorate degree impacted the ones closest to me. Throughout it all, there were those who celebrated me at my best and encouraged me through the lows. This journey has taught me that walking with purpose toward destiny is an action that one does not do alone but through the collective support of others.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The long-understood colloquialism among Black Americans of doing practically anything "while Black" connotes a dark social reality in which all Black people, at any given time, are assumed to be engaging in unlawful or suspicious behavior. In recent years, this concept has been thrust into the mainstream via social media. An expression embedded in implicit bias and explicit racism, #WhileBlack has also surged in the era of the Black Lives Matter Movement (Black Lives Matter, 2019). In May of 2018, police were called to respond to a female college student who seemed "out of place" in the common room of her Yale University residence hall—*#SleepingWhileBlack* (Griggs, 2018). On Independence Day of 2018, police responded to a report of a Black woman swimming in her neighborhood pool. The white man who made the call assumed that the woman "wasn't rich enough to live there" (Perez, 2018, para. 2), a neighborhood with its pristine streets lined with half-million-dollar homes. The arrival of the police was caught on camera, posted to social media, and the hashtag #SwimmingWhileBlack went viral overnight. At times used tongue-in-cheek among Black circles, *#DrivingWhileBlack* carries the heavy association of police brutality. Such examples illustrate an injustice that permeates the fabric of American life; this is a society in which Black people of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic statuses must be vigilant in their daily movements. In the most extreme of circumstances, it is a matter of survival.

The *while Black* phenomenon extends to other aspects of Black development. As today's traditional-age students enter college campuses across the United States, they are

confronted with the cultural expectations that accompany adulthood. Among this student population, the concept of *adulting* has become a buzzword to describe the transition. Adulting, according to Urban Dictionary (2015), is defined as "to do grown-up things and hold responsibilities such as a 9–5 job, a mortgage/rent, a car payment, or anything else that makes you think of grown-ups" (n.p.). The popularity of adulting has proliferated in recent years and has begun to cement itself in American Culture. A YouTube search for adulting yields over 50,000 results. On Twitter, #adulting has nearly 140,000 followers. *Adulting: How to Become a Grown-up in 468 Easy(ish) Steps* by Kelly Williams Brown (2013) asserts that adulting is not something you are, but something you do. Adulting (as a verb) has even found its way into Merriam-Webster's "Words We're Watching" list (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). An outcrop of startups have been created to fill a niche market that is hungry for courses on grown-up skills such as paying bills on time, cooking, folding laundry, and changing a tire (Pesce, Hill, & Fottrell, 2017).

The preponderance of resources suggests that there is a widespread need for support in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. However, adulting is not as straightforward for Black American youth, because they are coming of age in a social environment that discriminates based on race. Racism has implications for whether Black graduates get jobs, if they can secure loans, and even who might come to their aid if they need help changing a tire along the side of the road. It also influences how Black people interact with authority figures and how they activate their agency. As this work will show, racism contributes to inequities in the resources and support available to Black college students in ways that inhibit their development of self-efficacy and self-concept,

two qualities that are critical to academic success. In sum, *adulting* and *adulting while Black* are two distinct developmental experiences, yet we know little about what the latter involves. Given the complexities of becoming an adult, and the additional need to learn the social realities of navigating a country rife with the racial profiling of Black bodies, how does one develop and make meaning of Adulting While Black while studying in a higher education environment? This context sets the stage for this inquiry.

Learning to #Adult

College represents an important developmental experience for many American youth as they transition to adulthood. One of the major transformations that students begin during this time is the development of an adult identity. The research suggests that there is an inextricable connection between identity development and student success (Jones & Abes, 2013). The American Council on Education (1994) links identity development and learning to promote "maximum effectiveness" among students (p. 69). Sanford (1962) correlates identity development and student achievement. Widick, Parker, and Knefelkamp (1978) drew attention to the role of core self-image and student success.

A growing body of literature offers theories about the identity development process from adolescence to adulthood as it relates to student achievement. *Self-authorship*, a constructivist learning stage coined by Kegan (1994), broadly describes a sophisticated meaning-making process commonly found among adults. Baxter Magolda's (2001) longitudinal study, which spanned two decades and expanded on Kegan's work, was one of the first to use self-authorship development to explore adult identity development among college students. Baxter Magolda (2008) added three additional

stages toward the development of self-authorship: external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship. The updated model (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008) tracks student meaning-making processes across cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions within each of these stages. Individuals in earlier stages typically rely on external authorities to guide decision-making and self-concept, whereas those with self-authoring identities make meaning based upon internal foundations, which are usually resilient to external pressures. This translates to one of the overarching goals of a 21st-century college education, which is to help students become the independent authors of their own lives (Baxter Magolda, 2007).

Self-authorship is a broadly accepted concept in higher education and has been used to explain the adult identity development processes of students (Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013; Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007; Meszaros, 2007; Pizzolato, 2003; Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, & Wang, 2012; Pizzolato & Olson, 2016; Strayhorn, 2014; Torres & Hernández, 2007). The self-authorship model (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008) is widely used to scaffold college student personal development. It is also applied extensively in the creation of programs and resources for students in all corners of academic and student life (Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda, 2007; Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009; King, Baxter Magolda, Barber, Brown, & Lindsay, 2009; Pizzolato, 2005; Redmond, 2014; Welkener & Baxter Magolda, 2014). Studies have found that while most traditional-age college students do not reach self-authorship by the time they graduate (Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Kegan, 1994; Pizzolato, 2007), the higher education experience offers unique access to

opportunities which help students advance in their development toward adult identity. While it may appear that the college environment presents an ideal context to transform from adolescence to learning the ropes of adulthood, Students of Color, and particularly Black students, often face barriers that place opportunities for personal growth out of reach. This experience is explicated below.

#AdultingWhileBlack

The terms used to describe the Black racial group in the United States have a long, and often complicated, social history (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005). Simms (2018) writes that:

> Today, some people view "black" and "African American" interchangeably. But many have strong opinions that "African American" is too restrictive for the current US population. In part, the term African American came into use to highlight that the experiences of the people here reflect both their origins in the African continent and their history on the American continent. (para. 3)

The influx of Black people from Africa and the Caribbean to the United States challenged the use of the term African American. The *American* component does not always fit these groups, yet they seek to identify with their African diasporic heritage (Simms, 2018). For example, in one study, Haitian youth in Southern Florida, had to learn that "in the United States others would perceive and frequently label them Black" (Stepick, Dutton Stepick, Eugene, Teed, & Labissiere, 2001, p. 251). Even more, this seemed to generate confusion about how the youth should label themselves as being "Haitian, Haitian American, or Black" (Stepick et al., 2001, p. 251). Thus, race is a social construct that shifts socially and individually.

"Some [Black immigrants to the United States] have argued that the term "Black" is more inclusive of the collective experiences of the US population" (Simms, 2018, para. 4). For the sake of consistency, the term Black is used throughout this work to inclusively describe a racial group of people "having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (National Institutes of Health, 2015). As much as the United States government and American society has attempted to assign racial labels to groups, it is important to remember that individuals have the agency to define their own identity in ways that personally meaningful to themselves. It is also critical to recognize the fact that the labels ascribed to racial groups, whether they want them or not, have tangible implications for how these individuals navigate the realities of racism in their daily lives.

Roughly 900,000 Black students are currently enrolled in public colleges and universities in the United States (Harper & Simmons, 2018). Navigating the college experience is challenging for most students, yet Black students experience additional barriers. A study by the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center reports that while there are some success stories, American public colleges and universities are failing Black students (Harper & Simmons, 2018). Authors Shaun Harper and Isaiah Simmons (2018) "attribute the disparities in the support, resources, and attention to Black student success to institutional practices, policies, mindsets, and culture that persistently disadvantages Black students and sustain inequities" (p. 3). These inequities are particularly visible when representation in higher education, chilling campus climates, and the comparatively dismal graduation rates of Black students are examined.

Black students are underrepresented in higher education. They make up 14.6% of college-age students nationwide, "yet only 9.8% of full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates at public colleges and universities are Black" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2). The lack of peers can lead to the isolation and marginalization of Black students. Upon arrival to the classroom, Black students are less likely to be taught by faculty that share their racial identity.

> For every full-time Black faculty member at a public college or university, there are 42 full-time, degree-seeking Black students. … On 44% of public campuses, there are 10 or fewer full-time Black Faculty members across all ranks and academic fields. (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 3)

Bensimon (2007) and Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) argue that knowing students is a key component of supporting student development as scholars and individuals. The Higher Education Research Institute (2014) reports that "whether through formal mentorship programs, classroom interactions, or informal encounters, faculty and staff play an important role in students' academic, social, and personal growth" (para. 1). Black students have much to gain from building relationships with faculty and staff who share their racial identity. As Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) point out, "for African American students, faculty members who share their culture are often a source of pride and admiration, living symbols of what they can achieve. Black faculty provide essential mentorship, advising, and role modeling for Black students" (p. 173). These scholars echo the importance of representation in Black college student learning and adulting.

Campus climates across the nation are not conducive to Black student success. The Institute for Higher Education Policy [IHEP] (2010) reports that "despite the proliferation of diversity programs, Black students continue to report, at a higher rate

than both white students and other minority populations, 'guarded, tense, and threatening' interactions with other students" (p. 3). Incidents of overt racism continue to harm Black students and the phenomenon of *racial microaggressions* have become the norm. Racial microaggressions, "often involving the projection of stereotypes [can] occur at any moment, a constant potential source of stress" (Tatum, 2017, p. 52). The stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) that Black students experience has led to "lower rates of academic success and performance" (Mitchell & Boyd, 2018, p. 893).

In addition to individual acts of racism, the campus climate presents a significant barrier for Black student success. A study about campus climate perceptions by Cress (2008) found that both Black male and female college students "reported higher perceptions of negative campus climate" than white students (p. 99). Cress (2008) concludes that if students "are interpreting their environments as hostile, it is quite likely that the psychological and emotional energy needed to address negative perceptions will detract from their participation in the learning community thereby potentially hindering their academic and personal development" (p. 100). The social and psychological impacts of hostile campus climates negatively impact Black students' learning experiences and their sense of self.

Lack of representation and unwelcome campus climate may also contribute to the fact that Black students, when compared to their white peers, are less likely to complete their college education on time. For example, "across four cohorts, 39.4% of Black students completed bachelor's degrees at public institutions within six years, compared to 50.6% of undergraduates overall" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2). In fact, "forty-one

percent of public colleges and universities graduate one-third or fewer Black students within six years" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2). Not only does the increase in time-to-graduation impact retention rates, but it also has exponential financial consequences. The early departure of Black students from college leaves them without a degree and a mountain of debt. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Education Statistics found that "nearly half (49 percent) of all Black borrowers in the 2004 group defaulted on at least one loan within 12 years […] That default rate was more than twice that of white students (20 percent)" (Fain, 2017, para. 5). These statistics point to an unacceptable inequity that is holistically pervasive for the Black college student experience.

Institutions of higher education are structured in ways that both inhibit Black student success and minimize their lived experiences. Isolation, marginalization, microaggressions, and racism create a hostile environment that force even the most high-performing students to question themselves and their ability to achieve their dreams of a college education. It is no wonder that nearly 75% of Black students do not graduate on time, if they reach degree completion at all. Persisting to graduation in the presence of these barriers takes a tremendous amount of energy and resilience. Amid these obstacles, Black students are also expected to learn to adult within this same period at pace with their white peers. Learning to adult is a tall order for any young person but the task is made exponentially more complex for Black students due to the forces of racism and the lack of support for their racialized personal development in higher education.

Statement of the Problem: Learning to #AdultWhileBlack

The link between identity development and student success is well-documented. The use of the self-authorship model as a foundation to scaffold adult identity development in higher education has been shown to create spaces and opportunities for students to succeed academically. Yet, some scholars assert that self-authorship does not fully account for the role of power, oppression, and racism in the adult identity development of Students of Color (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Baxter Magolda, Creamer, & Meszaros, 2010; Hernández, 2016; Torres, 2009; Torres & Hernández, 2007; Torres et al., 2009). This omission translates into the implementation of programs, resources, and pedagogical practices that fail to meet the adult development needs of Students of Color, thus minimizing the effect of such interventions on student success.

Abes and Hernández (2016) urged practitioners and scholars to consider the role of social forces as being central in student development. Using a one-size-fits-all theory, specifically, self-authorship, to broadly explain adult development in higher education is problematic because it does not account for the differential experiences of marginalized student populations. Bensimon (2007) notes that "when practitioners lack knowledge of their students' cultural lives, they are severely limited in their capacity to adapt their actions and be responsive to the particularities of the situation as these individual students experience it" (p. 453). On a systemic level, this erasure has implications for the types of support, interventions, and resources used to promote the success of minoritized students, particularly Black students. Individually, such practices can lead to disenfranchisement of

Black students, and are damaging to their sense of identity and self-efficacy. This can lead to negative long-term impacts.

American public colleges and universities are failing Black students. "College is a time of transformation. It is the time when adolescent dependence on authorities must be gradually replaced with adult responsibility as a citizen" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xvii). Central to this shift toward self-authorship is "developing an integrated sense of identity that extends to the larger world" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 3). Yet, the larger world (and the college environment) is one in which Black people experience racism, systemic oppression, and disenfranchisement. The result is that self-authorship theories fail Black students, because they are premised on white student data. Often touted as the common goal of 21st-century education (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Hodge et al., 2009; King et al., 2009; Meszaros, 2007), the self-authorship model does not fully account for this racialized existence within adult development (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Hernández, 2016; Torres & Hernández, 2007); thus, Black adult identity is not fully woven into the very fabric of a 21st-century education.

Purpose of the Study

Literature that puts race at the center of the analysis of adult identity development is limited. "Although most studies nowadays include race and ethnicity as an independent variable, there continues to be little recognition of the racialized existence of minority students" (Bensimon, 2007, p. 450). Black students experience a racialized existence that is different from the existence of white students. This has implications for how they internalize the world around them, how they interact with external authorities, and

ultimately how they self-author. We also know that navigating the world in a Black body is fraught with a complicated set of socially imposed barriers that must be learned by Black youth as a matter of survival. The weight of this reality may make it harder for Black students to perform successfully in academic spaces (Steele, 2011), in racially hostile workplaces (Hunte, 2016), and ultimately in society at large (Tatum, 2017). To center race in the study of adult development means that scholars and practitioners must resist the urge to compartmentalize race and adulthood as separate entities. Instead, they must shift to a Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach, which allows for racial identity and adult identity to be reimagined as interacting symbiotically in more fluid and context-specific ways. The term that best captures this relationship, *racialized adult identity,* will be used throughout this work.

The purpose of this study was to understand the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, this study sought to explore how traditional-age Black students make meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the context of racially hostile campus climates, and how campus climate informs this process. The stories of Black students thriving in higher education are many but often go untold. Their stories hold the truths about the ways in which they have learned to make meaning and become the authors of their own lives despite social and systemic barriers.

The success of Black students has broad social benefits. The economic advantage of degree attainment is clear. The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) reports that “the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree ($50,000) were 64

percent higher than those of young adult high school completers ($30,000)" (para. 3). In addition to economic benefits, degree attainment also is positively correlated with civic responsibility. "The more education one has, the more likely one is to vote and to participate in various ways in the political process" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 328). Thus, the success of Black students in college is not only a boon to both the individual and the American economy but also serves to uphold democracy. This study addresses an area of student development that, if properly scaffolded, could improve Black college student outcomes and therefore, serve the common good of society. With a deeper understanding of what it means to *adult while Black*, educational leaders will be well-positioned to address social, institutional, and systemic barriers in support of the academic success and personal development of Black students in higher education and beyond.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided evidence that American public colleges and universities are failing Black students. The college environment presents a unique opportunity for students to wrestle with the developmental tasks of becoming an adult while receiving guidance from trained professionals who are attuned to their unique developmental processes. Black student success is inhibited by multiple factors, from lack of representation to hostile campus climates to white-student-centric theoretical frameworks that inform practice. While supporting adult identity development has shown promise in improving student outcomes, the prevailing model of self-authorship does not account for how racialized existence influences this process. When programs, resources,

and interventions using the self-authorship model are deployed to enhance student success, their effect on Students of Color is minimized, because they are not considerate of the racialized experience of these populations. The lack of scaffolding of the adult identity development of Black students further contributes to their disenfranchisement and to their departure from higher education.

This work seeks to address one of the barriers to Black student success by focusing on how Black students make meaning of their racialized adult identity and exploring which factors contribute to this development during the college years. The research questions for this study were created to begin to understand how racialized adult identity development manifests in traditional-age Black juniors and seniors. It is hoped that the findings point to avenues for improving campus climates and better supporting the personal development outcomes of Black college students. In short, this study argues that *adulting* and *adulting while Black* are two very different processes. New approaches to racialized adult identity development are necessary to scaffold Black student success and could significantly address the failure of American public colleges and universities to holistically support the success of Black students.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. This chapter provided an overview of the problem in practice, introduced several key concepts that are used throughout this work, and explicated the purpose and significance of this work. Chapter 2 grounds this research within the scholarly discussions about campus climate, the social and psychological influence of campus climate, identity development, and CRT. The research

methodology for the study will be described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, while Chapter 5 offers implications for practice. This dissertation seeks to both give voice to stories about how Black students #AdultWhileBlack and describe what that means for their personal development in higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

On May 8, 2018, Lolade Siyonbola was studying in the common area of her Yale University residence hall. Having worked on a writing assignment for several hours, Siyonbola opted to give her brain a break and take a nap on the couch—a frequent student practice in the shared space. A white student passed by the lounge, saw Siyonbola sleeping, and decided that she did not belong there. The student's response was to call the police. At least three police responded to the scene, jarring Siyonbola awake and interrogating her for over 15 minutes. Even in her bleary-eyed state, Siyonbola knew what she had to do. As a Black woman living in the United States, she approached the situation with an abundance of caution. As she explained in the BBC News article "Police Called After Black Yale Student Fell Asleep in Common Room":

> I installed [Facebook on my phone] to record what I knew was going to happen. I always said to myself if I had a police encounter I'd record it on Facebook Live. For my safety, I thought that might be the wisest thing—to keep a record of it. (Gerken, 2018)

Siyonbola kept her calm during the incident, but inside she was filled with outrage. She had the trappings of a regular student, including an open laptop that showed she was writing a paper. However, #SleepingWhileBlack in a white common space was presumed to be a threat to a white resident. "This is what happens in America. White people think they have the license to use the police as a weapon against people of color. […] It's very common," said Siyonbola (Gerken, 2018).

Siyonbola's story is not unique. New reports emerge, seemingly every week, about the mistreatment of Black people who are simply going about their daily lives. What we often don't hear is what happens next for the people who are harmed by these racist acts. How did this event impact Siyonbola socially and psychologically? How might it lead to feeling unsafe and unwelcome at Yale University? And ultimately, what did the experience teach her about what it means to be a Black woman in higher education and society at large?

These questions about Siyonbola's experience touch the core purpose of this work which was to explore how traditional-age Black students transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of racially hostile campus climates. This chapter provides an overview of literature relevant to this topic. The literature is intended to contextualize experiences, like Siyonbola's, within the racist historical and social patterns of white American culture. The first sections describe how hostile campus climates negatively impact the social and psychological development of Black students in higher education. These are followed by a closer look at the leading adult identity development model used in higher education, self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). An introduction to CRT then illustrates how social forces differentially influence the adult identity development of Black college students. Finally, this chapter closes with an overview of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Strauss & Cross, 2006), a widely cited theory of Black identity development. The application of Nigrescence is crucial to understanding the racialized adult identity development process among Black college students.

Campus Climate

The terms “campus climate” and “campus culture” are often used interchangeably, which is incorrect. Campus climate is defined as the “metaphorical temperature gauge by which [individuals] measure a welcoming and receptive, versus a cool and alienating learning environment” (Cress, 2008, p. 96). The campus climate is preserved by hegemonic groups who hold power within the campus community; in most cases, this power is held by white administrators, faculty, and students. By contrast, campus culture refers to the norms, expectations, patterns of behavior, and spoken and unspoken rules that are shared within a community (González, 2002). Norms of behavior might include microaggressions or practices that push minoritized groups to the margins (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). By not welcoming them into the campus community, such behaviors tell Students of Color that they do not belong in college, which can lead to their departure from higher education (Solórzano et al., 2000; Tatum, 2017). The key distinction between these terms is that while campus culture (González, 2002) relates to the organizational culture, policy orientation, “acceptable” behaviors, and beliefs of individuals, campus climate is the overall felt environment that results from those beliefs and behaviors.

Critics often claim that the failures of Black students in higher education are the result of individual shortcomings while ignoring the systemic foundations that negatively impact Black students (Feagin et al., 1996). *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White College and Universities* by Feagin et al. (1996) was one of the first books to “explore systematically and in depth the racial experiences of African American students

in their daily rounds on a predominantly white campus" (p. xi). The authors argue that the victim blaming of Black students is short-sighted "because it fails to examine the persisting role of White racism in creating serious barriers and dilemmas for Black students" (Feagin et al., 1996, p. 7). According to Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), campus climates are a product of discriminatory history, internal and external policies and movements, the representation and interactions of diverse groups on campus, and individual perceptions of the community. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) assert that we cannot fully understand the reasons for Black student access, persistence, graduation, and transfer to graduate school without a deep examination of the collegiate racial climate. By situating campus climate within this context Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), Feagin et al. (1996), and Solórzano et al. (2000) affirm that these factors work in tandem to negatively influence the educational outcomes of non-white students.

Campus climates are often harmful to Black college students. Hurtado et al. (1999) point out that historical patterns of the exclusion of People of Color on college campuses shape present-day manifestations of hostile campus climates. Quaye, Griffin, and Museus (2015) found that institutions should be forthcoming about their history, because Students of Color "may feel their campuses are still hostile, unwelcoming places that only enrolled them because of forced desegregation" (p. 22). If Black students are feeling tokenized through their enrollment and ostracized by their peers, they may focus undue attention on this pressure rather than on their academic work. In their study about the outcomes of stress due to hostile campus climates, Clark and Mitchell (2018) learned that the burden of racism and mistreatment of Black students had the potential to manifest

in poor mental health. The study suggests that hostile campus climates are not only bothersome to Black students but also harmful to their psychological well-being.

Perceptions of campus climate can also be detrimental to Black students. The ways in which Black students think about their campus climate as either warm or chilly has real implications for their connection to the institution and for their overall experience. In fact, Black women "were more likely to perceive a negative campus climate as compared to men […] Black men have the highest average (mean) score on the negative campus climate measure of any group" studied (Cress, 2008, p. 99). Collectively, these studies point to the ways in which hostile campus climates tarnish the social, psychological, and educational experiences of Black students in higher education.

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), drawing on the research of others, identified four factors that can cultivate a positive racial climate for students of color. These are:

> The inclusion of students, faculty, and administrators of color; a curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of people of color; programs to support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color; and, a college/university mission that reinforces the institution's commitment to [racial diversity]. (p. 62)

As will be discussed in the next section, these characteristics align with the current racial inequities that undermine the success of Black students in public colleges and universities across the United States.

Racial Equity Indicators and Campus Climate

Eschewing the anecdotal, short-sighted observations of critics, scholars (Clark & Mitchell, 2018; Feagin et al., 1996; Hurtado et al., 1999; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Quaye et al., 2015) emphasize how inequitable systems in higher education perpetuate

the racist campus climates that Black students endure. In 2018, Shaun Harper and Isaiah Simmons of the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California undertook a major study in which 506 American public colleges and universities received a grade based on how well they serve Black students. The grades were determined by rating schools on four equity indicators: representation equity, gender equity, completion equity, and Black student to Black faculty ratio.

If all things were equal, the number of Black students on campus should reflect the general population. The report defined representation equity as the "extent to which Black students' share of enrollment in the undergraduate student population [reflected] their representation among 18–24-year-old citizens in that state" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2). The Gender Equity Indicator examined how the "proportionality of Black women's and Black men's respective shares of Black student enrollments in the undergraduate student population [reflected] the national gender enrollment distribution across all racial/ethnic groups" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2).

Most students enrolling in higher education do so with the intent to graduate. Harper and Simmons (2018) utilized a Completion Equity metric to determine the extent to which "Black students' six-year graduation rates, across four cohorts, [matched] overall six-year graduation rates during those same time periods at each institution" (p. 2).

Finally, the Black Student to Black Faculty Ratio represents a critical metric concerning Black student success by measuring the proportionality of "full-time, degree-seeking Black undergraduates to full-time Black instructional faculty members on each

campus" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 2). The use of equity indicators as metrics in this study exposed the structural foundation that contributes to the prevalence of racially hostile campus climates and cultures throughout the United States. On these campuses, Black students are disproportionately and negatively affected by these forces when compared to their white peers which can lead to poor educational outcomes.

The equity index metrics helped Harper and Simmons (2018) to rate how well each school supported Black students. An overall equity index score was calculated, based on the grades of each indicator, and then totaled to represent the GPA for that school. The last step of the analysis was to average the overall equity index scores by state. Based on this rating system, Harper and Simmons (2018) concluded that American public colleges and universities are failing Black students. "The Equity Index Score across all 506 public institutions is 2.02. No campus earned above 3.50. Two hundred colleges and universities earned scores below 2.00" (Harper & Simmons, 2018, p. 3). The results of the study shed light on a disturbing trend in higher education and served as a call to action for institutions nationwide to address inequities that inhibit Black student success. In addition, the use of Harper and Simmons's (2018) equity indicators offers a framework to analyze how *campus climates as systems* benefit some students and disadvantage others.

Campus Climate: Social and Psychological Impacts

The purpose of this research was to explore how traditional-age Black students transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of racially hostile campus climates. Therefore, it is important to understand how systemic inequities inform this

process among Black students. As will be shown, the pervasive influence of racist campus climate is felt by Black students. It damages their social integration into campus communities, their psychological well-being, and their personal development.

Social Impacts of Campus Climate

This section describes how macro-level hostile campus climates result in micro-level consequences for Black student success in college. Higher education researchers will often use the constructs of integration, sense of belonging, and mattering and marginality to understand the social factors that contribute to student success. The following provides an overview of these constructs and situates them within Black student social experiences in higher education.

Integration. Scholars have long been interested in how incoming students become part of the campus community. One of the earliest scholars on this topic, Vincent Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), developed a Theory of Student Departure to explain the multitude of factors that inhibit student persistence in higher education. The theory is conceptualized around the idea that students enter the college environment with their own backgrounds, prior academic knowledge, skills, and worldviews that inform their goals, attitudes and commitment to persist at a school. As they become involved in the campus experience, the background that they came with may integrate with the values, norms, and expectations of the institutional community; alternatively, their identity and ways of knowing may be so significantly different from those of the institution that they decide to leave or are forced to leave.

A key component of the Theory of Student Departure is the notion of integration. Building on Tinto's model, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) define integration as the "extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or a subgroup of it" (p. 54). When viewing integration through Harper and Simmons's (2018) Equity Indicators, it becomes clear that American public colleges and universities are failing Black students. Much of the ability to integrate with the normative attitudes and values of others in the community is dependent on the ability to see oneself as a part of that community; a welcoming environment validates one's humanity. Campus climates can be hostile to students who do not fit within the imposed campus culture or are unable to connect with people who can help them navigate the environment.

The alarming statistics around representation equity, gender equity, and ratios of Black students to Black faculty suggest that Black students are at a disadvantage when it comes to integrating into historically white campuses. Critics of Tinto's integration concept insist that "the theory's failure to recognize cultural variables makes it particularly problematic when applied to minority students" (Guiffrida, 2006). The history of higher education and its structural organization are steeped in the values, attitudes, and needs of white men. Feagin et al. (1996) stress that integration looks different among Students of Color than it does for white students:

> At traditionally white colleges in particular, racial 'integration' has in actual practice been a major failure. Indeed, 'integration' has been designed for the most part as a one-way assimilation process in which Black students are forced to adapt to white views, norms, and practices. (xi)

The result of this context is the prevailing expectation that Black students, in order to integrate successfully, must part with major aspects of their lived experiences, values, and attitudes that may conflict with the white campus culture (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Quaye et al., 2015). The results of Harper and Simmons's (2018) study suggests that across equity indicators, institutions continue to uphold barriers to Black student integration. This ultimately leads to the departure of Black students from unwelcoming campus climates.

Sense of belonging. In the process of successfully integrating into a campus community, college students may also gain social and psychological benefits of membership. Within psychologist, Abraham Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, developing a sense of belonging in one's network is an essential motivational factor toward reaching self-actualization. In considering the factors that lead to student departure, educational scholars are interested in how a *sense of belonging* may serve to benefit student persistence and success. A sense of belonging is defined as the level to which a student has a both a psychological and social sense of membership in a campus community. This includes both cognitive and affective elements (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, and Woods (2009) note that integrating within a campus community brings about a sense of belonging which influences both positive social-psychological outcomes for student persistence and a commitment to degree completion at the institution. Hurtado and Carter (1997) "contend that understanding students' sense of belonging may be key to understanding how particular forms of social

and academic experiences affect students [of color]" (pp. 224–225). In general, factors that contribute to a sense of belonging on college campuses include a welcoming campus climate and faculty support (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002) social class (Ostrove & Long, 2007), social capital (Soria & Stebleton, 2013), academic engagement (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009), and involvement in educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005), among others. While these factors may seem straightforward, the racist and discriminatory histories in higher education make it harder for Black students to access these supports.

Black students struggle with developing a sense of belonging at historically white institutions. Quaye, Griffin, and Museus (2015) describe how Black students feel they must constantly prove their intellectual abilities to be accepted by others. As Strayhorn (2009) notes, Black students "report feeling alienated, marginalized, socially isolated, unsupported, and unwelcomed by their peers and faculty members" (p. 502). Due to their underrepresentation, Black students are often expected to serve as racial subject matter experts and representatives of their entire race (Quaye et al., 2015). Seeking approval while also being singled out within white academic spaces leads to loneliness, self-doubt, and social pressure that detract from Black students' sense of belonging in higher education (Quaye et al., 2015).

Factors shown to improve a sense of belonging among Black students include affirmations of belonging from Black faculty (Walton & Cohen, 2007), ethnic student organization membership (Museus, 2008), and positive interactions with diverse peers (Strayhorn, 2009). Considering Harper and Simmons's (2018) equity indicators, a sense

of belonging is bolstered by the ability to find and connect with peers and faculty who welcome and affirm their membership within the campus community; it is of importance that this support, in part, should come from Black peers and Black faculty. Dismal rates of Black student representation and poor Black student-to-Black faculty ratios expose a widespread need to improve these numbers, which will directly support Black students' sense of belonging.

Mattering and marginality. Closely aligned with a sense of belonging, is sociologists' Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) theory of *mattering and marginality*. They suggest that "mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165). Mattering extends to several outcomes in higher education. Studies by Chickering and Reisser (1993), Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989), Schlossberg (1989), and Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1996) have shown that students are more likely to persist toward their educational goals when they are part of a campus community that demonstrates care for them as individuals. "When people feel important and have a 'fit' between themselves and the environment, their satisfaction and retention increases" (Gossett et al., 1996). Thus, one's perceptions of mattering may be closely tied to their perceptions of campus climate.

In contrast to mattering, Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) defined marginality as "the perception that one does not fit in, is not significant, and is not needed" (Gossett et al., 1996, p. 37). Black students may experience marginality when, while navigating historically white institutions, they realize that their personal worldviews and experiences

do not fit within the mix of explicit and implicit norms, rules, expectations, and responsibilities that dominate their campus culture. In leveraging CRT, Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) expanded on Rosenberg and McCullough's definition in stating that marginality is also "a complex and contentious location and process whereby People of Color are subordinated because of their race, gender, and class" (p. 212). Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) state that using marginality as a construct can help scholars and educators better understand how underrepresentation of Students of Color leads to the consequences of marginality. Because of their positionality, Students of Color in the margins are impacted by barriers and oppression that differ from their white counterparts (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). For Black students, living in the margins distances them from resources and opportunities that could otherwise promote their success.

While being pushed to the margins can lead to the alienation of Students of Color in higher education, Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) conclude that the margins may also serve as a space of empowerment. A study by Baldwin and Johnson (2018) found that non-hierarchical co-mentoring relationships between Black women on historically white campuses helped them resist marginalization and reflect upon the conditions of their experience while in college. The margins are places for support and unity, where individuals can organize, resist oppression, and build strength from an outside-within vantage point. In other words, the margins can be transformed into training grounds for the disruption of the socially constructed distance between the oppressed and privileged. It is critical to note here that finding a sense of belonging is a coping strategy that is activated in response to exclusion. The ideology that a person should be excluded to be

included is a dangerous platform that silences the discourse about oppression. While stories of resilience and empowerment may come from the margins, the positives should be evaluated with an abundance of caution.

Harper and Simmons's (2018) equity indicators offer additional perspective on how institutional structures negatively impact the Black college student experience. Again, we see that having a critical mass of Black peers and faculty can in turn produce a campus climate where Black students feel as though their presence on campus is both natural and welcomed. In describing the characteristics of Black American teacher pedagogy, Lynn (1999) writes that

> African American teachers express cultural solidarity with their students by communicating with them in a style that is familiar and easily understood by them. They express feelings of kinship and connectedness by relating to the students their experiences in overcoming obstacles such as racism. (p. 607)

In fact, research suggests that Black college students thrive in environments when with other Black students and taught by Black faculty. "There is considerable evidence that Black students at [historically] Black colleges and universities achieve higher academic performance, enjoy greater social involvement, and aspire to higher occupational goals than their peers do at predominantly white institutions" (Tatum, 2017, p. 169). The disproportionate degree completion rates when compared to white students suggests that hostile and unsupportive campus climates contribute to Black students' sense that their presence in a campus community does not matter which may lead to their premature departure.

Psychological Impacts of Campus Climate

The combined effects of poor integration, a lack of a sense of belonging, and a climate that pushes Black students to the margins result in a cumulatively negative social experience. As will be discussed in this section, these social effects are also are detrimental to Black students' emotional and psychological well-being.

Microaggressions. While overt acts of racism are still commonplace in the United States, historical and social shifts have evolved into the proliferation of subtle forms of racist oppression. In the 1970s, Chester Pierce (1975) was the first to define racial microaggressions "to describe the daily slights and insults experienced by Black people in the United States" (Tatum, 2017, p. 51). The daily toll of microaggressions, like overt racism, leads to a wide range of emotional responses that erode the psychological well-being of People of Color.

Solórzano et al. (2000) studied the effects of racial microaggressions on the experiences of Black students in college. The participants in the study stated that verbal and non-verbal microaggressions were commonplace both inside and outside the classroom. The weight of their experiences contributed to their feelings of exhaustion, isolation and self-doubt. Furthermore, these feelings manifested negatively in their academic self-efficacy and success (Solórzano et al., 2000).

Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, and Allen (2016) examined how gendered microaggressions harmed Black male students studying at elite institutions. The men in the study faced regular microaggressions that were perpetrated by their white faculty, administration, and peers. Microaggressions came in the form of misandrous

stereotyping, marginality, and hyper-surveillance on campus, which led to a host of emotional responses including shock, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. The Black men in the study unanimously reported that campus climates at elite institutions were more hostile to Black men than any other group (Smith et al., 2016). Smith et al. (2016) explain that the barriers experienced by the Black men in their study counter the narrative about "equal access and equality in higher education and the assumption that all students can experience supportive student-faculty and student-student relationships that foster academic success" (p. 1193). This finding corroborates Cress's (2008) study on Black student perceptions of campus climate, but goes a step further to demonstrate how a hostile environment results in the negative implications for the psychological well-being of Black male students.

The Harper and Simmons (2018) equity indicators also show that unbalanced ratios of Black students, Black faculty, and gender representation may be harmful, because Black students need other Black people on campus to help them emotionally process the daily microaggressions they experience. While white folks can aid in this process, Black students may not view them as a safe resource to express their feelings.

Additionally, not having Black folks on campus to counter microaggressions when they occur contributes to hostile environments in which white supremacy thrives unchecked. This is not to say that the burden of countering microaggressions and racism on college campuses should be placed on the backs of Black people. The Harper and Simmons (2018) report draws attention to the fact that without a critical mass of Black people engaging on college campuses, there is little impetus to upend the status quo.

Stereotype threat. The effects of racism and microaggression contribute to the erosion of academic success of Black college students. Stereotype threat was first introduced through Claude Steele's (1997) study that examined the influence of perceived stereotyping on academic performance. He approached his research from the perspective that academic success is, in part, informed by self-definition and a personal identity that holds one accountable to fruitful academic achievement. In addition, Steele (1997) paid close attention to how a sense of belonging within an academic environment can improve one's academic performance as it fulfills aspects of a positive self-concept and personal identity to schooling. Steele (1997) posited that academic achievement suffers when there are breakdowns in the relationships between determination, identity, and schooling. He defined stereotype threat as "the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (Steele, 1997, p. 614). He focused on the role of social structures in generating stereotypes that make it hard for women and Black people to identify with the academic domain (Steele, 1997).

> Where bad stereotypes about these groups apply, members of these groups can fear being reduced to that stereotype. And for those who identify with the domain to which the stereotype is relevant, this predicament can be self-threatening. […] Negative stereotypes about women and African Americans bear on important academic abilities. [Thus,] the threat of these stereotypes can be sharply felt and, in several ways, hampers their achievement. (Steele, 1997, p. 614)

Steele's (1997) research revealed that high-achieving Black students are more likely to be impaired by stereotype threat, not because they have internalized the stereotype but because their fear of being labeled as such is of crippling psychological concern to those students.

Similarly, Smith et al. (2016) explored the types of gendered racial stereotypes that harm Black men on campus. The study found that a host of gendered racial stereotypes such as being seen as a criminal, ghetto-specific stereotypes, non-student athlete stereotypes, and anti-intellectual stereotypes resulted in overwhelming stress and racial battle fatigue among their participants. The men needed to expend additional energy developing and implementing numerous coping strategies to stay engaged in their educational experience. Smith et al. (2016) concluded that "Black racial misandry permeates the presumed safe spaces of academia—the college classrooms, hallways, meeting rooms, libraries, and computer labs—where Black male students are targeted and negatively engaged" (p. 1193).

Given Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) Theory of Departure, stereotype threat disrupts academic performance and intensifies the psychological harm on even the most promising of Black students. When they do not feel safe, wanted, and valued on campus, stereotype threat becomes a critical factor that pushes Black students to depart from higher education. If it has this effect on high-achieving students, it is also likely to result in adverse implications and additional barriers for Black students without comparable levels of academic and social capital.

Self-efficacy. Arthur Bandura was one of the first to bring forth the concept of self-efficacy within the social sciences. Bandura, a psychologist, defined self-efficacy as "one's perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels" (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016, p. 34). Scholars and educators are interested in self-efficacy because it is believed to be an important factor in student motivation, goal

attainment, learning, resilience, and persistence. Drawing from social cognitive theory, Bandura's work was focused on the levels at which participants utilized agency and empowerment to take control of their lives. "Students who feel more efficacious about learning should be more apt to engage in self-regulated learning" (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016, p. 35). Examples of self-regulated learning could include a student creating a list of assignment deadlines and developing a schedule for completing the work; a student might also engage in learning strategies that improve their productivity, like working in a quiet library or being an active member of a study group. Self-efficacy can be hindered when students receive negative cues about completing a task. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) explain that "when individuals experience negative thoughts and fears about their capabilities, those reactions can lower self-efficacy and trigger additional stress and agitation that help ensure inadequate performance" (p. 36).

Stereotype threat and microaggressions can erode the self-efficacy of Black students. Quaye, Griffin, and Museus's (2015) study elaborated on how diversity enrollment initiatives might make Black students question their admission at historically white institutions. Negative comments or microaggressions from their white peers contributed to their sense of inadequacy. Similarly, Cress's (2008) study about student perceptions of hostile campus climates found that negative perceptions resulted in additional stress on Black students. Examples from these studies suggest that negative thoughts and interactions can lead to the reduction of self-efficacy among Black college students. "Students typically engage in activities that they believe will result in positive outcomes and avoid actions that they believe may lead to negative outcomes" (Schunk &

DiBenedetto, 2016, p. 36). Strengthening self-efficacy may be harder for Black students who feel marginalized on campus, have limited personal relationships with others, and find themselves confronted by racial microaggressions from peers and faculty in the classroom.

The research findings note that factors such as goal setting, positive feedback from others, and success when faced with a challenge can improve the self-efficacy of students (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). In consideration of Harper and Simmons's (2018) equity indicators, an important component of goal setting is having role models. In higher education, Black faculty and staff serve as examples of academic success for Black students. Given the disproportionate Black student-to-Black faculty ratios in American institutions, Black students have fewer Black mentors on campus from whom to receive guidance. Comparable gender ratios are also a critical equity indicator in this case. Like having role models, the opportunities for mentorship between Black students and Black educators along gender lines may further enhance self-efficacy (Patton & Harper, 2003); this is particularly true in the case of Black men, who face significant structural barriers to collegiate academic success (Smith et al., 2016). Not having these resources available to them can hinder Black student motivation, engagement, and agency and may contribute to their marginalization and departure from higher education (Patton & Harper, 2003; Smith et al., 2016).

Linking Social and Psychological Factors

Disproportionate gender, student, and faculty ratios as well as completion rate ratios are harmful to Black people in higher education (Harper & Simmons, 2018). These

indicators also draw attention to the ways racist campus cultures result in hostile campus climates that are socially and psychologically damaging to Black students. Black students, when faced with these overwhelming circumstances, may resign to the idea that degree completion is out of reach.

Self-concept is a social construct that describes the way people view themselves through their environment and relationships with significant others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In contrast to self-concept, Coopersmith (1967) describes self-esteem as a psychological construct. Self-esteem, "expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 219). The barriers and dilemmas experienced by Black students deeply wound the core of social and psychological development and in doing so destruct Black student self-concept and self-esteem. As the equity indicators and studies have shown, campus climates are not conducive to Black student personal and academic success which leads to their departure from higher education. American public colleges and universities are, indeed, failing Black students.

Fortunately, research has shown that facilitating the development of self-concept and self-esteem among college students can improve personal development and academic success outcomes. In fact, numerous scholars have argued the importance of developing the whole student as a cornerstone of a postsecondary education experience. Bowen (1977) identifies personal self-discovery as "one of the most far-reaching purposes of higher education" (p. 42). Bowen's (1977) work calls on institutions to focus their

practice on the growth of the whole individual which includes affective, moral, and emotional factors. Cultivating the personal growth of every student is a tall order, yet there is one model that has shown promise in facilitating the personal development goal of higher education. The next section provides additional context for facilitating personal development among students by leveraging a widely used adult identity development theory in higher education, self-authorship.

Self-Authorship

Robert Kegan's (1994) book, *In Over Our Heads*, asserts that the pressures of modern society result in overwhelming stress on individuals. He theorizes that a person must construct an *order of consciousness* that enables them to effectively navigate these pressures, particularly within the home and workplace. Self-authorship is one of the stages of Kegan's lifelong evolution model where much of the learning of adulthood comes together and equips a person with the psychological and social maturity to be a productive adult. Most American adults, Kegan (1994) laments, have not reached this level of consciousness, which he coined self-authorship.

Building upon Kegan's work, Marcia Baxter-Magolda (2001, 2008) was the first to apply the concept of self-authorship to higher education student development theory. Her work stemmed from the philosophy that "the complexity of contemporary life necessitates that higher education prepare students to be lifelong learners and responsible citizens" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xvii). Baxter Magolda's research involved a 21-year qualitative study about self-authorship development among college students, some of whom began participating at the age of 18. The study began with 101

participants (51 women and 50 men). Over time, the participant numbers reduced due to attrition. By the 20th year of the study, there were 30 participants, all of whom were Caucasian (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Participants initially engaged in structured interviews. As time went on, the interviews became less structured. In general, the interviews focused on how participants learned and how they came to know (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Each year, the participants were invited back to discuss the experiences that influenced their learning throughout the year prior.

> These conversations included discussions of life they felt were most relevant, the demands of adult life they were experiencing, how they made meaning of these dimensions and demands, their sense of themselves, and how they decided what to believe. Inherent in these dimensions was their sense of themselves in relation to others and their involvement in significant relationships. (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 273)

Using grounded theory methodology, the results of the study were used to create a model that maps the self-authorship development process of early adulthood (Baxter Magolda, 2008). The model encompasses three developmental dimensions and stages; more information on these will be discussed later.

Along this journey, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) drew attention to the critical role that stakeholders in student lives have in this process. Faculty help students grow intellectually within their academic disciplines while also training them to remain considerate of divergent perspectives and critique. Student affairs practitioners guide students through the negotiation of appropriate boundaries of adult behavior while scaffolding experiences that allow students to identify their own sets of values to guide their future conduct (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Finally, college presents a time in which parents begin to take a step back in their authority over the daily lives of their

children (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). With the removal of those parental guiderails, parents hope that their children will start to figure out life on their own. Inevitably, students will falter, fail, and crash as they seek harmony between their newfound freedom and the consequences of their mistakes. This process of consequences and learning represents the part of *adulting* that is often excluded from the conversation about growing up, yet it remains crucial to reaching Kegan (1994) and Baxter-Magolda's (2001, 2008) notion of self-authorship.

Given this longitudinal analysis, Baxter Magolda's conclusion was that college years present a critical time to scaffold student transition from adolescence to adulthood; ongoing research has shown that cultivating this development also leads to improved student success outcomes. Today, Baxter Magolda's self-authorship model is broadly accepted and used in higher education. More specifically, it has been used to explain the adult identity developmental processes of young adults (Barber et al., 2013; Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007; Meszaros, 2007). The model has proven useful in creating programs or resources to scaffold the adult identity development of college students (Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda, 2007; Hodge et al., 2009; King et al., 2009; Pizzolato, 2005; Redmond, 2014; Welkener & Baxter Magolda, 2014). The following section takes a closer look at self-authorship development and its connection to college student success.

Defining Self-Authorship

Both Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2008) conceptualize self-authorship as a complex meaning-making process. The development of self-authorship is

prefaced on the idea that as young people transition into their adult identity, their meaning-making processes should shift from being externally driven to internally oriented. Baxter Magolda (2008) defines self-authorship as the "internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (p. 269). Being internally oriented is an important competency for adulthood, because it facilitates identity development and self-efficacy that enables people to be "self-initiating, guided by their own visions, responsible for their experience, and able to develop interpersonal relations with diverse others" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). The development of self-authorship is a process by which young adults learn to take greater personal ownership of their self-concept and self-esteem rather than having them determined by others; being able to do so enables them to better navigate the rigors of adult life. Baxter Magolda's model expands upon Kegan's model by breaking down self-authorship into three developmental dimensions and three developmental stages. These are described more fully in the next sections and are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Developmental Journey Toward Learning Outcomes

Dimension	External formulas	Crossroads	Self-authorship
Epistemological	View knowledge as certain or partially certain, yielding reliance on authority as source of knowledge; lack of internal basis for evaluating knowledge claims results in externally defined beliefs	Evolving awareness and acceptance of uncertainty and multiple perspectives; shift from accepting authority's knowledge claims to personal processes for adopting knowledge claims; recognize need to take responsibility for choosing beliefs	View knowledge as contextual; develop an internal belief system via constructing, evaluating, and interpreting judgements in light of available evidence and frames of reference
Intrapersonal	Lack of awareness of own values and social identity, lack of coordination of components of identity, and need for others' approval to yield an externally defined identity that is susceptible to changing external pressures	Evolving awareness of own values and sense of identity distinct from external others' perceptions; tension between emerging internal values and external pressures prompts self-exploration; recognize need to take responsibility for crafting own identity	Choose own values and identity in crafting an internally generated sense of self that regulates interpretation of experience and choices
Interpersonal	Dependent on relations with similar others are a source of identity and needed affirmation; frame participation in relationships as doing what will gain others' approval	Evolving awareness of limitations of dependent relationships; recognize need to bring own identity into constructing independent relationships; struggle to construct or extract self from dependent relationships	Capacity to engage in authentic, interdependent relationships with others in which self is not overshadowed by need for others' approval; mutually negotiating relational needs; genuinely taking others' perspectives into account without being consumed by them

Note. Table sourced from Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 12.

The Dimensions of Self-Authorship

Like Kegan's work, Baxter Magolda's (2008) model of self-authorship is focused on three central questions that help us understand the evolution of meaning-making processes. These questions include: *How do I know? Who am I? How am I in*

relationships with others? Each of these questions is aligned with an epistemological, intrapersonal, or interpersonal dimension.

Epistemological dimension. Philosophers and scholars from a broad range of disciplines have long been interested in how people attain and internalize knowledge. "Theories of epistemological development include assumptions about knowledge and its acquisition, descriptions about how knowledge is constructed as well as where knowledge resides, and explanations about the certainty, justification, and structure of knowledge" (Boes, Baxter Magolda, & Buckley, 2010, sec. 8). Within Baxter Magolda's model, the question *How do I know?* is intended to understand student epistemological development. This dimension is sometimes called the *cognitive dimension*. More specifically, this dimension explores the transition from student epistemology—which is based mostly on external factors such as family, education, and peers—to an internally defined epistemological orientation. For example, a student may begin college with political beliefs that are based on their parents' views; as they navigate college and are exposed to different ways of knowing, they may generate their own beliefs based on their newfound knowledge. As they transition toward self-authorship, their beliefs will also become more self-generated which helps them make meaning from an internally oriented process.

Intrapersonal dimension. *Who am I?* is a common question that people often ask as they grow up. As such, "many intrapersonal development theories also have a common emphasis on an internal, structurally mature sense of self" (Boes et al., 2010, p. 9). This question is woven into Baxter Magolda's model in the intrapersonal dimension. This

dimension is focused on the unique internalization and expression of one's personal identity. Like the epistemological dimension, growth toward self-authorship in the intrapersonal dimension involves shifting away from external determinations of identity to an internal sense of self. For example, career planning is a task that most students will experience during college. Those with an externally oriented identity may look to their parents, instructors, and peers to decide what career path to take, whereas a student with an internalized sense of self will be able to reflect upon their personal strengths, values, and motivations to determine their own career aspirations.

Interpersonal dimension. Living in the presence of others is a mostly universal aspect of human life. Therefore, it is understandable that a person would reflect upon themselves in relation to those around them. The third question of Baxter Magolda's self-authorship model, *How am I in relationships with others?* addresses this human curiosity through the interpersonal dimension. As a student develops internally oriented ideas about how they know and who they are, they will begin to renegotiate the relationships "that had been built on external approval at the expense of personal needs" (Meszaros, 2007, p. 11). For example, a student entering college might initially seek out friendships with people based on their high school perceptions about who is part of the popular crowd. Some students might go to great lengths to assume a new identity in college in hopes that they will find acceptance among peers in their new cohort. These examples suggest an approach to relationships that is based on the approval of others. The problem with basing one's interpersonal dimension in the hands of others is that it undermines authenticity and self-esteem. A self-authoring adult is likely to be less focused on what

others think of them while putting energy toward relationships with people who honor and cultivate their sense of self.

The Interplay of Dimensions

Recent scholars of self-authorship have shown an interest in the interplay between the dimensions of self-authorship. This shift recognizes that while each dimension is important, they do not function in isolation of each other. Researchers agree that the three dimensions work together but less is known about how they do so (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). As Berger (2010) explains:

> Development is not like moving on an escalator, where we all move in the same direction and at the same rate. Development happens in fits and starts, and it happens for some people at one time and others at another time; the odds are slim that you will move at the same rate and pace as important others in your life. (p. 258)

The work of Patricia King (2010) points out that the dimensions of self-authorship are often seen as equal partners but suggests that the cognitive (epistemological) dimension may be a foundational element that underpins the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. She challenges the notion of the cognitive dimension and prefers to use the term *cognitive complexity*. Being able to navigate cognitive complexity necessitates that a person can "reflect [on] one's capacity to make connections between and among [intrapersonal and interpersonal] elements, forming and reforming the connections to allow for more inclusive wholes as one's understanding of the relationships among elements become more complex" (King, 2010, p. 182).

The interplay of dimensions is particularly important in the assessment of self-authorship. In urging researchers to study the epistemological dimension of self-

authorship, King (2010) theorizes that "development in all domains strongly reflects—and arguably requires—cognitive complexity" (p. 180). This knowledge may help scholars develop better assessments and research designs that assess student development toward self-authorship (King, 2010). To date, work that explores the interplay of the dimension of self-authorship is limited to King's (2010) study. However, Creamer (2010) asserts that "a richer way to shape future dialogue about dimensions is not whether one dimension of self-authorship leads development, but under what circumstances it may lead" (p. 220). Exploring the interplay of dimensions in this way could prove useful toward optimizing the student experience to promote self-authorship.

The Stages of Self-Authorship

Pizzolato and Olson (2016) assert that "self-authorship is not just the sum of development among three dimensions. Self-authorship represents both a complex understanding of knowledge, relationships, and self, and an ability to determine how the dimensions impact each other" (p. 411). Using the questions that mark the dimensions of self-authorship, Baxter Magolda identified three stages in which the dimensions arise. From least to most sophisticated, these stages are called external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship.

External formulas. The external formulas stage represents the absence of self-authorship (Boes et al., 2010). In this stage, individuals have trouble making major decisions and are often influenced by others. "Those who make meaning through following external formulas rely on those formulas for what to believe, how to construct their identity, and how to guide their social relations" (Boes et al., 2010, p. 12). The

external formula approach to life is not conducive to adulthood, because it undermines self-efficacy. It also means that students in this stage rely heavily on others to help them address their needs on a college campus. For example, a student using external formulas may enroll in a major that their parents or peers deem best or they may look to their parents to help them with roommate or financial aid issues. Anecdotally, a common complaint among higher education administrators is that parents often swoop in to advocate or complete a social or academic task that should be completed by the student. In fact, the involvement of parents may hinder a student's ability to progress to the next stage of development toward self-authorship.

Crossroads. The crossroads stage is marked by the struggle between viewing the world through external formulas and the development of one's internal voice. Building on Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, Baxter Magolda and Taylor (2016) describe a tension that exists as traditional college-age students make sense of their liminal status between adolescence and adulthood. They discuss an in-between status as "a space in which [students] realize their parents are no longer responsible for deciding how they will live but in which they have not yet developed the capacity to make their own decisions" (p. 299). Furthermore, "individuals in the crossroads have the tendency to take responsibility for others' expectations and feel guilty when they do not meet them" (Boes et al., 2010, p. 13). The participants in Baxter Magolda's (2007) study found themselves wrestling with this stage throughout during their college experience and into their 20s. Therefore, Baxter Magolda (2007) asserts that college is a critical time to facilitate the development of self-authorship.

Self-authorship. Embedded within the final stage in the model is the formalization of three distinct areas that characterize self-authorship: trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments. Trusting the internal voice, Welkener & Baxter Magolda (2014) write, is a state of development in which individuals were able to "manage their reactions to external influences. As they used their internal voices to shape their reactions, they developed confidence using their personal beliefs and values to guide their lives" (p. 581). This stage marks a great progression from externally oriented paradigms to internally developed truths. Building an internal foundation is the second characteristic that self-authoring individuals maintain. In this area of the self-authorship stage, the participants were "synthesizing their identities, relationships, beliefs, and values into a coherent set of internal commitments from which to operate" (Welkener & Baxter Magolda, 2014, p. 581). Finally, securing internal commitments is characterized by not only being aware of their internal commitments but using them to inform actions. Together, these characteristics work in tandem to provide adults with the foundation to take ownership of how they make meaning, determine their life's direction, and orient their worldview to become the authors of their own lives.

Facilitating Self-Authorship and Student Success

In a critique of higher education, Chickering and Reisser (1993) as well as Baxter Magolda (2003) assert that educators often overlook the critical role that identity plays in student learning. "Although student affairs professionals have always advocated a holistic view of education, the traditional bifurcation of the curriculum and co-curriculum

separates students' minds and identities" (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p. 232). Critical thinking, decision making, appreciation for difference, and collaboration with others are key skills that employers seek in college graduates; Baxter Magolda (2003) finds that to do these skills well requires complex meaning-making abilities. In the development toward self-authorship, Baxter Magolda's (2008) participants

> were required to analyze data, critique multiple perspectives, understand contexts, and negotiate competing interests to make wise decisions upon which to base their practice [in personal and professional settings]. These challenges required an internal belief system that allowed them to consider but not be overwhelmed by external influence, a coherent identity that yielded the confidence to act on wise choices, and mature relations to collaborate productively with colleagues [and significant others]. (p. 269)

These competencies are also important for school, particularly when it comes to decision-making. Baxter Magolda and Taylor (2016) assert that the "capacity to make decisions […] is a key to many college learning outcomes […] and is a foundation for success" (p. 300).

Baxter Magolda (2008) explains that "self-authorship evolves when the challenge to become self-authoring is present and is accompanied by sufficient support to help an individual make the shift to internal meaning making" (p. 271). Given that most traditional age students will attend college between the ages of 17 to 24, much of their growth between external formulas, to crossroads, and perhaps to self-authorship will happen during the time they are attaining their baccalaureate degrees. In consideration of the long-term personal benefits to students, Baxter Magolda and Taylor insist that "college educators intentionally enable collegians to develop self-authorship to navigate emerging and later adulthood" (Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2016, p. 313).

Effective developmental experiences. King, Baxter Magolda, Barber, Brown, and Lindsay (2009) focused their research on how educators can create developmentally effective experiences that promote the development of self-authorship. Their study showed that many of the experiences that work toward self-authorship among their participants took place outside the classroom; however, the characteristics of developmentally effective experience can be applied in the classroom as well. Students using external formulas in their study benefitted from experiences that "both challenged [their] beliefs and provided a strong support structure for exploring new territory that was intellectually and emotionally engaging" (King et al., 2009, p. 116). For students at the crossroad stage, King et al. (2009) found that "experiences that helped students practice, own, take responsibility for, and become comfortable expressing their opinions" (p. 116) helped to promote their growth. Given the marginalization of Students of Color on college campuses, one questions whether their engagement in this way would be welcomed. Finally, those with an internal foundation gained from "experiences that challenged [them] to develop a comfort level with information grounded in realistic appraisals and direct feedback, as well as opportunities to continue to grow by challenging themselves and taking risks" (King et al., 2009, p. 116). In conclusion, King et al. (2009) suggest that educators should endeavor to employ several of these strategies to broadly help meet the needs of students at various stages of self-authorship. Baxter Magolda (2007) and Meszaros (2007) conclude that the development of self-authorship closely aligns with the goals of a 21st-Century education. "Self-authorship requires not just skills but access to one's authentic identity" (Cambridge, 2010, p. 25).

Critiques of Self-Authorship

Self-authorship is critiqued for its narrow conceptualization about the factors that shape identity. The early research about self-authorship within student development did not explore the influence of race as significant factor in adult identity. In recent years, the works of Torres and Hernández (2007) and Hernández (2016) find that the development of self-authorship among Students of Color involves an additional task. In most cases, this task is to make meaning of the realities of racism in their lives by challenging stereotypes and finding empowerment in one's ethnic identity. In a call to use CRT as a frame to study self-authorship, Hernández (2016) writes that the "mere inclusion of diverse populations in student development theory research is short of the ultimate goals of Critical Race Theory" (p. 197). Hernández (2016) suggests another approach:

> Applying this concept to self-authorship means that we must move beyond merely 'coloring' scholarship by including students of color in our samples, to a more substantive examination of social forces, such as racism, power, oppression, in our theorizing and examination of student development, as well as the limitations of work that does not include a critical inclusion of these social forces. (p. 197)

As such, race and adult identity cannot be separated if we are to understand self-authorship development among Students of Color. As will be described in the next section, CRT offers a framework to address these questions.

Self-Authorship Summary

This section focused on the influence of identity development on student success by providing an overview of the dimensions, stages, and pedagogical practices that enable the adult identity development of college-age students. The research highlights the need for further study about the interplay between the dimensions of self-authorship. This

section also identified effective practices and models that may help students move from externally based formulas to internal foundations. Considering the research on self-authorship's widespread benefits, one may question which student populations stand to gain the most from practices that support self-authorship. Given that the model is based upon the experiences and realities of white students, how might racism and other social forces result in a different process among Students of Color? The use of CRT, described in the next section, offers an approach to exploring the influence of racism on the student development of self-authorship.

Critical Race Theory

Thus far, this chapter has used Harper and Simmons's (2018) equity indicators to identify the ways in which Black students are systematically pushed away from higher education through practices that harm their social and psychological well-being. Yet, research has also shown that supporting the adult identity development of college students can contribute to student self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Self-authorship offers a promising approach that could prove useful in improving Black student success outcomes in these areas. However, we also know that Black students experience equity barriers and campus climates differently than their white counterparts; therefore, the process of development toward self-authorship may be differentially influenced by these forces. CRT is a theoretical and methodological approach that seeks to put race at the center of analysis. Using a CRT approach allowed this work to reexamine and reframe self-authorship in light of the social and psychological impacts of hostile campus climate on Black students.

An Overview of CRT

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explain that "the Critical Race Theory movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). CRT initially emerged from critical legal studies in which scholars drew attention to the systemic disadvantages that People of Color experience in the American legal system. The early works of CRT legal scholars, including Derrick Bell (1980), Richard Delgado (1989), Cheryl Harris (1992), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990), among others, paved the way for an examination of how the written and unwritten rules create imbalances of privilege and power that perpetuate systems of injustice. At the inception of CRT, CRT scholars were most interested in civil rights legislation and the social dynamics between race and law (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). Today, "Critical Race Theory has exploded into a narrow sub-specialty of jurisprudence chiefly of interest to academic lawyers into a literature read in departments of education, cultural studies, English, sociology, comparative literature, political science, history, and anthropology around the country" (Harris, 2017, p. xvi). A common thread across disciplines that apply CRT is an homage to core tenets that guide the orientation and approach to CRT in research and analysis.

Tenets of CRT

Depending on the research study or the discipline of the scholar, the number of CRT tenets may vary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Most studies articulate four to six tenets in their theoretical and analytical context, to expose how racial inequities manifest

within systems. The tenets described below are unique but interconnected as such, scholars will deploy them in varying ways to reveal how institutions reinforce racism.

The permanence and intersectionality of racism. At its core, CRT is an approach that seeks to put race at the center of research design and analysis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In order to apply this lens to a study, CRT acknowledges the *permanence of racism* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) in American society and the myriad ways that racism *intersects* (Crenshaw, 1990) with other forms of oppression to intensify the disenfranchisement of Black people.

White supremacy has dominated American life from the time Christopher Columbus set foot in the Americas, in the late 1400s, to the present. The Black story of subordination has been perpetuated through over 240 years of brutal capture and horrifically enforced slavery and nearly 90 years of legal racial segregation, discrimination, and the Jim Crow Era (History.com, 2018). The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s resulted in modest gains including the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which assured legal protection against workplace discrimination based on race, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which removed some barriers for voting registration and poll monitoring and inhibited housing discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and/or national origin (History.com, 2018). The journey to these hard-fought wins was marred by the murders of Black children and adults who were simply going about their daily lives, the vicious silencing of the Movement's most prominent leaders, including Kwame Ture and Malcolm X, and the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Medgar Evers (History.com, 2018).

More recently, Michelle Alexander's (2012) text *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* argues that racism continues to plague American society through the criminal justice system. Expanding on this notion, Alexander (2012) states that Black people are "also subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents once were" (pp. 1–2). In fact, statistics show that there are currently more Black people under the criminal justice system's control through imprisonment, probation, and parole, than there were at the height of American slavery in 1850 (Alexander, 2012; Tatum, 2017). Additionally, the Black Lives Matter movement which began in 2013, exposes the current racism and subsequent brutality that Black people experience at the hands of law enforcement (Black Lives Matter, 2019).

Racism in American society is just one social factor that negatively impacts the experiences of Black people. The critical legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990), brought to the fore the concept of intersectionality to explain how combinations of social identities such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, ethnicity and class intersect with race. The intersection of social identities with race can potentially compound the level of oppression a person may experience in different contexts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Tatum, 2017). In this way, a Black woman with an observable physical disability from a middle-class background may experience oppression differently than a gay white man from an upper-class socioeconomic background. Each person has some level of privilege, but it is the compounding accumulation of oppression means that the Black woman with the disability will likely experience more barriers based on her race, gender,

and ability, than the white man; these factors play against her in the legal system (Crenshaw, 1990).

Inherent in Crenshaw's (1990) work is the notion that the legal system often overlooks how social identities contribute to increase levels of violence perpetrated at Black women. To ignore the aspects of social identity that may make people targets for discrimination is oppressive, because those very factors embed them in the margins (Patton et al., 2007, p. 47). Crenshaw's (1990) research challenged ideas that viewed Blackness and womanhood to be separate entities. Instead, she argued that these two social identities interact symbiotically in ways that worsen the level of oppression Black women experience. For Black women, these layers of oppression manifest in gender and racial discrimination in the penal system (Crenshaw, 1990).

Today white nationalism has surged in the public eye while the progress toward equity for Black people is rolled back on a disturbingly regular basis. What was once considered a seemingly underground network of bed-clothes-wearing white supremacists is now an emboldened network backed by racist political leadership at every rank of the U.S. Government. Even in the face of federal legislation (History.com, 2018), legal precedent (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1990), and activism (Black Lives Matter, 2019; History.com, 2018; Tatum, 2017), one only need turn on the television, observe social media, or simply walk down a street to see that racism, as it has always been, is alive and well in the fabric of American life.

The challenge to dominant ideology. CRT scholars point to liberalism as a key force working against the liberation of Black people in American society. They push back

against dominant ideologies such as meritocracy and race-neutrality, that ultimately lead to deficit thinking about Black people. Such ideologies slow the movement toward social change, because they inevitably do little to address the systemic causes of oppression and subordination (Bell, 1980; Sung, 2017).

Meritocracy is imbedded in notions of the dominant narrative of the American Dream (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The rags-to-riches stories of Ellis Island immigrants reinforce the false narrative that if one simply puts in the hard work, anyone, regardless of color, can succeed in America. While the tokenized story of a self-made millionaire may provide a nice hook for a movie, these aberrations conceal the fact for many Black people, layers of oppression significantly impair their access to the opportunities and resources that could enable their social mobility (Tatum, 2017). Racist practices such as redlining and racial profiling not only result in the continued subordination of Black people but also make them targets of injustice that underpin negative stereotypes about the Black community (Tatum, 2017).

The adage "I don't see color, everyone's the same on the inside," is a popular statement among white people seeking to prove their acceptance of People of Color (Tatum, 2017). Like meritocracy, by not *seeing color* they also conveniently ignore the reality of racism as a social construct and its impact on Black people (Tatum, 2017). For hundreds of years, the social construction of race has put Black people below the status of whites (Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Tatum, 2017). The vestiges of 18th-century pseudoscience that claimed that Black people were genetically inferior are still felt today despite mounting research to the contrary (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). "The consensus

among most scholars in fields such as evolutionary biology, anthropology, and other disciplines is that racial distinctions fail on three accounts—that is, they are not genetically discrete, are not reliably measured, and are not scientifically meaningful" (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 16). Not "seeing" race does little to address the social construction of race that inevitably puts whites in a position of superiority. This false reality has real implications for the current treatment and racism that Black people experience (Tatum, 2017). While the research suggests otherwise, it is to the benefit of white supremacy that race-neutrality maintains its place as a pillar of social policy-making (Parker, 1998; Tatum, 2017).

Deficit thinking is another area in which CRT scholars challenge dominant ideology (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano et al., 2000; Tatum, 2017). As with meritocracy and race-neutrality, the failures of Black people are often attributed to individual (and in some cases, perceived genetic) flaws of character being understood as a symptom of an unjust system (Tatum, 2017). Harmful stereotypes about Black people are used to validate theories about their "natural" deficiencies. Within notions of meritocracy, the perception is that Black people fail because they do not work hard enough (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Tatum, 2017). For the race-neutral crowd, explaining away race does not negate the fact that racism remains a central force in American society which propagates deficit thinking. The critique of liberalism holds that ignoring race tends to the optics of the liberal movement without having to make any meaningful change for Black liberation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The centrality of experiential knowledge. This tenet is concerned with the fact that the voices of People of Color have been silenced throughout history and that the narratives of their lived experiences are critical to understanding and dismantling oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

> Because of their different histories and experiences of oppression, Black […] writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know. Minority status, in other words, brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11)

Therefore, the tenet about the centrality of experiential knowledge holds that scholars "recognize the value of lived experiences as marginalized persons by giving them the voice to testify the consequences and effects of racism" in their lives (Hernández, 2016, p. 170).

Traditionally, scholars have not explored the effects of racism from the vantage point of the oppressed. The work of Richard Delgado (1989) challenged scholars to address this gap within legal studies. Delgado's (1989) work emphasized the ways reality is constructed through in-group and out-group narratives. Within the legal system, Delgado (1989) posits that the outgroup stories come from those whose "voice and perspective—whose consciousness—has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized" (p. 3412). He noted "that the stories or narratives told by the [white] ingroup remind [them] of [their] identity in relation to outgroups, and provide [white people] with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2412). The stories of the outgroup become the defining factor between marginality and mainstream. This process has perpetuated an ideology that undervalues the voices and

experiences of Black people, deems them incapable of speaking to their experience, and defines their reality as a product of their personal deficit.

CRT scholars use the narratives that emerge from their research as a tool to "contradict racist characterizations of social life" (Merriweather Hunn, Guy, & Mangliitz, 2006, p. 224). The counter-stories of the Black lived experience cut through the assumptions and biases of the dominant group and serve an important role in CRT research. Counter-storytelling is a "method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Counter-storytelling serves a liberatory purpose for the oppressed. They "build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings, and deeper, more vital ethics. [They] challenge the received wisdom […] and open windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). Delgado (1989) also points out that counter-stories can also expose the destructive function of racism. Counter-stories, Delgado (1989) writes,

> Show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power. They are the other half—the destructive half—of the creative dialectic. (p. 2415)

This tenet creates space for the voices of the oppressed to be heard and believed. Counter-storytelling serves both a healing purpose for Black people and, when shared, as a tool that is critical for social change.

Transdisciplinary perspective and commitment to social justice. The final two tenets of CRT advocate for an approach to research that is informed by multiple disciplinary perspectives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As noted earlier, what once

started in the discipline of Critical Legal Studies is now a framework that lends itself well to a broad range of disciplines (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Patton et al., 2007). CRT scholars believe that using multiple disciplinary perspectives allows for a broader story to be told and a deeper analysis to be completed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The transdisciplinary perspective also acknowledges the interconnectedness of race and other systems of power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Therefore, using disciplines such as women and gender studies, sociology, psychology, and education, among others, offers a broad information base to understand how systems such as hostile campus climates differentially impact certain groups while serving to benefit others (Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In addition, CRT's activist roots express that CRT research should not be conducted for research sake—CRT should be viewed as an embodiment and act of social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT elevates the voices of those who are minoritized, marginalized, and oppressed. Drawing from the critical pedagogy works of Paulo Freire (1972), a central goal of CRT research is to draw attention to injustice and liberate the oppressed through the deconstruction of systemic barriers. Whereas critical legal theory was used to expose and transform some processes within the legal system, CRT should be applied to other social institutions to challenge and eradicate inequities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT and Education

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV (1995) were the first to bring CRT into the analysis of American educational systems. Together, they developed a CRT of

Education. The tenets of CRT in education include counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (Hiraldo, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1998) created an influential piece titled, "Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What Is It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?" to assert that "despite the proliferation of critical race legal scholarship, we have seen scant evidence that this work has made any impact on the educational research/scholarly community" (p.7). Similarly, Andrea Dixson and Celia Rousseau (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), in recounting 10 years of CRT's presence in the education discipline, criticized the slow progress of CRT in producing meaningful change within racist educational systems. In recounting 20 years of CRT educational research, Dixson and Rousseau (2017) again critiqued the limited reform within the American education system due, in large part, to racism. Thus, while CRT in education was initially received with great fervor, the pace of change has been disappointingly slow.

While the initial scholars of CRT in education mainly focused on the issues present in the K–12 educational system, others have directed their attention to how the same systems manifest in the higher education environment. Patton's (2016) research sought to disrupt postsecondary prose by taking a historical look at the harm caused by racism and white supremacy in higher education. Using this context, Patton (2016) described how a host of factors contribute to the "ordinary, predictable, and taken for granted ways in which the academy functions" (p. 315) to oppress Students, Faculty, and Staff of Color. The following outlines the ways in which racism negatively impacts the higher education system using several tenets of CRT in education.

Racism in higher education. The permanence of racism in higher education is, in part, sustained through *whiteness as property*. Critical legal scholar Cheryl Harris (1992) contended that property rights in the United States have benefitted white people while disenfranchising Black people. Property ownership afford owners with added benefits and opportunities when compared to renters, including tax relief, property equity, and housing stability. Stemming from the ownership of Black people in the time of slavery to redlining practices of the 1930s that extend to today, whiteness as property is a concept that draws attention to the intentional and malicious property ownership traditions that cut Black people off from social, economic, and political advantages (Donnor, 2013; Tatum, 2017).

The dominance of white faculty, endowed chairs, university presidents and trustees serve as evidence that whiteness as property extends to the academy. "79% of faculty members are white. […] White men are the primary beneficiaries of leadership positions in postsecondary institutions" (Patton, 2016, p. 323). Patton (2016) also notes that white supremacy is embedded in promotion and tenure processes and, citation practices within academic scholarship, and that journal editorial boards serve as gatekeepers who favor mainstream research rather than the areas of scholarship that focus on Populations of Color.

Promotion and tenure practices have a significant impact on how faculty spend their time (Boyer, Moser, Ream, & Braxton, 2015; Colby & Sullivan, 2009). "Academic careers in the United States are profoundly shaped by the expectations for scholarly accomplishment at the colleges and universities where faculty work" (Taylor Huber,

2002, p. 73). Colby and Sullivan (2009) assert that while perhaps not intended, "the research emphasis has reinforced the tendency among many academics to view the promotion of disciplined inquiry as the central or only educational agenda" (p. 28). Yet, Faculty of Color face different service demands than their white peers. For example, they are often tasked to be the diverse voice on committees; they also spend extensive amounts of time informally mentoring and advising Students of Color (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017; Stanley, 2006; Thompson, 2008). The informal service to Students of Color is not valued in faculty evaluations of promotion and tenure leaving faculty to choose between their professional trajectory or abandoning the students who need them most (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017). In addition, Faculty of Color must navigate these demands while making meaning of their own experiences as a racialized being in racially hostile campus climates (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Duong, Hunte, & Mehrotra, 2016; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, & Harris, 2012; Salazar, 2009; G. D. Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

"The reproduction of racism occurs without much disruption because those with the power to change institutions were also educated by these institutions, meaning they graduate from their institutions and often perform their lives devoid of racial consciousness" (Patton, 2016, p. 324). Professors will often draw from the same white-centric paradigms that they were taught which informs the curriculum they design for students. "Faculty own the curriculum in their classrooms and design it according to their own ontological and epistemological assumptions, which may work against students of

color" (Patton et al., 2007, p. 45). The minimization of Black culture and history from 'mainstream' curriculum diminishes opportunities for Black students to connect themselves to the topic of study and engage fully in the classroom (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015; Patton, 2016). Aside from the comparatively few historically Black colleges and universities or other minority serving institutions, higher education is white property, and there are practices, policies, and norms that sustain this ownership.

Racism prevents access to higher education and increases the likelihood that Black students will experience racist incidents while in college (Tatum, 2017). This reality is the reason why it is critical to understand how campus climates help or hinder Black student identity development. As this chapter has already shown, Black students who do access higher education contend with racism in many forms including microaggressions (Solórzano et al., 2000), stereotype threat (Steele, 2011; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and harmful practices that undermine their self-efficacy (Patton, 2016; Patton et al., 2007; Tatum, 2017).

The problematization and silencing of Black voice in higher education. The publication of scholarly work in higher education journals is problematic. For example, Harper's (2012) review of over 255 publications in 7 peer-reviewed higher education journals found a host of topics that problematize Black student presence on college campuses. Harper (2012) argued that studies often do not consider the role of race in their analysis which in turn, minimizes racist institutional norms. Even more troubling is a trend that systematically silences the voices of people who seek to bring forth the counter-stories of the oppressed student experience. In the academy, white scholars have

been known to only cite the work of other white scholars; "as a result, they often made incomplete or erroneous assumptions in their writings about the complex social realities and policy needs of minoritized communities" (Harper, 2012, p. 10). The practice of only citing the white dominant group upholds a status quo and does little to enact real changes that could positively influence the Black student experience (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2005; McNairy, 1996; Phuntsog, 1998; Staples, 1984).

Master narratives are the stories told by the dominant group to maintain their supremacy over others (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Within higher education, the *master narrative* is that of white faculty, staff, and students. These narratives perpetuate racism in the academy and draw the gaze away from the harmful ways the dominant narrative impacts marginalized students. The master narrative "is one that privileges whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). Stories that counter the dominant white narrative are scrutinized, assumed to be untrue, and explained away by blaming the oppressed person for their circumstance; this, in turn, takes the pressure off the dominant group and creates an ideological divide between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Bucking the master narrative trend, Harper and Simmons (2018) appear de-problematize Black students by saying that *American public colleges and universities are failing Black students*. Rather than placing blame on the students themselves, their work draws attention to the systemic forces at play in the failure to support Black student success. The Harper and Simmons (2018) report represents a counter-story to the

dominant ideology that Black students are solely responsible for their poor academic outcomes.

This is not to say that Black students are stripped of all agency within the educational systems, but that the fallacy of meritocracy is demonstrably evident in the dismal statistics of Black student success in higher education. Therefore, it is vital to ask Black students about their racialized experiences of becoming adults while in college.

By not including their lived experiences in research, we fail to understand how and to what degree their experiences differ from the dominant white group. Learning how Black students navigate issues in the curriculum, research, faculty mentorship may point to new avenues for better scaffolding the personal development of Black students in higher education.

Critique of policy in higher education. Critical Race scholars critique liberalism for its slow and ineffective pace toward social change. CRT "is committed to challenging race-neutral dominant ideologies such as meritocracy and race-neutrality that have contributed to deficit thinking about People of Color" (Malagon, Perez Huber, & Velez, 2009, p. 256).

The results of anti-affirmative action policies in the name of race-neutrality have been devastating in the education arena. As of late, there has been harsh criticism of the affirmative action approach to admission at colleges and universities. Critics of affirmative action decry that the policy creates an environment of reverse racism. For example, initiatives like California's Proposition 209 were passed with the intention to end "preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in

employment, education, and contracting programs, effectively ending all state-run affirmative action programs" (Tatum, 2017, p. 10). The initiative had deleterious impacts on the enrollments of Black students. At UCLA the enrollment of Black students dropped by over 37% (Tatum, 2017). "Almost two decades later, the proportion of African American freshman enrolling at UCLA remains below the pre-Proposition 209 levels" (Tatum, 2017, p. 10). Seven other states have instituted similar initiatives like California's by banning preferential treatment in hiring and education admissions. In 2015, the American Council on Education (ACE) found that six in ten institutions "admitting fewer than 40% of their applicants consider race as a factor in admissions" (Busta, 2018, para. 3).

The critiques of affirmative action seek to use race-neutral policies to preserve the status and power of white people while systematically excluding and silencing the voices of People of Color. Such policy changes only intensify the frequency of at which Black students' presence on campus is questioned which can lead to Black students increased feeling of inadequacy (Quaye et al., 2015). CRT scholars demand that research should disrupt epistemologies, policies and practices that perpetuate systems of oppression and work toward the liberation of Black people in higher education (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004).

CRT and College Student Development Theory

The works of Patton, McEwen, Rendón, and Howard-Hamilton (2007), Torres and Hernández (2007), Abes and Hernández (2016), and Hernández (2016) have broadened the scope of CRT research in higher education by taking a closer look at how

racism informs the models used to understand student development. Patton et al. (2007) note that since the 1970s, student development theories have been used to understand and describe the personal development processes of college students. “Although these theories contribute substantially to higher education and student affairs work, they are limited in their use of language about race and considerations of the roles of racism in student development and learning” (Patton et al., 2007, para. 39). The work of Patton et al. (2007) sought to use critical race perspectives to “introduce critical race theory as a framework for not only understanding [the student affairs] use of theories but also for guiding practice on college and university campuses” (p. 39). Similarly, Torres and Hernández (2007) applied a critical grounded-theory lens to understand how ethnic identity shapes the development of self-authorship among Latinx college students. “Recently, researchers have investigated limitations and assumptions upon which development toward self-authorship is based, in particular its foregrounding of the individual rather than the contexts in which individuals are situated” (Abes & Hernández, 2016, para. 97). The following section offers an overview of research that uses CRT as a framework to challenge the race-neutral nature of self-authorship.

CRT and self-authorship. Self-authorship is critiqued for its narrow conceptualization of the factors that shape identity. When the self-authorship model is applied to the experiences of Students of Color, scholars (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Baxter Magolda et al., 2010; Hernández, 2016; Torres, 2009; Torres & Hernández, 2007; Torres et al., 2009) have found that these students must overcome an additional and significant developmental task: to “identify and make meaning of racism as part of the

journey towards self-authorship" (Hernández, 2016, p. 173). The additional step that Students of Color must take is a function of the fact that self-authorship does not account for positionality within a social system. Another critique of self-authorship is that it is founded on Western ideals of individualism and therefore, clashes when applied to communities who practice collectivist values (Weinstock, 2010). Thus, self-authorship also falls short when applied to the collective cultural traditions expressed among African and Black Diasporic Cultures.

In critiquing self-authorship using the theoretical lenses of CRT, Black feminist thought, indigenous theory, and queer theory, Abes and Hernández (2016) emphasize that scholars should consider the role of power, oppression, and racism as central in student development. In a call to use a CRT approach in the framing and study of self-authorship, Hernández (2016) writes that "mere inclusion of diverse populations in student development theory research is short of the ultimate goals of Critical Race Theory" (p. 197). Hernández (2016) suggests another approach:

> Applying this concept to self-authorship means that we must move beyond merely 'coloring' scholarship by including students of color in our samples, to a more substantive examination of social forces, such as racism, power, oppression, in our theorizing and examination of student development, as well as the limitations of work that does not include a critical inclusion of these social forces. (p. 197)

Centering race and social forces that shape identity may provide more comprehensive and inclusive insights for understanding development toward adulthood.

Using this perspective, Torres and Hernández (2007) took a closer look at the influence of Latinx ethnic identity on self-authorship of college students. "The Latino/a students in [their] study had additional developmental tasks that are not included in the

study of all White students" (Torres & Hernández, 2007, p. 561). In answering the epistemological question of self-authorship, *How do I know?* "the participants considered what they believed to be valid knowledge, why they trusted to be authorities of information, and the manner in which they made decisions affecting their academic and life plans" (Torres & Hernández, 2007, p. 561). The participants moved through the stages from being externally oriented to internally negotiating a sense of identity that was "shaped by context and inclusive of their individually created amalgamation of cultural values" (Torres & Hernández, 2007, p. 561). In contrast to the experience of white students, Latinx students needed to make meaning about their cultural identity to become self-authoring.

Answering the intrapersonal question of *Who am I?* involved challenging stereotypes and messaging about Latinx people in American society. The developmental task to address this question involved "making meaning of societal images of Latinos/as that can be positive or negative" (Torres & Hernández, 2007, p. 564). Latinx students, unlike their white peers, are often faced with a constant barrage of racism and microaggressions while navigating white spaces. Being able to weed through positive and negative images toward empowerment was an important step toward self-authorship.

Finally, responding to the interpersonal question, *What relationships do I want with others?* involved a renegotiation of "relationships to assure that they were consistent with an informed Latino/a identity" (Torres & Hernández, 2007, p. 568). Thus, a solid ethnic identity allowed the students to engage with others in ways that did not diminish their cultural values and worldview.

Hernández (2016) revisited her dissertation research (Hernández, 2008) that explored ethnic and racial identity development within self-authorship. Using a CRT lens, Hernández's (2016) goal was to consider the role of context in shaping identity and "provide an avenue for the purposeful investigation of the interplay between individual and environment" (169). Hernández (2016) found that revising the core questions better reflected the lived experiences of the Latina participants in her study. Doing so allowed her to "shift the developmental vantage point from the individual, to the individual in relation to her political, racialized, environment" (Hernández, 2016, p. 172). Table 2 provides an overview of the shift from the traditional questions of self-authorship to those that integrate CRT.

Table 2		
The Revision of Self-Authorship Questions Using CRT		
Dimension	Self-Authorship (Traditional)	Self-Authorship (CRT)
Epistemological	How do I know?	How do I make meaning of my social world?
Intrapersonal	Who am I?	How does my social world shape my sense of self as a racialized being?
Interpersonal	What relationships do I want with others?	What relationships do I want with others for the benefit of my social world?

The epistemological dimension which originally asked, "How do I know?" became *"How do I make meaning of my social world?"* Hernández (2016) explains that, "this revised question allows for investigation of the developmental process needed for an individual to recognize how the environment provides particular experiences and stimuli, and the meaning-making processes that an individual may use to interpret this information" (p. 172). Within the intrapersonal dimension, *Who am I?* became *How does my social world shape my sense of self as a racialized being?* which fundamentally acknowledges one's positionality in their social context. This revised question:

> allows for the study of ethnic identity development and the developmental processes of identifying how social norms affect sense of self, as well as the examination of how individuals manage their public selves in changing contexts while maintaining a stable, internalized cultural identity. (Hernández, 2016, p. 174)

Hernández (2016) found that Latinx students, unlike white students, code-switched between a private identity and a public identity in their daily lives.

The last question in Baxter Magolda's (2001) model addresses the interpersonal dimension in asking, *What relationships do I want with others?* Hernández's (2016)

revision asks, *What relationships do I want with others for the benefit of my social world?* The CRT-nested question "allows for investigation of developmental processes wherein an individual recognizes her role as a political actor who seeks to forge effective coalitions, represent an entity's agenda, and make decisions that affect group members" (Hernández, 2016, p. 176). Because white students are in positions of power, the self-authorship model does not explicitly challenge them to consider how their racial positioning contributes to their role in systems of oppression. The racial positionality of Hernández's (2016) participants forced them to reckon with their status and how relationships with others could help lead to their liberation.

The early work and application of self-authorship to student development did not explore the influence of race in the development of adult identity. The fact that self-authorship does not center race is problematic because it limits the extent to which Black students "make the transition from their socialization by society to their role as members and leaders in society's future" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 25). Torres and Hernández's (2007) critical grounded-theory work with Latinx students and the Hernández (2016) revision of the core questions of self-authorship using CRT together serve as a starting point to explore the impact of social forces on individual self-concept. This work holds promise for use among other racial and ethnic groups.

While the focus on the experiences of Latinx students provides a framework to see the CRT self-authorship model in action, it does not fully account for the differential experiences of other racial and ethnic groups. The histories, cultures, and social positioning of Latinx and Black people in the United States are dissimilar, which is likely

to manifest in different notions of self-concept (Torres & Hernández, 2007). This is not to say that Latinx people have not experienced their own version of oppression through the power of white supremacy, but that the experiences of Black people and Latinx people throughout history have evolved in differing ways. Thus, these differences are likely to emerge in the development of self-authorship with respect to the historical, cultural, and social histories of each group.

Current research on ethnic/racial identity and self-authorship has focused mostly on Latinx students (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Hernández, 2016; Torres & Hernández, 2007; Torres et al., 2009). The one study that looked exclusively at the self-authorship of Black students is a quantitative study based at a historically Black university (Strayhorn, 2014). Thus, we know little about how Blackness informs the lived experiences of Black college students in their development toward self-authorship. Using the studies on Latinx students serves as a helpful starting place for exploring how self-authorship might be informed by Black racial identity. The next section will provide more context to the ways racism and oppression play critical roles in the personal development of Black people throughout the lifespan.

Nigrescence

William E. Cross Jr.'s (1971) widely cited theory of Nigrescence, or *the process of becoming Black*, remains the most common framework of Black identity development in use today (Helms, 1990; Patton, Renn, Guido-DiBrito, & Quaye, 2016). At the most basic level, Nigrescence is a theory about Black racial identity formation that evolves in response to racism. This is also true of other Black racial identity theories including

Thomas (1971), Jackson (1975, 2001, 2012) and Helms (1990). While each theory is diverse in its approach to explaining racial identity development, like the critical race theoretical perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), they all point to racism and oppression as a hegemonic force that shapes the context of Black identity.

Nigrescence Lifespan Theory

Cross's Nigrescence model was expanded in collaboration with Fhagen-Smith (2001) to account for the developmental process of becoming Black throughout the lifespan. The model includes six sectors and is inclusive of Cross's (1971) original Nigrescence theory which resides in sector five.

Sectors 1 and 2. The first and second sectors of the Nigrescence Lifespan Model explain Black identity development from the infancy and childhood stage (sector 1) and the preadolescent stage (sector 2). According to Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001), infancy is a stage in which a Black person is unaware of racial identity.

As infants move into childhood, their understanding of racial identity is developed through a process of socialization. The racial socialization process takes place in one of three ways that are dependent on the influence of external authorities such as parents, teachers, and other significant people in a child's life. Two of these socialization forms include low racial salience and high racial salience. Children exposed to low racial salience grow up in an environment that minimizes the significance of race in that it is not a formative component of their upbringing. In contrast, children who grow up with high racial salience are taught that race is a significant aspect of their identity. Children in high racial salience environments represent *Pattern A* socialization.

The final socialization form is internalization. Unlike low and high racial salience, children socialized through internalization learn that Blackness is bad. In turn, the child will internalize negative racial perceptions of themselves and other Black people. Those with low racial salience and internalized racism are grouped into socialization *Pattern B*. Because this work focuses on Black students transitioning into adulthood, the information about these sectors is intentionally minimal; however, patterns A and B, low/high salience and internalized racism, will be central to understanding what takes place in later sectors.

Sector 3. The third sector of Cross and Fhagen-Smith's Nigrescence Lifespan Model articulates the Black identity development during adolescence. Youth will enter this stage with an externally defined racial identity that is based upon external influence. Up to this point, they have not developed the cognitive skills to critically reflect on their racial identity. Adolescence is a period in which Black youth begin to engage in critical reflection—Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) call this exploration *moratorium*. Youth with high racial salience will begin to internally make meaning of their Blackness, while youth with low racial salience will navigate this process by exploring non-racial aspects of their identity such as their gender or their group membership as a musician or athlete, among others. Among youth with internalized racism, this period is marked by a continuation of negative assumptions or perceptions about Black people if they are not challenged by others. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) note that adolescence is *authenticated* when youth can identify and affirm their own self-concept and are therefore, less reliant on others to define themselves.

Sector 4. By early adulthood, Black people with high racial salience have strong Black reference group orientation, that is, they recognize and internalize the value of Black culture and race. Black people with high racial salience constitutes the largest group within this sector. This sector presents opportunities to further expand and personalize their Black self-concept. Those with low racial salience or internalized racism are likely to maintain the status that they authenticated in the adolescence sector. Black people with low racial salience "can continue to live in environments where their identities are maintained and their race is never acknowledged. However, they are highly susceptible to adult Nigrescence, particularly if they experience a critical event that causes them to examine their race" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 101). Internalized racism will continue into adulthood unless a conversion experience takes place for these individuals to work toward a healthy Black identity. People with low racial salience and internalized racism may never experience adult Nigrescence, because they view their race as insignificant or are overcome with racial self-deprecation.

Sector 5. Adult Nigrescence represents this fifth sector of Cross and Fhagen-Smith's lifespan model (2001). This sector consists of Cross's (1971) original four stages of Nigrescence. The four stages are: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization/internalization commitment. There are multiple processes taking place in this sector that pull from concepts already described. For example, pre-encounter considers two identities; pre-encounter assimilation corresponds with the low racial salience type, while pre-encounter anti-Black is associated with internalized racism. It is important to note that those with high racial salience (Pattern A) might skip this sector

due to their lifelong socialization, which both valued and made significant their Blackness.

This sector is focused on the changes that might take place when a person with low racial salience or internalized racism experience a critical event that challenges how they conceptualize their racial identity. “Cross (1991) noted that the encounter is an unexpected situation, which can be one traumatic experience or a series of events that prompts a turning point” (Patton et al., 2016, p. 102). An example of a single event might involve a Black person being racially profiled and mistreated by a police officer whereas, experiencing daily microaggressions would represent a series of events.

When the critical event or series of events happens, the individual enters the encounter stage. How the individual responds to the critical event gives rise to the immersion or emersion response stage. Some may respond to the critical turning point by developing a pro-Black identity that romanticizes all things Black while rebuking whiteness. Alternatively, the emersion stage is marked by a period of liminality in which one reevaluates their racial identity and seeks to incorporate their new knowledge into a more authentic understanding of their Black self-concept.

Another pattern of responses results in even more problematic outcomes. A person may regress back to the pre-encounter stage due to their inability to cope. They may also become so fixated on anti-whiteness that they focus less on cultivating their Black self-concept. Perhaps, most damaging to their self-concept, they become so exhausted and frustrated that they drop out of an exploration of their racial identity altogether.

The final stage in this sector is *internalization/internalization commitment*. For those who have been socialized with low racial salience or internalized racism (Pattern B), this stage can result in a *conversion* experience that may result in a healthy Black self-concept. At this point a person may devote their energies into one of three identity personas: Black Nationalist, bicultural, and multicultural. A Black Nationalist persona is one in which a person's Blackness is their most salient identity—they actively commit and engage in social justice work that benefits Black people. Those with a bicultural persona seek to blend their Black identity with their other identities while continuing to value their Blackness. The third persona is the multicultural perspective. People with a multicultural persona integrate a wide range of their identities, commit to the ongoing exploration of the identities of others, and work toward dismantling multiple oppressions through social justice activism. As Patton et al. (2016) explain, "this sector involves coming to a race consciousness and establishing a more authentic and balanced comprehension of being Black" (p. 102).

Sector 6. The last sector of the Cross and Fhagen-Smith model is called Nigrescence Recycling. This sector describes an ongoing process of being impacted by critical or serious events and making meaning of them in ways that result in an ever-evolving, yet sound, Black self-concept. Nigrescence recycling "occurs when one's pre-existing Black self-concept is called into question. Having no explanatory power to resolve emergent questions regarding their identity, adults reflect on and subject their identity to close scrutiny as they seek resolution" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 103). Patton et

al. (2016) describe that over time, this reflection and resolution process can result in a wisdom, "or a complex and multidimensional understanding of Black identity" (p. 103).

Nigrescence in Daily Transactions

Linda Strauss and William Cross Jr. (2006), collaborated on a study that examined the strategies Black people use to negotiate the daily transactions of social life while living in a racist society. These coping strategies include buffering, code-switching, bridging, bonding/attachment, and individualism. The strategies are grouped into three transaction categories: transactions with oppression, transactions with other Black people, and transactions with the increasingly diverse American society (Strauss & Cross, 2006).

> Each pattern represents the types of experiences Black people face daily, whether it be contending with racism, feeling a sense of pride in being Black, or understanding the importance of being successful in the larger society. In sum, Cross's expansion of Nigrescence theory emphasizes the lived experiences of Black people and represents not only how Black identity is performed but the manner in which Black people are taught to perform it. (Patton et al., 2016, p. 103)

Buffering, code-switching, and bridging represent three coping strategies that arise when a Black person interacts with others.

A Black person's buffer response to a racist interaction may be to shield themselves from the situation. The person might make a joke or downplay the severity of the conflict to counter the immediate threat (Patton et al., 2016, p. 103). Code-switching represents another strategy that is activated when faced with oppressive circumstances. It involves a process by which "Black people successfully maneuver interactions within the larger mainstream and Black cultural life. Individuals can adeptly shift between the two as needed" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 103). Code switching is leveraged to fit in at school,

the workplace, and in places where the threat of racism or oppression is present. Bridging represents the last coping strategy that Black people use to manage their interactions with others. Within bridging, a person cultivates respectful and rewarding relationships with diverse others. Patton et al. (2016) explain that "this transaction represents a comfortable sense of identity and willingness to embrace people from various walks of life" (p. 103).

Bonding/attachment and individualism are generally focused on a sense of belonging and affinity with other Black people (Patton et al., 2016). Black people enhance their connection to Black culture and Black identity by immersing themselves in experiences with other Black people or through in-depth study of Black history, culture, and social positionality. These interpersonal interactions result in a strong bond or attachment to others that reinforces their racial identity.

Learning about and making meaning of the Black experience, coupled with interactions with Black people, can prompt a reference group orientation. It is in those groups that individuals can come together to collectively celebrate their shared identity and organize against the oppression they experience (Higher Education Diversity Summit, 2016). In contrast, individualism characterizes a separation of the individual from their attachment to Blackness. The focus on individualism distances the person from their Black racial identity in daily transactions, thereby taking racial salience out of play when they are faced with a racist or oppressive incident. In this case, a person might make meaning of the incident by making meaning through another identity that they hold (Higher Education Diversity Summit, 2016).

Three of the five strategies suggest that coping with racism and oppression often involves a Black person changing their behavior to avoiding conflict. By buffering and code switching, a person copes by either creating a barrier between themselves and the incident or by adapting their speech and mannerisms to better fit in with the oppressive group. Individualism appears to erode Black identity salience to assimilate into whatever identity is needed to circumvent negative interactions. Conversely, bridging and bonding attachment involve stepping into relationships with other Black people or non-Black people to forge purposeful and self-fulfilling interactions that fuel positive self-concept.

Nigrescence Research in Education

The application of Cross's Nigrescence Theory is mostly limited to counseling situations (Patton et al., 2016; Shin, 2015). Much of the research that uses the Nigrescence model within the higher education context focuses on counseling elements such as the relationships between racial identity and self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985), racial identity and psychological health (Pillay, 2005), and racial identity and academic performance (Awad, 2007). Patton et al. (2016) assert that:

> fostering racial identity development could serve as a major tool in prompting students to consider their contributions to a racially just society as well as, the actions in which they might engage to disrupt racism on campus, and in society upon graduation. (p. 114)

Nevertheless, change in student affairs practice is slow because the "research studies of racial identity development [including Nigrescence] that do exist rarely address the applicability of the models to higher education or student affairs specifically" (Patton, 2016).

Linking the negative outcomes of sector 5, namely regression, fixation, and dropping to Black student response to hostile campus climates could help educators serve and support the persistence of Black students in college. For example, a lack of resources, Black peers, and Black mentors may create situations in which Black students are unable to cope with racist events they experience on campus. The inability to cope may force them to regress to the pre-encounter stage.

Students who become fixated on anti-whiteness may miss out on opportunities to put in the work to develop their own racial identity. Educators who know how to identify and redirect anti-white fixation may better serve Black student racial identity in the long run and will certainly help improve interpersonal interactions between Black and white students on campus.

In the same way, dropping out of Nigrescence has harmful implications for Black self-concept and self-esteem which may also erode personal development. Again, having a critical mass of individuals who can tend to students in this phase can improve their sense of racial belonging and mattering on campus; with these supports in place, Black students may be able to direct their attention toward self-authorship development.

The interpersonal coping strategies of buffering, code-switching and bonding/attachment may need to be activated more frequently in racially hostile campus climates. The ongoing threat of oppression and constant adaptation to fit in can lead to racial battle fatigue (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and ultimately to departure from higher education. As Harper and Simmons (2018) point out, institutions are failing Black students in the areas of representation equity and degree completion equity. To minimize

the need to use these coping strategies, having enough Black representation on campus is critical.

Critique of Nigrescence

A common critique of racial identity development theories, in general, is that they do not account for the complexity of identity development beyond race (Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Patton et al., 2016). A critique of Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) Lifespan Nigrescence Theory is that it shows that racial identity is influenced heavily by racism and oppression but does not go far enough to consider how other intersections of identity might also be informing these processes (Patton et al., 2016). Cross does not deny the fact that his model focuses on race and oppression. He challenges this notion by stating that attention to intersectionality "in some ways dilutes the emphasis on the collective" (Higher Education Diversity Summit, 2016, sec. 18:10). As a radical social psychologist, Cross's work shifts from traditional psychology that attends to the individual; instead, he is interested in the ways reference group orientation assists in the meaning-making process of racial identity and how this orientation supports collective action toward social justice.

Cross urges us to consider how reference group orientation helps advance social change. Within the context of social movements, Cross argues that if Black people are focused on identities that take them away from the cause, it reduces the number of Black people who are fully committed to the work of Black liberation (Higher Education Diversity Summit, 2016).

The reality is that people are not just Black—they move about the world experiencing many types of oppression based upon their sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability and a host of other factors (Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These forces manifest not just within a person's racial identity, but in other elements of who they are. Focusing exclusively on race may weaken the meaning-making process of the whole Black person *within* the collective. The focus on race sidesteps the ways in which the intersections of identity might lead to greater creativity and cohesion within the collective. What appears to be a dilution of the social movement actually serve the broader purpose of addressing the intersections of multiple oppressions toward social justice for all. Of significance in this work is how adult identity development might inform and intersect with Nigrescence of traditional-age Black college students and work toward their holistic liberation.

Chapter Summary

A report by the American Council on Education highlights the increasing racial diversity of the United States. Growth statistics project that by 2050, the total number of people with Black, Latinx, and American Indian/Alaskan Native backgrounds will make up most of the American population. At the same time, higher education institutions throughout the country are seeing an increase in their enrollment of racially diverse students. Noting this demographic shift, the authors of the ACE report, Espinosa, Gaertner, and Orfield (2015), insist upon addressing the ongoing need to prepare the American citizenry with "the education and training that post-secondary settings provide—a form of capital that can help ensure American economic

competitiveness, the economic mobility of individuals and families, and a robust democracy" (p. 1). Trends in the enrollment of Students of Color in higher education suggest a promising step toward addressing the demands of America's future, yet getting students to college is only the first step. To maximize the potential of racially diverse students in higher education and beyond, institutions must offer inclusive experiences that cultivate their personal and academic development. Critical Race Theorists point to racist ideologies, laws, and historical practices that systematically block the personal and academic success of Black students.

The previous sections in this chapter articulate that public colleges and universities are failing Black students across critical equity indicators, through hostile campus climates that harm the social and psychological development of Black students, and that the very model used to support the adult development of Black students does not consider how racial identity is involved in this process. Therefore, American institutions are failing in their missions to provide *all* students with the social and economic capital they require to productively engage in life, the professional workplace, and democracy; in doing so, they are also complicit in the destabilization of America's future.

White supremacy has ravaged the country that is now called the United States of America for over 500 years. The failure of today's education system is embedded in an unwillingness to formally acknowledge and deconstruct the racist stronghold that prolongs this injustice. College is a critical time to scaffold the transformation from adolescence to adulthood; the support for this process should extend to equitably to all

students and it may require some adaptation to address the unique experiences of Black students. The broad application of self-authorship approaches to student development without regard for the differential experience of race perpetuates white supremacy in higher education and beyond.

Central to the purpose of this work was understanding how supporting both racial and adult identity development may lead to better outcomes for Black college students. This purpose demanded a better strategy to bring the theory of Nigrescence into the forefront of student affairs practice. The recent attention to using a CRT-informed model of self-authorship opened the doors to more inclusive perspectives to address these questions. Merging the themes of Nigrescence with the themes of Hernández's model of CRT self-authorship has the potential to bridge the divide between theory and practice and move toward a better holistic experience for Black students in higher education.

This work argues that one can be simultaneously Black *and* adult—that the process of finding harmony among these specific identities will look different for Black students. American colleges and universities must do better to understand this process because it has equity implications for the social and psychological development, and ultimately the academic success, of Black students. Prior to this study, we did not have the data to tell the story of the racialized self-authorship development of Black students.

The intention of using a Critical Race approach and Nigrescence theory to research and analyze this gap is to bring the lived experiences of Black students to the forefront, to provide a platform for their voices to be heard, and to present compelling evidence to influence educational practice toward social change. As explicated in the next

chapter, this inquiry explored the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, this study sought to understand how traditional-age Black students made meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of racially hostile campus climates and how campus climate informs this process. Adapting a CRT model of self-authorship (Hernández, 2016) that situates adult identity within the broader racial context and centering the identity development process involved in Nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1994; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Strauss & Cross, 2006) allows for a new Black-centered perspective on how college students #AdultWhileBlack.

Chapter 3: Methodology

American public colleges and universities are failing Black students (Harper & Simmons, 2018). These failures are made evident in the ubiquity of racially hostile campus climates, the disproportionate representation of Black people working and studying in higher education, and the comparatively dismal graduation rates of Black students (Baldwin & Johnson, 2018; Clark & Mitchell, 2018; Cress, 2008; Harper, 2012; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Smith et al., 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000). Intellectual and personal development remain two longstanding goals of a collegiate education (Bowen, 1977; Humphreys, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013). In fact, the positive link between identity and learning is widely acknowledged within the literature about college student success (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Hodge et al., 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014; Torres et al., 2009; Zaytoun, 2005). Unfortunately, research in this area is mostly based on old, white models and fails to acknowledge the ways in which racism and oppression inform the intellectual and personal development of racially marginalized students (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Feagin et al., 1996; Hernández, 2016; Torres & Hernández, 2007).

Institutional failure to understand and address the link between racialized identity and learning is representative of a broader problem in higher education and American society, in general. Racism informs the ways in which Black people grow up, learn, and survive under the hegemony of white supremacy. As discussed in the previous chapter, racism silences Black voices in the academy (Harper, 2012; McNairy, 1996; Stanley,

2006), minimizes the experiences of Black students (Harper, 2012; Solórzano et al., 2000), and marginalizes Black student racial existence on college campuses (Smith et al., 2016; Solórzano, 1998). What is needed is an amplification of Black student voices so that their narratives, lived experiences, and humanity can be heard and solidified in the literature. While the acknowledgement of the racialized adult identity development of Black students cannot fully address the complex social issues present in American society, if used to address institutional policy and practice it offers an opportunity to chip away at the structures that perpetuate injustice.

The purpose of this study was to understand the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, this study explored how traditional-age Black students made meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the context of racially hostile campus climates, and how campus climate informs this process. Scaffolding the development of adult identity using Baxter Magolda's self-authorship model has been shown to improve student success outcomes among white students. However, the self-authorship model is critiqued for its race-neutral approach to adult development and therefore, is not inclusive of how racism intersects with the adult development of Students of Color.

Hernández (2016) used CRT to reimagine Self-authorship by centering race in the development of adult identity and by revising the core questions of the model. Doing so has allowed Hernández (2016) to describe the racialized adult identity development among Latinx populations; to date, no one has published work that explores this process among Black college students.

The conceptual framework articulated by Hernández (2016) lends itself to the Black population, even though there are important historical and contemporary differences in experience between the two populations. This study addresses a gap in the literature about the racialized adult identity development of traditional-age Black college students. With this knowledge, educators will be well-positioned to address policies and practices regarding campus climate and better scaffold the personal development outcomes of Black college students.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the research questions and design that guided this work. A description of the researcher's positionality follows which will help to ground this work in critical race methodology. The next sections describe the research methods, data collection procedures, and the ethical consideration of the study. The final sections address the quality assurance of the research and the limitations of this line of inquiry.

Research Questions

This study is significant because it seeks to address the fact that American public colleges and universities are failing Black students (Harper & Simmons, 2018). Amplifying Black student voices about their racialized adult identity development in college is a starting place to improve the success of Black students in higher education and beyond. Therefore, this work was guided by the following research questions.

1. What does it mean for college students to #AdultWhileBlack?

a. How does the racialized adult identity meaning-making process unfold across the dimensions of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?
b. What does racialized adult identity development look like within the stages of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?
c. How do the sectors of Nigrescence manifest within the dimensions and stages of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?

2. In what ways does campus climate help or hinder #AdultingWhileBlack among traditional-age Black college students?

Thus far, Hernández (2016) is the only scholar to publish about the use of a CRT-informed framework to understand the adult identity development of Students of Color. Hernández (2016) focused her study on the experiences of Latinx students.

The first research question, *what does it mean for college students to #AdultWhileBlack*? builds upon Hernández's work by applying the model to a Black student population. Sub questions (a) and (b) were intended to address the Black student development process across the dimensions and stages of CRT Self-authorship. Hernández's (2016) study offers a framework to articulate the adult development process of racially minoritized students but is informed by Latinx racial experiences. Therefore, sub question (c) was intended to contextualize Black racial identity within the exploration of CRT Self-authorship (Hernández, 2016). Nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1994; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001), or the process of becoming Black, grounds this study in the racialized experiences of Black people.

The second question addressed the role of social forces in shaping the racialized adult identity development of Black students. Campus climates at historically white institutions benefit white students while disadvantaging Students of Color. Identifying how campus climates inform the racialized adult identity of Black students is a useful step toward the generation of inclusive and equitable campus climates that foster the success of Black students. Taken together, these research questions explored the racialized meaning-making processes that traditional-age Black students undergo as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and how racially hostile campus climates inform the racialized adult identity development process.

Research Design

This study used a basic qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with a critical race lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Creswell and Creswell (2018) write that qualitative researchers are interested in "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4).

This work closely aligned with qualitative inquiry, because it sought to understand how Black student racialized adult identity is informed by collegiate campus climate. Qualitative researchers are also curious about "making sense of (or interpreting) the meanings others have about the world" (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 8). CRT asserts that the world in which we live is racist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT scholar-activists study how People of Color exist and make meaning of their lives within systems of white supremacy (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hernández,

2016). Thus, qualitative Critical Race scholar-activists must be intentional about examining problems considering racism, power, and oppression in the lived-experience of marginalized groups.

Using both qualitative and critical race lenses, this work intended to explore how traditional-age Black college students make meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of racially hostile campus climates. A qualitative research design was appropriate for this work given, the focus on the lived experiences and meaning-making of the participants.

CRT was also well suited to the purposes of this work. This study assumed that racism plays a central role in the construction and permanence of racially hostile campus climates that damage the social and psychological development of Black students. While a common goal of higher education is to cultivate the personal development of students, racism pushes Black students away from learning experiences that should support their adult identity development. Through a deeper understanding of what the racialized adult identity development process looks like for Black students, this work addresses a knowledge gap that could inform practices and policies that better support the personal development and success of Black students in higher education.

Researcher Positionality

CRT demands that scholars reflect upon the assumptions and biases that could inform the researcher's practice and include a statement of positionality in the proposal and publication of their findings. This section draws upon a practice from Critical Race-Grounded Theory (Malagon et al., 2009) that situates a researcher's positionality

while acknowledging their cultural intuition as an asset to the study. Delgado Bernal (1998) states that cultural intuition is "a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic" (p. 568). Thus, "cultural intuition informs not only data collection and analysis, but also the entire research process itself—from the questions [asked] and the methodologies [employed], to the ways [scholars] articulate […] findings in the writing process" (Malagon et al., 2009, p. 266). Using this approach, positionality and cultural intuition are described below through the researcher's personal, academic, and professional experiences as well as the orientation to the analytic research process. Because of the personal nature of this portion of the chapter, first-person language will be used.

Personal Experience

The ways in which we are socialized have a profound impact on how we view ourselves and the world around us (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). I identify as a bi-racial cis-gendered woman. My mother is a white American of distant Scottish and Irish descent, my father was a Black Ghanaian man who spent his formative years living in Ghana before coming to the United States to attend college. My parents separated when I was young and my contact with my father was periodic. Thus, I was raised by my white mother. For the first 10 years of my life, I lived in a predominantly white, low-income community. For the next 10 years, we lived about 30 minutes north in a rural, predominantly Mexican community. Much of my entire life has been situated in places where I am one of only a few Black people.

In linking my childhood experiences with the sectors of the Nigrescence Lifespan Model (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001), I can say that I was pseudo-socialized with high racial salience. My mother instilled a pride in my racial and cultural identity by speaking positively about my Black features, by borrowing books and videos from the library that featured Black characters, and by attending cultural events that helped connect me to my Black roots.

I am incredibly appreciative for the great lengths that my mother went to help socialize me into Black culture; however, I continue to understand my experience as being pseudo-socialized. My mom grew up in a low-income white family, in white communities, and attended predominantly white schools; her socialization means that, at times, no matter how hard she tries, she cannot fully understand the complexity of my racialized experiences. Perhaps signaling a period of low racial salience as I matured into adolescence, I would often find myself explaining away racist incidents by focusing on reasons other than racism like a white person might do. While I still felt pride in my racial identity, I felt uneasy about pulling the proverbial *race card*, about how to respond to the pushback from others when I did, and about how to make meaning of those experiences with a person who could fully understand what I was going through.

During my early adolescence and first years of college, my father became more present in my life. While he was proud to be a Ghanaian man, he seemed intent on assimilating into American culture. Perhaps it was a survival strategy that he, as a Black man, used to survive in a very white area of the United States in the 1970s. In any case,

when I was with him, he would only share romanticized soundbites about Ghana and share even less about my extended family that continues to live there today.

A turning point in my racial identity came when my father passed away suddenly. I realized soon after, that he was my primary authentic connection to Blackness. At the age of 20, less than one year after his passing and feeling the vacuum of his loss in my concept of identity, I boarded a plane to Ghana to find it for myself.

Going to Ghana was my first-ever experience being surrounded by Black culture. It was a wholly transformative experience to see the good and the bad of the place that my father romanticized from afar. Even so, I struggled with being seen as a tourist, in what I believed to be one of my home countries. I so wished that I had learned Twi, my father's language, so that I could interact with my family members who had limited English skills. At the time, I found that an inability to speak a Ghanaian language distanced me from being perceived by others as Ghanaian, and therefore, separated me from my Blackness. I realize now that I was at a *crossroads* and was just about to embark on the process of creating an internally based definition of what it meant to be Ghanaian, to be Black. Over the span of 3 years, I spent two of them living in Ghana.

Cross (1994) might have called my trip to Ghana a conversion experience, but it happened in a completely opposite way. Usually, a Black person develops a racial identity in response to a critical racial event or a series of micro racial aggressive events with white people. To understand my Blackness, I needed to remove myself from a white space and immerse myself in West African culture. Today, I believe that I have a racialized self-authoring identity. I would say that I am more cognizant of my Black

racial identity because it informs how people treat me and how I move about the world. While I may have had a mostly white upbringing, at the end of the day, I have brown skin, dark curly hair, and other phenotypically Black features. This means that I am often vigilant about how others might perceive me and about the constant threat of racism, and continue to seek guidance and connectedness with other Black people.

What I also have is access to white identity and worldviews. By growing up in a white family, I was exposed to white perspectives about Black people. I endured racial taunts at the hands of others that, at a young age, made me feel ashamed of my hair, my skin, my Blackness. My racialized adult identity development process was complicated due to my bi-racial identity, but it has allowed me access to engage in vulnerable discussions with white people about Blackness. In fact, I relish opportunities to be an intermediary between divergent Black and white experiences, and to help explain how different backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, and worldviews intersect in ways that shape the way people move about the world. It is from this personal background that I came to this work with an empowered Black identity and a lived insight into the white experience.

Academic Experience

Part of what fascinates me about this study is the change that I saw in my academic success once I had a deeper sense of my racialized adult identity. As mentioned, the first 10 years of my life were spent in a low-income white community. I attended schools where I was one of a handful of Black students. For the most part, I lived the next 8 to 10 years of my life in a predominantly Mexican-American community.

Moving to that community was a bit of a culture shock for me, but I seemed to fit in more as an oppressed person among other Students of Color.

In my new town I found myself longing for more Black people because while I continued to be proud of my Black identity, I wasn't entirely sure what that meant. Throughout my primary and secondary education, I never once had a Black teacher. The curriculum in my new town incorporated Mexican history and culture in addition to the traditional curriculum. I was left wanting for Black history, beyond units on slavery and Martin Luther King Jr. that made everyone cry instead of focusing on the resilience and strength of Black people—those aspects were never part of the narrative.

After graduating from high school, I went to a small liberal arts college. I was hopeful that I might finally be able to make relationships with other Black peers. Unfortunately, I struggled with the underrepresentation of Black peers and faculty. I was still hungry for an education that could teach me about being Black, but those opportunities were few and far between. This coupled with my subpar preparation for rigorous post-secondary studies negatively impacted my sense of belonging and mattering, and ultimately my grades. At the end of my second year (I didn't have enough credits to be considered a sophomore), I was academically dismissed from the university. That was also around the time that my father passed away, I took the dismissal as an opportunity to reset, hence the trip to Ghana.

Between trips to Ghana, I enrolled in a community college. My community college experience was a good one. I had my first Black professor, became the President of the Black Student Union, and spent more time with Black people than I had ever done

while living in the United States. I took a course on Black literature and was able to draw connections between my Ghanaian roots and the stories that survived the middle passage to the Americas. My grades were perfect at the end of one year, I had earned a 4.0 GPA.

Bolstered by my strengthened racialized adult identity, I re-applied to the small, liberal arts university that had dismissed me. To my surprise, they allowed me to re-enroll. Upon my readmission, I earned mostly A's and B's. I became the President of the Africa Student Club. While I was away, the institution had hired new professors who offered courses on African cultures and African Cinema. I was even awarded a research grant to travel back to Ghana to explore a topic that I was interested in. By the time I graduated, I had earned academic honors from the Department of Anthropology. Walking across the stage at commencement was a validating experience for me. I had conquered an educational hurdle that had at one point seemed insurmountable. I believed that I had succeeded by changing myself, and by growing up a little.

Then I enrolled in a master's program focusing on post-secondary educational leadership. It was through an exploration of Black student success literature that the initial failures of my undergraduate experience were contextualized within the larger system of oppression. I learned about higher education's historically white legacy and how it pushes Students of Color to the margins. I was finally able to see my early undergraduate experience were a product of a system that was not made for me as a Student of Color. Buying into the narrative of meritocracy, I had assumed that my failures were solely the result of not working hard enough. While this was maddening, I also focused on the ways in which a better sense of my identity helped me succeed the

second time around. I learned about self-authorship and began to understand my journey toward adulthood. In the end, I used self-authorship as a conceptual framework of my comprehensive exam but had the nagging feeling that it did not fully account for my racialized experiences.

This brings me to my doctoral educational journey and the focus of this study. I see how profoundly my educational experience benefited from gaining a deeper understanding of who I am as a racialized adult being. I'm saddened that my journey forced me to leave college to define an identity that ultimately helped me succeed. At times I wonder how my life would have been different without the enormous upheaval that my dismissal caused, how my experience in college could have been improved if I had a Black mentor or peer group that affirmed my place in higher education, how having informed educators to scaffold and help me process the evolution of my adult and racial identity could have led to my success. The *what ifs* of my experience have driven my commitment to this study. It is my hope that Black students will be able to stay and find themselves, and ultimately succeed in higher education, like most white students do.

Professional Experience

The bulk of my professional career has been devoted, in one way or another, to the equity, inclusion and support of Students of Color in higher education. My early professional work involved advising student leaders of multicultural organizations. In that role I taught year-long courses on teamwork, citizenship, and sense of self using a social justice lens.

I then moved to another university in a completely different functional area of student affairs. While I worked with Students of Color daily, teaching for diversity and social justice were not an inherent part of my job. Instead, I joined the institution's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and supported cross-campus efforts to improve the college experiences of minoritized students.

Most recently, I transitioned to a role at yet another institution in which social justice is again central to my job responsibilities. I have always endeavored to be in positions that allow me to influence change at a macro-institutional level. This position enables me to actualize my deep commitment to minoritized students and is embedded into every aspect of my work.

In most professional settings, I am the only Person of Color in the room, but what might be challenging for other racially minoritized folks is not as disconcerting for me. Given my upbringing, I am accustomed to being the only person that looks like me everywhere I go. It is easy for me to speak the language of institutional leadership while elevating the voices of oppressed student populations. The findings of this study are likely to be immediately applicable in addressing racist institutional structures and practices at my current institution. It is my intent to present these findings in ways that facilitate their transferability to other contexts as well.

Analytical Research Process

The final area of positionality that I would like to discuss is my approach to analytical research processes. This section is a bit different than the others. While my personal, academic, and professional experiences describe the worldview that I bring to

this work, the analytical research process speaks directly to how this background shows up in my research analysis.

My cultural intuition allows me to draw upon my own experiences as data and offers an advantage with analyzing the factors at play in the data. Race has always been a central component of my identity; thus, it is natural that I would be drawn to CRT as my theoretical framework for the study. It means that my study intentionally focuses on questions that interrogate the influence of race and racism in the human experience. My racial identity also informed which sources I chose to include in my literature review. The literature review articulates that race plays a critical role in shaping the experiences of Black students in higher education. My academic experiences throughout my life closely reflect the studies in this proposal. Cultural intuition is imbedded in the research methods that I used to gather data. These methods which focus on learning about the lived experiences of Black college students will be described shortly. Finally, it means that I analyzed the data from a Black perspective. I was able to empathize with participant experiences on a level that a mono-racial white person cannot. It also means that I have an emic positionality that enables me to identify nuance specific to Black experiences. My cultural intuition—my existence and lived experiences as a Black person in American society—is to the benefit of the proposed study.

Positionality Summary

While the scope of this study will not fully employ Critical Race-Grounded Theory in the research design, it does offer a strategy for articulating researcher positionality. Providing a description of my personal, educational, and academic

experiences lays a foundation for understanding how my cultural intuition influences this work. These descriptions also offer context about why certain research methods and analytical processes have been selected for the proposed study. They may also shed light on the biases that I bring to this work.

Research Methods

This study used basic qualitative research methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with a critical race lens (Hernández, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Torres & Hernández, 2007) to explore how traditional-age Black college students make meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood and how campus climate informs this process. As such, the methodology of this study reflects the tenets of CRT by:

- Addressing the permanence of racism and the intersectionality of multiple forms of oppression;
- Challenging dominant ideology;
- Centering the experiential knowledge of minoritized people;
- Utilizing a transdisciplinary perspective; and
- Committing to research that serves the purpose of social justice.

The following section outlines the characteristics of the research population, participant criteria, and sampling.

Characteristics of the Population

Research suggests that there are roughly 900,000 Black students currently enrolled in public colleges and universities in the United States (Harper & Simmons,

2018). While navigating the college experience is challenging for most students, Black students experience additional barriers. While studying, Black students are confronted with marginalizing, disparaging, and racist treatment (Cress, 2008; Smith et al., 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). The mistreatment of Black students contributes to their disenfranchisement and premature departure from higher education(Smith et al., 2016; Tatum, 2017).

The poor experience that Black students have in higher education is attributed to institutional inequities such as the lack of resources, peers, and faculty that could otherwise support their success (Bensimon, 2007; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Tatum, 2017). These inequities are sustained through race-neutral ideologies and practices that value meritocracy without accounting for how white supremacy informs mobility (Alexander, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Harper, 2012; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton, 2016; Tatum, 2017).

Through resilience and resourcefulness, just over a quarter of Black college students are able to traverse racially hostile campus landscapes and graduate within six years (Tate, 2017). There is much to be learned about how these students overcome these barriers and how their personal development evolves during the collegiate experience. This study focused on the experiences of these 10 traditional-age, Black students in their junior or senior year at a single institution. The following describes the selection criteria of the participants.

Participant Criteria

In order to be involved in the study, participants needed to meet criteria that takes institution, racial identity, class standing, and age into account. The criteria were an important factor in supporting the validity and trustworthiness of the study (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Institutional criteria. Participants in this study attended Pacific Northwest University (PNWU). A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the participants. The location of the campus in the Pacific Northwest is important to consider within the context of this study. The Pacific Northwestern part of the United States has a long history of exclusion and discrimination of Black people. Slavery was deemed illegal in 1844 in the, then called, Oregon Country. While slavery was not allowed in the area, neither were Black people. Those who stayed were legally subject to regular lashings in an effort to push them out.

In 1850, the Oregon Donation Land Act was passed. The Act provided free land to white people while omitting language that would allow Black people to claim land. What continued throughout the next 100 years was a mounting legal framework that made it challenging, if not impossible for Black people to keep up with the white pace of growth in the area. It should be noted that such laws were also in place to prevent Chinese, Hawaiian, and Native Americans from gaining a political or economic foothold.

The Pacific Northwest, and particularly Oregon, was a stronghold of white supremacy and many laws racist laws remained on the books until the year 2000. The

discriminatory history of the area is one of the main reasons why there are fewer Black people in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho when compared to other parts of the United States.

This institution was selected in, in part, because it received a *racial report card* as part of Harper and Simmons's (2018) report *Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities: A 50-State Report Card*. Harper and Simmons's (2018) quantitative study provides a helpful overview to describe the macro-trends behind the Black student experience at universities across the United States. However, this study sought to understand what this process looks like at the micro-level. PNWU is a large campus in an urban area of the Pacific Northwest. The institution is among the most diverse in its predominantly white metropolitan area. The campus serves a significantly large number of non-traditional students. While commuter students make up the bulk of the population, the campus maintains several residence halls for students who seek to live on campus.

This work intended to tell the story of the lived experiences of Black students at PNWU while examining the factors that systematically hinder their personal development and success. While all the participants in the study were enrolled at PNWU, many had attended other post-secondary schools prior. Their experiences across their higher educational journey were considered relevant to this work.

Racial identity. Traditionally, Black or African American people are described as a racial group as those "having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (National Institutes of Health, 2015, sec. Definitions for Racial and Ethnic Categories).

This study centers the racialized adult identity development of Black people and therefore, only included participants who self-identify as Black.

Class standing. The class standing of the participants was critical to help provide a frame for understanding the process of racialized adult identity development. Participants in this study needed to have junior or senior class standing. The class standing criteria helped to ensure that the participants had enough exposure to the higher education environment and ample opportunity to be impacted personally. The level of exposure turned out to be critical to a deeper experiential basis upon which participants assessed how campus climate helped or hindered their racialized adult identity development.

The class standing criteria also assumed that college juniors and seniors have, thus far, found ways to successfully navigate a higher education system that traditionally fails Black students. These students may have coping skills that have enabled them to be successful academically, which, given racially hostile campus climates, might also mean that they are advanced in personal development as well.

Baxter Magolda (2008) identified three stages toward the development of self-authorship: external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship. Individuals in earlier stages typically rely on external authorities to guide decision-making and self-concept, whereas those with self-authoring identities make meaning based upon internal foundations which are usually resilient to external pressures. Research has shown that students from marginalized backgrounds, particularly Students of Color, are more likely to be self-authoring by the time they graduate because of the dissonance they

experience as a racialized being in American society (Pizzolato, 2003). For the purposes of comparison, most white students enter college in the *external formulas stage* and typically only reach the *crossroads stage* by graduation. Based on Pizzolato's (2003) findings with high-risk students, the barriers that Black students may have encountered prior to college enrollment could put them at a more advanced stage of self-authorship when they matriculate into the higher education environment.

Age. This study sought to be intentional about selecting college juniors and seniors who were traditional-age students. Traditional-age undergraduate students are often defined by age—specifically being 24 years old or younger (Horn & Carroll, 1996). All of the participants in the study met the age requirement except for one, who was 26 at the time of the interviews. Given the challenging nature of finding participants for the study, this person was included.

Contextualizing the racialized adult identity development process with an age-bound group helped to minimize some of the variables at play. While a study could involve Black participants of any age, non-traditional-age students will often have different enrollment patterns, financial and family responsibilities, and different prior education experiences than traditional-age students that fundamentally change their involvement and engagement in the college experience (Horn & Carroll, 1996). The demands on non-traditional students' time and energy may result in developmental processes that are beyond the analytical scope of this study.

Traditional-age students are likely to be more engaged in the college experience, in part due to their residence on campus, similar-age college peers, and the

flexibility to participate in campus and social activities (Kuh, 2008). Thus, traditional-age students may have similar educational, age-specific, and experiential reference points that will help in defining their process of racialized adult identity development.

In summary, this study gathered data from 10 traditional-age Black college juniors or seniors from PNWU. Because this research explores the Black experience, it naturally requires that the participants self-identify as Black. Combining institutional and racial criteria will allow for an analysis of the influence of campus climate in student development. Developmentally, juniors and seniors are likely to be in the more advanced stages of the self-authorship model (Pizzolato, 2003). Practically speaking, upper-level students should have more exposure to campus climate than college freshmen and sophomores. Finally, the traditional-age criteria serve to narrow the variables for a more precise analytical scope of study. The selection criteria served to focus analytical scope of this work and provided insights about the racialized adult identity development of a specific population of Black college students.

Sampling Procedures

The study gathered data from 10 participants. A small sample size is typical in qualitative research because the focus is on understanding the in-depth experiences of a sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike the randomized sampling techniques used in quantitative studies, the use of purposeful sampling enables qualitative researchers to identify participants who will be able to provide rich information relating to a specific case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The convenience and snowball sampling procedures used in the study are described below.

Convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is one purposeful sampling technique that was used to identify participants. This involved selecting participants "based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 98). The considerations for this study involve time and the researcher's familiarity with institution where the participants were enrolled.

Typically, self-authorship studies are longitudinal. Baxter Magolda's (2001, 2008) research with white students spanned over two decades, while Torres and Hernández's (2007) work with Latinx students has involved ongoing research with participants for several years. There may be long-term potential to turn this work into a longitudinal study, but the focus at this time was to gather initial data about the racialized identity development process of Black students in college. The data collection and analysis timeframes were complete within less than one year which was made feasible using convenience sampling.

Snowball sampling. Snowball sampling "is the most common form of purposeful sampling" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 98). This study used snowball sampling to identify and engage new participants based on referrals from the early key participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Snowball sampling addressed two barriers in the research processes within the study. The first was with regard to building rapport with the participants. Tuhiwai Smith (2005) writes that Communities of Color have been disproportionately disadvantaged by research that views their humanity as secondary (or non-existent) to the goals of the research project. Therefore, it was possible that participants might opt-out of

participation due to concerns that they will be harmed in some way. Encouragement from trusted others who have contributed to the study went a long way toward new participants agreeing to engage in the research process. Snowball sampling also helped with engaging new participants. Given the disproportionately small number of Black students on campus, they convened with a critical mass of other Black students in the margins (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). About half of the participants in the study were identified through direct referral to the researcher by other participants.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This study gathered data by conducting two rounds of face-to-face or video-conference interviews with each participant. Interviews allowed the participants to share the counterstories of their experience at PNWU. The interviews included semi-structured and open-ended (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) questions that allowed for the stories of Black student experiences to emerge. First and second round interviews lasted 60–90 minutes each.

Three pilot interviews were conducted prior to holding interviews with the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Pilot interviews were conducted by the researcher with Black colleagues in order to refine the interview protocol and help to ensure that the language was accessible to the participants.

A focus of the interviews was to bring forth counter-stories. Within CRT, counter-stories are often used to challenge dominant narratives that uphold the values of race-neutrality and meritocracy (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A counter-story is defined as "a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told"

(Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Beyond serving methodological purposes, "the counter-story is a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Counter-storytelling is a valuable tool with the potential to transform education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In identifying four central functions of counter-storytelling, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) suggest that counterstories can:

1. build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice;
2. challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems;
3. open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; [and,]
4. teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. (p. 36)

Not only do counterstories serve the purposes stated above, they also align closely with the traditions of African and Black Diasporic communities. For thousands of years, the oral tradition of storytelling has been a mainstay of African and Black Diasporic Culture (Tuwe, 2016). Storytelling survived the middle passage and was embedded into the cultural traditions of generations of enslaved Black people in the New World (Steele, 2016). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) assert that storytelling and counter-storytelling "can

help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (p. 32). Thus, storytelling is a natural, and culturally understood practice among Black communities and has served to exert their agency throughout history.

Dominant groups are quick to blame Black students for their failures in higher education (Feagin et al., 1996; Tatum, 2017). Counterstories provide valuable insights that contextualize the individual experiences of marginalized students on college campuses within larger systems of oppression. In keeping with this theme, Hiraldo (2010) writes:

> The use of counterstories in analyzing higher education's climate provides faculty, staff, and students of color a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences. Counterstories can assist in analyzing the campus climate of a college campus and provide opportunities for further research in the ways which an institution can become inclusive and not simply superficially diverse. (p. 54)

In sum, the interviews were used to identify and ultimately amplify counterstories about Self-authorship development among traditional-age, Black-identifying college juniors and seniors (Hernández, 2008, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The methods used to bring forth counter-stories in this study addressed the impetus for marginalized voices to be heard and honors the rich ethnic traditions that are central to Black culture. That said, speaking the truth about one's racialized experiences can involve a considerable amount of the participant's emotional labor. The two-part interview process helped to ease into storytelling, while also offering time for participants to reflect on their experiences. Interviews were held one week apart in most cases. The second interview started with the participants reflecting on their experiences in the time since the last interview and sharing what came up for them during that time.

Data collection channels. The participants in the study were initially selected based on convenience sampling; specifically, this sampling process entailed working through contacts within the researcher's professional and personal network to identify potential participants. The professional contacts selected to help with outreach work at select the higher education institutions in Black or Ethnic Studies Departments or serve Black students in other capacities such as advising services, student leadership, residence life, and Black cultural centers. These contacts were asked to share an email (Appendix A) and an electronic flyer (Appendix B) with their students via listservs or individual outreach. The flyer was posted in areas where Black students gathered and on every residence hall floor on campus. Both the flyer and email offered language that introduced the study to students and provided instructions for contacting the researcher via email should they be interested in becoming a participant.

Upon receipt of an email from a prospective participant, the researcher responded to confirm that the person met the criteria for the study and scheduled a time for the first interview. Almost all first and second round interviews took place in a public space on campus. During the winter academic break, interviews with two participants were held via video conference.

Participants were asked a range of short answer to open-ended questions that explored what it means to become an #AdultWhileBlack in the college environment (Appendix C). Using a two-part interview process served to build rapport with participants and allowed them more time to reflect deeply about the intersections of their racialized adult identity and campus climate.

Because this study was rooted in critical race philosophy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), racial identity, racism, and power were the focal point within the interview schedule. The first round of interviewing focused on demographic information, racial identity development, adulting, and the social impacts of campus climate. The second round of interviews built on the first by asking participants to share anything that has come up for them since the previous interview. After addressing participant updates, the interview explored their perceptions of campus climate, the psychological impacts of campus climate, organizational structure, and community practice.

While both interviews draw from the tenets of CRT, the second round was much more action-oriented. For example, the questions focused on the barriers students experience regarding programs, curriculum, policies, and interactions with white people on campus. A follow up to each of these questions asked what ideas the participants may have for improving the experience for Black students. Not only did this validate the experiential knowledge of the participants it also gave rise to constructive insights that provided some of the basis for the implications for practice that resulted from the study.

To gather counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), participants were asked to recount critical racial incidents in their higher education experiences. These experiences illustrated participants' integration into their campus communities, their process of finding a sense of belonging and mattering in their environment, developing supportive peer networks on campus, and navigating racism and daily microaggressions in collegiate academic and social settings. How the participants

negotiated the daily transactions of their racialized academic and social experiences pointed to coping strategies such as buffering, code-switching, bridging, bonding/attachment and individualism (Strauss & Cross, 2006) that have enabled them to persevere in racially hostile campus climates.

Questions about participant meaning-making process with regard to the CRT Self-authorship model (Hernández, 2016) were also asked at the close of first and second round interviews. Using the types of questions developed by Hernández (2008, 2016) to explore CRT Self-authorship help bring insights about the ways Black students processed their racialized adult identity development and how this growth manifested within the stages and dimensions of CRT Self-authorship. Because this work sought to explore the racialized adult identity development of Black students, some interview questions explored the racial socialization, racial salience, and the sectors of Nigrescence (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001) as they relate to their meaning-making processes.

Table 3

Sample Interview Protocol Questions

Question (s)	Purpose	Related Theory/Construct
What is your academic major? Minor? Have you ever lived on campus? If so, for how long? If not, where did you live? Did you transfer to this school from another one?	Gather demographic data and build rapport. Assessing exposure to campus community.	n/a
How did you come to identify as Black? Describe what being Black means to you.	To understand meaning-making of racial identity	Nigrescence – Socialization pattern
Are you familiar with the term "adulting"? What does that term mean to you? How do you think your racial identity impacts adulting?	To understand how adulting is conceptualized	Adulting – CRT Self-authorship
Have you ever felt like you don't fit in on campus? Can you tell me more about that? Where do you go to feel at home on campus? Tell me more about that place/space.	To understand sense of belonging	Social Impacts of Campus Climate – mattering and marginality
In what ways do you think that being Black on a white campus influences what people think about or expect from you? How do you think these perceptions and/or expectations impact you psychologically?	To understand how white perceptions influence Black sense of self	Psychological Impacts of Campus Climate – stereotype threat
How do you think your existence as a Black person on campus has influenced how you define yourself as a racialized being?	To understand how racism informs intrapersonal development	CRT Self-authorship – intrapersonal dimension

Note. See Appendix C for a full list of questions.

The researcher conducted and digitally recorded all the interviews in the study. During the interviews, the researcher took observational notes that described participant emotional response and body language. Notetaking during the interview was also used to notate key words or topics introduced by the participants. These items were revisited within the interviews.

Throughout the research process, the recorded or written researcher memos were used to capture "anything that the researcher does in relationship to the research other

than actual field notes" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 19). Researcher memos included post-interview reflections, margin notes in interview transcripts, and ideas or analysis recorded in a personal research journal. Drawing from the Critical Race-grounded Theory notion of cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998), these memos served as researcher-generated data that was analyzed in tandem with participant-generated data.

Data analysis procedures. Pulling from the CRT emphasis on storytelling, the use of participant interviews were analyzed to illustrate the racialized adult identity development process of traditional-age Black college students. Data analysis took place simultaneously with the collection of data which lends to the iterative nature the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this way, this study reviewed the data collected to identify themes that guided the ongoing research and follow-up interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews were transcribed using a transcription service. Some would suggest that transcribing one's interviews manually allows the researcher to be closer to their data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Closeness to the data without personal transcription was compensated for by using multiple coding practices. The initial review of the interviews involved provisional coding (Saldaña, 2016) based on the literature (Appendix D) about CRT Self-authorship (Hernández, 2016), the tenets of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), the Nigrescence Lifespan Model (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001) and racism coping strategies (Strauss & Cross, 2006).

The second round of coding involved in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). Specifically, in vivo codes helped the researcher articulate participant meaning-making

about the social and psychological impacts of campus climate on their racialized adult identity development while in college. In vivo coding also served to enrich the presentation of participant counter-stories. Embedding the analysis within the language of the participants further supported the authentic presentation of their lived experiences (Saldaña, 2016). Codes were assigned according to type and analyzed using the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software.

In summary, the use of several coding processes allowed for the exploration of racialized adult identity development from different analytical lenses. Provisional coding was used to address the first research question which asks *what does it mean for college students to #AdultWhileBlack?* Likewise, in vivo coding was used to address the second research question: *In what ways does campus climate help or hinder #AdultingWhileBlack among traditional-age Black college students?* Taken together, the codes mapped student meaning-making to the existing literature while offering space for Black college student voices and experiences to come alive within their counterstories. The triangulation of data and two rounds of interviews helped to honor the participant lived experiences, validate the correct interpretation of the data, and support the internal validity of the findings.

Ethical Considerations of the Research

In *Negotiating the Complexities of Qualitative Research in Higher Education*, authors Susan R. Jones, Vasti Torres, and Jan Arminio (2013) assert that "an important first step in developing ethical sensitivity [in educational research] is anticipating where and when ethical issues may emerge in the research process (p. 174). Ethical

considerations are critical toward extending respect to the participants and upholding the integrity of any study (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). As stated throughout this work, the purpose of this study was to understand the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, this study explored how traditional-age Black students make meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the context of racially hostile campus climates, and how campus climate informs this process. The following section discusses ethical considerations for the study including: participant benefits and risks, confidentiality and anonymity, participant consent, and the presentation of finding and researcher positionality.

Participant Benefits and Risks

Ethical sensitivity extends to participant risks and benefits as members of the study and their engagement in the data collection, interpretation, and analysis (Jones et al., 2016). The participants in this study served to benefit from having access to a platform to reflect upon their personal growth from adolescence to adulthood. Counterstories have the power to help "victims of racism find their voice. […] Those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover that they are not alone in their marginality" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27). Participants also benefited by learning more about their development in the context of existing race-centered models. Like counter-storytelling, being able to see oneself in at a stage in a process helps validate their experiences and provides hope for what may come next. Finally, given the action-oriented nature of this work, participants said that they took pride in being part of a study

which sought to improve the higher education experience for themselves and other marginalized students.

One would be remiss to not acknowledge that an abundance of care was taken in the implementation of this study considering the historical trauma that has resulted among Black communities in the name of advancing research. This involved being aware of the skepticism and mistrust that potential participants and actual participants may have experience in relation to their involvement (Alvidrez & Areán, 2002). The use of convenience and snowball sampling techniques seemed to address these initial hesitations. Assurances, authenticity, and the racial background of the researcher also served to ease participant concerns.

While the topic of racism may bring forth stories about impactful psychological and social experiences, the interview protocol was intentionally structured to start with general questions that allowed the researcher and participant to build rapport before delving into their personal experiences with racism. While it did not occur during the interview process, the researcher was prepared to work with participants to determine whether to stop the interview entirely or explore ways to proceed that were more comfortable for the participant.

Participants were made aware that the researcher was not a mental health professional and could not offer with psychological diagnosis or treatment. The researcher has engaged in professional development training on recognizing signs of students in distress or those experiencing anxiety, depression, and other common mental health concerns. Her close contact with students in distress as a component of her job

duties for the past three years has deepened her skill set in working with students in distress. These competencies include, evaluating risk for harm to themselves or the community, de-escalation techniques, and connecting students to additional resources for further support. The researcher familiarized herself with the crisis resources local to the participant's residence to help ensure appropriate referrals for ongoing care, had it been needed.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity continue to be important for protecting participants from the risks and maximizing the benefits of their participation. Because of the *permanence of racism,* the anonymity of participants is crucial. Participants shared counternarratives that could reflect negatively on the university and their white peers. Should the stories be tracked back to the participant, it could put them at risk for racially motivated backlash. Thus, the measures below provide some strategies that were employed to minimize this risk.

Because the participants were sourced through convenience and snowball sampling, it is possible that participants might be able to identify their peers in the research findings. Reducing this risk began at the outset of the study. First, participants contacted the researcher directly via email to express their interest. No one knows who participated in the study except for the researcher. All inquiries were asked to provide the same, low-level demographic information to ensure they meet the criteria for the study without going into detail about their experiences.

Second, regarding anonymity, participants were given pseudonyms. The names were carefully selected to align with the cultural traditions of their names. As such, those with names from West Africa were assigned names from those regions of the world.

All recordings, notes, and transcriptions were organized and stored by participant pseudonym in a password protected electronic file. Transcriptions, recordings, and other data were kept separate from the pseudonym codebook.

Participant Consent

All participants were required to complete a formal consent before the interview began (Appendix E). Following the interview, the participants were sent an electronic file with the document. The interview recording did not begin until the participant's questions were answered, and they decided to sign the form on their own free will. Revoking consent was at the will of the participants for any reason, at any time, and without penalty. No participants requested a revocation of their consent.

Presentation of Findings and Positionality

Approaching research with an ethic of care also includes the presentation of the research results and the positionality of the researcher (Jones et al., 2013). The member-checking processes discussed earlier helped to maintain the authenticity of the information shared by participants and allowed them the opportunity to have some control over how their counter-stories have been told. Member-checking was employed to clarify the use of language and poor interview recording before transcripts were

fully analyzed. Furthermore, second-round interviews allowed for a deeper understanding about the students' experiences considering first-round analyses.

Regarding positionality, this chapter offered an overview of the researcher's culturally intuitive approach to the study by describing her personal, academic, and professional experiences. In addition, information about how these factors are likely to influence the data analysis have been provided. The researcher's emic positionality is viewed as advantageous in this line of inquiry.

Quality Assurance of the Research

This research study is attentive to credibility, transferability, and dependability to support the quality of the research findings. Credibility refers to whether the data or findings truly reflect the participants' experiences. To improve credibility, this study combined purposeful sampling with the use of a selection criteria that "reflects the purpose of the study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 97). To assure credibility, this study chose participants based on the pre-selected institutional, racial identity, class standing, and age criteria. These strict selection criteria were necessary in this study because it is beyond the scope of this work to address additional variables that freshman, sophomore, and non-traditional students might introduce, should they be included. By being selective about participants this work has been intentional about contextualizing the lived experiences of a specific type of student. The use of member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) also helps to assure credibility.

Transferability refers to whether the findings could be transferred to a similar context. Harper and Simmons's (2018) *50 State Report Card* demonstrates that racially

hostile campus climates are widespread in American society. Furthermore, CRT acknowledges the permanence of racism and the intersection of multiple forms of oppression among marginalized groups. Because racism is woven into the fabric of American life, applying this research approach among participants at one institutions named in Harper and Simmons's (2018) report could yield similar findings at other institutions should they undertake this study format.

The dependability of a study refers to whether similar results would be found if the same procedures were followed. Hernández's (2016) study examined racialized adult identity development of Latinx students. This work sought to build upon her research using similar interview questions and a CRT Self-authorship model with a different racial group (Table 2). Some questions used in the protocol have been adapted from Hernández's (2008) work and add to the dependability of the study.

Limitations of the Research

The common limitations of this study are consistent with most qualitative studies (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One limitation of qualitative research is that the in-depth focus on the experiences of individuals may not scale with trends experienced in the broader Black student population. While Hernández sought to understand the relationship between social forces and the development of Self-authorship among Latinx students, this inquiry adapted her approach by 1) focusing specifically on how the dimensions and stages of CRT self-authorship unfold among Black college students, 2) situating Nigrescence within the context of CRT Self-authorship, and 3)

examining the impact that campus climate has on racialized adult identity development among traditional-age, Black college juniors or seniors.

Harper and Simmons (2018) have already shown quantitatively that racism in the higher education environment leads to insufficient support of Black students and that this leads to their disenfranchisement and attrition. While this study does not intend to *speak* to the experiences of all Black college students, the intentionality with regard to the selection criteria for participants helps to provide some parameters upon which broader implications can be extrapolated.

The selection criteria used to identify participants for the study may also be limiting. There are many factors that could be added to the pre-screening criteria, such as socioeconomic status, first-generation college student status, single institution (non-transfer) status, academic major, and Nigrescence socialization type, among others. These additional factors were left out of the screening criteria intentionally, for practical a reason. The goal of the initial outreach was to generate a list of potential participants. Given the challenging history of research in Black communities and sensitivities around providing information, asking for too much up front could have resulted in getting fewer responses. The unused pre-screening criteria may offer additional insights about how Black students make-meaning and navigate campus climates. The interview protocol included questions about additional identities that participants may find salient to them. This question yielded data that proved significant for this study.

Opponents of CRT would challenge the theoretical orientation of this study. CRT is an approach to research that seeks to draw attention to and deconstruct systems of

oppression. This central focus can make those in positions of power react defensively and disregard the findings of this work. “It should come as no surprise, then, that CRT which seeks to change the reigning paradigm of civil rights thought, has sparked stubborn resistance” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 102).

The permanence of racism in American society and the resistance to change has the potential to limit the acceptance of the findings of this work. Critics are quick to disregard data collected through the counter-storytelling based on the experiential knowledge of marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 102). They critique “the merit, truth, and objectivity; and the matter of voice” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 102). These critiques exemplify the permanence of racism within the academy (Harper, 2012). Research that challenges dominant paradigms will always be limited when met with dissent from those in power; however, change cannot be actualized without challenging dominant paradigms.

Qualitative data is also critiqued because the researcher serves as the instrument in the collection and analysis of data. This can lead to bias, misinterpretation, and unauthentic presentation of the research findings. These limitations are minimized by laying out the researcher’s positionality in relation to the study and participant engagement in clarification and interpretation of the data analysis. Additionally, the use of a reflective research journal and researcher memos helped the researcher acknowledge how biases may have emerged and to address them throughout the research process and the data analysis. Other limitations surrounding credibility, transferability, and

dependability described in the previous section address internal and external limitations of this study.

It is also important to consider the limitations brought to the study based upon the researcher's positionality and assumptions. The positionality section of this chapter summarized how the researcher's personal, academic, and professional experiences led to a lived understanding about how racialized adult identity development evolves. The fact that she grew up in non-Black spaces may limit her ability to fully understand the racial and cultural worldviews of Black students who were socialized within Black communities. Her mostly white upbringing means that seeing racism and microaggressions for what they are involves actively pushing back race-neutral cognitive processes that have been embedded in her worldview from an early age. She has, however, become much more adept at identifying the racist undertones of incidents in adulthood. To address this limitation, the researcher piloted the protocol with several and called upon others to verbally process the researcher's interpretation of the findings. The researcher has also been intentional about selecting Black dissertation committee members who may offer their expertise and insights about the study.

Similarly, her academic experiences were void of relevant Black curriculum and educators until her junior and senior years of college. Black students who attended Black primary and secondary schools may have had more peers who looked like them and more exposure to culturally relevant curriculum, and perhaps had Instructors of Color who served as mentors and role models throughout their academic experiences. As the literature review for this work has shown, representation matters (Harper & Simmons,

2018) and is fundamental to Black student learning and identity (Smith et al., 2016; Steele, 1997, 2011). The fact that the researcher didn't have these formative experiences in education has meant that learning about Blackness and what it means to be Black came later in her socialization. Again, this isn't to say that she has not been able to formalize a Black identity but that the process to get there came later in her life and may look different from her participants.

Professionally, the researcher's work has involved support and advocacy for underrepresented students in post-secondary settings, and specifically, for Black students. These professional experiences almost exclusively situate her practice and world view about racism within the context of higher education student development and success. Her knowledge is industry-specific, thereby narrowing her scope about the factors that contribute to human success and identity development outside academia.

Another personal limitation of the study is the researcher's critical and social constructivist approach to understanding identity development. More recent models of identity development view identity as a dynamic and fluid process (Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Torres et al., 2009) as opposed to the stage-based nature of constructivist theories. While she believes that most models of identity hold truth, dynamic models focus on salience in the moment (Jones & Abes, 2013), rather than on the meaning-making process that follows. As this work seeks to understand the racialized adult identity meaning-making process, a constructivist approach is a better fit for this purpose, yet the researcher remained open to other interpretations. It was this openness

that allowed the researcher to translate the finding into a new, fluid model of identity formation.

Like all other studies, this inquiry has limitations. One limitation is the research design which impacts generalizability. Another relates to the criteria used to select participants. Additionally, CRT can may be perceived as a polarizing theoretical framework, while researcher positionality might introduce bias in the analysis of the data. Acknowledging the limitations of a study serves to foreshadow aspects that may influence the results of the inquiry. While care was taken to address the positionality limitations, critical decisions needed to be made to support the practicality and scope considerations for this work.

Chapter Summary

> All too often we see injustices, both great and small, we think, 'That's terrible,' but we do nothing. We say nothing. We let other people fight their own battles. We remain silent because silence is easier. Qui tacet consentier videtur is Latin for 'silence gives consent.' When we say nothing, when we do nothing, we are consenting to these trespasses against us. (Gay, 2014, p. 179)

This work was intended to break the silence that perpetuates injustice in higher education and American society at-large. The purpose of this study was to understand the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, the study explored how traditional-age Black students make meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the context of racially hostile campus climates, and how campus climate informs this process.

The research questions were qualitative in nature and seek to understand the lived experiences and meaning-making processes. Woven into the research questions are the

conceptual frameworks of CRT Self-authorship (Hernández, 2016) and Nigrescence (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Strauss & Cross, 2006). Understanding the developmental process of racialized adult identity proved liberating for Black students as they will be able to name their experiences. Providing a fresh perspective about student growth using two widely cited theories of identity may help educators intentionally scaffold personal development opportunities for Black students.

CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998) guided the proposed selection of research questions, the sampling procedures, and the data collection and analysis processes. An articulation of the researcher positionality provided an in-depth look at how this study has been conceptualized and personally informed.

Using a basic qualitative research design with a critical race lens allowed for the counter-stories of the adult identity development of Black students to be told. This chapter articulated how this design was used to amplify the voices of Black students, contextualize their racialized existence, and shed light on their racialized developmental experiences in higher education.

The data collection procedure included convenience and snowball sampling procedures, to select 10 participants. Those selected for the study were asked to participate in two rounds of interviews. This process allowed for rapport building, time for reflection, and acknowledges the emotional labor involved in articulating counter-stories.

All research data was coded using a combination of provisional and in vivo coding and analyzed simultaneously with the data collection. Provisional coding connects

this inquiry with the existing literature. In vivo coding was intended to bring the voices of Black students to the fore. Triangulation, follow-up contact with participants, and member-checking also supported clarity and trustworthiness of the findings.

Next, the ethical considerations of the research were described. A discussion about participant benefit and risks, confidentiality and anonymity, consent, and the presentation of findings and researcher positionality was provided. The ethical considerations of this study are particularly important given the challenging history of research ethics and harm within Black communities.

The final section discussed the quality assurances and limitations of the research. An overview of the quality assurance, and the study's credibility, transferability, and dependability were offered. Lastly, the limitations section described the limits inherent in the qualitative approach, theoretical framework, participant selection criteria, and researcher positionality. An articulation of the limits of the proposed study sets the stage for a research study that was cognizant and intentional about proceeding with care.

This study was action oriented and sought to change destructive institutional patterns that harm Black college students. Hiraldo (2010), accurately captures this sentiment.

> An institution can aim to increase diversity of the campus by increasing the number of students of color. However, if the institution does not make necessary changes to make the campus climate inclusive, the institution will have a difficult time maintaining diversity. (p. 54)

In conclusion, the results of this study are intended to provide educators with the information and knowledge to address systemic barriers in support of the racialized adult identity development of traditional-age Black college students. While it would be naïve

to presume that this work will upend the complex web of injustice that plagues America's future, to remain silent is not a viable option when American public colleges and universities are failing Black students. Rooted in the tenets of CRT, this study sought to activate social change in higher education as part of the larger movement toward Black liberation.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the racialized adult identity development process of Black college students. Specifically, this study explored how traditional-age Black students made meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the context of racially hostile campus climates, and how campus climate informed this process. Woven throughout this chapter are the answers to the core research questions of the study, which were:

1. What does it mean for college students to #AdultWhileBlack?
    a. How does the racialized adult identity meaning-making process unfold across the dimensions of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?
    b. What does racialized adult identity development look like within the stages of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?
    c. How do the sectors of Nigrescence manifest within the dimensions and stages of self-authorship among traditional-age Black college students?
2. In what ways does campus climate help or hinder #AdultingWhileBlack among traditional-age Black college students?

This chapter presents the findings of the research study. The first part of the chapter introduces the participants of the study. This context is provided to give life to the narratives that follow. The next section explores the ways in which the participant experiences map within the dimensions of Critical Race Self-Authorship. At this point

the chapter takes a necessary turn, to accommodate the findings in a way that departs from the stage-based model of adult identity development. Considering this shift, a new model of Black Critical Conscientization is described. The final section brings together four foundations that emerged from the narratives, which illustrate the manifestation of Black Critical Conscientization in the college setting.

Participant Profiles

The following section provides demographic and biographical information about the participants involved in the study. Pseudonyms were assigned to support participant anonymity. All ages and class standings given reflect the academic year in which the study was administered, 2019–2020.

Alicia, 22, identifies as a cis Black woman. Her formative years were spent in the mountain west area of the United States. After high school she moved to the Pacific Northwest and earned an associate degree at a community college. From there she transferred to PNWU, where she has junior class standing. She described her extended family as being actively engaged in the Black community in the areas surrounding PNWU. She lives off campus with her white husband.

Andre, 25, is a cis male who described his ancestry as a mix of Black, Native American, European, and French. He grew up in the west south-central region of the United States, in a Black area of a racially segregated community. His higher education journey began at a community college near his hometown before he transferred to PNWU. Andre is a first-generation student in his junior year. He is Christian.

Hazel, 21, is a cis female of Black and Asian descent who identifies as mixed race. She grew up in a white community in the Pacific Northwest with her Asian mother and grandmother. Hazel maintains contact with her half-siblings on her father's side, who are fully Black. She has attended PNWU for her entire higher education experience.

Imani, 26, is a cis female who identifies as African American. She spent a considerable number of her formative years in the foster care system in the Pacific Northwest. Throughout this time, she maintained a strong connection with her mother. She attended three other institutions of higher education before transferring to PNWU. Imani is a first-generation student in her senior year.

Kenya, 21, is a cis female of mixed-race (Black and Latina) heritage who identifies as Black. Growing up, Kenya moved around the United States frequently; her formative years were split between the Pacific Northwest and the east south coastal region of the United States. She transferred to PNWU from a community college in the Pacific Northwest and is currently a senior.

Madison, 22, is a cis female who identifies as African American. She grew up in a home with her Black parents and siblings in the Pacific Northwest. While she has not had the opportunity to visit, her family traces their African heritage through the West Indies. Prior to transferring to PNWU, she attended a private university in a neighboring state. She is a first-generation student and a senior at PNWU.

Nia, 19, is a cis female who identifies as mixed race (West African and Middle Eastern). She was born in West Africa and moved to the United States to live with her Middle Eastern father before the age of 10. Her formative years were spent in a

predominantly white community in the Pacific Northwest. Having skipped several grades in primary school, she started her higher education journey at PNWU and currently has senior standing. Nia's Christian faith is an important aspect of her identity.

Raven, 21, is a cis female who identifies as mostly Black. Her parents are of Black and Asian descent. She grew up in the mountain west region of the United States with her Asian mother before transferring to PNWU as a freshman. Raven is a first-generation student and a senior at PNWU. Her Christian faith and her identity as a poet and performer are central to how she defines herself.

Shanice, 21, is a cis female who identities as African American and as a person with a physical disability. She grew up with her Black parents in a predominantly white community in the Pacific Northwest. Having completed several associate degrees at her local community college, she transferred to PNWU to earn her bachelor's degree as a first-generation student. Shanice is a junior.

Sulayman, 24, is a cis male who identifies as African. He grew up in West Africa before moving to the Pacific Northwest to attend college. Prior to transferring to PNWU, he attended a community college. Many of his family members have attended college in the United States and Europe before returning to West Africa to fulfill their professional careers; he intends to do the same. Sulayman's Muslim faith is a central component of his identity.

Dimensions of Self-Authorship

One research question for this study explored the ways in which #AdultingWhileBlack manifested within the dimensions of self-authorship. As described

previously, the dimensions include the interpersonal, epistemological, and intrapersonal areas of meaning-making. Adding to Baxter Magolda's (2008) original description of these dimensions, this study used Hernández's (2016) CRT approach to situate Black student meaning-making within the racialized social world those students navigate (Table 4).

Table 4	
CRT Self-Authorship Questions	
Self-Authorship Dimension	CRT Self-Authorship Question (Hernández, 2016)
Interpersonal	What relationships do I want with others for the benefit of my social world?
Epistemological	How do I make meaning of my social world?
Intrapersonal	How does my social world shape my sense of self as a racialized being?

Interpersonal

The interpersonal dimension of CRTSA explores the ways in which Black students engage in relationships with others. The core CRTSA question associated with this dimension is, "What relationships do I want with others for the benefit of my social world?" The interviews revealed a variety of ways that the participants understood and defined relationships. Because race was a focal point of the interviews, the narratives point to the participants being challenged with making meaning of the fact that not all relationships are for the benefit of their social world. The narratives below describe how this consciousness influenced how they navigated the interpersonal dimension of self-authorship.

Black power. A common theme that arose from the interviews was an understanding of power in relationships. All participants were cognizant of the inequitable power dynamic in which white people are often positioned above Black people. In some cases, this resulted in Black students extending greater levels of trust to their Black peers and faculty, while carefully navigating interactions with white people on campus. Hazel elaborated on her encounters with white people and the power they hold:

> I would say I generally don't trust white people the most. Yet, in my hierarchy, I put white people very high. Even though I may not trust them, I still see them as representation of power. And then when it comes to my own people, Black people, I definitely would say that I trust more easily.

In Hazel's narrative we see that she closely links race, power, and trust in her negotiation of her relationships with others. Using a CRT lens offers useful insights for understanding how racism informs identity. This approach to making meaning of the interpersonal dimension departs from Baxter Magolda's (2001) original work with white students.

At PNWU, Hazel often found herself in situations where she was the only Person of Color in a group of white peers. She described numerous occasions when racist comments or assumptions were expressed in such situations. In those moments, she found herself wavering about how to respond:

> Typically, with white people, it's like I'm the only person and I'm going to have to call [racism] out in front of a whole bunch of them. But there's also this horrible fact within me that's like, white people hold power, therefore I cannot burn this bridge. It's a really shitty, ugly thing.

Hazel's narrative speaks to the potential risks of confronting racism. The other participants in the study also shared similar experiences of being silenced by whiteness in white spaces. Thus, in order to maintain relationships that could potentially benefit their social world, Black students often felt that it was not safe to confront racism from their white peers, faculty, and staff when it occurred. For the participants, safety was an acute factor in students' sense of belonging on campus. The findings of this theme point to the corrosive role that white power plays in the Black student experience.

Black burden. In addition to navigating power dynamics, the participants also contended with white entitlement to their minds and bodies. Entitlement often came in the form of white people touching Black student bodies without consent. Raven described the regular encounters she has experienced in relation to her hair on campus.

> A lot of the micro-aggressions I experience [on campus] have to do with my hair. I like to change my hair often because I get bored easily. The only downside is that white people will walk up to me and they will hold me hostage just to ask me questions about my hair that they could Google. Without even saying hi or asking my name, they will try to touch it. I feel like I'm in a zoo. It happens so many times that I want to ask, "Do you want to know my name? Would you like to get to know me [or am I] just hair right now?"

Raven's use of language in this narrative is particularly telling. In this example, she describes feeling as though she is being held hostage by white entitlement to her body. Her experience also sheds light on the objectification she feels as a result of the frequent encounters of this nature. White entitlement devalues her humanity to the extent that she is viewed as being "just hair."

When asked about the cumulative effect of these types of encounters, Raven stated:

> I feel bad because at the beginning of the day or at the beginning of the week, if someone says something to me, I'm a little nicer and more patient and I'll talk to them for a little bit. And then as the day goes on and it keeps happening, or the week goes on, I get meaner because I'm tired. I'll make up answers because I'm just sick of it.

Raven's example sheds light on an additional analytical process, which involves unpacking the impact of the encounters on the self while considering the source of the offense. In the midst of managing white entitlement, Raven explains that she feels "bad" about not being as patient with white people as time wears on. She struggled with wanting to educate people who approached her, but doing so took away from her ability to go about her life without constant white interruption. In general, educating white people about the Black experience was met with a mix of gritted-teeth patience, frustration, and detachment.

Like in Quaye, Griffin, and Museus's (2015) work, the participants discussed constantly being asked to serve as subject matter experts and representatives of their entire race. Nia explained, "Being a Person of Color requires a lot of explanation. [White] people always want you to go into detail about who you are and the kind of things that make you different from them."

Like Nia, Imani described her frustration with white entitlement to her hair.

> I think [white people] feel like you need to be educating them. I feel like they have room to just ask you any kind of questions, like "How many times do you change your hair? Oh, can I touch it?" And I'm like, "No, why don't you ask to touch Amy's hair?"

In this encounter, we see Imani questioning the absurdity of white entitlement to her body. She names the double standard by asking why the person doesn't ask to touch other white people. In both situations, encounters with white people were not beneficial to their

social world. White entitlement was burdensome to participants, because they felt that they needed to constantly be ready to educate others about their racialized existence. Even more problematic, however, was that white people continued to feel entitled to the personal details of Black lives. This entitlement is a product of white supremacy.

Black validation. While in college, the participants sought relationships with people who validated their Black existence. Many spoke about the importance of finding a community of Black people within the school to help them process and resist the oppression they experienced. As such, the participants sought to form deeper relationships with Black people on campus to buffer against racist encounters. Nia explained,

> I think being a Black student on this campus has taught me to seek out other Black students. I seek spaces where I'm comfortable and am not made to feel like I can't take up a space because I'm not white.

Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) would describe Nia's narrative as finding power in the margins.

Finding shelter with other historically minoritized people in predominantly white spaces is a survival strategy that many of the participants said that they used. In most cases, the power they found in the margins facilitated their persistence. Nia went on to share that in such spaces, she feels a sense of transparency where she can talk about her racialized experiences without fear of disbelief, white fragility, or rejection. "Just having those shared experiences has helped me with my journey in college," she said. In fact, Black faculty and staff played an essential role in cultivating power in the margins. Many of the participants expressed that they would not be where they were if not for the

guidance, mentorship, advocacy, and support of these educational leaders; this finding affirms existing literature about the importance of Black faculty and staff and Black student persistence (Bensimon, 2007; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Another haven for Black students at PNWU was the Black Studies Department. Imani articulated her experience in Black Studies courses:

> That's where I saw more African-American, African, and Chicanx students. I always felt like I did better in those classes because I saw people who looked like me. I felt like I could actually have conversations. I sat in the front and I could raise my hand when I knew an answer and not feel like "oh my god, I don't have to dim down my brightness."

In this example we see that the presence of not only other Black students, but also Students of Color in general, served to improve Imani's engagement. Like Nia, she was not made to feel as though she was taking up too much space in the setting, and she was made to feel that her presence was of value. These results are consistent with the data obtained by previous studies about Black student engagement with diverse Peers of Color (Harper & Simmons, 2018; Quaye et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2009).

The findings suggest that being in college challenged participants to be intentional about the types of people they *chose* to interact with; these ties with others served to the benefit of their social world. For the participants, it was about more than simply finding someone who shared their interests; it was also about connecting with people who had common lived experiences. Nia explained, "I think I'm more willing to make friends with Black people than I am white people just because that's something that I, in a sense, crave. I crave having Black friends and having people that I can automatically relate to."

In this way, the collective experience of being in a Black space was a validating force. In Nia's case, choosing to interact with Black people on campus was something that she craved, and she took intentional steps to build a *life-minded* community toward the benefit of her social world.

In addition to building life-minded relationships through the Black Studies Department, the participants chose to build such relationships through involvement in Black or African student organizations and the use of Black cultural spaces on campus. These resources created a sense of belonging for Madison: "I feel like the community in the Black Cultural Center also runs into my Black student organization family. I feel like they care, and I feel like we all advocate for each other." In Madison's narrative we see that involvement with Black students benefits her social world through a sense of community. Madison's description of these interpersonal relationships as being familial speaks to the profound influence they have had on her experience. Her narrative also suggests that there is a protective element in the margins, which is consistent with Solórzano and Villalpando's (1998) research. Not only are participants seeking refuge, but they also share resources, empower each other, and advocate for one another.

Epistemological

The epistemological dimension of CRTSA explores the ways in which Black students cognitively process their racialized identity. The core question associated with this dimension is, "How do I make meaning of my social world?" The participant narratives revealed meaning-making strategies that differed from the types of responses gathered from white students (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001; Pizzolato,

2005). To understand epistemological meaning making, the participants were asked to recount experiences with racism that they have had throughout their educational experiences. In this dimension Black representation, Black encounters with whiteness, and Black racial salience arose as the main themes for how meaning-making manifested in the college environment.

Black representation. Participants expressed a collective epistemological orientation toward Black identity that differs from individualistic cultures. The negative stereotypes associated with Black people weighed heavily on the minds of the participants. An interesting finding of this study was that participants felt pressured to represent the Black race when faced with negative stereotypes. While all the participants believed that the stereotypes did not fit their character, they spent a considerable amount of energy acting in ways that would counter harmful tropes of Blackness.

Nia recounted how the weight of presenting her Black identity in a positive light was more than an individual act:

> I'm always scared of saying something that makes white people look down on me, and then that translates to them looking down on other people like me. And so being a minority and having this Black status makes me want to prove myself in every situation so that it's easier for other people who come after to be able to do the same.

Nia's narrative and those of the other participants in the study speak to a collective epistemology often found in African and African diasporic communities. Not only was she concerned about how she, as an individual, might be perceived, but this responsibility also extended to challenging white social perceptions of the Black race.

The findings suggest that the participants' parents played a critical role in helping them recognize that their race came with a host of negative expectations from white people. "I think these ideas about expectations come from my own family," explained Alicia. "I was raised saying that you have to be twice as good to be seen as good. It's like white people are constantly underestimating and stereotyping us." Imani received similar messaging from her family. "My mom drove home the point that, when dealing with racism, there are going to be times in your life where those things are going to happen, but you got to keep pushing through."

In many cases, this meant doing more to keep up appearances for oneself and to challenge the perception of Black stereotypes. Kenya describes this phenomenon: "I think a lot of Students of Color have to juggle a lot more or feel like they have to work harder while having other extracurriculars, like clubs and jobs, to feel at the same level as their white peers." These results seem to be consistent with other research showing that Black students felt the constant need to prove their intellectual abilities in order to be accepted by others in white campus environments (Quaye et al., 2015).

These narratives point to the fact that Black students bear a significant level of responsibility when it comes to making meaning of their social world. Not only do they feel responsible for disproving stereotypes in the college environment, but they also believe that in order to do so, they must go above and beyond their white peers to be seen at the same level. The pressures of collective identity add to this dynamic.

Black encounters with whiteness. The findings of this study point to the reality that racialized encounters are a frequent part of the Black student experience. Because of

the regularity of such encounters, Black students engage in a constant evaluation process of the severity of an encounter with their energy and/or agency to analyze it. They consistently spoke about an instantaneous response to the discomfort toward the offensive behavior, statement, or circumstance. It was at that point that they would ask themselves if it was worth it to take stock of the incident, or whether they should move on instead. In several narratives, the participants used similar language to describe this process of asking: "Is this a big deal right now or do I let it go?"

While almost all the participants said that they had not experienced what they would call "direct" racism on campus, microaggressions were frequent. For the most part, participant response to microaggressions was to ignore them when they happened. Alicia explains, "It sounds silly, but I'm just so used to them, it's just like it's not really special. It's work, it's school, it's the stores. It's just part of life." Sulayman described a similar experience:

> People address me with some amount of hostility because I'm not from here. They ask, "are you a citizen?" and want to know if I'm an illegal immigrant or a legal immigrant. At first [those questions] bothered me, but not anymore. You just have to get a thick skin.

Shanice also had a similar approach and stated: "I try not to listen to some things people say. It can either set you off or upset you." By acknowledging microaggressions as a normal aspect of their racialized experiences, Alicia, Sulayman, and Shanice were able to deflect the need to fully analyze them.

All these narratives suggest that participants allowed the daily slights to roll off their backs. It should be noted, however, that deflection requires recognition that a microaggression has occurred. Even if a person decides to ignore the incident, each

scenario requires brain work to determine if it is worth the battle of addressing or not. This suggests that energy is still used to recognize that an encounter has occurred, even when it doesn't lead to a full analysis.

This energy expenditure recalls Raven's constant microaggressions with white people touching her hair; even if one deflects the encounter, the cumulative effect of microaggressions can take their toll over time. These findings point to Cress's (2005) research suggesting that Black students spend extra energy managing the racial battles of their college experience, energy that could otherwise be directed toward academic and positive personal pursuits. This also accords with earlier discussions about the negative effects of microaggressions on Black student mental health (Clark & Mitchell, 2018).

Black racial salience. Because Hernández's CRTSA framework incorporates the role of social forces into development, it makes sense that a person's racial salience would weigh heavily in their meaning-making processes about encounters. The participant narratives from this study confirm that racial salience is an important epistemological scaffold for meaning making. The narratives suggest that how participants made meaning of their social world bifurcated based on an individual's Nigrescence racial salience socialization patterns (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Higher Education Diversity Summit, 2016).

High racial salience. Those who grew up in high racial salience environments were "steered toward the building of self-concept that gives high salience to race and Black culture" (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, p. 252). Through analysis of the participants' discussions of the early experiences in the development of their racial

identity, it was determined that Alicia, Andre, Imani, Madison, Nia, and Shanice meet this designation. Imani's experiences provide insight into how her socialization influenced how she made meaning of her racialized experiences in college.

Part of Imani's childhood involved growing up in the foster care system; however, she was able to maintain a strong connection to her Black mother and siblings. She says that she was always made to feel proud of her dark skin and Black heritage. As such, Imani's upbringing involved high racial salience, even though she bounced from one foster home to another. She described, in detail, her experiences being one of a handful of Black students at school in some of the places she lived growing up. She recounted that in high school, she went toe-to-toe with the school board to request a transfer from an all-white school to a predominantly Black school in a neighboring district. She felt out of place in the all-white school and felt that teachers did not give her the same attention or support as she saw her white peers receive. Even in her adolescence, she was aware of how her race put her at a disadvantage in white environments.

Prior to transferring to PNWU, Imani had attended three other post-secondary institutions, each with varying levels of support for Black students. At a four-year institution and a community college, both in predominantly white rural areas of the Pacific Northwest, Imani struggled to find community and navigate enrollment processes. After enrolling in a community college in an urban area, Imani found that while she was able to find more community, she still had a hard time accessing the consistent information and resources she needed. "One person was telling me this, and another

person was telling me that. So I was like, 'okay, is there one person that I can just talk to, to help me? What classes am I supposed to take?'" Instead, she was instructed to "figure it out."

> I can't just figure it out. That's why I'm asking for help. I feel like for a lot of Black students, we have to work harder to make sure that we come out on top. [When you are Black] you have to push those buttons for help a lot more. Help. Help. Help. Help. Help! If a white kid was like, "Hey, I'm failing my class right now, what can I do? Is there someone to help me?" they would have been heard and served right away.

Imani's narrative describes how she felt racism influenced the service she received on multiple college campuses. Her narrative also speaks to the barriers that hindered her self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). She was forced to spend more time at the community college than she needed to, and she attributes this to the racism she experienced at the hands of institutional administration.

At PNWU, Imani enrolled in a Black Student Success Program to help her prepare to navigate the college environment. It was through the Black educators of this program that she was able to put to words what she had experienced her entire life: "The school system is not built for Black students." While she was frustrated with the reality, it allowed her to put her encounters with whiteness in education into perspective. She thought about the many times when she felt like she needed to drop out of school. "They want you to fail," she explained. "They were actively making me fail by saying no, no, no." In her moments of despair, she thought, "Yeah, I'm going to fail because it is not built for me. Loans, financial aid, they are saying no. More resources, they are saying no. So how am I supposed to succeed?" College was the place where Imani's views of the

educational system crystallized. Imani's high racial salience upbringing prompted her to make meaning of her experiences primarily through a racialized lens.

Low racial salience. The participants in this study determined to have grown up with low racial salience were Hazel, Kenya, Raven, and Sulayman. They were also socialized in environments that "exposed them to numerous experiences that stress something other than race and Black culture" (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, p. 252). Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) assert that those with this socialization type will likely need to undergo a convergence experience to transition to the adult stages of Nigrescence. The findings suggest that the entry into the college environment served as a convergence experience for about half of the participants with this type of socialization. Kenya's experiences illustrate low racial salience and how it manifests in the higher education environment.

While Kenya defines herself as "mostly Black," she notes her mixed-race heritage when filling out documents—her mother is Latina and her father is Black. She describes her mother as one to never want to stick around in one place for too long; thus, Kenya frequently moved throughout the United States. In most places, her mother would enroll her in predominantly white schools in hopes that her gifted daughter would have an enriching educational experience.

As an adult, Kenya and her mother began to talk more about how her education was influenced by race. Kenya's mother often fought Kenya's racial battles for her behind closed doors. At new schools, Kenya's white instructors translated her quiet demeanor to not understanding the content and sought to put her in special education

classes. After she was tested, it was determined that Kenya was talented and gifted. At each new school, this pattern repeated itself. Because her mother often took the lead in addressing racism when it happened, Kenya didn't often think about her race being a major factor of her identity; instead, Kenya explored her queer sexual orientation as her primary identity growing up.

In fact, it wasn't until she went to college that Kenya truly began to examine how her race impacted her, because her mother wasn't around to shelter her from racism. Kenya was asked to describe how she sees race factoring into her experience at PNWU, and she reflected on her experiences in the Design Program. Kenya was one of a few Black students in the predominantly white major. One of the challenges of being in the fine arts is the subjective nature of evaluation of student work, which can lead to bias. In the forthcoming passage, we see Kenya's meaning-making process as she describes getting her work critiqued in the program:

> I get discouraged when people in class don't like my projects. It makes me feel inferior, like I'm not doing something right. Every time we have critiques, people point out things wrong [with my work]. I have an internal battle trying to figure out what is a helpful comment and what I don't need to stress about.

When pressed to describe what factors she analyzed to determine the value of feedback, she explained:

> I try to compare the critique comments to my work and then the critique comments to other people's work just to, I don't know, see if I'm getting more negative feedback than other people are, and try to tell myself, "This is how this works. Everyone's going to get negative feedback because we're all sort of at the same level as each other." So that's how I've been trying to, I guess, slow down my process when it comes to that. Maybe because I'm in classes and places I'm not too comfortable in and I am more of a quiet person that fades into the background, so I'd say it's probably that too. Sometimes my thoughts will turn to, "Oh, is it because I'm Black or is it because I'm this or that?"

Kenya's narrative suggests that she develops multiple explanations for the negative feedback that she receives during critiques. Her epistemological process involves observing the comments that other students are receiving and weighing those against her own, rationalizing that critique is part of the academic process, and finally considering the influence of race as a mitigating factor. Kenya's response is indicative of being raised in a low racial salience environment.

The critical factor of Kenya's experience, and of the experiences of the others with low racial salience, lies in the lived experiences of their Blackness. Even though they were not raised in environments with high racial salience, they still move about the world in Black bodies. This suggests that the permanence of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) maintains its impact regardless of one's racial salience. While Kenya may not initially attribute her treatment to her racial identity, there is nothing to prevent her white instructors and peers from allowing their racial biases to inform their judgement of her work.

In both examples, Imani and Kenya make meaning of their experiences through the lens of racial salience. In general, the interview transcripts showed that those with high racial salience were quicker to view an encounter through a racialized lens before any other lenses. Those with low racial salience were shown to draw upon several explanations for the encounter; while race was one of the lenses they used, it typically was not the first lens.

Intrapersonal

The intrapersonal dimension of CRTSA is associated with the process by which an individual makes meaning of how their social world shapes their sense of self as a racialized being. The findings suggest that socialization pattern was influential in the meaning-making process. In addition, all participants engaged in a process of reconciling the intersections of their identity and the social pressures of racial essentialism. The narratives provided in this section offer insights into how the participants made meaning of the relationship between the social and the personal.

Nigrescence socialization & sense of self. In the interpersonal dimension, one's Nigrescence socialization pattern influenced the meaning-making process. In their Nigrescence Lifespan Model, Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) describe two socialization patterns that Black people experience early in their lives. These socialization patterns come into play later in a Black person's life, as they experience encounters with whiteness. Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) model names these socialization types Pattern A and Pattern B. The challenge with naming them this way is that they do not accurately convey the socialization process; from a practical standpoint, it makes them hard to remember. Thus, the researcher has developed new titles for the socialization patterns by drawing from the data collected in this study and the original definitions by Cross and Fhagen-Smith.

"Nigrescence Pattern A refers to the ways in which a person may develop a Black identity as a consequence of his or her formative socialization experiences [and often have reached] early adulthood having achieved any one of a variety of Black identities"

(Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, p. 243). In this sense, their identity was shaped and reinforced by the Black culture that surrounded them. Individuals with this socialization pattern are born into Blackness; thus, the term *Black Intrinsic Socialization* will be used in this work going forward. It should be noted that this group is the most common among Black populations.

Pattern B socialization refers to those who "do not achieve a well-formed Black identity until they have undergone an identity conversion experience, generally as a part of their adult development" (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001, p. 243). Unlike people with Black Intrinsic Socialization, these individuals must learn about their Black identity through encounters that challenge them to examine their race. As such, they go through a process of entering Black identity through encounters; thus, the term *Black Emergent Socialization* will be used to denote this process.

Black Intrinsic Socialization. The participants in this study with Black Intrinsic Socialization came to the higher education environment with an established Black identity. Because of this, Black students with this socialization pattern were prompted to interact with their environment by making meaning of where it was safe for them to be authentically Black. Over a century ago, the scholar W.E.B. Du Bois (1908) coined the term double-consciousness to describe this phenomenon:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others…One never feels his twoness, and American and a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 7)

This study found that participants who experienced Black Intrinsic Socialization struggled to find safe places to be their whole selves at PNWU. This resulted in the belief that they needed to express one identity in white settings while withholding elements of their Black identity. Madison described how double consciousness manifested for her in the college environment:

> I have learned that you have to be two different people to really be accepted, because I feel like I'm myself when I'm with [Black people], but I do feel like when I am outside of those walls, or that sense of community, that I have to be someone different.

When asked to explain what this looks like in her daily interactions she said:

> I can be the fun, relaxed, Madison that has her own interests, and what she believes in, and her culture. Then I shift to classroom Madison where I see only white faces. I have to be concerned. I don't even wear the same clothing. I know that if I wear what I find is cute, or fun to wear, I'm not going to be looked at the same way. I have to conduct myself in a way where it's like I always have to be professional. I feel like I have to be two separate people.

Madison's narrative illustrates Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness and situates what it looks like for her in the college environment. Madison, like the other intrinsic Black participants in the study, needed to become astute in code-switching (Strauss & Cross, 2006) in order to navigate double-consciousness. In Madison's experience, we can see that code-switching involves changing her behavior, clothing, and awareness in order to fit in with whiteness. Whiteness tells her that Blackness and professionalism do not go together, which challenges her ability to be fully accepted in the white classroom.

These results are in line with other scholars who assert that white-centric norms of historically white institutions marginalize Black students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Quaye et al., 2015). In order to successfully navigate higher education, Black students

must part with major aspects of their racialized experiences, values, and opinions—those that conflict with campus culture. What the classroom loses, then, is exposure to the "fun, relaxed Madison" who could otherwise feel comfortable contributing her ideas and beliefs to the learning environment. By maintaining conditions that force Madison to withhold core aspects of her humanity, everyone loses.

Black Emergent Socialization. Participants with Black Emergent Socialization were challenged differently in the college environment; therefore, they took an alternate path toward meaning-making in the intrapersonal dimension. The findings suggest that those who experienced Black Emergent Socialization needed to do more reflection to counter the low racial salience and internalized racism they formed while growing up. Emergent Black meaning-making often involved unpacking racial trauma. That said, in most cases, this meaning-making took place before these students matriculated into the higher education environment. This is helpful context to consider when exploring how these students engage with racism in post-secondary settings.

Triggered by the news of Trayvon Martin's murder and the exoneration of his perpetrator, Raven described her first experience connecting her identity with her own trauma and the struggle for Black liberation:

> [The media started paying more attention to] young Black boys dying at the hands of police officers and the [resulting] uprisings. It was around this time when I was feeling just so angry. I think I was so angry because it was coming from a place of pain I hadn't ever addressed before. I finally was like, that's my community that's dying, that's my community that's being killed in the streets like this. Why do I feel such a connection to these stories? And I think it's one thing if it's just sad in general, but it's another thing because I felt like I was watching my family die. And I think that's, for me, when it was like, oh, you're a part of this.

Raven's experience illustrates her process toward developing Black reference group orientation (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). She describes the pain that she feels as she connects the stories that she sees in the media with her own Black identity.

Discussions about racial trauma were common in the interviews with emergent Black participants. When asked about what it is like growing up Black in America, Raven spoke candidly about the role of trauma.

> I think Black kids have a lot of cultural trauma no one ever teaches them about, but they still suffer from and they go a long time without ever knowing why they're suffering from this. And so going from taking that trauma from your childhood into your adulthood is really heavy and it's really hard and there's not a lot of spaces or opportunities or sources that help navigate children from being traumatized to being like adults who are supposed to go throughout the world as if they aren't traumatized.

Raven's narrative suggests that Black youth, particularly those from low racial salience backgrounds, begin to recognize a tension between their socialization and their agency to address their racial identity as they transition toward adulthood.

For Raven, college was a time to continue unpacking the trauma that she experienced at a young age. Due to her socialization, she did not have access to other Black people who could help her process the harm. Her narrative about "finally" feeling a connection to the Black American experience is indicative of a newfound consciousness as she aged toward adulthood. She is now able to look back and see how her upbringing with her non-Black parent may have shielded her from cultivating an authentic connection with her Black identity. As such, throughout her interview, Raven described a constant unlearning process toward a new understanding of her Black identity. In the

college environment, we see Raven grappling with this reality as she battles regular microaggressions with her braided hair, an outward representation of her Blackness.

This process was expressed among the other emergent Black participants in the study. Exposure to other Black students and learning the language of oppression on campus allowed them to feel anger and frustration with whiteness in ways they hadn't before. As will be discussed in later sections, how each participant managed these emotions was expressed in their Adult Nigrescence type (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Black identity intersections. The very first research question asked of all participants was: "Can you tell me about yourself?" This standard interview question was often met with puzzled looks and hesitation. Many participants weren't sure where to start and asked clarifying questions before jumping in. They would ask, "What do you mean? Stuff like my race, or major, or my hobbies?" To these questions, the researcher consistently responded, "Why don't you start by telling me what you think I should know about you." In response to this prompt, coupled with questions about other identities that were important to them, the participants spoke eloquently about how they were Black and "queer," "a woman," "Asian," "a person living with a disability," "a Muslim." The ways in which they described their identities was indicative of the intersections of their being.

A challenge participants faced in the intrapersonal dimension was developing pathways to being intersectional in a social world that consistently tried to essentialize their identity to being only Black. As such, the participants expressed antiessentialism by holding their other intersecting identities salient along with their Black identity.

Multiraciality. A contradiction with essentialism manifested uniquely among the participants with multiracial identities. A common question that multiracial people are asked is, “What are you?” This question is often viewed as a microaggression. Just as white people have been shown in this study to feel entitled to the personal details of Black hair, the study also showed they feel similarly entitled to question the racial makeup of multiracial Black people. When pressed with these types of questions, Kenya developed a default response that frequently resulted in fewer follow-up questions. “I just say I’m black. If anyone asks for more information, I’ll tell them that I’m mixed.” She explained that she identifies with monoracial Black people in terms of the similar struggles they face:

> I do find myself getting followed in stores. I do find myself dealing with not getting job interviews I know because how my name looks or because of a certain way my hair might be styled, and people expecting me to act a certain way, just because of how I look.

An interesting aspect of Kenya’s response is that she connects her racial identity with the social implications of what it means to be Black in America. In this way, the self is bound with the socio-historical context of the environment.

Nia described the complexity of responding to the *What are you?* question:

> I think it’s really hard because when people ask me where I’m from or what I am, it’s like, in what context do you mean? Am I from a city in the Pacific Northwest? Am I from West Africa? Am I American? Am I African? Am I Middle Eastern? I guess you could say I’m mixed, but it’s really difficult to determine that in our society because the way I speak. No one would assume that I was born in West Africa. They’re like, "Where’s your accent? Blah, blah, blah." When I talk to my parents and my family, I have an accent, but when I talk to other people from America, why would I speak in that accent? It doesn’t really make a lot of sense.

In this passage, Nia defines who she is in relation to her social world. Her narrative is inclusive of geological facts such as where she was born and where she grew up. She also examines social expectations about how she should look and sound, based on her upbringing. Finally, she describes her process of code-switching (Strauss & Cross, 2006) between her mixed-race family and white cultures.

Nia's experience was shared among the other mixed-race participants in the study. White entitlement led to disbelief in their initial response and resulted in additional lines of questioning. In such scenarios, Nia felt uncomfortable with the amount of detail she felt was demanded of her, but in those moments she also weighed the risks of not indulging white entitlement. She recognizes that white people in her social world have trouble *placing her* based on her birth country and her American accent.

Engagement with other Black students helped Nia make meaning of her sense of self as a racialized being. She explained:

> I think they have really opened me up to being less filtered and being less what everyone else wants me to be. I realize that I can still be myself and still be intelligent, and I can still be respected just for being the person that I am with my family and the person that I am with my Black friends.

Nia's Black friends allowed her to embrace her multiracial identity.

In the midst of code-switching around her intersecting racial identities, Nia maintains a strong internal foundation about who she is and how she wants to be perceived. "I want to be seen as someone who's an asset to any situation because I have so many cultural experiences and so many different insights. I'm smart and I am driven." Like the other participants, she has a multifaceted identity, and she pushes back on white desire to compartmentalize her.

Antiessentialism. Another contradiction the participants needed to reconcile within the intrapersonal dimension was making meaning of what it means to be Black in a social world that has a distinct archetype of Blackness. They addressed this dilemma by eschewing socially constructed notions of Blackness and, instead, self-authoring their own version of Black identity. The participants were asked what being at PNWU taught them about themselves. Their responses speak to the ways in which they push back at essentialism.

Sulayman described how his self-authoring identity was, in part, informed by his experiences in a historically white college. "Being at PNWU has helped me realize that I can do better and reach further. That said, being amongst more white people and seeing that it's not an even playing field has made realize my Blackness more."

Attending college in the United States was a big shift for Sulayman. As he reflected on his upbringing in West Africa, he said that he never really had to think about race because he was surrounded by other Africans. Sulayman's experience differs from those of the other participants because he grew up outside the United States. He would be described as having grown up in a Black Intrinsic Socialization environment with low racial salience. There was pride in his dark skin, and there were Black people at every level of the social institutions of his country. The distinguishing social factor in his community was religion, but even that did not segregate people into class groups. In the United States, he was seen as a Black man and treated as such. In a society that often vilifies the Muslim faith, he became a double target. "The longer I've stayed in the US, the longer I stayed here, I just realize how Black I am." Even so, Sulayman's resilience in

his cultural identity helped him push back at essentialism. He explained, “I’m a young, Black Muslim, but I can also be a physician. I can eventually have a good career that will become part of my identity.”

Sulayman’s narrative presents his knowledge of the social forces shaping his identity, and his agency to determine how he defines himself in the future. His remarks suggest that he has developed a keen understanding of the way racism limits his potential in the United States. On the other hand, he speaks of hope about his future and the dynamism of his identity. Sulayman’s plans are to return to his home country after he completes medical school. Given his experiences with racism, isolation, and profiling in the United States, it is expected that he will follow through with this goal.

Being at PNWU and having the opportunity to be around more Black people also helped to shape Hazel’s authorship toward antiessentialism.

> I think it taught me that there’s more than one way to be Black, that all Black people are individuals, we all have our own different opinions, background, and beliefs. We’re not all just a group of Black people. We’re individual people who are African American.

With this framework in mind, Hazel sought to elevate other identities to compensate for society’s essentialism.

> I choose to just be a person. I don’t want to be a Black person. I don’t want to be just a female human being. I want to be seen as so much more than that. I’m getting a degree in something that I view as pretty difficult. I have my own political beliefs that don’t align with every single person who looks like me. I have my own religious beliefs. I have my own sexuality. People just need to get to know me instead of viewing me as one entity.

Hazel’s statement suggests a frustration with being categorized by society. Her interactions with other Black students in college helped her unlearn the essentialist

ideology she was exposed to growing up. We also see Hazel's yearning to author her unique, multi-layered identity in the face of essentialism. Thus, not only is the college experience allowing her to redefine what it means to be Black, but she is also recognizing that diversity exists within Blackness.

Dimensions Summary

In summary, the findings of this study offer rich insights into the ways in which racialized identity manifests within the dimensions of self-authorship. Using CRT self-authorship (Hernández, 2016) allowed participants to articulate the influence of racism in how they came to identify. Interpersonally, this meant being intentional about navigating interpersonal relationships with racially informed intention. Epistemologically, a split in meaning-making occurs based on high or low racial salience, and this informs how one uses race as a lens to make meaning of encounters with racism. Intrapersonally, socialization plays a critical role in how the participants define themselves in relation to their social world. These themes will be explored again in forthcoming sections.

Black Self-Authorship

One of the research sub-questions of the study was to explore the ways in which #AdultingWhileBlack manifested within the stages of self-authorship. Contrary to expectations, the experiences of the participants suggest that #AdultingWhileBlack is in some ways a misnomer. The participant narratives suggest that the college years do not necessarily present a new phase of growing older under the oppression of white supremacy. They are simply an extension of a life they came to know very early on— a life in which one learns at a young age that they are different, that their difference is

reinforced through constant messaging that they do not belong, and that interactions with others must be carefully negotiated to succeed. For intrinsic Black participants, the college environment reinforced these realities, while most matriculated Black participants engaged in a process of unpacking trauma in order to make meaning of the role of racism in their life. In both cases, racism was always present.

Constructivist stage-based models often describe a process by which a person moves from immaturity to a more sophisticated level of development. The researcher's initial goal was to analyze the narratives to identify how the participant experiences fit into the stages from external formulas to self-authorship. Applying this concept to the data collected in this study did not result in consistent themes across stages. One reason for this is that racism, by nature, is an external force that Black students cannot ignore. The self-authorship model describes a process by which college students move from defining themselves based on external factors toward defining themselves based on an internal foundation. White supremacy makes it such that the interpersonal, epistemological, and intrapersonal dimensions of Black student meaning-making are constantly informed by external input. This is made particularly evident in the examination and bifurcation of meaning-making based on one's socialization pattern. While the participants all demonstrated the internal ability to make meaning of racism, external pressures remained a constant force that played a major role in the expression of their adult identity.

Worell (2012) suggests that some racial identity models describe change in ways that differ from other types of constructivist developmental models. Worrell (2012) writes that Nigrescence:

> …was developed in response to what was seen to be a change in African Americans' racial identity awareness [based on] their involvement in the racial equality struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. However, although development is about change, not all change is development. […] Developmental change implies that the change is typical and predictable for members of a group, and developmental change is often associated with a change in age. [Therefore,] racial identity does not fit neatly into this definition of development. […] Although no absolute statements can be made in the absence of longitudinal studies, the evidence in the extant literature does not support a developmental interpretation of Black racial identity. (pp. 30–31)

Change, then, is based in part on the socio-political environment that a person experiences. Worell's (2012) findings explain why mapping racialized adult identity development onto the stages of self-authorship resulted in inconsistencies. As previously noted, self-authorship is critiqued for its narrow conceptualization about the factors that inform identity. This study addresses that critique by inserting race into the conceptualization of self-authorship. What is perhaps most telling about racialized adult identity development is that a Black student has an awareness of the social order and has taken *intentional actions* to navigate white supremacy in ways that allow them to get their needs met. Based on these conclusions, the following sections bring forth a new concept and model to illustrate the intersections of the racialized social environment, meaning-making, and racial expression.

Black Critical Conscientization

Worell's (2012) work and the findings of this study point to the fact that by the time traditional-age Black students reach college, the evolution of racialized adult

identity is less about development and more about formation. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) offer a model of the development of Black identity throughout the lifespan. The researcher would categorize all of the participants in the study as having reached the adult stages of the Nigrescence Lifespan Model around the time they reached college. A philosophical challenge with developmental models is that the final stage creates a sense of completion. The idea that one reaches the end of a model and remains stagnant in that state fails to account for the ongoing formation that takes place within that stage. Thus, the term Black Critical Conscientization was created to distinguish the ongoing, cyclical formation of Black adult identity as the final sector of the Nigrescence Lifespan Model. In short, Black Critical Conscientization describes the awareness of the physical, social, and psychological dynamism of #AdultingWhileBlack and acting on that consciousness.

Black Critical Conscientization draws from Paulo Freire's (1974) notion of critical consciousness—"learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 4). Broadly, "critical consciousness describes how oppressed or marginalized people learn to critical analyze their social conditions and act to change them" (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011, p. 44). Critical consciousness is a product of social interaction and personal reflection. In order to analyze one's social conditions, one needs to be conscious of the contradiction between their social reality and the broader social narrative. Through this analysis one becomes aware and may take intentional action to enact change. This study asserts that the intersections of race and racism necessitate the addition of Black identity theory into the understanding of critical consciousness. Bringing together Freire's (1974)

concept of Critical Consciousness with Cross's (1971) Adult Nigrescence types allows both the psycho-social and behavioral elements of meaning-making and identity to interact.

Thomas Parham (1989) introduced the concept of Nigrescence Recycling to describe an ongoing formation within this final sector of adult Nigrescence. Consequentially, the way that the overall Lifespan Model is set up, those with internalized racism do not reach the point of recycling. The researcher asserts that one can be an adult, and Black, and express internalized racism while engaging in Black Critical Conscientization. Such represents a departure from Cross and Fhagen-Smith's model. As will be shown later, one's adult Nigrescence type is integrated into the expression of Black Critical Conscientization. While this consciousness is described in the higher education environment, it has the potential to be applied to other settings. With this context in mind, the next section describes the formational sequence of Black Critical Conscientization.

Black Critical Conscientization Sequence

Through a close analysis of the participant narratives, existing research, and researcher cultural intuition, the findings of this study point to a common pathway toward the embodiment of Black Critical Conscientization. The Black Critical Conscientization Sequence (BCCS) presents a more fluid model of identity formation than constructivist development. Figure 1 illustrates a sequence through which Black Critical Conscientization is affirmed and actualized. Before delving into the narratives that give life to the sequence, it is necessary to describe its main elements.

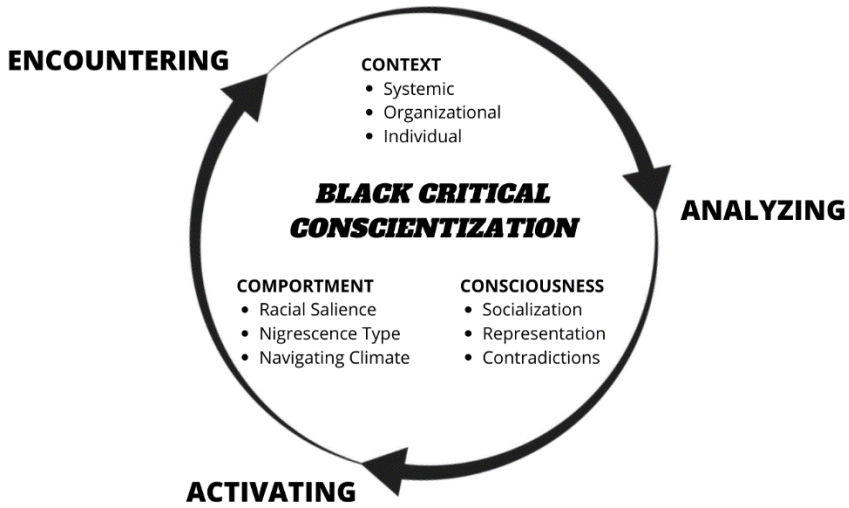

Figure 1. Black Critical Concientization Sequence

Black Critical Conscientization Model

This section will describe how the activity areas of the BCCS interact toward the expression of Black Critical Conscientization among the participants of this study. The following sections will explain each activity area, first by grounding it in existing theory and then by illustrating it through the lived experiences of the participants.

Encountering. The first part of the BCCS is encountering. All students face new people, systems, processes, and expectations as they matriculate into the higher education environment. As referenced in Chapter 2 of this work, "encountering occurs when Black people experience an event that causes a conflict in their understanding of their racial identity" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 101). This study found that what makes the college experience unique for Black students is that encounters that challenge their racial identity stem from systemic, organizational, and individual forces. The following narratives

describe the types of encounters the participants in this study faced in their college experiences.

Systemic encounters. Education, as a social institution, is a *systemic event* for Black students because the prevailing educational system in the United States was not created for their benefit (Dixson, Rousseau Anderson, & Anderson, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Harper, 2012; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Patton, 2016). The tenets of CRT already described in this work, specifically the permanence of racism, provide evidence that systematic forces perpetually undermine the lives and liberties of Black people in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Patton, 2016; Tatum, 2017). Racism infiltrates every social institution and inhibits the success of Black people. In education, the impacts of racism can be seen in the comparatively poor graduation rates of Black college students (Harper & Simmons, 2018), their marginalization in educational settings (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998), and the perceived and actual threats within the campus climate (Cress & Hart, 2005; Hurtado et al., 1999; Quaye et al., 2015).

Earlier in this work, Imani's narrative provided insights about how she learned that the educational system did not mean for her to succeed. At each turn she faced barriers that she felt, but she was not fully able to give voice to what happened until she reached her fourth higher education institution. Similarly, teachers at multiple schools assumed that Kenya had developmental delays based on her quiet, reserved nature. A CRT perspective on Kenya's experience would presume that white instructors allowed their biases to make incorrect assumptions about her intellectual abilities because of her

race. The master narrative in the United States blames the oppressed student for their inadequacy rather than calling attention to the systemic culture that oppresses the individual (Feagin et al., 1996; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000). Most colleges and universities in the United States have been designed through the lens of whiteness; the results of Black students' systemic encounters with higher education are evident in the dismal Black student success statistics throughout the country.

Organizational encounters. Organizational-event encounters often take the form of institutional processes or norms a student must navigate that conflict with their racialization. The norms, patterns, processes, and acceptable behaviors are all components of the campus climate which in turn influence the felt environment for Black students.

Alicia transferred to PNWU after having great success at a local community college. While at that college, she was able to find a community of other Black students through the Black Student Union. This group served as a safety net for Alicia as she navigated the rigors of higher education. Upon transferring to PNWU, Alicia had a hard time finding Black community on campus. She initially lived in the residence halls, where she was surrounded by a group of predominantly white peers. While she was able to connect with white friends in the hall based on academic and pop cultural interests, they lacked a life-minded understanding of her Black existence.

Alicia struggled academically during her first term at PNWU and was ultimately put on academic probation. This resulted in a hold on her financial aid funds

disbursement. In order to remove the hold, Alicia was required to submit an appeal form. Such forms are common practice in post-secondary institutions and are used to help students articulate a performance plan to improve their grades over a designated period of time. When asked about what that process was like for her, she recoiled and became a bit anxious. She remembers thinking, "Oh, my God, they're just going to think I'm just trying to rob the system. And all these thoughts they have about Black people, they're not even going to approve me because of that."

Alicia's experience illustrates several factors that complicate her encounters with PNWU as an organization. First, Alicia's racial needs were not factored in when she enrolled. This suggests an organizational assumption that Black students should assimilate into the environment in order to be successful. While Black-focused access programs and cultural resource centers are available at PNWU, it is unclear if the institution made intentional efforts to connect Alicia with these services and articulate their importance to her success at the time of enrollment. One also questions whether these programs and resources are provided with appropriate levels of funding and staffing to address the complex needs of all Black students on campus.

A second factor that complicates this encounter is Alicia's fear that discrimination will influence the outcome of her academic probation appeal. It is highly unlikely that a white student would consider the role that race could play in the evaluation of their appeal. Furthermore, mounting evidence points to the fact that Black people often receive harsher sentences than white people for the same crimes in the courtroom (Alexander, 2012; Crenshaw, 1990; Tatum, 2017). In the educational environment, we see that Black

children are often suspended or receive harsher punishments than white students in the classroom (Tatum, 2017). Given these facts and the unsubstantiated stereotypes of the modern Black Welfare Queen, Alicia's concerns about being reduced to those stereotypes (Steele, 1997, 2011) are valid.

Another place where Black students face organizational encounters is with access to campus resources. Madison described why Black students are less likely to use campus resources that could support their development and success.

> There are a lot more resources on campus that are more geared towards white people than there are for minorities. There are opportunities such as internships, mentorship programs, resource centers to help white people with adulting. I don't feel like we get as many opportunities, which is unfortunate.

Madison's interview suggests there is a perception among Black students that the resources on campus are geared toward white students. This fact contributed to a chilly campus climate for Black students in this study and had implications for their sense of belonging at the institution, which is consistent with Cress and Hart's (2005) work. When advertisements about such resources mainly depict white students, when internships are situated in predominantly white settings, when mentorship programs only include white professionals, or when Black students visit resource centers on campus and see only white faces, it sends the message that Black students are not welcome. Not only do these factors inhibit Black student success, but they also make it harder for Black students to integrate into the campus community.

Individual encounters. Black students also encounter *individual events* throughout the college experience that reflect and reinforce the system of white supremacy. What makes navigating individual events even more challenging for Black

students is that they are, often for the first time, encountering in a new context without the physical presence of their support network.

Drawing from Madison's narrative about resources on campus, we see that individual encounters damage opportunities for access. When pressed for more information about why Black students don't take advantage of the resources that white students have, she noted,

> There's a lot of stigma and a lot of nervousness around getting resources at PNWU for Black people. There are a lot of times when Black people have tried to do the same and they have experienced racism, so they don't want to reach out.

Andre's experience reflects Madison's point. During an interview he described one of his experiences with the PNWU financial aid office. His funds were not being dispersed because he needed to submit one final document. For several weeks, Andre had tried to fax and email the document to the office and was told that it had not been received. He decided to visit the office in person to clear up the issue. Upon arrival he was frustrated, because he desperately needed the funds for educational and living expenses:

> I'm in line and I'm observing these white students going off on the financial aid people. And what is their response? They are ignoring the behavior and disrespect and just giving them their services. I get to the front of the line, and knowing the space that I'm in, I present myself as nice as ever. And they gave me a snooty attitude that they should have given the white students before me. If I had come off as even remotely agitated, it would have been a huge problem for me.

The double standard presented in Andre's narrative illuminates the ways in which individual encounters manifest in the college environment. He describes code-switching (Strauss & Cross, 2006) to fit within the social context, which still did not yield basic courtesy. The encounter left him angry and frustrated and eroded his confidence in the organization. This study has also provided numerous examples of individual encounters

that the participants have faced, from white entitlement to their Black bodies to essentialism of their Black identity. This study also confirms other work (Smith et al., 2016; Tatum, 2017) in which the white perpetrators of individual encounters were found at every level of institutional leadership, and among faculty, staff, and students.

Encountering summary. The participant narratives suggest that systemic, organizational, and individual events frequently overlap. Strauss and Cross's (2006) research focused on the harm and conflict of racial encounters. Systemic events came in the form of engagement with racism as a social fact that places the lives of Black people below those of white people. This fact is evident in the organizational and systemic processes within higher education that perpetuate white supremacy. Finally, individual events were more direct and came in the form of microaggressions and stereotype threat.

The critical point, however, is that encounters, regardless of type, are harmful. While encounters with people were easier for the participants to identify, systemic and organizational encounters continue to be an oppressive force that weighs heavily on the Black college student experience. It is also important to note that all encounter types forced students to reflect upon and refine their personal relationship with their Black identity. This complex meaning-making process is described in the next section.

Analyzing. The next activity area of the BCCS is analyzing. This area of the model involves the meaning-making of encounters and is inclusive of the interpersonal, epistemological, and intrapersonal dimensions. The analysis process was described in the earlier section about how meaning-making manifests in the dimensions of self-authorship.

By integrating Freire's notion of social contradiction, the researcher was able to identify the main challenges that Black students face in the higher education context regarding these dimensions. When a Black student faces an encounter, it prompts an analysis process within the BCCS. What results from this process is a reconciliation between what they once knew and the reality facing them. Often this came in the form of a social contradiction. Exploring meaning-making in this way allowed the participants to articulate their perception and exposure of the social contradictions in their lives.

In the interpersonal dimension, the participant narratives described a consciousness of how relationships inform their social world. Experiences in the college environment enabled the participants to reconcile with the fact that not everyone had their best interests in mind. Within the epistemological dimension, participants found that racism made it such that they could not ignore social forces in how they made meaning of encounters. Finally, in the intrapersonal dimensions, the participants needed to resolve the contradiction between their own experience and the master narrative of race neutrality. Taken together, this analysis and reconciliation of contradictions allowed participants to move from consciousness to action.

Activating. The next activity area of the BCCS model is activation. In this area the individual outwardly expresses their analysis through behavior. Interestingly, behavioral patterns mapped closely with Cross's (1971) adult Nigrescence types. These profiles include Internalized Racism, Multicultural, Bi-cultural, and Black Nationalist. These are described through the narratives of the participants below.

Internalized racism profile – Hazel's story. Internalized racism is a Nigrescence type that describes individuals who, due to socialization or adverse experiences, distance themselves from Black identity and culture (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Often, internalized racism manifests as racial-self-hatred. It is important to note that people with this Nigrescence type can develop a healthy self-concept if they undergo the work to address the trauma that caused internalization. Hazel was the only participant interviewed for this study who fit this profile. Her approach to interacting with her racial background suggests that while she wants to be viewed by others as intersectional, one gets the sense that she continues to harbor a resistance to her Black identity. This may stem from her low racial salience upbringing. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) note that individuals with low racial salience may continue to exhibit signs of internalized racism even after facing a conversion experience (or encounter).

Attending PNWU could be defined as a conversion encounter for Hazel. She originally wanted to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Hazel described a yearning to be immersed in Black culture and romanticized what it would be like to connect, for the first time, with a major part of her identity through an HBCU experience. As it turned out, she could not afford to move across the country to attend her dream school. Instead, she enrolled in PNWU, because it was one of the most diverse schools within her price range; even so, she was thrilled to finally have the opportunity to engage with more Black people than she did in her home community.

Hazel struggled to find her footing within Black spaces and with her Black peers at PNWU. For a time, she did her best to "fit in" with Black people but was faced with

constant doubts about not being Black enough. “When I first came here it got to this point where being Black was my whole identity.” It appears that Hazel had a hard time navigating the intersections of her identity.

> To be honest, I just want to be like another person. I don’t want to even be seen just a Black person. Yes, these are my characteristics, but I don’t really want that to have much to do with who I am or the type of person that I am. I don’t want to go back to the place where my whole identity was just being Black, because that in itself was toxic.

When asked why she didn’t want to be viewed as a Black person, she explained,

> When you see things in the media about all these things that are happening to Black people, all these narratives that people have of Black people that they were trying to perpetuate on me. I didn’t want to be that person.

Hazel’s narrative describes an attempt to distance herself from her Black racial group orientation. Instead, Hazel focused her energies on being an active student leader. When asked where she felt the most comfortable on campus, she described the Student Leadership Center. In this space, her race took a back seat to her other identities, and she felt that she could flourish as a person.

As described in earlier chapters, one result of a conversion involves a person gaining a deeper connection to their Black identity (Cross, 1971). In Hazel’s case, we see the other outcome. Hazel’s emergent experiences pushed her farther away from wanting to be associated with Black identity. She also attributes messaging in the media for her disinterest with being Black.

Multicultural profile – Raven’s story. The multicultural Nigrescence profile describes a person who maintains a Black identity and strong reference group orientation while being inclusive and open to elements of their identity (Cross & Fhagen-Smith,

2001). Raven and Kenya both shared experiences that would suggest that they would fit in this profile.

Raven, 21, grew up in the mountain west region of the United States. She defines her racial identity as "mostly Black." Her mother is Asian, and her father is Black American. Raven grew up in a low racial salience, Black Emergent Socialization environment. As a first-generation student, Raven found it a little challenging to navigate PNWU, because she wasn't immediately able to find her place on campus. It was then that she looked to find connections with her peers through a faith-based group on campus. She explained that their faith in Christ helped to transcend those racial differences. Within the group there was a handful of other Black students. She described immediately feeling closer with the Black members of the group as they shared life-minded experiences.

In addition to her faith, Raven also draws strength through the intersections of her identity. Here she uses a metaphor to describe how she came to make meaning of her many salient identities:

> I feel like an onion. I've got a lot of layers and these layers are important to me being a whole onion. You can't just take one layer of me and say that that's it. It's not. I have to be the entire onion at all times. I don't want to be just a woman. I don't want to be just Black. And I don't want to be just Asian. I don't want these to be separated.

Raven's narrative describes a tension between how she wants to be defined and the disconnected version of her identity that society demands. She continued, explaining how she overcame the social pressure to choose one identity:

> It's all important and that has to do with many parts of my personality. I think I identify more heavily with these subsections as my whole now, as opposed to

> when I used to try to compartmentalize them. Like I couldn't be Asian and Black at the same time, so I had to be Asian in this moment and forget that I was Black. I had to be Black in this moment, and then forget that I was Asian. Or, I had to be a woman in this moment and forget every other part about my personality in order to fit in those specific spaces. And I think I finally realized that my identity cannot be compartmentalized that way. I want people to know that I'm a Black, Asian woman.

Raven's narrative demonstrates a multicultural Nigrescence profile in that she has found a way to integrate the many intersections of her identity while still maintaining a strong connection to her Black identity. This perspective also informs how she views her agency in the world. She believes that race, in some cases, should not encumber a person's ability to achieve their goals in life. "You can be successful and be brown here at PNWU because people are multifaceted. If it were just based on my color, that's not what is going to keep me from being successful. And I refuse to let it be the reason that I'm not progressing in this world in the way that I want to." In this example, Raven draws upon her multicultural identity to strengthen her resolve and seeks to use the salience of her identity to navigate different situations.

Bi-cultural profile – Shanice's story. Like those with multicultural profiles, participants with bi-cultural profiles are able to maintain salience of their Black identity while finding ways to fit in within the dominant culture (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). The participants in this study who fit this category are Shanice, Madison, and Nia. Shanice's experiences offer an example of the bi-cultural profile.

As the second oldest of four children, Shanice grew up in a home with her Black parents in a small, predominantly white community in the Pacific Northwest. "We were one of the few Black families in the town so if there was another Black family, we most

likely knew each other." Her parents instilled pride in her Black identity and heritage in a high racial salience environment. From a young age, Shanice knew she was different from her peers, in part due to her race, but also due to her disabilities. In her interview she explained that she lives with cerebral palsy and frequent seizures. These aspects have become part of her identity. "Recently, I've noticed my disabilities being a bigger part of how I define myself, but being African-American, that's always been part of me."

Before transferring to PNWU, Shanice completed two associate degrees at a community college in her hometown. She was eager to attend PNWU for the diversity it advertised. What she found upon arrival was different: "One of the most surprising things about PNWU is how it's less diverse than I expected. I guess I didn't expect to be the only Black person in a majority of my classes." Even though she was a little disappointed, she explained: "That's also how I grew up, I just thought it would be different. It didn't really affect me." Because of her familiarity with white spaces, Shanice was able to navigate the higher education environment with some level of ease. She connected early on with accessible education services and multicultural student services. Shanice also secured scholarships to cover her first year of education at PNWU though scholarships and grants.

True to her high racial salience, Shanice describes herself as a "proud Black woman." She is involved with Black student organizations on campus and was enrolled in Black Studies courses. She is also informed about the racial justice challenges in the Black community.

> I fear for my brothers driving, like, please don't let them get pulled over. Being Black is about surviving, honestly. We've got to steer clear of the police, well, not steer clear, but at least keep clear of the bad ones.

Her understanding of racial dynamics also applies to the dating world.

> In my Black Studies class, we were discussing an article that basically said that Black women are the least desired. Now, when I think about a guy, one of the first things I wonder is if he is into Black girls. My parents didn't raise me to think like that, but now that I see that is the way it is here, it makes it harder.

When asked if she feels like she fits in at PNWU, her response was mixed. "Yes, because I'm able to stay on top of everything I need to get done. And no because, looking around, I don't see many people who look like me." Shanice credits her diverse group of friends for providing a sense of belonging. While she appreciates her friendships with white peers, she also gains from relationships with other Black students. She says that sometimes it is hard to connect with her white peers, because they "don't know how it feels to be the only person of that race." Her Black peers provide that life-minded support.

Shanice's story demonstrates her ability to maintain multiple identities as salient. In describing herself as a strong Black woman, we see that she ties both gender and race to her sense of self. Additionally, her disabilities remain a reference group in how she defines herself. One does not get the sense that any of these identities are in competition with one another, but that they coexist. Perhaps the combination of growing up in a high racial salience environment in a predominantly white space allowed her to develop the skills and cultural capital to successfully navigate PNWU.

Black Nationalist profile – Andre's story. If put on a continuum, those with the Black Nationalist and Internalized Racism Nigrescence types would be at opposite ends

of the spectrum. Black Nationalists are people whose Black racial salience is the dominant aspect of their identity (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). The participants in this study who fit this category are Alicia, Andre, Imani, and Sulayman. Andre's experience offers insight into the expression of Black Nationalist expression in the higher education environment. In fact, when asked in the first interview question to tell the researcher about himself, Andre responded, "I'm a beautiful soul that is just navigating white supremacy." As the interview continued, Andre described his Black pride and commitment to Black movements.

Andre grew up in the American south in a high racial salience environment. In addition to being Black, he describes himself as an artist, Southern, and Christian. Andre is astutely aware of the ways in which racism impacts his life and mobility as a Black person. Prior to attending PNWU, Andrew was enrolled in a community college in the south. At the time, he noticed that white students at his college were steered toward programs that would help to ensure white-collar careers such as dental hygiene and business administration, while Black students enrolled in programs such as mechanics, welding, and other blue-collar career paths. He was drawn to the Pacific Northwest because he had performed in the area and was hoping for a social change of pace; actually, moving there ended up being a bit of a shock to Andre.

For the first time in his life, he found himself living in a predominantly white city. "I'm very intentional about spaces I enter," he explained. When asked how he went about finding Black connections, he responded, "If it ain't no colored in there, I ain't going up in there." His high racial salience background helped him quickly identify resources and

people who affirmed his Black identity. Andre found work with a non-profit organization that engages in advocacy campaigns for Black communities in the areas surrounding PNWU.

On campus, he sought connections with other Black people through the Black Student Union.

> In my first week at PNWU, I went to a Black Student Union Meeting. Getting involved with them is like magic to me. We meet twice a week. We are literally turning nothing into something. We believe in ourselves and believe in what we can manifest. We share tools and resources with to make a huge impact in ways the school doesn't even want us to make an impact. We are continuing to persevere, be resilient through thick and thin. We aren't going anywhere.

Andre is wary of white instructors due to bad experiences he has had at PNWU.

> I'm going to be 100% honest. I don't want to have any more white professors at PNWU, period. A majority of the classes I have left are for my Black Studies major, so I believe I'm in the clear to not have to take any classes with a white professor.

Deciding on which classes to enroll in involves an additional layer of research for Andre. He talks with his peers in the Black Student Union and looks up professors online to find out which instructors are "safe," and above all, he avoids taking courses with white instructors. For Andre, being a Black student at PNWU is all-encompassing; he explained, "from what classes I take, to what major I'm in, to what spaces I put myself in, to who I trust," all these factors are informed by his racialized existence.

Andre also found validation through his use of the Black Cultural Center on campus.

> It's a space where I can find common ground with people that have identified as either African refugees, or people from Africa and Black Americans. And, I hear them talk, they hear me talk, and we relate to one another. So, I love that.

For Andre, the Black Cultural Center and the Black Student Union, in addition to his community work, helped buffer against the challenges of navigating a white city and campus in a Black, male body. “I’m very intentional about what spaces I want to be in and where I place myself. When I’m at PNWU, I’m around my people. I don’t pay the others any mind.”

Andre’s story demonstrates how being Black is the primary aspect of his identity. His narrative also suggests that he distrusts that the institution has his best interests in mind. In his interview, he was clear that the institution was never made to support him and that he would need to go above and beyond to make it through. As such, he has dedicated time and energy to navigating his experiences to avoid discrimination while creating fulfilling bonds with other Black students on campus. Andre’s strong reference group orientation aided him in finding the types of people and places on campus that would strengthen his identity.

Activating and campus culture navigation. As the narratives above illustrate, each profile type experienced the campus environment differently. Aside from feeling out of place with other Black students, Hazel had a smooth transition to PNWU. She was able to get involved in student leadership, took courses in a major with mostly white instructors, and generally has had a positive experience at PNWU. She was able to find people and spaces in many parts of campus that validated her identities. Perhaps this is because she was able to assimilate into the environment without too much identity turmoil. The result, however, was the loss of her Black reference group orientation and of the potential for deeper racialized personal development while in college.

While those with bi-cultural and multicultural profiles were eventually able to find their place at PNWU, it often involved finding connections to other Black students on campus. When they were faced with white oppression, turning to their Black reference group provided a buffer and safe space. Those who engaged in Black student success programs and Black student leadership opportunities were able to racially contextualize their entry into PNWU better than those who matriculated without these supports. This is not to say that they had an easy transition but that they were more informed about processes and procedures and knew who it was safe to turn to, should they need help. Many of their narratives spoke about their discomfort in predominantly white classrooms and spaces on campus. They also recognized that the system was not made for them, but that they had learned to draw upon their cultural capital to succeed at PNWU.

Finally, those with Black Nationalist profiles had the hardest time navigating PNWU. All the participants experienced microaggressions, but those with Black Nationalist profiles where more impacted by them in ways that made it harder for them to navigate PNWU. Participants with this profile held strongly to their Black reference groups, on and off campus. These connections were what helped them make meaning of their experiences and gave them the strength to keep pushing against white oppression. At each turn they described facing racism and microaggressions, and they believed that going to school was something that they had to do in order to better support the Black community upon graduation. Again, a communal epistemology is involved in these narratives. Another interesting finding was that Nigrescence type did not appear to shift

during the participants' college experiences. This finding could provide further evidence of the idea that the participants were developmentally adults at the time of matriculation.

Activating and Black self-authorship. Adding activation into the BCCS is important because it challenges the notion of directional change and, instead, situates formation in the social context. In the self-authorship model, students with Black Nationalist orientation would not necessarily move toward the more advanced stages of the adulthood model. Their narratives demonstrate how they have gone to great lengths to separate themselves from white people. They seek to take classes with only Black professors, choose Black or POC friends, and are very distrustful (with valid reasons) of white people. The most advanced stage of the current CRT self-authorship models involves a multicultural orientation, an appreciation for difference, and an acceptance of others. Categorization of Black identity at this point of the lifespan would suggest that, to become an adult, one would need to make judgements about what is the *best way* to be Black while navigating white supremacy.

One questions, then: if a Black student has formed a healthy wariness of white people in order to navigate the permanence of white supremacy, who is to say that this wariness is wrong, or that this attitude is less developed than a student who assimilates into the higher education environment with a multicultural adult orientation? What is lost, for the individual and the community, when this occurs? These questions bring about several ethical considerations involved in using stages to map development. By incorporating activation into the BCCS, one can illustrate the ways in which encounters,

socialization, and analysis inform how one expresses their Black identity without making judgements about the best way to do so.

BCCS Summary

The previous sections described the areas of encountering, analyzing, and activating. The narratives provided illustrations of the factors that inform Black Critical Conscientization at the core of the model. The *context* of encounters matters. As the narratives have shown, encounters come in the form of systemic, organizational, and individual events. These forces serve as the catalyst for *consciousness*. Socialization appears to influence the lens that a student uses to make meaning of the racism they experience on a regular basis. All the participants were able to explain that their Black appearance could result in racist encounters; often, the severity of the encounter determined how quickly a person deemed it racist or racially motivated. In the face of social contradiction that continued to minimize and dehumanize their humanity, the participants walked a careful path of *comportment* in order to navigate higher education successfully. In some cases, this meant addressing racial trauma toward a revised vision of Black identity; in others, it meant using cultural capital to "play the part" to get their needs met, finding spaces that validated their existence, and biting their tongue when every fiber of their being wanted to speak. Ultimately, comportment is where the participants' resilience and agency were most evident. They authored their own paths by defining themselves as whole beings, they situated themselves within the social and historical context, and they were intentional about who they interacted with and how.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the research study. One of the critical factors of that study, which changed its scope, was the finding that the participants did not experience a transition from adolescence to adulthood while in college; this transition often happened before matriculation. Therefore, college was a place for the refinement of adult meaning-making models and racial reference group orientation. This process unfolded in unique ways across the dimensions of Critical Race Self-Authorship and was particularly influenced by one's racial socialization and salience. Another key finding of the study was that the nature of racialized identity did not map consistently across the stages of self-authorship. Such mapping would be inappropriate, for several reasons that center on making judgements about how Black people survive the oppression of white supremacy. Instead, the Black Critical Conscientization Sequence was introduced, using the participant narratives to demonstrate the dynamic meaning-making and identity formation that occurs in the higher education environment. Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) socialization patterns, racial salience levels, and adult Nigrescence types were woven throughout the activity areas of the model. The use of the model to understand student experiences suggests that encounters in the higher education environment significantly influence the experience of Black students, regardless of adult Nigrescence type. At the core of the model, Black Critical Conscientization was described using the participant narratives, researcher cultural intuition, and theoretical underpinnings.

The findings assert that Black college students face systemic, organizational, and individual encounters that hinder their academic and personal growth. Encounters in the campus environment have implications for how students navigate educational systems, academic processes, and interactions with others, and ultimately for how they define themselves. Factors that support Black student development include the presence of other Black faculty, staff, and students. Cultural resource spaces and student organization involvement provide a haven and buffer against racism.

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Implications for Practice

The central question that has driven this work and framed core research questions for this study was, "What does it mean to #AdultWhileBlack?" The findings of this study suggest that the answer to that question is rich with complexity. This chapter will provide an overview of the research problem, research study, and findings. The chapter closes with implications for practice based on the data and a discussion about avenues for future research.

Summary of the Study

Black students in the United States face numerous barriers navigating and completing a college education when compared with their white counterparts (Harper & Simmons, 2018; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Steele, 2011; Tatum, 2017). Scholars have long grappled with how best to provide an education that cultivates the academic and personal development of students (American Council on Education, 1994; Bowen, 1977; Jones & Abes, 2013; Sanford, 1962; Widick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978). In fact, an abundance of data demonstrates the positive connection between adult identity development and learning, yet these models often fall short because they lack racial context (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Patton, 2016; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). The prevailing adult identity development model used in higher education, self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001), relies heavily on the experiences of white, middle-class students; in doing so, it fails to account for the ways racism differentially influences the identity development of Black students. Not only does this

result in inadequate resources to support the personal development of Black students, but it also contributes to the master narrative in the United States that seeks to blame Black students for their failures (Harper & Simmons, 2018). This omission has systemic, organizational, and individual implications for Black student success and necessitates an approach that is inclusive of the racialized development experience.

The purpose of this study was to explore how traditional-age Black students made meaning of their racialized transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of a racially hostile campus climate. This basic qualitative study used data gathered through a total of 19 interviews with 10 students at a public, four-year university in the Pacific Northwest. The interviews were then coded using provisional, open, and in-vivo methods to identify themes.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are centered on a series of research questions. The first research question sought to understand the ways in which #AdultingWhileBlack manifests within the dimensions of Critical Race Self-Authorship (Hernández, 2016). Within the interpersonal dimension, the key finding was that participants realized that not all relationships were to the benefit of their social world and that they must be intentional about who they choose to interact with and how. Often this meant connecting with other Black students, faculty, and staff to buffer against the racism they experienced on campus. In the epistemological dimension, the concept of racial salience came into play. This study found that those with high racial salience were more likely to examine their world through a racial lens, while those with low racial salience often used several lenses

to make meaning of their social world. The findings within the intrapersonal dimension varied by Nigrescence socialization. Those who had established a strong Black identity as children found that successfully navigating higher education required them to maintain double-consciousness. On the other hand, those who had not authenticated a foundational Black identity as children often needed to address their low racial salience in order to make meaning of how their social world shaped their racialized sense of self.

A surprising finding of this study was that the participants all exhibited the self-authorship characteristics that mark adulthood by the time they matriculated to college. Even those with low racial salience had experienced conversion encounters that prompted them to adopt an adult Nigrescence type. Therefore, while the premise of this study was to understand the transition from adolescence to adulthood in the context of a racially hostile campus climate, this process had already occurred.

The fact that the participants were developmentally adults by the time they reached college posed a challenge for addressing the second research question in the study, which was to explore how racialized adult identity development manifested within the stages of self-authorship. The participant narratives did not map consistently across the existing stages of external foundations, crossroads, and self-authorship. These inconsistencies can be partially explained by the way development is conceptualized. Development is a construct that implies change with direction. Because race is a dynamic and socially influenced state of being, racial identity models do not fit neatly into constructivist development models like self-authorship. In the case of this study, forcing such an agreement would have meant making ethical judgements about the best way to

#AdultWhileBlack within the context of surviving under the oppression of white supremacy. Instead, the research pivoted to examine the factors that influence racial identity formation.

The collection of narratives in this work serves as a counternarrative to previous conceptualizations of identity. The result of this study was the development of a new term, Black Critical Conscientization, which is defined as the awareness of the physical, social, and psychological dynamism of #AdultingWhileBlack. In addition to this term, a model called the Black Critical Conscientization Sequence was created to illustrate the dynamic, fluid nature of racialized adult identity formation among Black college students. The model draws together the theoretical foundations of critical consciousness (Freire, 1974), Nigrescence (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001), and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Hernández, 2016) toward the expression of Black Critical Conscientization.

Encounters with racism are the driving force that starts the model. Cross's (1971) work defines encounters as experiences with racism that force an individual to evaluate their racial identity. The model has three components, which include encountering, analyzing, and activating. Mitigating factors within the model that shape the lived experiences of the individual are their socialization, their racial salience, and the context of the racialized encounter. At the core of the model is an ever-evolving Black Critical Conscientization that a Black adult uses to navigate their social world.

The creation of the model addressed the third research question of the study, which was to explore the ways in which Nigrescence manifests within the dimensions

and stages of self-authorship. While a stage-based presentation of racialized adult identity formation was not appropriate in this case, Nigrescence played a critical role in the dimensions of self-authorship, as noted above. In addition, adult Nigrescence type, socialization, and racial salience are all integrated into the model.

The final research question of the study sought to examine the ways in which campus climate helped or hindered #AdultingWhileBlack among the participants. The participants spoke at length about the factors that supported their persistence in higher education. Having opportunities to connect with other Black people on campus was the factor most commonly mentioned. Their narratives articulated the importance of Black faculty, Black staff, and Black peers who offered life-minded support. These people helped the students navigate institutional processes, provided professional role models, and served as mentors and friends to the participants. Some of the participants were part of a summer bridge program specifically designed to support Black student success, which helped them build their support system early in their educational journey at the institution. Most of the participants stated that they would not be where they are academically without the network of Black people on their campus.

Dedicated spaces on campus also played a significant role as help factors. The participants described the Black Studies Department and the Black Cultural Center as places where they felt that they could let their guard down and be their authentic selves. Black Studies courses, according to the participants, also seemed to have the greatest concentration of Students of Color. It was in these courses that participants felt they could freely engage as members of the learning community.

Student organization membership provided another haven for the participants. The Black Student Union offered student-led opportunities for the participants to gather, study together, and collaborate on educational events for the community. Some participants spoke about their fellow club members as family. The Black Student Union also gave students space to give voice to their experiences while mobilizing for social change.

The narratives offered throughout Chapter 4 highlight the many ways that campus climate harms Black student personal development. The results suggest that Black students experience systemic, organizational, and individual encounters that inhibit their success in higher education. Education is a systemic factor, because American educational institutions were never created with the interests of Black students in mind. The very act of attending a historically white institution is an encounter for Black students. On campus, students experience organizational encounters. These encounters often come in the form of campus norms, processes, and practices that uphold white supremacy. Finally, Black students face individual encounters with white students, faculty, and staff, and at every level of administration. Individual encounters include frequent microaggressions, mistreatment, and stereotype threat. Systemic, organizational, and individual encounters cause Black students to spend additional time and mental energy on surviving higher education, which has negative implications for their academic and personal development. Taken together, systemic, organizational, and individual encounters contribute to the failure of American institutions of higher education to

holistically cultivate the success of Black students at similar rates as their white counterparts.

Implications for Practice

Knowing what it means to adult while Black is a starting place for addressing post-secondary institutional failures to support the academic and personal success of Black students in the United States. While the master narrative in the United States seeks to blame Black students for their failures, such blaming does little to address how the embedded structure of white supremacy promotes racially hostile conditions in higher education institutions. The findings of this work offer a variety of implications for practice.

Implications for PNWU

Of significance to this study was that Pacific Northwest University received one of the highest racial equity scores in the United States, based on a series of quantitative measures. While this work was not a case study, the data and the participant narratives give rise to many qualitative insights that could support Black student success at PNWU, and these insights may also translate well to other institutions. One of the final questions in the interview protocol asked participants what advice they would offer university administration and faculty to support #AdultingWhileBlack in college. True to Critical Race Theory, this question allowed the participants to speak as experts from their lived experiences. The recommendations for practice in this section are largely based on participant insights.

The first recommendation is that PNWU should seek to understand the disconnect between their promising racial equity score and the lived experiences of their students. Racial equity scores are a starting place, but they tell us little about the quality of the experience that students have while they are enrolled. This work suggests that students' perceptions of campus are essential. Many institutions including PNWU have taken steps to improve the experiences of Students of Color, yet these practices are often implemented without the involvement of students. Including Black students in the development of resources and programs is a start. They truly are the experts on their student experiences. Hosting focus groups with Black students may help educators identify strategies that would be the most impactful for them on this campus.

Many of the participants of the study had participated in a summer bridge program that was developed to support Black student transition at PNWU. The program included mentorship, success courses, and social engagement opportunities. The program runs through the fall term. That said, PNWU enrolls a significant number of transfer students throughout the year. Those who enroll in later terms are not able to benefit from the bridge program. Additional financial and staffing resources should be directed to this vital program, so that it can be run year-round for any Black student who wishes to participate. This model is also of value to other institutions seeking to support the integration of Black students on campus.

The Black Studies Department at PWNU served as a lifeboat for many of the participants. Not only did the program maintain a critical mass of Black faculty, but the courses also allowed Black students to learn about their history and culture in ways that

they had not before. The participants explained that organizational changes have slowed the hiring process for filling vacant positions in the Black Studies Department at PNWU. The lack of support for Black Studies at PNWU translates to the perception that Black students, their history, and their culture do not matter. It would behoove leaders at PNWU to prioritize filling the vacant positions in the Black Studies Department and ensure that appropriate funding is provided to support its sustainability.

The participants said that they would have benefitted from knowing what resources and supports were available for Black students at PNWU when they arrived. Once Black students in this study were connected to the Black network on campus, their ability to navigate the institution improved. The participants were eager to learn who the Black faculty and staff were on campus; they also wanted to know what scholarships, extra-curricular activities, and peer support groups existed. The concept of a guide for Black people to navigate white culture is not new. In fact, the Greenbook was a valuable source during the Jim Crow Era to help Black people know where it was safe for them to dine, gather, and sleep. The Greenbook served to assemble the collective knowledge that enabled the survival of Black travelers. The same concept could prove useful at PNWU and other institutions.

Hosting a PNWU Greenbook as a webpage is a way to bring the concept to the 21st Century. A website offers easy access and the ability to update information quickly. The PNWU Greenbook could include several sections. One section could be a listing of Black faculty and staff profiles. The listings could contain instructor course information and research interests. Staff profiles could include information about resources their unit

on campus provides and ways for Black students to access them. Including pictures could send a powerful message to students that there are Black folks on campus who look like them and who are ready and willing to cultivate their success.

Black students could also benefit from specialized information about the financial resources available to them. This goes beyond providing a list of scholarships. This study pointed out that Black students at PNWU are encountering a new environment and may not have the cultural capital to fully understand the financial consequences of taking out additional loans. Providing financial literacy for Black students that considers the discriminatory legacy of wealth inequality may serve to inform and empower Black students to take charge of their financial futures. Offering workshops or creating short, informative videos are two strategies that could reach a broad audience of Black students.

The permanence of racism extends to the healthcare system as well. For a variety of reasons, utilizing health and wellness resources is stigmatized in Black communities, yet the narratives provided throughout this work demonstrate a collective trauma that must be addressed. PNWU has a full health center that offers medical, dental, and counseling services. It is unclear to what extent the health center is targeting its efforts to serve Black students. Assessing Black student use and evaluation of the center, hosting focus groups, creating a Black student wellness team, and including Black students on advisory committees are several options to begin the work of better serving the health needs of Black students at PNWU. These practices offer avenues for Black students to give voice to their experience, advance institutional change, expand their network, and develop transferable professional skills.

Higher education practitioners understand the connection between student engagement and a sense of belonging. The participants in this study spoke at length about the value that was brought to their experience through their connections with other Black students. An additional section for the PNWU Greenbook could focus on student engagement opportunities. Housing a Black community calendar will help inform students about upcoming events of interest. Listing Black student organizations, discussion groups, study groups and the like will also support student engagement. The point here is to offer a diversity of opportunities for students to engage with one another; of course, Black faculty and staff may benefit from attending the events as well.

Taken together, these insights could start to address Black students' perceptions of the campus climate at PNWU. It is hoped that as student experiences improve, racial equity scores will follow suit. As noted, the guidance for PNWU may be applicable to other institutions.

General Implications for Practice

The findings of this study point to the significant impact that individual, organizational, and systemic encounters have on Black student experiences. Educators and practitioners should find this framework helpful for addressing the structural factors that inhibit Black student success on their campuses.

Individual factors. The individual work to address social change will look different depending on one's positionality. Given the complexity of dismantling systems of oppression, it can lead to white individuals feeling as though they are helpless. This attitude is counterproductive, because it eliminates one's personal responsibility to affect

change within their locus of control. As such, guidance that speaks directly to white people is included in this section. Support of Black students is everyone's responsibility, which means that People of Color play a critical role as well. Suggestions for practice and self-care for People of Color are offered.

Guidance for white people. The work, particularly for white people, involves engaging in personal reflection to understand how your whiteness oppresses others. A helpful starting resource is Robin DiAngelo's (2018) book about white fragility, while Ibram X. Kendi's (2019) book on antiracism offers advanced strategies. White people are challenged to examine the ways in which whiteness leads to their sense of entitlement to Black bodies, consider how white socialization reinforces this assumption, disrupt these narratives, and build pathways for socially just ways of knowing. Learning more about Critical Race Theory and reading the work of CRT scholars enables white people to explore the lived experiences of People of Color in a non-invasive way. This study offered many examples of how whiteness, white power, and white entitlement negatively influence Black student experiences. Additionally, there are thousands of books, documentaries, podcasts, articles, and other forms of media to support this learning.

Your charge includes interrupting oppression when you see it occurring in the home, in the workplace, and in society. The narratives contained within this study illustrate that it is often unsafe for Black people to do so. White allyship is crucial toward the dismantlement of white supremacy within your individual locus of control. It will feel uncomfortable (DiAngelo, 2018). To not act in the face of racism only upholds the preservation of white supremacy (Kendi, 2019). That discomfort one feels when deciding

whether or not to address bigotry represents just a fraction of the racial trauma that Black people experience on a daily basis. Perceptions of discomfort do not matter when it comes to the actual safety and lives of Black people.

Guidance for People of Color. Individual work also extends to faculty, staff, and administration of color. It is hard out there, and it is unreasonable to assume that POC folks have all the answers, especially when you are feeling the burden of oppression yourself. You are often in spaces where you are the only one who looks like you at the table; like the participants, you may feel the pressure to represent your entire race. In some cases, the stakes are higher as you weigh whether to speak your truth (Harper, 2012). The pressures and expectations on People of Color exceed those of white people—this is heavy. Your mental health and wellness as you navigate whiteness is critical. Resmaa Menakem's (2017) book about healing from racialized trauma may offer validation and support. Like the participants, you may need support unpacking racial trauma that you have experienced. Know that there are Professionals of Color who *see* you and who have the resources to help you work through your experiences. Connecting with an affinity group on campus or in your community may help you cultivate a sense of belonging. Remember that your impact on campus means the world to Students of Color, but you cannot pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourselves.

Professionals of Color can also benefit from engaging in learning about race, privilege, and power. The works of CRT scholars throughout this work offer language that both articulates and validates your experiences. Use this language and framework for

empowerment. Use it to provide context about the ways in which racism is embedded in your campus climate.

From your locus of control, begin the work of dismantling that power in your mind and environment. Something as simple as displaying elements of your culture in your work area expresses a decolonization of space. Start small and work outward. Ask the tough questions, bring other People of Color with you when you are the only one at the table, and be open to building trust with white allies.

Organizational factors. As noted, organizational encounters manifest in the norms, practices, and spaces of a campus environment. Addressing organizational factors extends the locus of control beyond the individual into a community effort.

Organizational norms. Institutional mission statements are an important place to start addressing organizational norms. Most schools across the country have included a commitment to diversity and inclusion within their mission statements. The trend of Black student attrition from higher education is evidence of the fact that institutions are not doing enough to actualize their missions with regard to diversity and inclusion (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Addressing organizational norms begins with a Critical Race interrogation and redistribution of institutional budgets to promote equity. This work will likely require a revision of organizational charts, leadership models, and governance.

People are resistant to such change because they fear that it will negatively impact them (DiAngelo, 2018). This is capitalism and white entitlement speaking. For thousands

of years, non-white indigenous communities, particularly those from Africa, have practiced models of shared governance and resources. They recognize that collectivist models benefit and strengthen everyone in the long run. Institutions of higher education often tout their role in supporting the common good, but the statistics suggest otherwise. Institutions must recognize that their ideal values are not enough to reduce the frequency of organizational encounters; actualizing values is the way to do that. Institutional budgets reflect institutional values. Directing funds toward campus diversity, equity, and inclusion benefits everyone.

Organizational practices. Institutions could improve organizational practices by assessing and modifying their operations to increase the number of Black people on campus. Having a critical mass of Black faculty and staff to provide life-minded support and guidance to Black students is essential to their success (Bensimon, 2007; Feagin et al., 1996; Harper & Simmons, 2018).

Institutions should address biases in their hiring practices and boost support for the long-term retention of Black hires in academic and administrative divisions (Tatum, 2017). It is also vital that Black professionals are hired into roles throughout the university, in contrast to current practice, which often relegates them to cultural programs and cultural department positions. Hiring should include mental health services and providers who specialize in the support of Black students (Menakem, 2017; Shin, 2015). These professionals can offer tailored guidance for students as they make meaning of their racialized identity and unpack racial trauma (Bensimon, 2007).

A common practice in recent years has been to hire a University Chief Diversity Officer (Clark, 2011; Wilson, 2013), yet the burnout from these roles is frequent because they are not adequately supported. While it is beneficial to have a central body that monitors institutional progress toward improved equity and inclusion, having a position becomes a meaningless checkmark if the people in these roles are not afforded the authority to change institutional structures. Offices of Equity and Inclusion must be fully staffed, funded, and protected to coordinate the hard work that is necessary for institutional change.

Ongoing diversity training should be as ubiquitous as sexual harassment training on college campuses. Training should be frequent and should include reflective and action planning components. Black Critical Conscientization should be taught to everyone to support pedagogical practice. Faculty should take what institutions learn about Black students through the model and use it to embed inclusive pedagogy into their courses; likewise, staff should continue to use the model to meet Black students where they are, in an effort to work toward inclusive excellence.

Black people at all levels of leadership must have the authority to change structures that perpetuate white supremacy and the protection to do so. Institutions need to recognize that Black faculty and staff face encounters in the education workplace similar those experienced by the participants in this study (Baez, 2000; Harper, 2012; Salazar, 2009; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). A multi-pronged approach is necessary to address the Black student and Black personnel success factors.

Organizational leaders must reconcile with the fact that many of their white employees will not engage in the individual work to address their contributions to racially hostile campus climates. Therefore, this work should be incentivized through training and performance evaluations. Institutions will not change if the people within them do not transform; in some cases, this means letting go of individuals who cannot actualize institutional diversity and inclusion values. This approach should also be extended to student populations. Addressing whiteness in orientation programming and throughout the collegiate experience will help to disrupt patterns of socialization that perpetuate white supremacy.

Organizational spaces. All the participants agreed that factors such as summer bridge programs, Black cultural and academic spaces, and student organizations contributed to their success at the institution; however, these resources were few and far between. Black cultural spaces on campus create havens for students to be their authentic selves and feel a sense of belonging (Linley, 2017; Tatum, 2017). In the move toward more welcoming campus climates, however, one questions why Black students only feel at home in dedicated rooms (Tatum, 2017). This study draws attention to the power of student perception, Nigrescence socialization, and racial salience in how students perceive a sense of belonging on campus.

A common phrase on many campuses is “you are welcome here.” This idea, while well-intentioned, fails to address that being welcome often isn’t enough. Spaces should be designed with the users in mind. If campuses were designed with all students in mind, Black students should feel like they can be themselves everywhere. In the interim, Black

cultural spaces and department spaces should be adequately funded and staffed, because they play a central role in the retention and persistence of Black students.

Systemic factors. Encountering racism is the result of white-centric systemic factors. Whiteness is embedded in every social institution, including education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Harper & Simmons, 2018; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Tatum, 2017). Education as a socializing force has the power to take a leading role in disrupting racism. The tenets of Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) described in Chapter 2 of this work articulate the ways in which racism infiltrates education. A review of these tenets in light of this study offers avenues for education to right itself toward the success of all students, and has implications for society at large.

The first tenet is the permanence of racism. It is essential that society collectively acknowledges that racism has been intentionally woven into the fabric of American culture. Unless this fact is addressed first, change is not possible. This process will involve interrogating liberal ideals such as meritocracy and race-neutrality as well as ending interest-convergent policies that disproportionately harm the mobility of People of Color. The next tenet asserts that oppression causes additional harm at the intersections of social identities. This further marginalizes People of Color and compounds the layers of oppression experienced in the educational system. Finally, the narratives of the oppressed hold the devastating truths of injustice. Every effort should be made to amplify these voices, to both understand the problems and identify solutions.

Recommendations for Further Research

The development of the model for Black Critical Conscientization opens many doors for continued research. Testing and application of the BCCS among more participants and at other educational institutions may support the refinement of the model. Longitudinal studies could capture what happens within the model over time. Taking a closer look at each of the areas of encountering, analyzing, and activating could lead to new insights and further understanding about their interaction.

Harper and Simmons's (2018) *Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities: A 50-State Report Card* offers a quantitative measure of the success of American colleges and universities in supporting Black students. Yet, the site for this study (PNWU) received one of the higher racial equity scores in the country. The narratives throughout Chapter 4 would suggest that the Black students at this campus continue to experience encounters detrimental to their success. Replicating this study at other institutions, as well as comparing the findings between institutions, could offer a more nuanced understanding to balance the quantitative findings. Further research could focus on the ways in which the model manifests at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Additionally, this work was situated in a historically white area of the United States, but the results would likely differ in areas of the country with higher populations of Black people.

This study found that socialization and salience shape Black student navigation of campus climate. Further research into this topic could prove valuable for developing interventions to support Black students based on their context. Studies could be deployed

to determine if interventions effect the activation of, or shift between, adult Nigrescence types among college students.

This work focused on students in their final years of college, yet the findings suggest that Black students need support with identity formation and racial navigation earlier in their lives. The participants began to take on an adult identity at the onset of puberty. This often involved the typical "talk" about sexuality with an adult in their life, but also included a serious conversation about how to comport oneself as a Black person in white spaces. This means that supports and navigational guides must be provided long before Black students get to college. The summer bridge program at PNWU offers a compelling model for empowering Black students while preparing them for the challenges they may face in college; perhaps a similar model can be applied to middle and high school populations. What does encountering look like for Black students at different times in their education?

While the model has been developed from the experiences and literature of Black populations, it could serve as a starting place for other groups. This study involved Black multiracial participants. Given the nuanced experiences of multiracial groups regarding socialization and origin, there are likely other factors that add complexity to their narratives. In addition, the experiences of Black students from Africa, the Caribbean, and the West Indies are sure to sure to differ from those of American-born Black students in ways that give rise to further implications for practice.

The lived experiences of racially oppressed people share similarities. Exploring the model with Latinx (Hernández, 2016), South Asian (Subedi, 2013), Indigenous

(Brayboy, 2013), undocumented (Olvia, Perez, & Parker, 2013), and other racially or culturally marginalized populations of students could serve to investigate how encounters shape their identity formation in higher education and beyond. How might racial identity models of those respective groups fit in with the development of critical consciousness? What similarities and differences arise in the areas of encountering, analyzing, and activating when they are compared across racial groups, genders, or other intersecting identities? The avenues for further inquiry are many.

Concluding Remarks

Hashtags like #Adulting and #AdultingWhileBlack will become passing phrases as American society turns its attention to the next social media fad. If we look deeper at their meaning, however, they tell a story about what it looks like to transition from adolescence to adulthood for many of today's young people. The tweets, memes, books, and classes all signal the significance and uncertainty of this population and their need for guidance.

Throughout history, growing up has involved taking on new responsibilities, defining oneself, and understanding one's role in a community. White supremacy has made growing up harder for People of Color. The narratives throughout this work attest to the fact that racism has far-reaching implications for Black people. Hashtags may come and go, but racism remains an acute pressure on the lives and livelihoods of many.

The needs of a complex global society require innovation, creativity, and diverse ideas. We simply cannot meet that demand if the messaging for Black students and other People of Color is that they must assimilate to whiteness. At the heart of this work, acting

as the driving force behind this inquiry, were the Black students who somehow thrived in contexts where they were never meant to do so. Their stories are of resilience, perseverance, passion, and commitment—they are the epitome of #AdultingWhileBlack. These strengths, while valuable, are attained at an unconscionable cost. A more equitable, peaceful, and socially productive world is not possible when encounters tell people that they must be less of who they are to succeed.

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Appendix A: Research Introduction Email

Hello,

I'm a Doctoral Candidate at Portland State University in the College of Education. I'm conducting a study on #AdultingWhileBlack to understand how Black college students develop their adult identity.

To help understand this topic, I'd like to talk with you about aspects of your racial and adult identities, any experiences you've with racism and/or microaggressions, and how you've navigated those experiences while becoming an adult at a predominantly white college. I hope to use the results of this study to help educators better support Black student personal and academic growth while in college.

To be selected to participate in this study, you must meet ALL the following criteria:

- Currently a junior or senior attending [School Name]
- Self-identify as Black or African American (having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa)
- Between the ages of 19–24 years old

If you meet the criteria above and would like to participate in the study or if you have additional questions, please email Sarah Kutten, skutten@pdx.edu.

Individuals selected to participate will be eligible to receive an Amazon.com gift card(s) -- $20 for an initial 60–90-minute interview, $20 for a second 60–90-minute interview; and, if applicable, an additional $20 for follow-up contact.

I cannot do this work without your help! Feel free to share this information with other folks at [School Name] that might qualify. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Sarah Kutten, M.S.
Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership & Policy Department
Portland State University, College of Education
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Christine Cress, Ph.D. [Research Supervisor]
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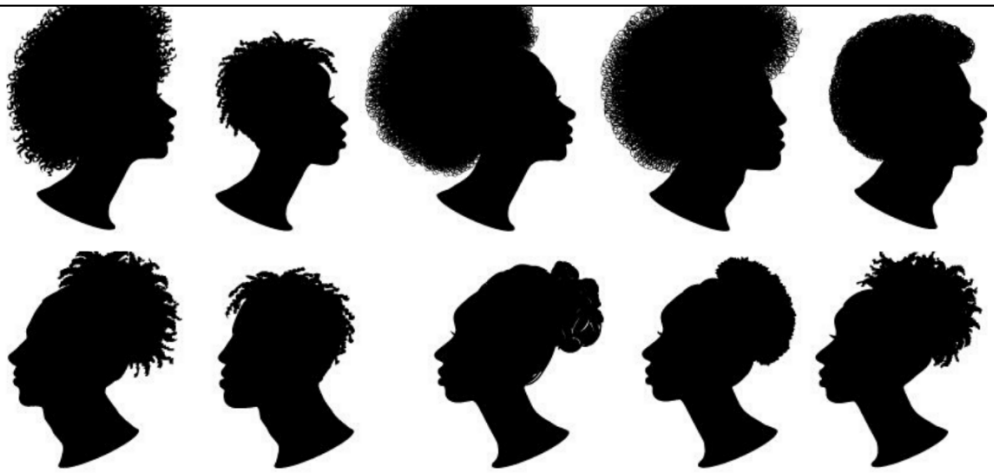
Appendix B: Research Introduction Flyer



SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

#ADULTING WHILE BLACK

I'm a Black doctoral candidate at Portland State University in the College of Education. I'm conducting research interviews to understand how Black college students define their adult identity. Specifically, I'm interested in what role your university's campus climate might have on your worldview, your sense of self, and the types of relationships you seek with others. Want in?

To Participate, you need to:
Identify as Black/African American
Be a Junior or Senior at [School Name]
Be between the ages of 19-24
What you'll do: Complete two 90-minute interviews
with the possibility of a 3rd, 5-45 minute interview
What you'll get: $20 Amazon gift card for each interview (up to $60)

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING? WANT TO LEARN MORE?
CONTACT ME ASAP: SARAH KUTTEN | SKUTTEN@PDX.EDU

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview 1

Introduction
I'm a doctoral student at Portland State University in the College of Education. I'm conducting a study to understand how Black college students develop their adult identity. Specifically, I'm interested in what role your university's campus climate might have on your worldview, your sense of self, and the types of relationships you seek with others. To help understand those things, I'd like to talk with you about aspects of your racial and adult identities, any experiences you've with racism or microaggressions, and how you've navigated #AdultingWhileBlack in college. I hope to use the results of this study to help educators better support Black student personal growth in college. [Provide informed consent document; address questions; and request signature to proceed]

Demographic Questions

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
    a. Probes: year in school; academic focus; have you always lived in [city]?
2. How did you end up at [school name]?
    a. Probes: Transfer status; on-campus/off-campus residence; first-generation status

Racial Identity Questions

1. How do you identify racially? (i.e. Black, African American, Black American, etc.)
2. Describe to me what _____ means to you.
3. What was it like growing up with that racial identity?
    a. Probes: Have you always identified as __? Tell me more about that.

Intersectionality of Identity Questions

1. When you told me a little bit about yourself a bit ago, you mentioned X and X, what other identities do you have?
2. Which of those identities do you think is the most important to how you define yourself? In what ways?

Adulting

1. Are you familiar with the term "adulting"? What does that term mean to you?
2. Can you tell me about some adulting wins or fails that you've had lately?
3. Do you think that adulting is the same for white people as it is for Black people?
    a. If so, how? If not, how not?
4. What comes to mind when you hear the term, #AdultingWhileBlack?

Campus Climate Social Impacts
Integration / Sense of Belonging

1. Now I'd like you to think back to your first couple months on this campus. Can you tell me more about your experiences during that time?

    a. Probes: What things surprised you about college?; Did you ever feel like you didn't fit in?
2. Were you able to make friends easily? Tell me more about that.
3. Did your friend group change as you went through college? How so?
    a. Probes: What role, if any, did these friendships play in forming your racial identity in college?
4. How about connecting with faculty?
5. Where do you go to feel at home on campus? Tell me more about that place/space.
    a. Probes: Where on campus do you feel like you can be your authentic self?; What has being part of that space meant to you and your sense of self as a ___ person?

Mattering and Marginality

1. Do you feel like others care about you on campus? Tell me more about that.
    a. Probes: How do you know? Are there certain people on campus that you feel like care about you more than others? In what ways do you think these people have helped you understand yourself as a [racial identity] person?
2. Are there times when you feel like others don't care about you on campus? Tell me more about that.
    a. Probes: How do you know? Are there certain people on campus that you actively avoid?; In what ways do you think these people have helped you understand yourself as a [racial identity] person?

CRT Self-Authorship

1. What do you think that being a [racial identity] person on campus has taught you about race relations?
2. In what ways do you think being [racial identity] influences how you make friends or who you trust on campus?
3. How do you think that your experiences as a [racial identity] person on campus has shaped how you define yourself?
4. In thinking back to what brought you to [School Name] and your experiences as a student here, what do you think was the most helpful in becoming the person you are today? What obstacles did you have to overcome in school to be who you are today?
5. If you were to offer advice to university administration and faculty about helping Black students with #AdultingWhileBlack what would you tell them?

Closing

1. Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to tell me about your experiences. Is there anything else you would like to share?
2. Do you have any questions about the study or what happens next with the information you have shared?

I appreciate our time together today and would like to schedule a follow-up interview with you to talk more about how being Black on a white campus impacts your experience and sense of self. I anticipate that the next interview will last about as long as this one. Can we go ahead and schedule that now?

Interview 2

Introduction: I'm so glad that we got a chance to meet again for this interview. Today I want to talk more about how being [racial identity] on a white campus impacts your experiences and sense of self. But before that, I'd like to step back and ask:

1. What's come up for you since the last time we talked?
2. Is there anything that you would like to add or focus on during our time together?
    a. Probe: I wanted to follow up on something you said last time…

Campus Climate

1. How would you describe the feel or energy of this campus? (Warm and welcoming? Chilly and hostile?)
    a. Probe: How did you come to those ideas about campus? Request specific personal, bystander, and/or second-hand incident(s)
2. What's it like to be [insert racial identity] at this university?
    a. Probe: Have you ever experienced racism and/or microaggressions on campus? If yes: Can you tell me more about that? OR, if no: have you heard about racism or microaggressions happening to other students? Can you tell me more about that? Why do you think that these things don't happen to you?
3. What about other Black students on campus?
    a. Probes: What interactions do you have with them? Are enough Black students on this campus? Tell me more about that. How about the gender balance of Black folks?
    b. How about your interactions with white students? What are those like?
4. In your experience, do you think racism and/or microaggressions are a problem on campus? Tell me more.
    b. Probe: Do you think anyone is helping to address those? If not, why not? If so, how?

Campus Climate Psychological Impacts

1. In what ways do you think that being Black on a white campus influences what people think about or expect from you? How do you deal with those expectations?
    a. Probes: Whose opinions hold weight? How? In what context? Can you prove a specific example about how the opinions of others have affected you?; How do you think these perceptions or expectations impact you psychologically? Academically?; Does the way they you think people perceive you change how you act or behave on campus?
2. How does the way you think others perceive you impact your sense of self as [racial identity] person?
    a. Probes: Has it always been that way, or have you seen a shift in how much the perceptions of others matter to you over time? Can you tell me more about that?

Campus Climate Organization/Structure Issues

Integration and Resources

1. Why do you think you were accepted to attend this school?
2. What support have you been provided with i.e. scholarships, mentorship, work study, etc. that have enabled you to succeed thus far at this campus? What more could be done?

3. Going back to my question from last time about your first couple months on campus. What do you think could be done to improve that experience for you as a [racial identity] student?
4. Tell me more about the Black faculty/staff on campus.
    a. Probes: What interactions do you have with them?; Are enough Black faculty or staff on this campus?
    b. How about your interactions with white faculty and staff?

Navigating Bureaucracy

1. How are you treated when trying to access services on campus such as health services, financial aid, registrar, career services?
    a. Probes: Do you think that the way that staff provide service or treat you is the same as white students on campus? Tell me more about that.; Have you ever found that there were rules or policies on campus that negatively impacted you because of your race? Tell me more about that.
2. What programs/resources have been the most helpful to you as a Black student on campus? How did you find out about these?

Curriculum and Instruction

1. What's it like for you in the classroom here?
2. Do you feel like your classroom materials reflect your racial identity? Tell me more about that.
    a. Probes: How do you think that could be improved?; Are there things that faculty do, such as the way they interact with you, or the types of materials they cover in class, or the assignments that could be adjusted to better reflect Black culture, identity, history?; If they had those things, how do you think that would impact your learning? How about your sense of Black identity? About your future as a Black adult in the US?
3. Do you think faculty have enough training regarding microaggressions, racism, and interrupting oppression to address them when they happen in the classroom? Tell me more about that.
    a. Probes: What other training do you think faculty need?; Who else on campus might need more training on these things?; If those things were in place, do you think that would impact your learning? How about your sense of Black Identity? About your future as a Black adult in the US?

Campus Climate/Resilience

1. With the way things are on this campus right now, would you encourage other Black students to attend this school? Why or why not?
2. What is it that keeps you in the game?; What things could make it better for other Black students to succeed on campus?

CRT Self-Authorship

We've now spent several hours together between the two interviews. A major component of my study is to understand how the campus climate and campus culture have helped you understand yourself as a racialized being as you transitioned from an adolescent to an adult in college. I'd like to ask you several questions that I asked you last time. Given that some time has passed and lots of new information came out today, I want to hear your responses to these questions again.

1. What do you think that being a [racial identity] person on campus has taught you about race relations?
2. In what ways do you think being [racial identity] influences how you make friends or who you trust on campus?
3. How do you think that your experiences as a [racial identity] person on campus has shaped how you define yourself?
4. In thinking back to what brought you to [School Name] and your experiences as a student here, what do you think was the most helpful in becoming the person you are today? What obstacles did you have to overcome in school to be who you are today?
5. If you were to offer advice to university administration and faculty about helping Black students with #AdultingWhileBlack what would you tell them?

Closing

1. Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to tell me about your experiences. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Again, I really appreciate how generous you have been with your time thus far. At this point, I'm going to go back and start looking at the information you have provided in both interviews. I may be in touch with you in a month or so to ask follow-up questions or seek clarification on things. Would that be alright? Do you have any questions about the study or what happens next with the information you have shared?

Appendix D: Provisional Codes and Definitions

#	Code Family	Code	Definition
1	Adulting	Adulting	To do grown-up things and hold responsibilities such as a 9–5 job, a mortgage/rent, a car payment, or anything else that makes you think of grown-ups
2	Campus Climate	Campus Climate	The "metaphorical temperature gauge by which [individuals] measure a welcoming and receptive, versus a cool and alienating learning environment
3	Campus Climate	Chilly Climate	A cool and alienating learning environment
4	Campus Climate	Racially hostile Climate	A cool and alienating learning environment that is influenced and maintained through white supremacy
5	Campus Climate	Warm Climate	A welcoming and receptive learning environment
6	Campus Climate Psychological Impacts	Stereotype Treat	The social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applied
7	Campus Climate Psychological Impacts	Self-Efficacy	One's perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels
8	Campus Climate Psychological Impacts	Microaggressions	The daily racially motivated slights and insults experienced by Black people in the United States
9	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Integration	Extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or a subgroup of it
10	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Assimilation	Process in which Black students are forced to adapt to white views, norms, and practices on college campuses

11	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Sense of Belonging	the level to which a student has a both a psychological and social sense of membership in a campus community. This includes both cognitive and affective elements
12	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Mattering	The feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate
13	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Marginality	the perception that one does not fit in, is not significant, and is not needed
14	Campus Climate Social Impacts	Marginality Power	A complex and contentious location and process whereby People of Color are subordinated because of their race, gender, and class, is transformed into training grounds for the disruption of the socially constructed distance between the oppressed and privileged
15	Campus Culture	Campus Culture	The norms, expectations, patterns of behavior, and spoken and unspoken rules that are shared within a community
16	Campus Culture	Culture Norms	The taken for granted expectations and rules that guide behavior within a community
17	Campus Culture	Culture Practices	The act of expressing cultural norms through behaviors
18	Campus Culture	Culture Policies	The documented rules that govern a community
19	Campus Culture	Culture Org Structure	The power-based arrangement of people within a community
20	Campus Culture	Culture Programs	Planned activities and engagement opportunities that engage the people within a community that reinforce values, expectations, and behaviors
21	Campus Culture	Culture Black Spaces	Physical places on campus which have been designated for Black culture (i.e. Black cultural centers, Black studies departments, Black Greek houses) or spaces that have been appropriated by Black people on campus
22	Campus Culture	Culture white Spaces	Physical places on campus where the values, expectations, and policies center whiteness

23	Campus Culture	Culture Curriculum	Instructor-led educational activities/assignments/materials for academic classroom learning
24	Campus Culture	Culture Black Student Resources	Culturally relevant, materials, services, spaces on a college campus that serve to help Black students navigate the post-secondary educational environment
25	Critical Race Theory	Permanence of Racism	Racism is ordinary and embedded in American life. Race is a social construction that racializing certain groups and is changed over time by dominant society, often to protect "property" and in response to shifting labor and market desires.
26	Critical Race Theory	Intersectionality	Describes how the intersections of social identities (gender, age, SES, sexual orientation, disability, religion, etc.) compound the level of oppression People of Color experience in different contexts, and converge to create unique social locations (i.e. identities and experiences) for communities and individuals.
27	Critical Race Theory	Challenge Dominant Ideology	CRT scholars challenge the traditional ideologies of meritocracy and equal opportunity in the education system, as well as deficiency frameworks used to explain the achievement gap between white students and Students of Color
28	Critical Race Theory	Critique of Liberalism	Liberal, color-blind, and rights-based approaches to social change maintain the social status quo.
29	Critical Race Theory	Interest Convergence	Social change that takes place is often to the benefit of white people rather than for People of Color. People with power will support ideas that may serve others when there is some benefit for their own privilege embedded within.
30	Critical Race Theory	Race-Neutrality	Approach to policy and practices that ignore or do not consider race as a mitigating factor

31	Critical Race Theory	Experiential Knowledge	The voices of People of Color have been silenced throughout history. People of Color know and are capable of telling the stories about their lived-experiences of racism and oppression. Their stories are often counter to the dominant paradigm.
32	Critical Race Theory	Counterstories	A tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege
33	Critical Race Theory	Whiteness as Property	White identity confers tangible and economically valuable benefits.
34	Critical Race Theory	Transdisciplinary Perspective	The use of multiple disciplinary perspectives to for deeper analysis and storytelling of a social problem; challenges ahistoricism and insists on analyzing race/ethnicity and racism by placing them in historical and contemporary contexts with interdisciplinary methods
35	Critical Race Theory	Commitment to Research for Social Justice	CRT scholars are social activists. The purpose of research should be to enact social change by drawing attention to and deconstructing power differentials, discriminatory/racist laws, policies, and practices that perpetuate injustice.
36	Critical Race Theory	Cultural Intuition (Researcher)	That which situates a researcher's positionality while acknowledging their lived cultural experiences and knowledge as an asset to the study
37	CRT Self-Authorship	Epistemological Dimension	Process by which a person asks: "How do I make meaning of my social world?"; allows for investigation of the developmental process needed for an individual to recognize how the environment provides particular experiences and stimuli, and the meaning-making processes that an individual may use to interpret this information

38	CRT Self-Authorship	Intrapersonal Dimension	Process by which a person asks: "How does my social world shape my sense of self as a racialized being?" allows for the study of ethnic identity development and the developmental processes of identifying how social norms affect sense of self, as well as the examination of how individuals manage their public selves in changing contexts while maintaining a stable, internalized cultural identity.
39	CRT Self-Authorship	Interpersonal Dimension	Process by which a person asks: "What relationships do I want with others for the benefit of my social world?"; allows for investigation of developmental processes wherein an individual recognizes her role as a political actor who seeks to forge effective coalitions, represent an entity's agenda, and make decisions that affect group members
40	CRT Self-Authorship	External Formulas Stage	Represents the absence of self-authorship. In this stage, individuals have trouble making major decisions and are often influenced by others.
41	CRT Self-Authorship	Crossroads Stage	Marked by the struggle between viewing the world through external formulas and the development of one's internal voice.
42	CRT Self-Authorship	Self-authorship Stage	The internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations
43	CRT Self-Authorship	Trusting the Internal Voice (SA)	State of development in which individuals were able to "manage their reactions to external influences. As they used their internal voices to shape their reactions, they developed confidence using their personal beliefs and values to guide their lives
44	CRT Self-Authorship	Building Internal Foundation (SA)	Synthesizing their identities, relationships, beliefs, and values into a coherent set of internal commitments from which to operate
45	CRT Self-Authorship	Securing Internal Commitments (SA)	Characterized by not only being aware of their internal commitments but using them to inform actions.

46	Equity Indicators	Representation Equity	The extent to which Black students' share of enrollment in the undergraduate student population [reflected] their representation among 18–24-year-old citizens in that state
47	Equity Indicators	Gender Equity	The proportionality of Black women's and Black men's respective shares of Black student enrollments in the undergraduate student population [reflected] the national gender enrollment distribution across all racial/ethnic groups
48	Equity Indicators	Completion Equity	The extent to which Black students' six-year graduation rates, across four cohorts, [matched] overall six-year graduation rates during those same time periods at each institution
49	Equity Indicators	Black Student/Faculty Ratio	The measure of the proportionality of full-time, degree-seeking Black undergraduates to full-time Black instructional faculty members on each campus
50	Nigrescence	Sector 1 - Infancy & Childhood	Parents, guardians and those who are present in a child's life have routines and norms that emulate the black culture and an individual is consistently being socialized into the Black culture, almost through osmosis.
51	Nigrescence	Socialization Pattern A	Children socialized within high racial salience environment
52	Nigrescence	Socialization Pattern B	Children socialized within low racial salience and internalized racism environment
53	Nigrescence	Sector 2 - Preadolescence	Development in this sector is influenced by the parents; high or low race salience or internalize racism
54	Nigrescence	Internalization	Experience negative issues with black community, thus develop self-hatred and hesitance to identify as black
55	Nigrescence	Low Racial Salience	Place no emphasis on race, although they are aware
56	Nigrescence	High Racial Salience	Instillation of importance of being black, black culture is most important

57	Nigrescence	Sector 3 - Adolescence	Begin to develop a black self-concept, authenticating one's own beliefs is key to an achieved identity; Adolescence is a turbulent time, as is, developing a self-concept may be affected by an individual's peer group, community, and/or school environment. i.e. Are you Black enough?
58	Nigrescence	Moratorium (3)	The engagement in critical reflection on Black identity during the sector 3 (adolescence)
59	Nigrescence	Authenticated Black Identity (3)	The point in sector 3 (adolescence) when youth can identify and affirm their own self-concept and are therefore, less reliant on others to define themselves
60	Nigrescence	Sector 4 - Early Adulthood	Low/High Race Salience and Internalized Racism reemerge in this stage; Low Race Salience is characterized by the construction of diverse identities and see race unimportant; High Race Salience is characterized by the establishment of a group of peers with the same values as black culture; Internalized Racism perceive black culture in the same light as sector two, however there are moves to modify and solidify a healthy self-concept
61	Nigrescence	Sector 5 - Nigrescence	The four stages are: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization/internalization commitment.
62	Nigrescence	Sector 6 - Nigrescence Recycling	Occurs when one's pre-existing Black self-concept is called into question. Having no explanatory power to resolve emergent questions regarding their identity, adults reflect on and subject their identity to close scrutiny as they seek resolution
63	Nigrescence	Single Critical Event (5)	A single traumatic event that causes one to re-evaluate their racial identity (i.e.. hate crime, discrimination)

64	Nigrescence	Series of Events (5)	A pattern of interactions with white people that harm one's Black self-concept (i.e.. microaggressions)
65	Nigrescence	Pre-encounter Assimilation (5)	Low race salience individuals will assimilate into mainstream with an appreciate of black culture
66	Nigrescence	Pre-encounter Anti-Black (5)	Response to racial identity triggers is to dig deeper into internalized racism
67	Nigrescence	Encounter (5)	Event will cause conflict and a questioning of their black identity
68	Nigrescence	Immersion - Pro Black (5)	Immersed into black culture become black nationalist or pro-black and entrench themselves in the culture and issues of the group, Immersed individuals
69	Nigrescence	Encounter Regression white Fixation (5)	Process by which, after a critical or series of incidents is acknowledged, one focuses their attention on rebuking whiteness rather than cultivating their Blackness
70	Nigrescence	Encounter Regression Drop Out (5)	Process by which, after a critical or series of incidents is acknowledged, one decided to stop identifying as Black and/or refuses to reflect on elements of their Black identity
71	Nigrescence	Emersion - Liminality Reflection (5)	The process by which, after a critical or series of incidents is acknowledged, one reevaluates their racial identity and seeks to incorporate their new knowledge into a more authentic understanding of their Black self-concept
72	Nigrescence	Conversion Black Nationalist (5)	Black Nationalist persona is one in which a person's Blackness is their most salient identity—they actively commit and engage in social justice work that benefits Black people.
73	Nigrescence	Conversion Bicultural (5)	Bicultural persona seek to blend their Black identity with their other identities while continuing to value their Blackness.
74	Nigrescence	Conversion Multicultural (5)	Multicultural persona integrate a wide range of their identities, commit to the ongoing exploration of the identities of others, and work toward dismantling

			multiple oppressions through social justice activism.
75	Nigrescence	Sector 6 - Nigrescence Recycling	Occurs when one's pre-existing Black self-concept is called into question. Having no explanatory power to resolve emergent questions regarding their identity, adults reflect on and subject their identity to close scrutiny as they seek resolution
76	Nigrescence	Nigrescence Wisdom (6)	Reflection and resolution process can result in a wisdom, "or a complex and multidimensional understanding of Black identity
77	Nigrescence	Reference Group Orientation	The lens through which a person views the world with regard to their racial group positioning
78	Nigrescence Daily Transactions	Buffering	Response to a racist interaction may be to shield themselves from the situation. The person might make a joke or downplay the severity of the conflict to counter the immediate threat
79	Nigrescence Daily Transactions	Code-Switching	Process by which Black people successfully maneuver interactions within the larger mainstream and Black cultural life. Individuals can adeptly shift between the two as needed
80	Nigrescence Daily Transactions	Bridging	Person cultivates respectful and rewarding relationships with diverse others.
81	Nigrescence Daily Transactions	Bonding/Attachment	Enhance their connection to Black culture and Black identity by immersing themselves in experiences with other Black people or through in-depth study of Black history, culture, and social positionality.
82	Nigrescence Daily Transactions	Individualism	A separation of the individual from their attachment to Blackness. The focus on individualism distances the person from their Black racial identity in daily transactions, thereby taking racial

			salience out of play when faced with a racist or oppressive incident.
83	Significant Others	Black Faculty	Professors/Instructors on college campus who identify as Black
84	Significant Others	Black Staff	Non-faculty personnel on campus who identify as Black
85	Significant Others	Black Peers	Black individuals who are around the same age of Black participants in the study
86	Significant Others	POC Faculty	Professors/instructors who identify with a race other than white or Black
87	Significant Others	POC Staff	Non-faculty personnel on campus who identify with a race other than white or Black
88	Significant Others	POC Peers	Individuals who are around the same age of Black participants in the study who identify with a race other than white or Black
89	Significant Others	white Faculty	Professors/instructors on college campus who identify as white
90	Significant Others	white Staff	Non-faculty personnel on a college campus who identify as white
91	Significant Others	white Peers	Individuals who are around the same age of Black participants in the study who identify as white

Appendix E: Participant Informed Consent

Project Title: #AdultingWhileBlack: Exploring the racialized adult identity development of traditional-age Black college students

Researcher & Contact: Sarah Kutten, Doctoral Candidate, Education Leadership & Policy,
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You are being asked to take part in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully review the information provided on this form. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider
• **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation. • **Purpose**. The purpose of this study is to understand how racism informs the adult identity development of Black college students. Specifically, this study is interested in how Black students deal with racism and microaggressions they may experience on college campuses and how that might impact their self-concept as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. • **Duration.** An initial interview should take 60–90 minutes. Potential follow-up interviews or clarifications over 1–3 months should take between 5–45 minutes total. • **Procedures and Activities.** The researchers have invited you to participate in two in-person interviews in a public space on or near your campus. A third follow-up interview may take place in-person, or via Skype, phone, or email. As part of the interviews participants may be asked to review portions of their interview transcripts or researcher interpretations for clarity. • **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include mild emotional response as you share memories about your experiences with racism on campus. • **Benefits**. Some of the benefits that may be expected include the opportunities to have the stories of your experience be heard, to reflect upon your transition

to adulthood, to participate in a study that could improve the higher education experience for other racially marginalized students.

- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary and the only alternative is to not participate.

What happens if I agree to participate?
If you agree to be in this research, your participation will include two interviews with a researcher at a public space on or near your campus for 60–90 minutes. You will be asked questions about your college environment and your experiences as a student on a predominantly white campus. Questions will focus on your racial identity, your arrival and early experiences on campus; and, times when you may have been confronted with racism and/or microaggressions on campus, the impact that those may have had on you as you have developed into an adult, and your ideas about how to address potential campus climate concerns. Should there be a need for further clarification you may be contacted for a third follow-up interview. The follow-up contact can take several forms including a short clarification interview in-person, or via Skype, phone, or email. In addition, participants may be asked to review portions of their interview transcripts or researcher interpretations for clarity. The duration of follow-up contact may range from 5–45 minutes total. We will tell you about any new information that may affect your willingness to continue participation in this research.

What happens to the information collected?
Information collected for this research will initially be used to write a dissertation, the information will be presented at a public dissertation defense and may be shared with other audiences through publications or additional presentations.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?
We will take measures to protect your privacy including the use of a pseudonym that you will select that will be used throughout the research process, keeping any information that could tie you to the research confidential, and storing data in secure and/or password-protected locations. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee that your privacy will be protected.

To protect the security of all of your personal information files connecting you the research will be kept separate and secure from interview recordings and follow-up details you share. Interview recordings will be transcribed using only your pseudonym. Follow-up emails will be copied and pasted into a new document without your personal identification details. Only the researchers will have access to documents that could connect you to the research. Despite these precautions, we can never fully guarantee the confidentiality of all study information.

What if I want to stop participating in this research?
Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you may stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from participation at any point without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or Portland State University.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?
Following each interview (interviews 1 and 2), you will receive an electronic $20.00 gift card for Amazon.com. Should you participate in any follow-up contact, you will receive one additional $20.00 Amazon.com gift card.

Who can answer my questions about this research?
If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

Christine M. Cress, Ph.D Educational Leadership & Policy Portland State University cressc@pdx.edu | 503-725-4682	Sarah Kutten, Doctoral Candidate Education Leadership & Policy Portland State University skutten@pdx.edu | 503-984-1835

Who can I speak to about my rights as a research participant?
The Portland State University Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. The IRB is a group of people who independently review research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. The Office of Research Integrity is the office at Portland State University that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights, or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Office of Research Integrity - PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751
Phone: (503) 725-5484 |Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400| Email: hsrrc@pdx.edu

Consent Statement
I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

By signing below, I understand that I am volunteering to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to provide consent prior to me continuing in the study.

I consent to participate in this study.

_____ _____ ___

Name of Adult Participant **Signature of Adult Participant** **Date**

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)
I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

_____ _____ ___

Name of Research Team Member **Signature of Research Team Member** **Date**