INVESTIGATING BLACK STUDENTS' OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Acknowledgment

3 John 1:2 Beloved I pray that you prosper in all things, in health, even as your soul prospers.

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INVESTIGATING BLACK STUDENTS' OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

For centuries, Black people have fought and wrestled against forces of human domination that have hindered their progression to obtain and maintain basic needs, particularly in higher education. More specifically, white supremacist structures have sought to prevent Black people from being educated and taught about their history with emphasis on relegating them to second-class status. Nonetheless, Black people have persisted in being trendsetters and changemakers in every facet of the world. The academic process demands students learn to critically think, assess situations, and become changemakers in society. Black students experience racial, gender, and class domination that has lasting impact on the trajectory of their lives. However, higher education institutions have not equipped students with tools to understand, question, and interrogate society's most pressing issues and concerns. 1960 Black social movements forged collective action and disruption to the higher education landscape demanding that public institutions proactively increase resources and support for Black students that yields upward mobility for Black communities. One organization critical to these efforts, the Black Student Union (BSU) has been simplified and backgrounded in scholarship as a conduit to protecting and advocating for Black student needs. These systemic and structural barriers have infuriated Black students causing them to respond in varied ways.

The purpose of this study is to unpack how students have cultivated oppositional consciousness identities to topics of interest, how organizations like BSU supported their consciousness, and what they do as a result of carrying those oppositional identities. It considers how Black students develop angst toward human domination they have faced and strategize through organizations and staff/faculty supports to transform the world. Oppositional consciousness is an empowering mental state and identity that informs how people move from anger to strategy from an oppressed position to overhaul a system of domination. The phases of oppositional consciousness consider subordinated groups identifying with the group, naming the oppressive structure, building collective identities with others, believing in the power of that group in resolving issues, and engaging in action to counter their domination. Beyond that minimal state, more mature phases consider how people identify target audiences, policies, or engage social movements that might consider transformational or liberatory principles.

In my study I explored how Black students gain oppositional consciousness and how that shapes their collegiate journey and experiences. Moreover, taking a critical qualitative approach, I interrogated how the Black Student Union served as a teaching mechanism and community for Black college students to equip them with tools to understand various forms of social domination and prepare them to collectively advocate. I interviewed 14 participants from two public research institutions using narrative inquiry. Participants were in college between 2017-2021 and related to BSU on their campus. Black students shared how their upbringing, schooling experiences, and collegiate experiences were informed by the systems of domination they faced in their lives. Findings indicate that participants developed oppositional consciousness at various points in their lives and the Black community played a major role in helping counter the one-sided narratives and histories they learned in their educational journey. Thus, BSU remains a beacon of light for Black students and helps challenge the predominantly white curriculum, while empowering Black students to learn their history, proactively engage Black issues in their studies, and develop strategies to counter structures that could liberate the Black community. Implications suggests that institutions truly learn about Black students' oppositional consciousness to better understand the role of BSU, challenge and dismantle barriers to supporting students' holistic wellbeing, and partner with Black student-led movements and organizations to counter overwhelming white curriculum and dismantle systems of domination.

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Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2011 I sat in my brother's one-bedroom apartment with my mom after we were recently evicted from our home during my last year in high school. Like most teenagers, I immersed myself in Facebook and noticed a few posts from my peers about their recent the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) admissions decisions. My heart racing, I opened my email, clicked on the notification from the university, zoomed in, and saw the header: "CONGRATULATIONS." I jumped up, screamed, yelled, and cried while my mom looked in bewilderment before hearing me say, "Praise God! I got into UCLA!" She immediately joined the celebration. After posting my achievement on Facebook and attending school the next day, I felt like a pop star and even had a new nickname: Mr. UCLA. Unfortunately, not everyone was as excited as me. I arrived at my International Baccalaureate (IB) History course and my white male teacher welcomed me with what I now recognize as a microaggression. "What was your GPA? A 3.7? and Angie—a white girl—had a 4.1. Wow," he exclaimed as he shook his head. My excitement allowed me to brush it off, but I was more upset that the other three Black males in IB courses were not accepted to UCLA. Nonetheless, a few weeks later, I received a call and email from the Afrikan Student Union (ASU) Admit Weekend Programming Committee about an opportunity to visit UCLA for a weekend, stay in the residence halls, and relate to other Black -admitted students. I had not participated in my high school's Black club so I lacked awareness of this aspect of my Black identity and was not fully aware of what the weekend would do for me. Since the experience was free, I took advantage of this opportunity that would eventually help form my critical consciousness and desire to serve my community.

Living only an hour away from UCLA, I caught the train to the Los Angeles Union Station where a student-volunteer was scheduled to pick me and a few other students up for the drive to campus. Although she arrived extremely late and at the apex of midday L.A. traffic, I arrived to campus just in time for the step show from the Black Greeks. Aside from the movie *Stomp the Yard*, I had little knowledge about Greek life, but I was in awe of the entire event as the host welcomed us and cheered us on for being admitted, and most pivotal of all, enticed us to sign our intent to register. The rest of the weekend consisted of living with a student host, participating and learning about ASU's history and why the organization was founded, and why this weekend even existed. They underscored the power of noble Black alumni like Lew Alcindor (Kareem Abdul-Jabaar), Arthur Ashe, and Ralph Bunche in creating the organization during the Black Power Movement (BPM). They highlighted Black student action of each decade such as divesting from organizations like Coca-Cola that supported apartheid in the 1980s and fighting affirmative action in the 1990s and early 2000s. Similarly, in 2006 ASU fought for increased Black student representation and demanded to have African American Studies departmentalized after "the infamous 96"—a year when UCLA only admitted 96 students out of a class of 4800 students (ASU at UCLA). We joined mock lectures from Black professors, gained insight from Black administrators at a Black alumni dinner, and were fed multiple times at the campus's world class dining and catering facilities. We gained friendships and community as incoming Black freshmen in sharing our stories of being the only Black student in our honors classes, and truly understanding how powerful it was that we were Black students admitted to the most applied to university in the world. The ASU chair keynoted the closing celebration, urging us that whether we committed to UCLA or not, we should commit ourselves to our campus's Black organization and continue fighting for our peers and family to gain access into the university and discover our passion for transforming the Black community. She continued reminding us that we belonged at the university and that there were several student organizations under the ASU umbrella and multiple spaces on campus committed to our holistic success. That weekend ignited a fire in me to know why UCLA and the University of California system only represented less than 10% of Black students, join my peers in protests to improve the campus climate, and inspire the Black community to excel in every facet. It was the Black Student Union that set me on the path for success by cultivating my oppositional consciousness. This study explores if other Black students have gained similar opposition to various forms of human domination and if their Black Student Union (BSU) has played a role in their awareness or actions. It considers how Black students develop angst toward human domination they have faced and strategize through organizations and staff/faculty supports to transform the world. In the next section I problematize concerns related to Black student success and describe oppositional consciousness as a framework to my study.

Problem Statement

"The police are killing Black people, why can't we go and kill them?" (Personal Communication, 2020). On June 2, 2020, Derek Chauvin, a white police officer in Minnesota, killed Mr. George Floyd, a middle-aged Black man, by kneeling on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. The world was in an uproar as the senseless killing showed Mr. Floyd repeatedly stating, "I can't breathe, call my mother" as Chauvin and his coworkers failed to respond to his demand. A few weeks later, I participated in a Juneteenth—a celebration of final notice of emancipation for enslaved Black people—conversation with Black youth and witnessed a *seven-year-old* boy (Tristan) exclaim the Floyd's quote above. This young man was extremely concerned about how Black people could or could not respond to heinous acts and murders at the hands of police. Within this young man's short existence, he has likely witnessed hundreds of these killings via social media and traditional media outlets (Codeswitch/NPR, 2020). Unfortunately, these experiences have occurred generations before this young man was conceived, and with lasting impacts on the plight of Black people in society. Tristan's father is a professor at Indiana University and has likely witnessed police harassment, brutality, and killings to Black people such as the 1992 beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, CA. Presumably, the BSU was present to support students that wanted to protest and those in fear of the police, interact with campus administration to address similar occurrences on campus, and work with community members to address both the brutality and larger injustices in the neighborhood. Overall, BSUs seek, and have sought, ways to prevent Black people from being subjected to or negatively impacted by violence from the police-state (Alexander, 2011). Simultaneously, BSUs exist to help Black students deal with the severity of caution, fear, and hopelessness of police interactions and instead thrive as citizens in society, as their white counterparts do who are shielded from police brutality and anti-Black institutions. Thus, Tristan will likely benefit from the support of a Black Student Union in the future. Yet today's organizations hope that the issues they are currently addressing will not be similar topics that Tristan, his BSU staff, and the Black community must counter in the future. In my dissertation, I sought to understand how Black students comprehended their social positioning in society and what role organizations like the BSU had in stimulating their ambitions for transformation. I investigated how Black students in college experienced violence prior to college, like Tristan, that fueled their anger and frustration toward a system of domination and who or what helped repurpose that anger into strategy and action, if at all. Black students gaining oppositional consciousness is not relegated to contesting violence in society, it helps them thrive on campus.

Scholars have stated for years that students thrive on college campuses from supportive campus stakeholders, community-oriented environments, and high levels of campus involvement (Allen, 1992; Griffin, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008; Strayhorn, 2005). Historically, it may have seemed as if colleges and universities could operate separately as isolated environments, however, scholars have noted that universities are positioned among the larger sociopolitical and sociocultural environments (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Museus & LePeau, 2020). Namely, these larger environments have implications for decision making and student success in multiple ways. Scholars have explored how local and national governmental policies such as affirmative action, economic policies, housing segregation, and race-based actions have drastically and positively influenced Black people's lives, and subsequently, student engagement in college (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011; Rothstein, 2017). My study explores how students respond to these sociopolitical events after (in)directly experiencing and living through them. Oppositional consciousness helps Black students develop ally relationships with same-race or same-sex peers that provided opportunities to propose solutions to their negative experiences proven by Groch (2001) and further seen by my study's findings. In the next section, I provide an example of how a Black student with varying degrees of oppositional consciousness tried to balance multiple commitments both invigorating her peers despite still seeking liberation.

A current city council member in California, Leslie was devoted to transforming her campus and community environment. She was welcomed into the university at the BSU's weekend yield program, participated in the summer bridge program for underrepresented students, and participated in a host of BSU internships that cultivated her consciousness as a Black student on campus. Leslie joined the BSU board her sophomore year while participating in the Student Government Association (SGA) to complement her double major in African

American Studies and Political Science. While balancing these commitments, Leslie also witnessed alt-right student groups on campus hosting "diversity bake sales," professors exclaiming affirmative action unfairly allows Black people into the institution and seeing the lack of Black and other racial ethnic minoritized students on campus. Furthermore, Leslie tried to support her community in the aftermath of multiple police officers killing unarmed Black people like Ms. Sandra Bland, Ms. Rekia Boyd, Mr. Oscar Grant, Mr. Freddie Gray, and even young twelve-year-old Tamir Rice who was killed while playing with a toy gun. Leslie and many of her other Black peers can face challenges balancing where they invest their time and energy as college students. Due to the responsibility that Black students like Leslie have to be both critically aware and active in sociopolitical issues, while managing school work they are faced with the challenge to balance where they invest their time. Leslie's college and BSU experience consisted of planning programs to support her peers, facilitating marches and rallies at the University President's office, engaging in service projects by reading and helping Black students apply to the university, facilitating study halls, participating in mentorship programs, all while fighting for the freedom to *just be*. While higher education literature suggests that students immerse themselves in the campus environment, such scholarship often lacks a concerted notion of what happens within organizations like the BSU and how students commit themselves to transforming the world through their campus and community. Thus, my study illustrates how Black students cultivate oppositional identities while balancing the expectation to be immersed in campus culture. I wondered how students in both the social and physical sciences discovered and created community to combat the multiple forms of racism they experienced on their campus. Once students' oppositional identities reached action and strategy in phases 3 and 4, if at all, how did their efforts transform the campus environment or inspire younger students to participate?

Overall, the problems presented here suggest Black students must balance domination from historic policies and practices, are expected to succeed academically, and must discover ways to transform their campus and larger sociopolitical environment. Ermibayer and Desmond (2013) highlight how racial and economic domination preclude Black people from upward mobility and social advancement. Black students sometimes have angst and frustrations toward the campus environment because it is often unconducive for them to thrive. Black students enter majority white campus environments with antiquated curriculum, overwhelmingly white student representation, all while Black people are marginalized in almost every aspect of the university. Thus, Black students at PWIs may seek formal organizations to combat years of being dominated in society and to discuss and challenge sociopolitical issues in higher education spaces. While some Black students may seek out these organizations, other Black students stumble upon the resources or may never truly or meaningfully engage in conversations that matter. Others may take classes and major in programs like Black studies as a counter to the racialized environment (Guiffrida, 2003). The issues that Black people experience in broader society are amplified on campus, therefore my study uncovered how students' irritation and experiences manifested to strategy at their PWI. More specifically, I questioned if principles of democracy and deliberation were present in the university structure that allowed Black students to meaningfully interrogate issues of concern, like why they are not overrepresented in the student population. Black people sometimes lack formal structures and opportunities to voice their trepidations and for administrators to deem them meaningful enough to tackle (Bohman, 1996). Also, compared to the Student Government Association (SGA)—again that can be overwhelmingly white—BSUs and Black students may lack formal university governance structure by not having consistent opportunities to voice issues on behalf of the campus community or on Black people. Black students can voice issues to the SGA, but their anger and topics of concern in historically white campus environment may not be considered as relevant or imperative to the general student body. Thus, I studied if Black students develop oppositional consciousness as an reaction to their marginalized state and to disrupt oppressive campus structurers and systems. My study examined if students develop oppositional consciousness and highlights how they battled the hegemonic structure.

Theoretical Framework: Oppositional Consciousness

Oppositional consciousness is an empowering mental state that allows people to assess their domination in society, to deem there issues as oppressive and needing contestation, and to potentially engage in collective action aimed at redressing the oppression (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Oppositional consciousness was developed by Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris in the latter 20th century. It grew out of resistance efforts during the Civil Rights Movement as scholars sought to understand more of how people and groups confront power through organizations, and the various tactics they employed to counter their subjugation (Groch, 2001; Morris, 2001). Said scholars and their interests varied including social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Tilly 1978), social psychology (Gamson & Gamson, 1992; Taylor & Whittier, 1992), class consciousness (Foucault, 1977), and more. According to Foucault (1977), oppressed communities engaging heavily in activist and resistance efforts should be expected and extensive since powerful groups suppress and dominate marginalized groups in thought and action. Their class status hinders their participation in society thereby causing them to push back against classism and demand equality in the US. Thus, oppositional consciousness was formed to understand how underrepresented minoritized groups alter their mindsets and approach in understanding the sociopolitical environment and the ways racial and class domination create and sustain inequalities in their community (Groch, 2001; Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Specifically, oppositional consciousness is “an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination. It is fueled by righteous anger over injustices done to the group and prompted by personal indignities and harms suffered through one’s group membership” (Morris & Braine, 2001, p. 25). Historically, people develop oppositional consciousness when they assess their positioning within their dominated group and begin to gain awareness of their subjugation while aspiring for liberation. According to Mansbridge and Morris (2001), minoritized groups such as Black people or women have historically faced deep levels of oppression regarding their identity causing them to assess root causes for their oppression and create plans to fight for justice/ equality. Within a myriad of cultural structures such as (churches, alternative schools, and impoverished neighborhoods) oppressed groups learn about the dominate classes subjugation, and the systems that oppress them. These forms can be outrightly understood with systems in place like slavery or it can be more subtly hidden with class domination such as poor working conditions and pay. Nonetheless, these oppositional cultures, as Mansbridge and Morris (2001) suggest, “contain partially developed critiques of the status quo as well as knowledge of isolated rebellious acts and prior episodes of organized collective action” (p. 26). Oppositional cultural practices historically played a crucial role in demystifying marginalized groups experiences by equipping them with knowledge of who or what they must fight against to live a better life. For example, many scholars have underscored the power of songs and oral histories in the Black community that historically helped liberate enslaved Black people through clandestine communication tactics empowering them to know that change would come or to follow leaders that could help free them (Painter, 2006). The formation of oppositional consciousness and cultures grew out of larger studies on class consciousness, social psychology, and social movements of which I briefly describe below and elaborate on in chapter two.

As scholars sought to understand resistance, consciousness, and movement behavior, for example, often these research arenas were siloed and did not account for the multiple ways that dominated groups might experience and need to combat multiple forms of oppression (Foucault, 1977; Marx & Engels, 1978; Sandoval, 1991). Therefore, Mansbridge and Morris (2001) contend that dominated groups that have experienced several histories of oppression develop and are more committed to oppositional consciousness than their peer groups, like an environmental rights organization. Groups as such borrow liberation ideas and tactics from the former group, only to frame their issue as a larger human rights issue instead of fighting for a specific race, class, or gender cause. This distinction is quite important to understanding oppositional consciousness, as Morris (1991) describes with the combination of class and race consciousness, articulating how Black people assume a double oppositional consciousness in order to survive and do not have the liberty to merely focus on combatting race *or* class. The development of oppositional consciousness as an ideology was predicated on the racelessness embedded in scholarship on class consciousness and was extended to focus on both (Groch, 2001). Moreover, oppositional consciousness focuses on how individuals determine injustices in their lives and imagine the possibilities of changing it. Oppositional consciousness happens in phases (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). In the next section, I illustrate how the first four phases of oppositional consciousness are categorized into a minimal state. Subsequently, more mature states comprise of intentional and meaningful action that counters human domination.

Phases

Following people's understanding of oppression are the development of collective identities and paradigm shifts of beliefs that make up the various phases of oppositional consciousness. The four phases of oppositional consciousness consist of 1) identification with a dominated group, 2) experiencing and relating to the injustices done to that group, 3) opposing those injustices, and 4) collectively believing in the power of the group to ending their subjugation (Mansbridge, 2001, p. 5). Oppositional consciousness can be scaled on both a minimum (previously shown) and mature level. Minoritized individuals maturate to a full-fledged consciousness by naming a target audience influencing or benefitting from the oppression, identifying a system or structure advancing the dominant groups' interests, or enhancing the subjugated groups' passion and moral condemnation aimed at liberation (Morris & Braine, 2001, p. 26). As highlighted in the previous section, groups will vary on how much they develop oppositional consciousness and the resulting actions they take, or not, after their gained understanding. For example, in a study where a disability group might have individuals angry over lack of accessibility in several workplaces. Collectively, the individuals within that organization may determine that a state organization and policy are causing them harm and begin to take necessary steps at redressing the policy. However, Groch (2001) argues that participants in her study developed a disability oppositional consciousness, considered mature, that saw their disabilities as a part of a system of years of discrimination and exclusion in housing, schools, and other institutions that need reform. Thus, they not only formed collective identities to detest the policy influencing work conditions, but also identified multiple structures and policies to engage in protests, create movies, and other activities aimed at liberation (p. 379). Oppositional consciousness can be considered a steppingstone for mobilization and resistance, although it does not guarantee it will lead to said action. As a developmental process, it moves people beyond anger and frustration to strategy and collective action. This can occur through discussions in public and private settings where members of oppressed groups voice issues, validate experiences, and cultivate relationships (Sandoval, 1991). Further, it can also occur from being segregated in majority minority communities, attending public forums and speeches, and other arenas where members of oppressed groups seek paradigm shifts within their community with liberation in mind (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). In chapter 2, I expound on how counter publics can help shift paradigms.

Black Students' Oppositional Consciousness in Education

In my study I explored how Black students gain oppositional consciousness and how that shapes their collegiate journey and experiences. Moreover, I interrogated how the Black Student Union served as a teaching mechanism and community for Black college students to equip them with tools to understand various forms of social domination and prepare them to collectively advocate. Numerous studies have highlighted how Black students develop their identities (Harper & Quaye, 2007), engage with student organizations (Guiffrida, 2003), participate in activism (Morgan & Davis, 2019), and succeed in higher education (Wood & Palmer, 2014). I explored how Black students gained oppositional consciousness of sociopolitical events, how they processed racism and oppression in their lives, and the multiple ways that higher education led to collective action for the Black community. Oppositional consciousness was an ideal frame for my study to understand how Black students moved from frustration and anger from issues they cared about such as food insecurity, feminism, and representation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields to identifying and naming systems and structures that have dominated their groups for centuries. Oppositional consciousness showed the full gamut of how students gained knowledge in the classroom from Black studies, in their home communities from mentors, and within student organizations like BSU, and what they chose to do with their new knowledge. To gain a deeper understanding if oppositional consciousness occurred for Black students in higher education and the BSU's role I interviewed Black students at two predominantly white research institutions (PWIs) to understand the complexities of their experience and how they were developing greater meaning of their sociopolitical environment, human domination, their societal positioning, what contributed to their critical consciousness, and how they responded, if at all. Findings illustrate that participants faced domination as adolescents, learned to name their subjugation through P12 schooling, and benefitted from cocurricular programs in high school and college that helped them (re)learn strategies to alter policies and practices hindering their success. In the next sections, I contextualize concepts and ideas needed to understand more about Black students in higher education, BSUs, and the various processes and tactics employed historically that are present contemporarily.

Context for the Study

In understanding how Black students gained awareness of sociopolitical events centered on racism and responded in various ways, I contextualized why Black students' consciousness raising and participation in activism in higher education is necessary. Black student success and activism is heavily influenced by systems of oppression and, I argue they should work commensurably to ensure that universities are meeting students' holistic needs to obtain success and counter domination. Cruel structural and systemic treatment of Black people is still very prevalent in society, which was a very strong reason for Black students' opposition to oppression in my study. Black students experience countless negative and/or violent racial incidents on campus (Harper, 2009), are in constant fear of police from anti-blackness in many American institutions (Alexander, 2011), are unsupported in K12 education (Howard, 2014), and, subsequently, disenfranchised in higher education (Allen, 1992). To counter these experiences, Black students often find community through Black Student Unions, namely an organization committed to dismantling racism and providing space for Black students to thrive on campus and in society (Rogers, 2012). Black students, once admitted into the historically white campus environment, must discover support systems that will ensure that they will successfully weather racial or negative incidents and under-preparation to still graduate and succeed beyond the university. As such, resources such as Black Culture Centers (BCCs), Black Studies departments, Black student organizations, and even funding opportunities like scholarships have been provided to support student success (Hypolite, 2020; Woodward & Howard, 2015). While some Black students may already be aware of the various systems and practices that have hindered their success, other students gain awareness or consciousness in BSUs or other campus entities, acquiring relevant information about injustices that they are then able to push back against in college or graduate school like my findings suggests (Harper & Quaye, 2007). This critical consciousness raising can ignite students' passions to occupy administration buildings, write letters and op-eds to legislators and campus officials, plan service weekends and events, or choose a major that addresses Black issues head on (Davis, 2019; Museus & Sifuentez, 2020).

BSU and Consciousness in Black Students. BSUs in my study aided Black students in learning how to protest, identify issues as important, and use the operation framework from BSU to take to major-specific Black student organizations. The BSU historically served both as a space for communicating issues and initiating action that grounded Black students and supported their ambitions to transform the campus and the world (Biondi, 2012). BSUs can also affirm students' identity development and sense of belonging by helping them feel that they matter within the predominantly white environment (Strayhorn, 2012). While BSUs have shown how instrumental they can be to Black student activism and success, this study expounds that narrative highlighting how Black students gain oppositional consciousness in higher education and how the BSU plays a role. I unpack the myriad ways that Black students became aware of inequalities and how they responded. I further discuss how Black students gain consciousness and how various literatures connects different methods they may take toward developing oppositional consciousness.

For this study, I discuss the importance of Black students learning about pressing issues impacting their lives and the process by which they begin to act on and challenge people that may have power to address their concerns. By questioning how Black students benefit from BSU programs, I sought to understand if BSUs acted as a conduit for Black students' consciousness raising and potential activism. Black student activism and success via Black Student Unions has historically been significant in addressing racism and discrimination in society. Black Student Unions are student organizations focused on Black students' overall experiences on college campuses with hopes that their influence will change the social, economic, and intellectual status of the larger Black community (Patton, 2006; Rogers, 2012). To enact said change, Black students within BSUs gained critical consciousness that equipped them with tools to effectively challenge systems while also succeeding academically (Kelley, 2002; Rogers, 2012). Albeit not foregrounding BSUs in their research, higher education literature highlights how Black students' success is enhanced through their identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), and capital (Hypolite, 2020) that aids in their retention through student organizations and other campus resources like the BSU. Yet the literature fails to nuance if and how Black students' presuppositions to injustice in society have already equipped them to gain oppositional identities; or what factors from the campus environment, particularly BSUs, develop their understanding of their position in society to engage in resistance efforts leading to their success. Therefore, my study explores how Black students gained consciousness and if those oppositional identities help them be successful.

Lastly, critical pedagogy and social movement literature further enhances our understanding of how Black students develop oppositional consciousness. Critical pedagogy can be understood as a teaching philosophy based in democratic and critical theory that empowers students with tools to understand and interrogate injustices (Apple, 2014). Social movement theory seeks to understand how people mobilize, organize, and engage in resistance to dominant powers (Benford & Snow, 2000). Accordingly, Morris (2001) shares how crucial social movement organizations were to teaching Black students about their oppressors and helping to design strategies to fight back on college campuses and in society. Further, Black students in BSUs in conjunction with social movements in the 20th century, amplified their demands and concerns on campus from college student concerns to addressing larger causes for Black people in society (Rogers, 2012). In doing so Black students' developed consciousness from counterspaces like the Black Culture Center, from radical Black parents and families at churches, or even via engagement with the sociopolitical environment through interactions with prominent Black leaders in society (Biondi, 2012; Morris, 2001). Therefore, I contextualized Black students' experiences in higher education through critical pedagogy and knowledge from Black spaces on campus that may raise their consciousness (Tarlau, 2014). By utilizing social movements theory to audit Black social movements of the past in relation to how Black students reference and relate to them in their own learning of oppression, my study highlights how Black students in college gained knowledge and understanding of oppression that could help them fight for societal change. I also gained insight into how Black students successfully graduated and gained career success, while meeting the demands of other commitments including family obligations, or other organizational involvement through their oppositional identities (Rhoads, 1998). While social movements are not new, nor is the BSU, tailoring research to focus specifically on this type of organization advances scholarship on critical consciousness raising, student success, activism, retention, and the Black community at large. Understanding the intersection of these concepts elucidates my larger argument about how Black students increase knowledge about and enacted radical restructuring of universities and challenged large forms of domination and oppression through oppositional consciousness raising from BSUs. I outline the purpose of my study and why it is critical for Black students to gain oppositional consciousness and have tools necessary to interrogate human domination.

Purpose of the Study

In response to the myriad issues presented above, I investigated how Black students learned of power and domination that they experienced, what cultivated their understanding, and what outcomes occurred as a result. For decades, higher education scholars indicated how important cocurricular activities are to student success (Allen, 1992; Hurtado, 1994; Kuh, 2003; Tierney, 2001). They have further indicated how balancing students' involvement and maintaining mental health and wellness are crucial to student retention (Smith et al., 2007; Smith, 2014). Many scholars have also highlighted the challenges and successes of historically underrepresented groups and the importance of having diversity on college campuses (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Harper & Quaye, 2007). More specifically, research has stressed the need for racially ethnic minoritized faculty and staff to contest the predominantly white environment (Griffin, 2003; Museus & LePeau, 2019). Similarly, scholars have underscored the importance of teaching and educating for democracy and criticality that prepares students with tools to adequately interrogate systems and structures for liberation (Apple, 2014; Kelley, 2018;

Wheeler-Bell, 2014). While scholars have written and engaged in various activities to bring awareness and change to this multilayered issue, Black students can be livid at conditions presented to them in higher education and may need supports like BSUs and Black studies to help them thrive in higher education (Davis, 2019; Stokes & Miller, 2019). Thus, my study examined how students understood and gained knowledge about their positioning in society, factors that supported their academic success, and their potential engagement in activism to change the world for the Black community.

Gaps

More specifically, I discuss the role of hegemonic forces and the sociopolitical climate in creating harsh conditions for Black students that warrants their action. In this dissertation, I address gaps in how higher education literature focused on Black students in organizations and their activist agendas are not rooted in social movement and critical pedagogy literature that enhances understanding of why and how students mobilize to resist racial and institutional oppression (Tarlau, 2014). Scholarship does not trace what Black students are taught about power and domination, where they learn about oppressive systems and structures, and if organizations play a role in preparing them to overhaul policies and practices. Higher education scholars primarily focus on the success of Black students through discussing their sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), benefits of student leadership (Harper & Quaye, 2007), and holistic success for Black students (Harper, 2010) without a concerted focus on Black Student Unions and what its involvement offers participating students. Ibram Rogers's (2012) profound historical work on the advent of the Black Campus Movement (BCM) has been foundational in advancing scholarship for BSU's. While BSUs are not foregrounded in this study, I investigated if Black students—via participation in BSU or not—gained oppositional consciousness within higher education literature that discusses BSU students' academic success and leadership. I also consider critical pedagogy literature that highlights how students resist power and domination, and social movement literature that illustrates what halts or stimulates movements. As such, the primary focus of my study was to explore how students developed opposition to hegemonic structures and what role, if any, BSUs had in creating tangible strategies that students used to eradicate said structures. I provide a summary of my theoretical underpinnings in connection with my larger argument in the next section.

Theoretical Framework

I sought to understand how BSUs helped Black students develop oppositional consciousness to challenge inequality and institutional racism. Oppositional consciousness consists of students' feelings and ideas about the world that need pruning for social change and human thriving. Specifically, oppositional consciousness is "an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination. It is fueled by righteous anger over injustices done to the group and prompted by personal indignities and harms suffered through one's group membership" (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001, p. 25). Students can possess a minimum or mature oppositional consciousness in response to the sociopolitical environment. At minimum, students with subordinate group identities, such as class, race or gender, experience and relate to wrongdoing done to their group, detest those experiences with anger, and develop relations with other members with hopes that they may put an end to the injustice. This minimal consciousness is consistent with oppositional cultures that "contain partially developed critiques of the status quo as well as knowledge of isolated rebellious acts and prior episodes of organized collective action" (Mansbridge & Morris, p. 26). Cultural influences such as music and churches provide subordinate groups with minimal oppositional consciousness by merely encouraging people to name oppressive factors and develop some external resistance to structures or systems that may hinder their ability to thrive. On the contrary, a full-fledged (mature) oppositional consciousness consists of "identifying some of the ways a dominant group systematically uses power to initiate and maintain its position, a moral condemnation of the forms of domination, and usually some set of strategies—historical, culturally derived, or borrowed—for ending the system of domination" (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001, p. 26). Mature opposition not only names and detests structural oppression, but people begin to develop tactical strategies lending to supporting social movements and groupthink aimed at liberation. This mature positioning uses oppositional cultures and subordinated group's presuppositions to assess their understanding of their societal positioning, demystify normative practices that may be fueling hegemonic structures, and develop collective action aimed at reconstructing and deconstructing systems of human domination. My study discovers students' presuppositions prior to and entering collegiate institutions. The emphasis then pertains to where students developed oppositional consciousness and what role, if any, the BSU played.

Using oppositional consciousness as a framework, I examined how Black students gained oppositional consciousness and what Black campus supports helped them develop consciousness or be successful on college campuses. I wanted to learn how Black students managed seeing explicit police violence on social media, experience faculty calling them inadequate, what organizations or people helped them process related feelings and emotions, and encouraged activism. If students developed mature oppositional consciousness, how did their actions redefine and imagine a more equitable society allowing Black students and people to thrive? Moreover, might Black students' demands, after developing mature oppositional consciousness, call upon higher education leaders to create democratic processes or alter policies that can better meet Black people's needs? Oppositional consciousness underscores the multiple ways students enter collegiate institutions and BSUs with various understandings of human domination, or not. I wanted to know if BSUs helped them counteract the oppressive systems and, if so, how? Limited research explores Black students' efforts in relation to the larger sociopolitical environment or how Black organizations empower Black students to engage in restructuring the campus community. However, higher education literature might benefit from more interdisciplinary scholarship that can help address concerns of critical consciousness, student success, and democracy in the higher education landscape. In the next section, I outline my research question and list key terms that ground my larger argument.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Below, I list key concepts and definitions that will be used throughout my dissertation:

Black people— U.S. born citizen individuals of the African diaspora.

Black Student Union (BSU)— The primary Black student organization at historically white institutions. It serves students' holistic academic and social wellness and sometimes addresses campus issues for Black staff and faculty. It can also be the umbrella organization for other meaningful student organizations including but not limited to the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE), Black Business Student Association (BBSA), African Student Association [or respective countries in the continent—Nigerian, East African, etc.]. It also works closely with the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) which encompasses nine historically Black fraternities and sororities also known as the "Divine Nine." BSU as a term is inconsistent across institutions as names can vary, such as Afrikan Student Union, Pan-African Student Association, Black Student Association, etc. For the purpose of consistency, Black Student Union will be used.

Student Government Association (SGA)— Primary student governing body of all students on colleges and universities in the U.S. context. Undergraduate Student Government is another term but SGA will be used for consistency. The President of this organization meets directly and can serve in co-governance with the University President and higher education administrators.

Higher education institution— Institution for postsecondary education in the U.S. and will also be used interchangeably with college and university.

Racial Domination/Racism— The symbolic, political, and economical power encompassed in institutions that hinder marginalized communities from basic human rights and autonomy to thrive in society. Racism is endemic and can be seen in different forms such as microaggressions, exclusion from deliberation processes, and underrepresentation.

Economic Domination/Capitalism— Ditto to racial domination. Economic domination denies people the ability to participate in economic processes and excludes them from accessing basic knowledge needed to thrive in the capitalist system. Capitalism is an economic structure in which resources are gained through maximizing economic power and wealth through controlling production.

Activism/Activists— Consists of contestation of power, domination, systems, and structures that hinder students' ability to flourish on campus. Can be included with demands for a more appropriate and equitable society or campus. Activists seek change to institutions and the sociopolitical environment and the status quo of both. Their efforts can include but are not limited to sit-ins, protests, rallies, listing demands, and other efforts that may change policies and/or practices. Activists can be members of internal and/or external organization structures.

Social Movements— Consistent joint actions that disrupt the status quo and social structures. Social movements can be sustained over long periods of time depending on a movement's goals.

Organizations like the BSU can also act as a social movement through their efforts to reshape the sociopolitical and sociocultural landscape. Contemporary social movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM) will be of particular concern for this study.

Critical Consciousness— Knowledge and insights gained about power and domination used against underrepresented minoritized groups through formal and informal networks (i.e. curricular or cocurricular experiences) that can cultivate awareness, sense of urgency, and commitment to countering hegemony.

Oppositional Consciousness—Subordinated groups develop positive cultures among their peers, oppose racism and domination against their people, and stress the need for campus and societal transformation to economics, sociopolitical environments, and human thriving while seeing collective action as critical to liberation.

Liberation/Emancipation— The ideology and practice that people are free of racial and economic domination and can genuinely express and appreciate Black culture and values across the world. For the purposes of my study, I also include human flourishing that revolves around providing people with autonomy to maximize a thriving life, making decisions, and growing in their full capacity to live. Emancipation and liberation will be used interchangeably, asserting that emancipatory goals are aimed at freeing people from dominated positions in society

Democracy— Process by which people have equitable and equal rights and say over decision making and policies in an institution. Using their collective social power, people in a democracy are able to contest issues and decisions pertinent to their lives in the public sphere.

Public Sphere— An arrangement for communicating information and deliberating on meaningful issues. It allows for the contestation of issues and decisions that are amplified to civil society and generate social movement activity. The *counterpublic sphere* is a distinct Black subset of the public sphere that allows Black people to communicate their issues for conveyance to the larger public as crucial to society.

Deliberation— Process by which people can equally communicate and contest issues in an institution that can be amplified to the public sphere and civil society.

Study Significance

I maintain that Black students develop oppositional consciousness in higher education through Black student organizations, like the BSU, and Black faculty and staff. Whether on a mimimum or mature level, Black students' oppositional consciousness, I argue, fuels their passion for service, helps them build community, and provides value to their career endeavors. To test my argument and understand if Black students did in fact develop oppositional consciousness or if organizations played a role supporting Black student success or activism, I employed the following research questions for my study: 1) How do Black students develop oppositional consciousness identities to human domination? 2) What role, if any, does the Black Student Union play in developing oppositional consciousness? 3) What outcomes or successes have come about if students do indeed develop oppositional consciousness? These questions guided my investigation and understanding how Black students developed oppositional consciousness through formal and informal learning experiences, how they responded to oppressive systems through curricular and noncurricular experiences, and if their efforts mobilized their peers, at all, that could influence policies, counter domination, and transform college campuses or society. I now offer contributions to research and practice from my study.

Practice. This work could be relevant for university administrators to better understand how their resources may support identity development that may contribute to civic engagement and education. Universities create ample opportunities for students to attend speaker series, plan service opportunities, and create student organizations that address students' interests and concerns. By understanding how students enter institutions with varying levels of consciousness and anger from human domination, administrators can assess how their offered resources may be developed to better prioritize students. Thus, as educators develop service-learning opportunities or create projects for students to partake in, they might consider what issues students have faced and how that might inform students desires to eradicate whatever caused them harm.

Similarly, this investigation might also lend support to better understanding ethnic student organizations like the BSU. Practitioners understand student development and higher education scholarships, urging students to get involved for identity development, critical awareness, and for sense of belonging. However, my study provides valuable insight into how students enter higher education institutions with some form of consciousness and how ethnic organizations develop students' awareness resulting in their activism or collegiate success.

Research. Findings from my dissertation might also lend to advancing scholarship on Black student activism and success. Research on Black students in higher education could benefit from focusing on how Black students come to oppose human domination and if that fuels their drive to overhaul systems of oppression. Furthermore, Black students' opposition to human domination tends to be the driving force behind student activism and success, but research has mainly focused on how and what students do to respond to oppression without truly understanding how students were socialized or learned about inequalities and what factors helped them gain consciousness and/or create a game plan to solve the problem. My study builds upon research on identity development and student success research investigating if Black students gain oppositional consciousness and what role if any does the BSU play.

Moreover, this study is critical to higher education and critical pedagogy literature because it further expands knowledge on the purpose of student organizations and how students possibly gain oppositional identities to transform society. Student organizations were created and supplanted as cocurricular activities that support students' development, equipping them with tools to impact the world. Black students have always sought ways to access education and implement strategies to use their knowledge to create equitable practices and policies for their communities. Therefore, these questions and arguments support discourse that recognizes student organizations as important, civic engagement has a lasting impact, and social movements help transform society.

Organization of the Dissertation

The subsequent chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to my study. Afterwards, chapter three includes my study design, methodology, positionality statement, and summary of my site and overall study. Next, chapter four provides a thorough overview of my participants and their narratives relating to their oppositional consciousness development. Chapter five includes findings from my study. Finally, chapter six concludes my study with discussion and implications for research, practice, and a special letter from Black students to their community.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Review

In the next sections, I draw upon constructs in Higher Education, Social Movements, Critical Pedagogy, and Black Studies to underscore how they played a role in understanding oppositional consciousness, particularly for Black students. Collectively, these literatures supported my investigation if Black students in collegiate institutions developed oppositional consciousness, if BSU supported oppositional consciousness identities or not, and had implications for how Black students in BSUs challenged power and domination through various movement tactics and succeeded in college. Including oppositional consciousness as a frame in my study, I aimed to understand how Black students began to understand and oppose injustices in society and if BSUs influenced how they gained a blueprint for demanding change to their campus and societal environment. As an overview to this literature review, I historicize Black students in BSUs and how they have been relevant to student success. I discuss various resistance tactics from Black students and Black people including how that has led to social movements. I underscore research on counterpublic spheres and spaces that allowed Black people to generate ideas collectively. Finally, I illustrate how Black people's opposition was taught through critical pedagogy allowing for their resistance. I weave these constructs into my theoretical framework to illustrate how oppositional consciousness could be evident in Black students' experiences.

Black Student Unions are one of the longest existing ethnic student organizations on college campuses (Thelin, 2004). Aside from historical accounts of the Black Power Movement, their commitment to student success and Black student activism has rarely been given due diligence (Rogers, 2012). Thus, in the first section, I historicize some of the BSU's contributions and detail how the first one was created at San Francisco State University (SFState). I include information on some of the more prominent leaders while also highlighting how many members or organizations do not have the same goals or foundation, thus how they operate on any campus can vary by university and geography. Articles offer extensive information about the work of BSUs, but very few assert how the sociopolitical environment and Black people's presuppositions in the world necessitated their opposition to domination and their subsequent engagement in activism. In my study, I hoped to understand who taught Black students, in BSUs and not, how to organize and to tactically create plans to disrupt systems in society. I wanted to explore what role, if any, the BSU has had with their programming, organizing, connections to faculty, and other potential oppositional consciousness ideals to support Black people's success on campus and in society. This teaching was connected to the third or fourth phases of oppositional consciousness where students may have demanded fair treatment and/or built coalitions for action.

Next, I include literature on social movements theory and resistance as a critical piece of oppositional consciousness phases demanding change to policies that could lead to Black students developing deeper consciousness, and potentially transformation. Core to Black students' success was and remains their resistance to negative campus climate and institutional powers for the purpose of improving their community's ability to thrive on campus and in society (Biondi, 2012; Morgan & Davis, 2019). Thus, understanding their resistance tactics and how they are aligned or not with social movement theories and student organizations was extremely helpful for my investigation. I determined how Black students on college campuses learn from their peers in BSUs and from Black programs on campus to create initiatives challenging institutional structures. I wanted to understand if they gained oppositional consciousness and if they desired to contribute to larger discourse and activity outside the university in hopes of garnering constituents and support from inside the university (Tarlau, 2019). Moreover, I hoped to assess Black students' awareness of the impact of racism and classism on their lives and if their peers' organized efforts in the BSU helped them gain a collective understanding and identity aimed at radically restructuring the campus. Those tactics and their strategic approach (oppositional consciousness) to responding to their subordinated group is crucial to social movement theory and Black liberation.

Similarly, literature on counterspaces and the counterpublic are offered to help understand the physical or cultural spaces allowing Black people to freely enjoy their peers and build strategy for actions. Because Black students may not participate in SGAs, they may not have access to the same resources and be privy to accessing campus administrators or decision makers that care deeply about their issues. Or some students may want to work outside of the structure and enact more radical strategies to eradicating injustices (Kelley, 2018). Therefore, Black students need to gain more consciousness from Black staff and faculty networks in Black culture centers or Black Studies departments to help push their agendas forward and maximize that momentum to overthrow unfair and unjust policies (Patton, 2006; LePeau, 2018). Likewise, those Black networks provide mentors that help critique and support Black students' plans for navigating the sociopolitical and sociocultural environment they experience and reach their intended audience (Biondi, 2012). More specifically, Black students benefitted greatly from consulting Black staff and faculty so that issues presented in a BSU general body meeting or a Black Greek lettered organization become amplified to the larger campus and societal communities as crucial to overhaul as human issues (Dawson, 2003). Thus, discovering Black student oppositional consciousness development underscored how Black students entered the university with varying experiences and how BSUs or Black campus groups might complement students' experiences with knowledge on how to counteract the overwhelming injustices they face in society and in the campus environment.

The final section of the review illustrates how scholars have researched ways to teach people about domination and power, detailed examples of movement organizations, and empowering people to be imaginative in countering oppression—which were ways Black students developed oppositional consciousness, or not (Apple, 2014; Museus & Sifuentez, 2020; Rabaka, 2002; Tarlau, 2014; Wheeler-Bell, 2014). I begin by discussing critical pedagogy and how scholars call on teaching students about forces and systems that Black students face, need to/have learned about, and may need/want to dismantle. Part of this work requires critiquing official knowledge and what the university or society deems appropriate for people to learn and study that dominates discourse, policies, and practice. I was particularly interested if Black students possess oppositional consciousness that sought to contest official knowledge related to predominantly white university curriculum and official university policies and increased awareness on issues most pertinent to their community. Moreover, I hoped to discover if BSUs were teaching Black students alternative albeit emancipatory principles that students used to guide their collegiate and life's work aimed at providing better opportunities for their community to thrive.

Overall, the review of the literature builds up the framing of my investigation into how Black students developed oppositional consciousness, if BSUs cultivated students' consciousness to transform the campus environment, and if their efforts support social movements that desire to overhaul power and domination in society. I had inklings that Black students moved beyond anger and frustration at societal issues based on previous literature. This review shows how

Black people did so historically to contest power and domination, and my study investigated if Black students mature their oppositional consciousness into phases that lead to change and or activism.

Restated Theoretical Frame.

Oppositional consciousness describes dominated groups' feelings and attitudes toward sociopolitical issues harming them and their communities. According to Mansbridge and Morris (2001), oppositional consciousness empowers members of marginalized groups to gain awareness alter behaviors that can lead to disrupting the status quo. People form oppositional consciousness sometimes historically based when direct violence has been caused against their community such as sexual or gender-based violence against women. Other times, groups developed oppositional consciousness through learning of direct violence against a group and building upon that group's angst as an ally; or they may develop passion for topics like global warming that focus on all humans' domination and foster ways to fight against it (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Nonetheless, at a basic level, oppositional consciousness has four phases:

1. People gain awareness of their marginalized identity
2. People are conscious of their subjugation
3. People move from anger to strategy as they confront their oppression and make demands
4. People develop collective identities and see them as essential to combatting injustices
5. * People raise their consciousness to actions, design, and implementation to target groups causing them harm (Groch, 2001; Mansbridge & Morris, 2001).

Number 5 highlights the maturation of these four phases. People's mature or full-fledged oppositional consciousness can grow from counterpublics, physically segregated areas, social movement organizations, and oppositional cultures including songs and music. I choose oppositional consciousness instead of critical consciousness because critical consciousness merely highlights a consciousness because of engaged critique that allows groups to challenge domination (Freire, 1974). Critical consciousness is transformational in that it equips people with power to change the world. However, critical consciousness does not account for why oppressed groups aim to develop consciousness and the actions needed to enact change (Mansbridge, 2001) Oppositional consciousness highlights the process by which people move beyond frustration or lack of awareness through developing consciousness and opposition and eventually to how they develop actions to counter their subjugation. In the next sections of this chapter, I discuss larger constructs and illustrate how oppositional consciousness can be present with them. I complement those relations with examples of how oppositional consciousness has developed in other literature and how the four phases undergirds various constructs. This frame helped me investigate if Black students developed oppositional consciousness, and if they did, did organizations like the BSU help cultivate their oppositional identity that contributed to how we understand how Black students engage in activism to counter oppression, as literature suggests.

BSUs, Historically

In this section, I introduce Black Students Unions and their relevance to Black students which aided my investigation if they help Black students at developing oppositional consciousness. Black Student Unions serve a unique and special purpose at PWIs because of their historical roots and actions of the past. Historically, Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) often do not have BSUs because their critical mass of Black students does not demand racial affinity organizations to counter their social isolation (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015); however, BSUs were not historically relegated to any institutional type and, instead, students were committed to reshaping the larger political and cultural landscape for Black people because they have been dominated for centuries. Facing said domination fueled their oppositional consciousness and desire to learn more, build coalitions, and devise plans to counter whatever power group caused them harm (Morris, 1991). Thus, the Black Student Union is a student organization committed to addressing the needs of Black people on campus and in the community (Rogers, 2012). Most BSUs arose out of the American Civil Rights Movement (1954-1965) with both moderate and radical students demanding an education that "interrogated progressive African American and Third World literature and gave students the intellectual tools to fix a broken society" (Rogers, 2012, p. 3). The BSU was part of the social movement termed the Black Campus Movement, a seven-year period (1965-1972) of Black campus activists engaged in the Black Power Movement (BPM), specifically reconstructing higher education. The Black Power Movement (1965-1975) challenged traditional forms of racial liberalism and questioned how we imagine democracy and the impact of political and social change (Joseph, 2009). Much is known about the Black Power Movement and its leaders, such as Angela Davis, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and organizations like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) the Black Panther Party (BPP), but recognition of BSUs' contributions to training those leaders in college, reshaping Black people's experiences during the BCM, and determining the path to resistance for the BPM often goes unaddressed in scholarship (Rogers, 2008; Williamson, 2003). In higher education alone, "the more than 300 departments, programs, institutes, and centers for Black Studies, the dozens of Black cultural centers in addition to the multitude of Black students, coaches, faculty, and administrators at America's colleges and universities are a direct result of the struggle of these BSUs" (Rogers, 2008, p.176). As such, I am intrigued not only by the work of BSUs historically to confronting human domination, but more importantly to this study, how students were equipped with knowledge about hegemonic structures hindering their progression in society. I cared to know what entity or person prepared them to fight against administrators and government officials in charge. This collective action historically was tied to Black students being a part of larger social movements.

The BSU engaged in the BCM social movement and was unique from off-campus activists engaged in the Civil Rights Movement, other student movements during the mid-20th century, and other on-campus student organizations, although BSUs did form allies with these groups. Accordingly, the BSU and external social movement organizations cultivated Black students' oppositional consciousness in the mid-1900s. For example, BSUs had unique growth spurts across collegiate institutions in the US that formed because of students from one state hearing about BSU activities states over (Biondi, 2012). Similarly, many of the Black students participating in organizations like SNCC were teens so by the time they got to college or by the time their younger family members got to college, there was a concerted movement for liberation. Thus, Black students and people participating or surrounded by Black organizations like the BSU discovered a space by which they could gain awareness, forge collective identities, and engage in radical behavior should they choose (Morris, 1991). The expansion and tactics of moderate and radical Black students in BSUs varied tremendously, but its origins at San Francisco State set the foundation for the insurgency of the next couple of decades.

The First Black Student Union. The inaugural Black Student Union was established in 1968 at San Francisco State University (SF State/SFSU) by 19-year-old James "Jimmy" Garrett, and Jerry Vernando (Robinson, 2012). Garrett participated in sit-ins and freedom rides and had moved to L.A. in 1965 to oversee SNCC's fundraising efforts (Rogers, 2012, p.77). After witnessing the devastating Watts Riot in 1965, he enrolled in SF State, encouraging SNCC to tap into rebellion at colleges. The 1965 Watts Riots, racism in society, and connection to the Black Power Movement's idea of community organizing and self-determinism inspired the two BSU leaders—phase one of oppositional consciousness—and they helped coordinate the first organization to use the term Black Student Union (Robinson, 2012). The BSU set out to support all Black people on campus, whether they were students or not. The Negro Students Club at the University of California, Berkeley and SF State held social meetings and dances in the 1930s and complained of lack of access to barbershops. Not merely relegated to campus issues, BSUs' focus was primarily on students, but their goals were to radically shift the campus environment, create a movement that would reach other campuses, and create access and success in higher education for Black people that would enhance communal upward mobility (Kelley, 2002). At SF State students did not want to continue being "whitewashed" by the curriculum and anti-Black campus environment. They introduced the idea of Black Studies to research and explore the lives of Black people from their purview and for their gain (Rogers, 2012). Students felt that the activities they promoted and participated in, such as arts and culture, should be recognized, supplanted in the curriculum, and institutionalized. The BSU at SF State continued making their demands known through their largest scale rebellion, the longest student strike in American history, which lasted from November 6, 1968, to March 20,1969 (Ferreira, 2018; Rhoads, 1998). The strike was inspired by the assassination of Dr. King and a host of other strikes occurring across the country at universities like Howard, where Stokely Carmichael had fired up students in the BSU. The BSU at SF State had multiple demands, including departmentalizing the Black Studies department, firing financial aid officers, demanding full professorships for faculty, and admitting more Black students (Rhoads, 1998). As such, their demands and efforts to create designated spaces where Black people can be free, contest the white curriculum, and mobilize their peers into getting on board with the movement are examples of the BSU cultivating oppositional consciousness. I am interested and will investigate if this remains true, contemporarily.

The BSU and Black Panther Party connection was critical to the liberation movement too. Former Minister of Education for the BPP, graduate student, and instructor at SF State, George Murray, was suspended in 1968 for his radical tactics denouncing Vietnam and allegedly calling for students to bring weapons to campus (Ferreira, 2018). While seemingly violent, students' efforts were in response to racial and economic domination in society, so their contestation of those systems stipulated more radical tactics. Nonetheless, students in the BSU were beaten during sit-ins and occupations of buildings and garnered interest of faculty that were concerned for the students' wellbeing, with some even protected them from the police (The Socialist Worker, 2018). The BSU established allies in the movement like the Third World Liberation Front that consisted of other racial-ethnic minoritized students, Students for a Democratic Society, and even white students and faculty committed to reconstituting higher education (Rhoads, 1998; Rogers, 2012). Accordingly, Black students during this time saw the power in collective action related to their oppositional consciousness knowing that their collective power would challenge hegemonic domination. Students in the BSU and Third World Liberation Front were in opposition to racism in society and on campus and engaged in activism to confront people in power. As a result of students' efforts, Ethnic Studies was established at SF State and other BSUs were thus given the nucleus to demand and institute them at their respective institutions (The Socialist Worker, 2018). Like many other BSUs, SF State's did not completely revolutionize higher education, but their demands and actions did create a jarring hole in the institutional fabric of higher education's status quo for Black students at PWI. As such, considering oppositional consciousness and challenging domination and power through BSUs, understanding if and how BSUs continue grassroots and radical restructuring of the university and society is essential.

Moderate Members and Activities. Black students were a part of groups like historically Black fraternities and sororities of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), the Negro Student Association, and other smaller affinity groups that paved the way for them to create and participate in the BSU and had already established varied forms of success (Rogers, 2012). Also, important to note, the BSU often goes by various names and ideologies that are particular to students' purview and interests such as the Afrikan Student Association, Black Student Alliance, or Africana Student Group. However, those other organizations, like the NPHC, did not seemingly evoke radical thinking and approaches like BSUs, so many students wrestled with decisions of whether to join more moderate or radical groups. Through the BCM, students within BSUs radically restructured the fabric of institutions (Rogers, 2012; Sitkoff, 1993). For example, students armed with guns, shut down the administrative building at Cornell University until the university president was fired and met their demands (Rogers, 2012). Black student movements through the BSU arose out of the radical tradition of the Civil Rights Movements that led to Black student-led demands of white institutions to better meet the needs of their Black constituents (Rogers, 2012). However, more moderate students in the BSU both challenged the institution and other times used their collective organizing power to teach local high school students reading and math, educate Black parents in local neighborhoods, and ensure the academic success of their peers through study tables and political debates (Williamson, 2003). BSUs' contribution to the growth of Black students, and their impact on the campus and historical movements like the Black Power Movement often goes unnoticed, however by studying Black student leaders and their connection to the BSU for this study highlights the considerable contribution and value Black Students and BSU's add both to universities and the larger fight to end oppression. However, I was also intrigued by students that did not participate in the BSU and how oppositional consciousness, if present, may be cultivated for them to counter injustices.

Moreover, while meeting with university officials to increase Black student representation will not suffice in countering how poor Black communities and under resourced schools, for example, do not have adequate tools for their students to even consider completing qualified application to institutions of higher education, both moderate and radical approaches are needed. Accordingly, Black students may never reach a mature oppositional consciousness where they have sustained plans targeting university administration or the US government, but their minimal oppositional awareness should still be developed in ways that could lend itself to other the larger movement (Morris, 2001). Some BSU executive boards or Black students prioritize one approach over the other but investigating how they learn of power and domination and if their consciousness is cultivated was a worthwhile undertaking that my study explores. With students' varied involvement, their oppositional consciousness development showed if students aim for more bandage outcomes like increasing representation or more radical practices like divesting from corporations that feed off private prison labor (Kelley, 2018). I underscore the need for these organizations in the next section.

Need for BSUs. Black Student Unions invest in the physical, social, and cultural empowerment and academic success of Black students to contest the overwhelmingly white and racist campus environment with hopes to ensure Black people thrive in society (Biondi, 2012). Black students at PWIs lack representation in higher education and therefore situate themselves in smaller subcultures and spaces on campus that allow them to be their most natural selves (Fries-Britt, 1998). Often before they arrive on campus, universities and/or student organizations plan yield events or diversity summer programs that seek to expose students to their same-race peers with the purpose of enhancing their community and eventual success on campus (Velasquez, 2002). Upon arrival, BSUs provide ample opportunities to socialize through parties and meet-and-greets, participate in grassroots activism by taking over buildings, and joining study halls and networking nights for academic and career success (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Williamson, 2003). The Black Student Union plays a critical role in supporting those opportunities and for welcoming students unto campus, but research on BSUs' contemporary relevance, primarily focused on history (Rogers, 2012), remains understudied (Patton, 2006). Even more, research illustrating how or why Black students choose to involve themselves in BSUs or engage in relevant organizations like a Black woman organization are also understudied. However, existing scholarship does highlight the importance of cultural centers (Patton, 2006; Hypolite, 2020), historically Black fraternities and sororities (Kimbrough, 2003), other Black student organizations (Newman, 2011), and supportive staff and faculty that assist in Black students' academic and social success, but BSUs are not foregrounded in the studies nor are their contributions to students highlighted (Baker, 2008). Foregrounding BSUs was crucial to understanding current Black student success and contextualizing how Black students made concerted efforts to improve society through the longest existing organization to emerge from the Black Power Movement. I aimed to understand if this organization educated and/or cultivated Black students' knowledge of injustices in society and, subsequently, equip them with tools to eradicate inequalities.

Scholars have illustrated the broader importance and benefits of Black student organizations and the ways Black students successfully navigate campus environments by engaging in Black organizations (Fries-Britt, 1998; Harper, 2009). Yet, how this organization specifically founded on radical principles guide students' collective action decisions and support their success is the focus of my study. More specifically, students in BSUs utilize diverse skillsets and ideologies, sometimes consistent with larger Black political ideologies—like the SF State-BPP connection—that enhance their sense of belonging and chances of success on campus, while advocating for societal change (Morgan & Davis, 2019). There are very radical Black students, tempered radical students, Black conservatives, Black liberals, and many more Black politicized identities that inform and shape their individual experience and, in particular, the BSU's success (Dawson, 2003; Kelley, 2018). According to Dawson (2003), despite Black people's individual ideologies, uplifting the Black community remains a critical component of the collective struggle. Therefore, Black students existing in a socio-politically heterogeneous space, while still working collectively to transform systemic oppression, illustrate how crucial Black Student Unions are to exploring Black student success and how they oppose systems of oppression. I further contextualize Black students' experiences in the literature and illustrate how they have resisted oppression through counterspaces, created and maintained social movements, and challenged power and domination (Biondi, 2012). Beforehand, I provide and debunk a few critiques of BSUs' tactics historically.

The absence and exclusion of Black Student Unions from history of higher education texts and contemporary student success is indicative of antiblackness and the contestation of their worth and value in helping Black students thrive for several decades (Thelin, 2011). While many applaud the efforts of the Black Power movement, others detest the idea that Black students and people at several universities engaged in hunger strikes, occupied buildings, and demanded control of universities that did not belong to them. As a result, the police state that white people created and use in their default response to such justice-based resistance was employed on numerous occasions to prevent Black students from continuing their destruction

(Rogers, 2012). Slogans like Malcolm X's "By Any Means Necessary" combined with radical actions by Black students became threatening to the university and their respective city's officials that, in turn, facilitated radical responses (Rolland-Diamond, 2019). Tactical responses included police and military personnel being summoned and subsequently firing shots and killing protesters in the Orangeburg massacre (Biondi, 2012). City officials, such as Richard Daley, working with the FBI facilitated the demise of Fred Hampton and the BPP through the COINTEL-PRO initiative (Rolland-Diamond, 2019; Williams, 2013). Additionally, campus police at the University of California, Davis pepper spraying student protestors despite the students' peaceful sit-in in 2012 (Maira & Sze, 2012). Museus and Sifuentez (2020) articulate five responses to protests from university officials: suppression, isolation, evasion, conciliation, and co-optation (p. 21). While university administrators must protect their assets and ensure that buildings are not set aflame and that they do not lose their financial investments, student demands, and actions should be carefully evaluated and considered meaningful to address. Nonetheless, university leaders suppress and challenge student activism with forceful measures like police intervention or suspending and expelling students (Cho, 2018). Any BSU may be deemed a radical organization because it lacks formal structure like an SGA or because it may engage more radical approaches than other student groups. However, understanding the multiple tactical approaches from the BSU, responses from university and city officials, and outcomes of various events that involve the clashing of the two stress the necessary role of BSUs in Black student success and Black people's livelihood in society. In my study I also investigated how campus leaders negate and challenge Black students' efforts that might inform if/how Black students cultivate oppositional consciousness and transform the campus environment despite pushback. I illustrate more of Black students' resistance tactics, phase 3 of oppositional consciousness, in the next section.

Resistance and Movements

Black students' participation in resistance and activism has facilitated social movements that seek to address larger issues of power and domination (Rogers, 2012). For example, Rhoads (1998) discussed the influence of Black students gaining knowledge of Black power and resistance and forming united protests with grassroots leaders that led to the success of the contemporary university structure—Phase one and two of oppositional consciousness. Simultaneously, scholars have called for *all* students to duplicate Black students' efforts and engage in active learning processes that equip students with complex understanding of issues in society, thus allowing them to engage in resistance movements on campus that will impact broader society (Apple, 2014; Della Porta, 2013; Ehrlich, 2000; Kelley, 2018). Social movements are "sustained interactions in which mobilized people, acting in the name of a defined interest, make repeated demands on powerful others via means which go beyond the current prescriptions of the authorities" (Tilly, 1979, p. 21). The sustained and collective social and political movement of Black students in the 1960s (Rogers, 2012) and the feminists and peace movements in the 1970s and 1980s (Rhoads, 1998) helped students challenge what McAdams (1982) terms cognitive liberation. McAdams (1982) argues that students undergo a chained process of hopelessness and *wanting* to address issues to then participating in collective action to confront issues of oppression. Very consistent with the four phases of oppositional consciousness, cognitive liberation illustrates how students get free while oppositional consciousness focuses on development. For cognitive liberation and protest to emerge, participants must name and blame the system and be confident that their efforts will have enough power to challenge the system (Della & Diani, 2009). This can also be like what Mansbridge &

Morris (2001) refer to as full-fledged oppositional consciousness. Rogers (2012) described how cognitive liberation can occur by providing an account of how Black student leaders in the late 1960s shifted their ideologies from passive learning and consistent engagement with the Civil Rights Movement to more alignment with the Black Power movement's beliefs, because leaders like Kwame Turé (Stokely Carmichael) inspired a new wave of contestation that was not passive, but instead, direct, and radical. In my study, I investigated if Black students' need for developing oppositional consciousness to live improved lives, related to how Black people historically matured in their consciousness.

Many students welcomed radical approaches and made repeated demands across the country for Black professors, changes to curricula, spaces like culture centers and departments, and even policy changes (Biondi, 2012). According to McAdams (1986), students assessed the opportunity structure by which they determined their goals and tactics of challenging the dominant power and believed in it enough to execute the plan while achieving their demands. Again, this connects strongly with oppositional consciousness, except Mansbridge & Morris (2001) place strong emphasis on what motivated students beyond their irritation and anger, and how they received help in developing tactics to confront people in power. Similarly, according to Exum (1985), Black Student Unions enacted six principles to activism that he identifies:

> Addressed the antiquated socioemotional and cultural supports the university provided; (2) provided a brave space for students to develop their identity; (3) enhanced students' Black ideological development and collective action-orientation; (4) developed students' self-worth and confidence in their value to the university; (5) empowered understanding of and resistance to issues pertinent to the Black community; (6) and coached and

> prepared grassroots leaders to grow as political and engaged leaders in multiple facets. (Fries-Britt, 1998)

BSUs' commitment to Black students, staff, faculty, and the Black community was evident in all their collective actions, as they aimed make significant strides toward Black liberation, as a social movement. Moreover, they recognized their struggles as part of a collective and not merely their campus or local city/town, which helped to amplify their issues thereby continuing the social movement (Rogers, 2012). The six principles may be strongly tied to oppositional consciousness raising. If BSUs are developing Black ideological development or empowering understanding of resistance, then those tools are supporting Black students' consciousness. I investigated if it is consistent and, if so, how it happened and if it helped students thrive on campus and successfully obtain career success? More specifically, oppositional consciousness underscores how Black students can build their academic toolkit, join BSUs or organizations to mobilize against racial and economic domination, and challenge university and city officials to alter policies and practice that serve their communities. In the next section, I will illustrate how social movement theory can support our understanding of oppositional consciousness raising in phases three and four that can lead to mature oppositional consciousness.

Social Movement Theory

Social movements have maintained a huge presence in the advancement of organizations, particularly higher education. Thus, their analysis in relation to how Black students challenge oppression is crucial to understanding how change can occur. A social movement develops when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads, insufficiently flexible institutions are unable to respond, and people collectively mobilize to challenge the dominant regime (Della & Diani, 2009, p.12). Social movement theory is concerned with how the process of a particular action occurs and changes structural conditions (Della & Diani, 2009). As such, Social Movement Theory was used to understand how Black students in higher education raise their intellectual capacity and participate in student groups to resist oppressive regimes, enacting social movement tendencies that lead to campus and societal transformation (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Social movement theory has various frames and considerations within its 70-year history. It focuses on resource mobilization theory, framing theory, and the new social movement theory. Resource mobilization focuses on how money, people, and skills are applied during the collective action of organizing a movement. Resources tend to be time and money but also includes focus on the conditions necessary for a person to engage collective action when they really have multiple reasons not to engage (Della Porta & Diani, 2015; Jasper & Goodwin, 2014). Resources related to oppositional consciousness can consider how Black students respond to frustration from anti-queer related issues on campus and a Black LGBTQ+ subset of the BSU provides space and teaching of how students can strategize against their oppressors.

Framing theory discusses how people perceive the norms and actions by which they should respond through diagnostic framing that explains the issue clearly, prognostic framing which offers the solution and shares the implementation process, and motivational framing that details action based on the diagnosis and prognosis (Jasper & Goodwin, 2014; Benford & Snow, 2000). An example of diagnostic framing could be that the university is anti-Black because it is overwhelmingly white and suppresses student activism. A prognostic frame might suggest that the university create access projects to increase Black student recruitment and representation. Motivational framing might consider voting for affirmative action in higher education and creating social media campaigns encouraging Black students to apply and succeed in college. Nonetheless, the various frames illustrate how Black students in BSUs, and other organizations galvanize and invigorate their peers to stress the need for collective action directly connected to phase three of oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Morris (1991) emphasizes how oppositional consciousness arose out of Social Movement Theory's lack of addressing exactly how Black students socialized experiences were sustained that could lead to their participation in movements. Oppositional consciousness stresses how learning occurs as a precursor for action.

Additionally, framing theory discusses the framing alignment process that highlights bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000). These points refer to how people are brought together, how the movement expands and gains broader influence, expanding efforts with other movements, and rethinking original goals to address other or emerging issues. These conditions often focus on the movement as being composed of siloed organizations with homogenous thoughts and ideals. As noted previously, the CRM and BCM of the 1960s tremendously helped transform higher education (Biondi, 2012). It challenged university leaders and state officials to reconsider how they continued to perpetuate anti-Blackness in their curricula and overall campus environment. Students demanded their institution consider its role as a public institution and generate resources for the Black community, especially community members not attending college (Kelley, 2002). Later, anti-progressive movements and the rise of neoliberalism countered the efforts of civil rights progression in American society (Rogers, 2012). Understanding these frames alongside oppositional consciousness can be critical in understanding how Black students contest power and domination in society after being trained by Black leaders or departments, if at all. Oppositional consciousness expands social movement theory from a mere understanding of how and what organizations are doing to counter sociopolitical issues in society to investigating how Black people learn and what outcomes are manifested that can facilitate systemic transformation and domination for marginalized communities.

According to Rojas (2007) movements are complex, and each movement will have intended and unintended outcomes that may adopt a policy that barely moves the needle for change or may radically restructure the design and operation of a system. Tactics of movements may be more radical and violent or veer toward being passive and civil. Important to this dissertation, is how the Black Student Union might enhance the movement for Black Liberation through its programming and activist initiatives that come about after Black students develop oppositional consciousness, if at all. Organizations are not social movements themselves; social movements are processes that can be facilitated through organizations protesting and disgusted by normalized practices or policies (Jasper & Goodwin, 2014). Oppositional consciousness focuses on people's disgust at inequalities in healthcare and regarding race and sex (Hounmenou, 2013). Historically, social movements were characterized as collective behavior because they were described as channeled within politics and anything outside of that realm was deemed disorganized. Scholars challenged this idea and introduced collective action which made social movements more intentional and purposeful activities (Jasper & Goodwin, 2014). These formal organizations forming collective action were denoted as Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) that varied in structure and operation but whose main goal was to disrupt the power balance. Some of the organizations required monetary contributions, some were more discrete and secretive, others just needed participants to show up and be excited. As BSUs and other organizations emerged, BSUs denounced the bureaucratic operation of SMOs knowing that the power of their movement lay within college students, community members, and allies committed to reshaping the world's race problem (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012). Although social movements are not organizations, organizations like the BSU may continue engaging in social movement tendencies that are aimed at redressing power and domination in society, including in anticipation of and despite pushback. I investigated if Black students contemporarily gained oppositional consciousness from the BSU or other Black entities that then prepare them to participate in more defined action and disruption.

Suppressing Movements. Unfortunately, institutional responses to social movements have often tried to repress and silence students and participants through threats and harsh disciplinary measures, like expulsion, for students (Cho, 2018); or institutional leaders might meet some demands of activists without fully addressing all demands of the systemic structure(s) hindering the full revolution that could occur (Kelley, 2018). When BSUs in the BCM urged campus leaders to respond to their demands, the members took over bowling allies in South Carolina (South Carolina State and Claflin University) before students were then shot at for protesting on campus during the Orangeburg Massacre (Biondi, 2012). The massacre killed three students and wounded 40 others after university officials called the National Guard, police, and military personnel to prevent a riot from occurring. Students then held a bonfire and protested segregation by taunting and tossing rocks in the air. The Governor ordered personnel to move in. The police apparently heard gunshots and fired multiple shots into the smoke-filled air with .38 caliber bullets used to haunt deer (Toth, 2012). Also, students were expelled for holding trustee's hostage at Tuskegee University, an HBCU in Alabama, in efforts to counter compulsory ROTC enrollment and in advocating for establishment of Black Studies (Ahmad, 1978; Rogers, 2012). Students sometimes received attention from government officials who sought to take a stand by calling in the National Guard; there was even the case of FBI agents interfering with the BSU at UCLA (Ahmad, 1978). The latter situation led to the killing of BPP leader Alprentice "Bunchy"

Carter and fellow BPP leader, John Huggins, being slain in Campbell Hall. The FBI told Ron Karenga's US organization where the BPP meeting was held and caused disputes between the organizations through spies and tampering phone lines leading to the killing of the two BPP members (Ahmad, 1978). While times were challenging, administrators did some concessions. To pacify the students and diminish the revolution of higher education from the BCM, they offered departmental programs, student services, hiring more Black faculty, increased salaries, Black spaces on campus, but also withdrew full funding or support for the student-requested initiatives.

The efforts of Black activists are a perfect example of how a movement can shift the culture and structure of a system with participation from leaders inside and outside of higher education (Tarlau, 2014). Although many issues still exist that activists fought against, progressive change happens at unique times and Rojas (2007) reminds us of the multilayered process of enacting change through social movements. Social movements and oppositional consciousness are often intertwined (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Social movement theory discusses how movements are fragmented, halted, and thrive at various time periods and thus necessitates its own focus (Jasper & Goodwin, 2014). In fact, Jasper and Goodwin (2014) maintain that movements occur from political and cultural factors that repress and suppress groups at a boiling point which garners a combative person or group to form social networking ties to counter their positioning in society. From the Civil Rights Movement to the Women's Movement, people were enraged when countering oppression and demanding justice (Ahmad, 1978). Leaders then assumed the role of forging a collective organization or tasks with targeted and direct goals to challenge and overhaul policies, people in power, and laws that displaced marginalized groups (Della Porta, 2013; Jasper & Goodwin, 2014). These concepts are quite consistent with the process of oppositional consciousness wherein they both illustrate how sociopolitical and other oppressive factors deny Black people’s human rights. After direct or indirect impact on their lives, Black people alter their frustration into tactical strategy often from Black organizations’ training and leadership. Collective actions may then be formed where Black people or students identify target groups and policies to disrupt or overhaul. In my study, I learned how Black students and BSUs have this same outlook and how that occurs. Rogers (2012) contends that Black students’ reconstitution of higher education succeeded in helping historically white colleges assume social responsibility and intertwine civic engagement within scholarly pursuits (p.158). BSUs enactment of social movement tendencies challenged the university to rethink its policies and promote civic engagement, while also supporting Black student success. Black students in BSUs historically understood their actions were connected to their community’s struggle so the issues they raised connected the campus and community to social movements. I explored if that falls into BSUs teaching or preparation that cultivates oppositional consciousness, if at all. The next section details how spaces on campus further complement BSUs and Black students’ success, support the movement, and hope to reverse systemic oppression and domination.

The Power of Counterspaces

Black students in Black organizations, like the BSU, use counterspaces to contest the larger racialized campus environment, gain academic success, and collectively organize movements to resist institutional and structural racism (Keel, 2020). Counterspaces are defined as “revolutionary settings embedded within larger settings and contexts. That is, they are pockets of resistance that may, to one extent or another, disrupt the dominant narrative of the larger setting and context” (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 263). As such, counterspaces offer students opportunities to engage in learning about their sociopolitical contexts, navigate through racialized experiences, organize around radical topics, and develop their ability and preparation to challenge systemic oppression (Keel, 2020, p. 19). Counterspaces during the BCM varied in nature whether it was a local Black business or family that housed students allowing them to organize, grassroots organizations providing opportunities for students to connect, or, very often, churches opening their doors to BPP members and students to collectively strategize their plan for mobilizing. These counterspaces proved to be crucial to the movement and to forging oppositional consciousness identities. Counterspaces help to resist racism and racial microaggressions that make minoritized students feel less than, and impact their psychosocial development in college (Smith et al., 2007). Lastly, Black students benefit from counterspaces providing a critical mass of Black students that aids their sense of belonging and connection to finding peer and staff support on campus, which leads to successful retention (Harper, 2009). BSUs serve as one of many counterspaces for Black students to grow more opposition to various forms of domination. Many Black scholars despise counterspaces merely being a space to support student success or neoliberal agendas of the university (Kelley, 2018). Instead, counterspaces historically were and contemporarily should be used to collectively organize, deliberate, and tactically pursue initiatives that aim at countering racial and economic domination in society (Kelley, 2018; Rabaka, 2002). As such, counterspaces can serve as training grounds for oppositional consciousness to occur, where Black students occupy departments, student organizations, civic organizations, and learn of how to adequately create plans for transformation. In this study, I explored if this occurs through BSUs or BCCs.

BSUs: A Counterspace. BSUs often receive pushback from dissenters that question why Black students need predominantly Black spaces, and dissenters make claims of reverse racism and self-segregation (Tatum, 2017). However, scholars have highlighted the benefits of counterspaces to the socio-emotional, identity, and cultural development of Black and other minoritized students on campus (Givens, 2016, Harper, 2009, Tatum, 2017). In fact, Givens (2016) contends that Black students participate in BSUs and other student organizations as both a way to affirm their identity and for social justice related causes, yet they are extremely overburdened (read: taxed) from performing what should be the university's work. Black students engage in recruitment, retention, civic engagement, and other core values universities espouse, but students contend are not enough (Cho, 2018; Morgan & Davis, 2019). BSUs and Black student organizations give students opportunities to volunteer for recruitment or service events for Black people on and off-campus, engage in the campus decision making, and support their peers' development through mentorship because they see the power in collective support and success (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Rogers, 2012; White, 2016). This work is often *in spite of* rather than *in conjunction* with the university leaders. While administrators might allow students to form the physical groups and designate financial resources for programming, historically students had to demand and fight for the structure and were even forced to justify their presence and contributions to society or risk resources being stripped (Biondi, 2012; Painter, 2014). Through this engagement, BSUs address how Exum (1985) describes the outdated ways institutions seek to provide support for Black students and the various growth and development students experience because of their participation. According to Kelley (2018), Black students must not rely solely on university leaders to address racism and sexism, especially through campus diversity officers, but instead should develop radical practices from their ancestral history and movements to transform society in every facet. Kelley implicitly argues for oppositional consciousness development urging Black students to learn their history and complement said knowledge with channeled anger that can lead to liberation for Black people

(Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Similarly, BSUs' historic demands for support like culture centers was the ideal counterspace because it institutionalized a space where Black people could fight within the system to challenge oppression, but radical approaches were still implanted and rooted in the establishment of centers despite repression from institutional and governmental officials (Kelley, 2018). Understanding BSUs historically is directly aligned with my investigation into oppositional consciousness raising, in particular, teaching, encouraging, and urging Black students to both raise their anger to demands and connect those demands to organizations and social movements that can serve their needs and help them redress domination on all scales. I describe how Black students in BSUs use culture centers as a counterspace below that was a crucial space helping to raise their awareness.

Black Culture Centers: A Collective Counterspace. Black Culture Centers offer Black students opportunities to engage in activism by gaining knowledge of discrimination and inequities, providing a training ground for student activism, and facilitating cultural development that could lead to graduation and career success (Hypolite, 2020, Patton, 2006, Patton, 2010). BSUs are different from Black Culture Centers because BCCs are structural campus units, the majority located at PWIs, tailored to Black students they provide safe and welcoming environments to support their growth and development, while welcoming all students (Patton, 2006, p. 1). BSUs do not always have a formal meeting or organizing space so using the BCC where they will not be ridiculed for discussing race issues or having a place of solitude to plan meetings and events can be critical to addressing their peers' needs. In fact, Black students use BCCs to address all Exum's (1985) BSU-enacted principles, despite the BCC serving a dual role in working *with* the BSU and *for* the university. Because BCCs were birthed out of student activism, they have a strong historical legacy and are committed to providing support and development for Black students that lead to campus and societal transformation (Patton, 2006; Rogers, 2012). In fact, Hypolite (2020) argues that Black staff commit themselves to recruiting and retaining Black students on campus and supporting their success after college, despite being overburdened by commitments such as administrating and addressing university wide diversity work. With serving a dual-role of working in an activist-based center and structurally designated to meet university demands, BCC staff members mentor Black students in and advocate for supports from the university, such as more funding that enhances Black students' ability to execute events connected to supporting Black people, contesting falsified academic misconduct claims, and liaising between students and university officials (Hypolite, 2020). Furthermore, Patton & Hannon (2008) argue that despite being underfunded and underpaid, BCC staff are an integral component of Black student success. For example, BCCs plan Black graduations, advise and reserve space for student organizations, serve as mentors and parental figures, and advocate for student academic concerns, all while working to address racism and anti-blackness on campus and in society (Hypolite, 2020; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Robinson, 2012). Cultural centers empower Black students to know their history, know themselves, and use that knowledge to impact society for generations behind them, which can be considered a form of oppositional consciousness. In particular, BCCs have a pulse on Black students, staff, faculty, and the community allowing them to tap into multiple resources to build collective action crucial to oppositional consciousness and contestation (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001).

Overall, Black students and staff both work to exude principles connected to Black people's success in society, despite challenges and pushback from dissenters. However, while students may depend on BCCs, most Black students and BSUs are not formally tied to the university and, therefore, do not have to adhere to the bureaucratic nature of the institution that may prevent staff members from participating in campus demonstrations because of their relation to the institution. Consequently, Black students use the BCC as a space to resist racial domination and form collective movements with—and sometimes in spite of—Black students, staff, and faculty (Patton, 2010). Other times, Black faculty and staff might clandestinely offer support that counters their bureaucratic connection with the university and, instead, exposes students to information or resources that will advance their movement (Kelley, 2002). Students need proactive support from faculty and staff that not only advance their formal academic learning, but that also supports their cocurricular development and oppositional development aimed at challenging racism. The final section demonstrates how Black students use oppositional consciousness and collective action to enact social movements that facilitate their graduation and career success—of which can lead to full-fledged oppositional consciousness.

BSUs and the Counterpublic

Black students can gain oppositional consciousness through BSUs and establish movements to challenge domination by tracing back to the counterpublic. The counterpublic was a challenge to the white idea of an exclusionary "boys' club" where men could dialogue about public and private matters and influence policy by amplifying those concerns to civil society (Fraser, 1990; Dawson, 2003). However, Fraser (1990) addressed the racelessness embedded in Habermas' assertion of the public sphere and coined subaltern counterpublics that showcases how people of marginalized groups join to challenge domination. According to Dawson (2003), the counterpublic offered a space for Black activists, community members, intellectuals, and workers to convene and address concerns in society, receive extensive feedback on ideas, and enact intentional movements to counter their subjugation. The fundamental piece of the counterpublic was the multiplicity of ideas from Black conservatives, democrats, Marxists, and the diversity in socioeconomic status and education of all concerned with the Black agenda

(Dawson, 2003). This meant that despite one's political affiliation or ideology, knowledge and ideas were contested and cultivated in a way that created a movement to challenge dissenting views and promote Black liberation (Rabaka, 2002). Black Student Unions engage in these efforts by the heterogenous makeup of the BSU. Black students do not preclude homogenous thoughts and ideas and because of their differing ways to go about Black liberation, as they have thrived from both radical and moderate gains and rebellion that has forged them different resources over their history (Biondi, 2012). In fact, according to Kelley (1994), daily resistance efforts from Black students on campuses such as shutting down the administrative building, protesting tuition hikes, and organizing for political participation, are weapons of resistance to the racialized campus environment. Dawson (2003) questioned whether the counterpublic still currently existed and if ideas were challenged to the degree that they were in the mid-1900s. Unfortunately, studies have not illustrated how Black students, who were the vanguard for movements in the 20th century, continue using counterpublics as a tactic for their resistance in the 21st century. However, Harris-Lacewell (2010) stresses how the Black public realm is fundamental to Black people because members of Black organizations are motivated by a pre-existing, larger mission and they are amid other Black people with a wealth of experiences, which may not be the case for non-Black organizations. For example, the SF State strike was largely successful due to the university being a commuter school and largely accepting of community college students and students that were denied admission to UC Berkeley, meaning their age and participation in the BPP added to their fearlessness in confronting injustice (Robinson, 2012). Collective mobility and togetherness are at the core of the Black agenda and community members find this through barbershops, churches, student organizations, sporting events, social media, school, and more (Harris-Lacewell, 2010). Research is limited on counterpublics for Black students in higher education. The BSU can surely be seen as a counterpublic that is not merely rooted in sharing similar cultural values but is instead a space for students to think of what society looks like and make efforts to improve it (Suissa, 2016, p. 14). Accordingly, oppositional consciousness necessitates Black students become critically aware through various learning processes, engage collective action, perhaps leading to more concerted efforts at countering domination. Counterpublics can produce safe, intellectually challenging arenas for this to occur and I hope to explore how/if that occurs for college students.

According to Tarlau (2014), literature on critical pedagogy, like counterpublics, is not in conversation with literature on social movement and action. By merging the two, I was able to better understand how people come to know and learn about power and domination and, subsequently, what they do to create movements to counter their positioning in society. Furthermore, Tarlau (2019) illustrates how a social movement in Brazil allowed small subgroups to use counterspaces to deliberate on communities' most pressing issues, communicate those issues to civil society, and determine how they would change policy and practice from citizens and politicians alike. This can be considered full-fledged oppositional consciousness and while not germane to this study, scholars can later investigate how Black people can amplify their concerns beyond marginal gain and consider efforts that might counter domination in society. Thus, using counterspaces can equip Black people with a space to consistently deliberate on issues and communicate those concerns to organizations and people with power to make change. In this dissertation, I sought to understand the dynamic of BSUs actions on campus and how they teach Black students about their marginalized identities. In the next sections, I investigate what Black students could be taught through critical pedagogy namely focusing on contesting the majority white curriculum and employing civic education to combat oppression.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy deepens social theory through critiques of power and domination as racial and gendered processes and equips educators with tools to help students reflect and resist for justice and liberation (Tarlau, 2014, p.372). Traditionally, white colleges and universities have received pushback from activists and community leaders for centuries about the deeply rooted white history and focus on their curricula (Kelley, 1994). Curriculum in higher education often has a Eurocentric lens that suggests to non-white identified students that their culture or identity is irrelevant through the institution's absence or paucity of scholarship from minoritized faculty, which is compounded by denigrating minority issues to one class section (Painter, 2010). Students should not have to depend on cultural departments to feel that they matter to the institution or to their field. Student demographics are everchanging so universities must engage faculty and students with conversations on race, sexuality, and capitalism, and ways to resist them, since they shape students' lived experiences. One way for this to occur is through educating students by creating resistance structures or oppositional consciousness (Houmenou, 2013). This concept comes from critical pedagogues that envision education as a process by which students gain necessary tools to understand and challenge their social positioning and progression in society (Apple, 2014; Gutmann, 1987; Wheeler-Bell, 2014). The process, therefore, is that BSUs go "through a process of cognitive liberation, develop an oppositional consciousness, and learn that they have the ability to take action" (Tarlau, 2014, p. 380). Historically, BSUs used counterpublics to raise issues that led to participants voicing their shared angst at their universities' oppressive systems and practices, and subsequently engaging in movements like the Black Power and other campus movements that could demand action from people in positions of power (Biondi, 2012). I illustrate how domination and power impact Black students' lives and how teaching students through critical pedagogy can help them gain tools to effectively combat their oppression.

Domination and Power

Racial domination penetrates every part of our lives and governs individual and collective actions and decisions. According to Ermibayer & Desmond (2013), racial domination is manifested through institutional and interpersonal racism where the former operates "in corporations, universities, legal systems, political bodies, cultural life, and other social collectives" (p. 30). The latter focuses on daily engagement, confrontations, and ordinary exchanges with other groups. Power is key to institutional racism as the symbolic, political, and economic privileges and economic privilege that white people positioning them as the authority that governs aspects of society such as: careers, political parties, and laws, as well as define normalcy (Ermibayer & Desmond, 2013). This power communicates to other groups a sense of them being abnormal. Black students in the BCM were learning to disrupt and transform the nation, and they instilled a legacy of activism and political engagement for the larger American community (Rogers, 2012), but they remained dominated by systemic forces. Their actions caused a major overhaul of antiquated practices by institutions of higher education and government officials because Black students mobilized a radical front that was strategic in addressing institutional racism. As Kelley (1994) contends, their efforts did not merely demand that a Black Studies department would address 300 years of white domination, instead they used the institutional resources to advance their agenda and efforts in the movement. Furthermore, Della Porta (2013) suggests that their actions were critical to the movement because it placed the onus on the state to provide resources as a public institution and administrators to counter the anti-Blackness they benefitted from for centuries. BPP members and BSUs were aware that their efforts would need to challenge the entire system that oppressed their community, so their actions aligned. Understanding this alignment is critical to comprehending if Black students' contemporary actions mirror those ideals. In particular, do Black students learn about racism in society and how might it occur? This question's relation to oppositional consciousness is crucial because in my investigation I unpack how Black students experience and learn about racial domination, who teaches them, what are they learning, and how does that contribute to their oppositional identities, if at all. I identify the teachers as upperclass students, staff, or faculty whom are cultivating their own oppositional consciousness to grow campus movements. This is not to suggest that continuing students have more oppositional consciousness or develop it prior to first years, I am merely noting how Black student and professional relations can support oppositional consciousness largely. In the next section, I illustrate how Black students and faculty worked to counter racial domination, while their white colleagues benefitted from dominating official knowledge (Apple, 2014).

Official Knowledge (Co)Curricularly. Power and domination forces have substantiated whiteness into the curriculum, stripping public discourse and contestation from the equation, and determining how official knowledge is created and sustained in higher education (Apple, 2014). According to Apple (2014), progressive policies and decisions are constantly attacked by conservative groups because the official knowledge is determined by powerful white elites and corporations that govern learning and teaching. In short, Black activists have fought for changes to the curriculum for its anti-Black rhetoric and devaluing of Black arts, music, and culture and have had major achievements in shifting the higher education landscape to departmentalize and respect Black people's contributions (Rogers, 2012; Painter, 2010). However, K-12 education has not seen the same improvements (Howard, 2014). In fact, ethnic studies, books written on Black communities, and sometimes even teachers continue to face ridicule or outright denial of reshaping the whiteness embedded in the learning environment (Howard, 2014). Thus, a hierarchy of knowledge exists in the curriculum and people within the institution know what knowledge is included (i.e. business, engineering, STEM) and what knowledge is excluded (i.e. liberal arts, ethnic studies, racial justice), which troubles how true emancipation and liberation can occur if students are taught homogenously with the main focus and prioritization of whiteness (Apple, 2014). This knowledge domination forces departments, students, and others in the institution to act within the structure in ways that then lead to increased competition for resources, prestige, and basic needs to operate effectively–all without concerns of racial justice (White, 2016). This point is significant because institutions do not adequately discuss systemic and structural forces in a detailed way that might equip students with tools to challenge domination, and BSUs, Black leaders, and some critical pedagogues have demanded the curriculum do so and resolve societal issues (Kelley, 2018). Instead, administrators and faculty depend on cultural centers and ethnic studies to address, handle, and resolve diversity work (Hypolite, 2020), resulting in institutions continually missing a grand opportunity to equip students with oppositional consciousness identities that can transform society. For example, BSUs and the Third World Liberation Front helped redefine the collegiate curriculum and the university's relationship with society (Museus & Sifuentez, 2020). This redefinition allowed all institutional participants to curricularly and co-curricularly discuss how society might improve, especially for marginalized populations (Robinson, 2012). According to Rabaka (2002), contesting what knowledge is important and demanding that institutions include Black scholars and thought in the fabric of their curricula is important. While students and the university might benefit from African American Studies departments, embedding Black scholars and teaching in all disciplines is critical to Black Liberation. Furthermore, and germane to my study is investigating what Black studies departments, BCCs, BSUs, or other groups are teaching students to increase their oppositional consciousness and how it influences Black students' experiences navigating higher education or contesting human domination. The next section showcases how the campus environment is negatively impacted without oppositional teaching culture, hence why scholars have called for strategies like civic education, critical pedagogy, and democratic citizenship to contest the systemic and racial oppression through concerted movements.

Campus Environments and Civic Education

Negative campus environments hinder the success, sense of belonging, and overall attitudes of people in higher education spaces (Museus, 2014). Many campuses' culture and environment issues have been addressed in the previous sections such as concerns with tenure promotion, lack of culturally relevant pedagogy, and utter denial or desire to have Black and other minoritized groups present on campus, while examining how BSUs have contested those structures. According to Hurtado and colleagues (1998), assessing campus racial climate should consider political initiatives and governmental policies on the one and the sociopolitical histories and actions that impact the institutional climate on the other. To this dissertation, I assess aspects of the campus climate knowing that it strongly influences the campus culture. Racial incidents particularly during the 45th president of the US' time in the office has dramatically influenced campus climate, demanding more oppositional cultures and consciousness to race, sex, international relations, and more (Stokes, 2021). As such, should students possess more oppositional consciousness and form collective action, then it could possibly lead to transforming campus and societal environments (Stokes, 2021; Tarlau, 2014). Moreover, civic education is a direct counter to the campus environment and Black people overwhelmingly participate in it because institutions lack a critical mass of Black students, and the universities' history of oppression leaves them no choice but to participate (Desmond, 2010; Gutman, 1987). Civic education connects to the curriculum in that it must embolden students to deeply learn about power and domination and imagine transformative change for humanity (Strayhorn, 2005). For example, students can learn of capitalism, but also learn of its various components and be encouraged to think about how their individual oppositions and collective actions might facilitate change to economic domination (Rogers & Wright, 2010; Wheeler-Bell, 2018). Civic education is important to the campus environment because it underscores how students, staff, and faculty might engage in critical dialogue in hopes of improving society. Further, I argue that college as a microcosm of the world should instill democratic values and practices in students allowing for them to fully participate in American economic and social processes. BSUs were instrumental in underscoring the importance of civic engagement and education historically, specifically to redress years of oppression in society. Thus, I investigated if Black students are civically engaged and if organizations, like BSUs, contribute to their oppositional awareness perhaps invigorating them to get involved in similar organizations or helping them find their sphere of influence. Specifically, if a student is frustrated by their ill relative not receiving proper healthcare, might an organization on campus help them understand that issue at a systems level and create opportunities for further engagement and potential disruption. I will further illustrate the history, benefits, and need for democratic education in higher education.

Civic and Democratic Education Historically. American schools and higher education institutions have lost sight of the importance of civic and democratic education for a more robust citizenry, despite the espoused values lauded in their mission statements (Cho, 2018). Participation in a democratic system of governance relies on basic skills and needs such as toleration, numeracy, literacy, deliberation, and responsible citizenship (Gutman & Ben-Porath, 2014; Strayhorn, 2005; Wheeler-Bell, 2014; White, 2016). Higher education has not developed a political citizenship that seeks to understand people's sociopolitical positioning and find ways to transform humanity. Educational philosopher, Morgan White (2016), brilliantly articulates the disconnect:

> The participative, political citizen is subsumed within the economic, instrumentally rationalist individual. Here the capacity for *action* is diminished and replaced by steering mechanisms whereby individuals respond instrumentally and strategically to their environment. (p. 63).

Students become so attuned to learning for jobs and careers that they miss out on fully comprehending and understanding how society operates. They are not taught to challenge systems, but instead students passively fall into political ideologies without informed coherence of the multi-layered issues. For example, through the rise of neoliberalism combined with capitalism, Civil Rights policies were portrayed as emancipating Black people from poverty by merely providing them resources equivalent to white people, also known as the "the ideology of integration" (Wheeler-Bell, 2018, p.11). This ideology is woven into capitalism with the notion that the market and capitalism will and should be trusted to fix all societal ills. While Civil Rights Movement gains such as affirmative action, urban renewal, and affordable housing were successful in eliminating some conditions of poverty for the Black community, critical masses of impoverished Black people became more prevalent (Wheeler-Bell, 2018)—meaning more issues to upward mobility for the Black community. Action was again diminished by neoliberal forces because poor neighborhoods become highly policed, typically have the worst schooling, challenge upward mobility, and often lack property ownership by residents. Democratic participation has always been a privilege, and, in this case for Black people, property ownership, wealth, and intellectualism perpetuated exclusivity from American core values, especially since only a small subset of Black people possessed those characteristics (White, 2016). Higher education teaching and learning is critiqued for this dynamic because it has the power to influence, shift, and structure K12 schooling and social mobility, but fails to make fully concerted efforts to educate the Black community en masse and educate all students on topics concerning people with marginalized identities. Black students were educated in this manner through counterpublics that stressed education as a tool of countering domination and participating in movements that equipped them with cognitive liberation needed to transform their positioning in society. Thus, my study is a worthy undertaking to investigate if Black students are educated and concerned about society's operation and if they are equipped with the intellectual tools that inform their oppositional identities. I will expand on ways that educating for democratic participation can be beneficial to higher education in general.

Contemporary Civic and Democratic Education

College should be a place for disputable dialogue, respectful critique, education for social progress, and a microcosm of collective action for transformation. Unfortunately, students are underprepared for democratic participation in K12 schooling, and subsequently in higher education, where colleges and universities should develop students' wherewithal to participate in society beyond their careers (Strayhorn, 2005). Institutions need to focus on skills outside the realm of careers that are deemed appropriate for successful and socially contributive life after college. In fact, if civic education is deemed a high impact practice by institutional leaders, then conceptualizing and analyzing how students develop oppositional consciousness and the impact they seek to have is critical to institutions. If such conversations are only acknowledged in diversity classes or completely unaddressed, colleges are missing a critical opportunity to equip students for (re)imagining and changing the world (Hypolite, 2020; Tarlau, 2014). A democratic education might not address and fix all societal problems, as was seen in the BCM, but it expects every student to enjoy and function with their basic rights and needs being met (Gutman & Ben-Porath, 2014; Rogers, 2012). Students of all backgrounds and political beliefs should have the opportunity to engage in official and unofficial governance decisions impacting their success in college and beyond, and discussion or these decisions should be facilitated by faculty and institutional leaders. Such actions challenge the negative campus environment that students and faculty of color experience because their issue would no longer be centered on or rely on the individual but becomes the collective concern that facilitates collective action (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001; Tarlau, 2014). A civic and democratic education might provide a tangible option and effort to empower higher education leaders and participants to demand more resources and enact change to society, especially for vulnerable populations. My study investigated if students develop oppositional consciousness, participate in collective action, and how it led to targeting higher education leaders that should offer tools to counter domination.

Democracy and the Public Sphere

True democratic spaces must allow opportunities for issues to be deliberated and contested in the public sphere and Black students' opposition to forms of human domination often are not included in higher education. Democracy can be understood as a process by which people have equitable and equal rights and say over decision making and policies in an institution (Wheeler-Bell, 2018a). Using their collective social power, people in a democracy can contest issues and decisions pertinent to their lives in the public sphere. For a true democracy to occur, people must be aware of their social power and necessary conditions in society must be present to ensure processes can help shape change through a democratic process (Wheeler-Bell, 2014). Said social power can be consistent with oppositional cultures that empower Black students to fight against systems and structures hindering their progress (Houmenou, 2013).

Marginalized communities are completely ousted and excluded from democratic processes through policies such as preventing those convicted of felonies from voting (Anderson, 2018), centuries of voter suppression (Combs, 2016), and lack of education on policies most influencing their livelihood (Wheeler-Bell, 2018b). As such, a deepened democracy would materialize if people can access economic and social topics that historically have dominated them and, instead, deliberate on the full process by which a policy is implemented, continued, or dismantled (Wheeler-Bell, 2014). This illustrates how Black students can specifically enhance their oppositional consciousness. Furthermore, deliberative democracy undergirds three foundational principles: all people participate in transactional reasoning, everyone must have access to the democratic process, and consensus must occur, while allowing issues to remain open for future contestation (Wheeler-Bell, 2018b). For oppositional consciousness, it is not enough to merely teach about domination and power, but instead, interrogating the process by which they can engage in collective action as in Phase 4 is crucial. In higher education, Black students search for avenues to raise concerns about the white campus environment and lack the social power needed to engage democratic processes from a bureaucratic aspect. While the university espouses values and outcomes that they hope students will experience, such as critical thinking, they fail to critique how their own operation undermines democracy for individuals with less power including marginalized communities, women, staff, and students. Thus, my study sought to understand and imagine the requisite conditions to see Black students thrive and develop mature oppositional consciousness identities that can transform campus or society. Overall, considering how Black students understand the democratic processes or imagine new processes by which to communicate concerns and amplify their movements is imperative to their oppositional consciousness.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I called for and argued that Black students must develop oppositional consciousness to contest power and domination on campus and in society. I will further illustrate what I learned about BSU's encouragement to help Black Students challenge domination and power by employing aspects of critical pedagogy in the use of counterspaces that can serve as a training ground for oppositional consciousness. Moreover, engaging the democratic process led to Black people flourishing on campus because they may have learned about societal ills while interrogating what role their target person or system played in causing them harm and discovered a process to counter it. This knowledge is critical to higher education scholarship that furthered how BSUs remain a positive beacon of change and influence to the Black community and society contempoarily. Black students have historically committed themselves to intellectual development, radical practices, supportive programming, and dismantling inequities in society that support their academic success while also creating an engaged citizenry. I investigated how Black students developed oppositional consciousness to relevant issues and BSU's role. I found that Black students develop oppositional consciousness and BSUs play a major role. I intentionally studied them to understand if Black students channeled anger into collective concerted action that can redefine the possibilites of life and envision society without Black people dominated through barred participation in securing their basic needs and rights. In the next section, I provide my research design, including my methodology and research questions governing my study.

CHAPTER III: STUDY METHODOLOGY

In this study, I investigated if Black student leaders develop oppositional consciousness identities that could instill courage and motivation to fight back against societal injustices. More specifically, I aimed to understand if the Black Student Union on students' campuses play a role in how Black students learn more about discrimination and if that led to developed strategies targeting people or systems inflicting harm to students. The time frame of my study focuses on Black students in the last five years (2017-2021) that have completed their first year in college. Students identified with varying issues in the sociopolitical environment including but not limited to COVID-19, the hostile racial climate during the era of the 45th President of the US, and other forms of human domination impacting students' lives. Exploring Black student leaders' oppositional consciousness development across different institutional types offered a chance to understand if Black students have opportunities in higher education to cultivate their passion for transforming the world in their college major or career interests and perhaps finding ways to support peers that share marginalized identities like their sexual orientation or class. Further, this study illustrates how BSUs have committed to advancing and building upon Black students' angers and frustrations about various societal issues that might empower Black students to engage in leadership positions and activism and develop streamlined responses to counteract oppressive structures. My study highlights how scholars have missed opportunities to intentionally study and foreground one of the longest ethnic student organizations in higher education history that has served as a conduit for Black students' consciousness raising and desire for campus/societal transformation. More specifically, this study amplifies how Black students process various injustices. In the beginning of this chapter, I illustrate my positionality as a researcher. I employed a critical qualitative research paradigm to not simply reproduce research to Black students' experiences, but instead counter and dislodge structures and systems connected to cultures, power, and reproducing actions (Carspecken & Carspecken, 1996). This paradigm influenced my study by honoring the contributions of Black student organizations and Black resources to Black students' oppositional consciousness development, while also pushing universities to reconsider passive approaches and invasively understand how and why Black students seek to transform the world.

Researcher Positionality

I am a low-income Black man, Christian, and activist from Rialto, California—a town located an hour east of Los Angeles in the Inland area of the state. Sharing the geography of my hometown is critical to this study and conversation about Black lives as it contextualizes gentrification and housing segregation that has overwhelmingly impacted Black people's lack of property ownership and educational attainment. Connected to my study, I wonder how my experiences are centered in Blackness and the subsequent domination experienced by Black people in white spaces. Moreover, raised by a single mother of four and formerly incarcerated father, I yearned for a spiritual connection that would complement my deep desire to transform the world and break generational poverty. My faith and relationship with God drive my joy, peace, and love and these God-given qualities are how I view and interact with the world. They fuel my persistence through both triumphant and debilitating times and equip me with confidence and hope to both save souls and transform the world. Black spirituality or Christianity are often huge components of the Black experience, and in my study, I hoped to understand how students wrestled with their faith or how it might empower them, fueling their oppositional consciousness to know that liberation and emancipation are possible. Consistent with critical qualitative research, I contest antiquated notions of dissociating myself and my values from the research process, and instead provide a positionality statement sharing my role and involvement in the process. Personal vignettes shared in Chapter 1 are particularly meaningful to this chapter.

As a Black man, I am constantly dueling with how to act and live throughout the world. As the great Dr. W.E.B. Dubois contends, this double consciousness or “sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Dubois & Marable, 2015, p. 15) often led me to question how I can truly impact those who look like me. I can never separate being a Black man because to separate them means depreciating aspects of each that are so inextricably tied. I am directly linked to the Black man experience through having a father that was imprisoned for 30 years, having brothers and cousins simultaneously act as father figures and having dealings with the same carceral state, and witnessing the innumerable cases of Black men—women, and nonconforming folx—slain in the streets at the hands of police. Likewise, systems of domination prevent housing attainment, basic income, and the ability for Black men to flourish while blame is simultaneously placed on us for the lack of success. By the hood, I am a hero. By society, an outlier. Yet my deep desire to see Black men continue excelling in every facet of life is largely because of the shoulders I stand on. Those shoulders are metaphorical for how my oppositional consciousness was raised and cultivated leading to my current commitment to Black liberation and emancipation. I wanted to know how that related to Black men in my study and I was careful to consider their multifaceted experiences consisting of prioritizing their needs that did not always include activism or advocating for the community like my lens.

At the leadership of Cathy Holloway, the matriarch, the queen, my mother, a village of Black women have shaped and molded me into the man I am today. She is strong, Black, faithful, and has taught me to be fearless and dedicated to being selfless and loving. When she did not have it, she went out and got it. Wise in her ways, aunties surrounded me with love and care–teaching me how to support and respect Black women and hold them tight. Although notions and experiences exist of Black men not supporting Black women have compounded the idea that society cannot understand how to value their lives, I know better and will continue growing and learning to amplify Black women's success and contributions to this world. I sought to understand how oppositional consciousness related to patriarchy and gender domination are formed that fuel Black women's desire for transformation, and subsequently continue raising my own consciousness that can help liberate our queens. Even more importantly, I sensitively shared findings regarding the #BBUM sexual assault cases that participants so graciously shared with me. I aimed to not burden them with reflecting on the experience, understanding their role in supporting other students, and not consider it their responsibility to solve every facet of the issue, which informed my analytical lens.

My identity in home and community roots me. Southern California is Hollywood, it is gangs, it is food, it is cars, it is gangsta rap, it is the Lakers and Dodgers, it is me. It is also the battle between UCLA and USC, of which I am an alumnus of both but stand true to my Bruin roots. Unfortunately, California is also Rodney King, gentrification, LAUSD, and a carceral state with hundreds of prisons filled with Black, Indigenous, and Latinx men and women while the colleges and universities struggle to be representative of the same populations. While I am grateful to the Black southerners that migrated West after slavery, settled and made strides in industry in Los Angeles before jobs were cut, and then sought affordable housing in Rialto and other cities in the Inland Empire, I hope to challenge how we arrived here so that we can better improve our conditions moving forward. I am also Ghana and Africa. I am forever indebted to the University of Maryland Higher Education program and Drs. Candace Moore and Jillian Martin for accepting me into a travel study program to the motherland, of which would be my first time out of the country. From visiting the slave castles and rivers where captured Africans were gruesomely prepared for shipment to the Americas to the beautiful culture, celebration, and sense of home I felt from merely being in the country for a few weeks. This experience further connected me to my Blackness in understanding and questioning what true liberation could mean after all we have been through; and the necessary teachers and teachings needed to demystify dominant notions of Blackness as less than to instead recognizing and appreciating its royalty. This influenced my methods and my findings as I thought about the differences in experiences for Black students and their relation to Africa. Many participants shared how their African parents influenced their STEM desires or shaped how they thought about impacting the world, but I was careful not to reinforce narratives that second-generation Africans perform and have higher expectations for success than their US Black counterparts.

I am an activist. Jesus Christ was an activist challenging the normalcy of life for a better world. My mom and dad evoked activist principles going against a system to improve my chance at life, and many fellow Rialto citizens were activists making demands for better conditions than what we were offered, so I was groomed into an activist mindset early on. These examples illustrate responses to horrible conditions, deep anger, and desire for change consistent with oppositional consciousness raising. Although plenty of scholars and leaders deliberate on definition and action of activism, my activism demands full, diasporic liberation and emancipation for Black people. Within that exists our ability to fully participate in the operation of society without retribution or oppression. As an undergraduate at UCLA, I discovered what it means deeply engage in liberation pedagogy, to be an activist, to demand equity, and to negotiate and contest policies and practices that do not serve underrepresented and racially dominated groups. I am forever indebted to the Afrikan Student Union for facilitating this gained consciousness—of which I highlight my positionality in studying its namesake, Black Student Unions.

I was heavily involved in the BSU at UCLA and am still involved with the BSU on a graduate school level as an activist; the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), once lumped into BSUs until they created their own organizations later, graduate students seeking Black Liberation do so through this foundation organization. In the BSU, I marched on capitol buildings, led chants on campus, met with campus administrators to reform policy, planned programs for my peers, and engaged in recruitment events for the university. I am passionate about underscoring the importance of the BSU to the academy. As an undergraduate student, my oppositional consciousness to race and class domination was raised when I learned decades of history from the BSU at UCLA and later of each University of California (UC) school's BSU at the Afrikan Black Coalition Conference (ABC). The ABC Conference is an annual event where all UC BSUs meet and organize to counter anti-Black policies and practices from the UC system and race and class domination in society. The combination of ABC and my experiences at UCLA are the platform and basis by which I know that BSUs can imagine and execute insurmountable work, and I hope to learn more from Black students at institutions across the United States. I am aware that not all BSUs operate under the same goals and, therefore, I allowed students to illustrate their own experiences aiding in BSUs' multiple assets. BSUs have decades of impactful success, and I shared their successes and understood how students wanted to change the world. I explored Black students' oppositional consciousness to injustices in society, and secondarily understood if BSUs play a role in students' intellectual and social development.

As shared, I would not have attended and flourished at UCLA had I not had BSU mentors and leaders help guide, direct, and fuel my oppositional consciousness. My experiences as an undergraduate student learning about socioeconomic status, systemic anti-Blackness, educational inequity, other informative teachings through BSU activities led to more involvement in Black organizations, civil and committee groups, and protests and marches after numerous senseless killings of Black people by police. Thus, I am intrigued with how students enter universities with varying experiences, selecting majors that might relate to them addressing or redressing past harms, and if/how their interests are cultivated.

Researcher Paradigm

My approach to the dissertation was through a critical paradigm. It is one of four paradigms used in research to understand meaning and engage in sense-making (Kim, 2015; McDougal, 2014). While critical paradigms rely on constructing knowledge and have aspects of the other three paradigms, critical paradigms do not only seek to understand meaning, but instead seek to challenge and transform (McDougal, 2014). Critical researchers subscribing to this paradigm maintain that knowledge is socially constructed while also critiquing power, domination, and other influences (Carspecken & Carspecken, 1996). According to Rabaka (2002), the critical paradigm is based in a radical theory by which we can imagine and have a "paradigm of possibilities" powerfully affirming Black people's existence and contributions as humans to the social world (p. 146). Similarly, oppositional consciousness grew from the principles in the Black Power Movement that trained Black leaders to interrogate their oppression and retool their anger toward strategic action against people or systems causing them harm (Morris, 1993; Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Thus, employing oppositional consciousness, I both acknowledged that a critical paradigm was appropriate in understanding and interrogating constructed meaning, while also challenged how power influences Black students' experiences or (de)limits their capacity to imagine liberation for their community (Karenga, 1988; Morris, 2001). In the same vein that I described my oppositional consciousness process that led to my creation and imagination of liberation, I sought to know what pedagogical tools or academic units helped students challenge the status quo.

My paradigm informed the entire research process. My analysis not only focused on how Black students contend with their subjugation as Black people in society, but it also explored the myriad ways they countered domination that could lead to campus reformation and Black emancipation. In addressing the research questions for my study, I questioned if Black students involved in higher education raised their oppositional consciousness about their positioning in society, participated in activities to support their retention and/or campus transformation, and if the BSU played a role engaging students with opportunities to program or become activists to help Black students succeed in college or flourish in society. Higher education scholarship has yet to emphasize how Black students first learn about and have challenged power and domination leading with emancipatory goals. While understanding multiple forms of activism and ways in which students combat injustice in society is important, this paradigm offered an opportunity to truly assess Black students' lived experiences focusing on the wisdom they obtain and if that facilitates an interest in not normatively reproducing current society, but instead, demanding full participation in every aspect of society. Exploring students' oppositional consciousness development was ideal for this study because its phases provide understanding of what issues are most concerning to students, how they channel their emotions into strategy, and how they come to understand the power of collective action in resolving various issues (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001).

Furthermore, I employed a critical qualitative paradigm because it is quintessential to pushing boundaries of understanding human domination in relation to the lived experiences of participants in my study. While quantitative and mixed methods could have tremendously impacted my study for breadth allowing me to survey more BSUs or Black students' interactions in the campus environment, critical qualitative paradigm forged intentional and in-depth conversations with participants across two institutional types. Moreover, rather than thinking about the breadth of students' oppositional consciousness development, I instead hoped to explore individual students' experiences from their adolescent years to their current state that deeply characterizes what societal issues mattered, who taught them about interrogating issues, and why it became important to devise strategies to counter the domination they or the Black community has faced. More specifically, the critical element of the paradigm also allowed me to not simply restate and affirm participants' frustrations with the status quo. Instead, I interrogated how the normalcy developed and explored students' understanding of their role in combatting the structures and systems while also complementing their knowledge with scholarship that has underscored creative ways Black people have implemented change overall. Thus, the narrative methodology led the investigation into Black students' oppositional consciousness raising from their first encounters with human domination, P12 schooling, and BSUs' influence on students' success.

Methodology

I used narrative methodology to guide my study. Johnson-Bailey (2004) states that narrative analysis prioritizes collecting participants' stories while also carefully cogitating the intricacies and full scope of their stories (p. 334). Said simply by Kim (2015), "Because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out and share, narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others" (p. 36). Narrative is powerful in underscoring vulnerability that leads to meaningful understanding of individuals' lives. Similarly, Atkinson (1995) identifies life story, autobiographies, and personal myths as various forms of narrative theory. In my study, I explored the lifeworlds of Black students in higher education and learned how BSUs serve a role in students' oppositional consciousness development and overall success. Narrative is not merely a collection of students' stories, but also deep, post-conversation are intensely analyzed whereby I drew upon "more general issues of identity, the interaction order, moral work and the organization of social encounters" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 15). As such, after speaking with students about how controversial issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, food deserts, and gender domination created a deep desire to create health opportunities and access to health resources in the Black community, I explored how human domination caused harm, what their responses were, and if there has been any action toward learning more about how to counteract health inequalities, interrogate class domination associated with healthcare, or change associated policies. This means that the lifeworlds and data gained were part of speech acts and collective action that generated deeper meaning into participants' lives. I learned that Black students' lived experiences prior to college inflicted harm and anger that they sought to disrupt at their institution or in society. Then, I considered whether the BSU and if the organization, or other groups, equipped students with tools to learn more about their circumstances and provide a formalized space to amplify those issues to university administrators or civic leaders. I explored how participants organized activities that challenged the racialized environment and contributed to social movements, all in hopes of reconstructing higher education and society. Each area forms a collective narrative of how Black students' oppositional consciousness developed and their interrogation of human domination in order to create better conditions for Black students and people (Houmenou, 2013). It became apparent that students did in fact develop oppositional consciousness to various structures and systems. Also, in addition to BSU, cocurricular programs complementing their schooling experiences, students' familial backgrounds and chosen families, and academic and cultural units on campus helped them learn about and develop strategies to transform the world.

Narrative theory can be understood as a theory for highlighting peoples' experiences through creative storytelling (Atkinson, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988). This methodology has been used in multiple ways that have focused on Black students. Oral history in the African tradition has a powerful legacy and has been crucial in the passing on of important traditions and actions for future generations (McDougal, 2014). Research on Black and other underrepresented minoritized groups have been dependent upon narrative storytelling in research because of the historical disenfranchisement done to African peoples (Rabaka, 2002). Thus, employing research that listens to and adheres to Black people aids in their liberation (Kelley, 2018). Similarly, various forms of narrative theory, such as counterstories, are used to deconstruct and reconstruct deficit notions and fabricated philosophies that deem Black people as less than or incapable (Karenga, 1988; Patton & Catching, 2009; Rogers, 2008). In this study, I used oppositional consciousness theory as a means of understanding Black students' rationalization of feelings and emotions toward human domination through their narratives. In grasping these stories, larger implications surfaced of the ways in which institutional leaders consider Black students' experiences in higher education foregrounding BSU as a dire space for the successful retention and engaged citizenship of their students. Also, BSU was not the only space, and the dreadful attacks to students' lives from witnessing police killings in the media, family's interaction with the police state, public health concerns, and anti-Black policies necessitated students pay attention and learn how to survive Beyond that, institutional leaders learn how to build upon narratives written in students personal statement essays lamenting anger toward human domination and identify creative ways including curricular and cocurricular to train students to strategically interrogate hegemony. Black students' narratives should be studied more intentionally as a model for how the public institution could rectify centuries of oppression to historically dominated populations.

Methods

Based on the paradigm, epistemological perspective, and methodology offered above, I now present the methods of my project. I first indicate the data sources I drew upon and my subsequent execution of how I recruited and sampled participants for the study. Next, I share my process for collecting and analyzing data. Lastly, I reflect on study limitations and how I maintained trustworthiness.

Data Sources

Study Sites. Two universities in the United States served as sites of this study: Indiana University Bloomington (IU) and the University of Michigan (UM). I was attracted to these states' flagship institutions where Black students on those campuses might be the forerunners of change. This does not suggest that students at other state institutions do not contribute to the movement for liberation and emancipation, but for the purposes of this study, I was interested in students at these flagship research institutions. Next, the BSU at UM is also listed on a comprehensive BSU demands website titled "Black Liberation Collective," indicating their relevancy over the last few years ias it pertains to their involvement in a larger movement to liberate Black people (Black Liberation Collective). IU is not included on the website, but Black students most recently advocated and demanded for a Black Lives Matter mural on campus amid social unrest in society and the constant attacks on progressive policies in the state (News at IU).

As such, I was drawn to Black students at campuses where demands were being made, and students had already seemingly shown a baseline form of oppositional consciousness and commitment to the liberation of Black people. Moreover, both institutions are members of the Big 10 Conference, positioned in politically red states in the Midwestern United States, and institutions where I gained more depth in the research process because of the breadth of students at the university. IU contributed greatly to the study located in the birthplace of the immediate past Vice-President of the US. He was complicit in controversial laws and policies on a state and national level that fueled students' anger, therefore invigorating their oppositional consciousness (Valadez, 2020). As an IU graduate student, I had a strong pulse of the Black undergraduate population. I knew several extremely involved leaders who I have seen grow over their collegiate journey on one side, and I intended to understand how that process occurred, and what campus organization or department(s) helped facilitate their learning. In the participant selection section, I detail how I prevented projecting my experiences on students and crafted students' individual narratives illustrating how they developed oppositional consciousness throughout their lives.

At UM, I relied on my extensive network of graduate students, faculty, and staff to aid in connecting to students. UM's stellar academic standing also included overwhelming support for its Black students on campus. However, Black students do not represent more than 10 percent of the student population at UM as the flagship public university, which caused contentious relationships with the university and difficulties succeeding academically and as student activists (Allen et al., 2018). UM and IU provided opportunities to compare how flagship midwestern institutions with similar Black populations in the state cause harm in the form of economic and racial domination yet have resources for Black students to develop oppositional cultures and consciousness to fight against those same injustices. While institution types were important and consistent with my paradigm and methodology, I was interested in students' stories and if their experiences as Black students at the universities or in the BSU contribute to a liberatory praxis.

I was particularly interested in how students desired to attend college, who or what motivated them to attend college, and how UM or IU met or exceeded their expectations of college. A part of the investigation considered how the critical mass of Black students that faced similar domination in their adolescent years-- including schooling and life at home-- might form affinity groups once arriving to their campus and be exposed to student organizations and classes that could help learn more about how to solve societal issues. More specifically, I was drawn to how BSU, BCCs, or Black studies might inform students' actions and complicated relationships with the institution that might facilitate oppositional consciousness development.

Research Design

I sought out Black students at UM and IU that attended the universities between 2017-2021. The rationale for selecting this particular time period is two-fold: (1) to interrogate students' experiences during the Trump presidency and (2) to provide a period for which students could reflect on more than one year of their college-going experiences. The 45th Presidents' era was marked by spewed hate speech toward the Black community, very tense academic environments at colleges and universities, and feelings of confusion and defeat for underrepresented minoritized groups on how to matriculate through college—and in many cases, life (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Okello et al., 2020). I was also interested in participants' reflecting and revisiting many of their past and present experiences, illustrating how their oppositional consciousness grew in the provided years. Although I did not prioritize the institutional culture and history in my study, participants' insights helped me comprehensively understand how the students' narratives and actions might connect to institutional and state culture, policy, and practices. Specifically, I hoped to understand how Michigan and Indiana policies or sociopolitical environments impact students' lives, influence their anger development, and facilitated their potential oppositional consciousness process. I sought students from both institutions that could provide multiple accounts of how their varied backgrounds, majors, and interests relate to the campus environment and culture. While an extensive historical account of each campus could be useful, I aimed to understand individual students' narratives complemented by the institutional environment. My positionality and limitations also nod to the implications of this decision.

Also, very critical to my investigation, I studied Black students that had connection to BSU or were infuriated by heightened racial tension and issues in society. I knew that Black students were extremely involved in student organizations and Black student organizations specifically, so I hoped to understand what occurred in those organizations to support their frustrations about issues in society. I did not want to limit my participation to students that participated in BSUs because my interests lied in if Black students generally developed oppositional consciousness and if BSU or other Black student supports provided learning opportunities to turn anger into strategy. At the same time, given that BSUs are understudied and lack nuance in higher education scholarship, I was intrigued by participants' relation to BSU on their campus in relation to how it cultivated their oppositional consciousness. Nonetheless, I included participants that were involved in other Black student organizations and that spent at least one year on campus and could share meaningful and thoughtful experiences.

Sampling

I received approval from Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study. I gained access to students through social networking sites like LinkedIn and reaching out to Black organizations and department affiliates on their respective campuses. Specifically, I used purposive sampling to intentionally seek out students at the university that shared stories of how they developed desires to change the world and how organizations they are a part of from my outreach helped them in the process (Polkinghorne, 1995). The purposive sampling BCC directors connecting me with students they felt met my criteria of students who had angst about societal issues and had some level of involvement with BSU. The criterion for sampling the students is as follows: they attended college during 2017-2021, identify as a Black student, had angst toward societal issues, and were actively involved in BSU or other student organizations. These characteristics ensured that students have attended college during the tumultuous 45th Presidents' era, have desire for change, and provided quality responses to how their efforts may have grown over time. I also did my best to balance gender makeup as Black women outnumber Black men in higher education and leadership participation. I publicized my invitation to participate on social media outlets including Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Next, I sent the invitation to mentors and colleagues that can possibly aid in my recruitment at these institutions. Lastly, I reached out to the Black Culture Centers at IU and UM and sought out Black students in Black student organizations or a part of the general population. These recruitment efforts allowed me to both broaden potential participant pools by generically using social sites for peers and colleagues to share with potential student leads and to narrow my scope by using close networks to suggest student leaders who can be insightful assets to my study. I provide a draft of my invitation to participate in Appendix B.

After publicizing my call to participate, I reached out to IU students from a list obtained by the BCC director. For UM participants, I connected with graduate students at IU that shared my call with colleagues on social media and LinkedIn. I requested this information from the BCC directors who shared my study call with them. Also, I employed snowball sampling with women participants, who were my first couple interviews to start my interviews, asking them to refer me to men that were eligible for my study. I accessed the students primarily through connecting with Black colleagues on LinkedIn, in graduate school at IU, and BCC directors. After connecting with students, I engaged in snowball sampling in which students connected me to other leaders that identified with the study (McDougal, 2014). Once connected to students, I facilitated individual semi-structured interviews with 14 participants from both institutions that allowed me a comprehensive understanding of the institutional and BSU climate and culture. After connecting with participants over email, I scheduled the first interview with them via Zoom. I interacted with 6 participants from UM and 8 from IU. I now present how oppositional consciousness informed conversations with participants.

Oppositional Consciousness. I asked students about their narrative amongst three holistic pillars connected to oppositional consciousness phases: home lifestyle and culture (phases1-2), initial university preparation and beginning collegiate experience (phases 1-3), and mastery and veteran leadership and career endeavors (phases 3-5*) (Appendix A). As an effort to highlight how Black student experiences are not monolithic, I was mindful that students may not develop the same levels of oppositional consciousness as their peers who had similar oppressive experiences as adolescents. The upbringing pillar contextualized experiences with their parents, what issues or circumstances caused them harm or fear, how they understood the sociopolitical environment, and endeavored to change the or their world by attending college. This helped clarify their levels of oppositional consciousness before college, and how the campus environment may have cultivated their oppositional consciousness when participating in BSUs or other campus organizations. As such, the next pillar sought to understand their transition to the university environment during their undergraduate years, including what they learned in their curricula, how they developed friendships and networks, and if they became involved in enriching activities that cultivated or instilled oppositional cultures (e.g., the introductory Black studies courses in Summer Bridge demystified negative notions about Black people received in P12 schooling and reaffirmed what they truly knew about their community). The final pillar explored whether students learned more about class domination, organized against discrimination in their community, targeted specific groups, or audiences to alter policies, and more. I sought to learn how students' fear, anger, and frustration switched to their consciousness being raised to them demanding action and results to improve campus or societal conditions for their community.

BSU. Moreover, I explored BSUs' influence on students' curricular and cocurricular experiences, and how it informed their overall experience or oppositional consciousness development at the university. Students were asked to reflect upon their entire undergraduate tenure and what shaped how they envisioned the world, including if their life's work may be tied to continuing their efforts that were initiated on campus. Consistent with my theoretical frame, I did not merely wish to understand students' experiences in the university environment, nor just acknowledge their grassroots efforts as activists or the role of BSUs. Instead, I explored how they developed meaningful knowledge connected to countering years of human domination that cultivated their anger into strategic and collective action, and their consideration of how their actions might liberate the Black community.

Overall, I learned about Black students' socialization to the campus and their awareness of issues causing harm. I explored if organizations like the BSU contributed to students' consciousness development and provided opportunities for Black people to interrogate sociopolitical issues, participate in collective action, or deepen/develop a desire for Black liberation. White supremacy and systems of domination impact Black youth influencing their desire to attend college to eradicate the issues they faced. Many benefitted from precollege programs as the onset of their oppositional consciousness that persisted through Summer Bridge programs expanding their knowledge of structural inequalities. I indirectly learned how Black faculty and staff support and cultivate Black student success and how Black students use their connections, interactions, and knowledge development to transform the campus and society. More specifically, I learned how counterspaces like the BCC played a role in student success. Black students discover their niche and make strategic and intentional decisions to give back to their community, lead organizations supporting their peers, and make graduate school and career plans addressing oppression they faced.

Data Collection

I used narrative inquiry to guide my data collection. Narrative helps lived stories develop while also allowing students to narrate lived stories. I was particularly drawn to narrative to understand Black students' lived experiences in higher education. In particular narrative focuses on relational engagement and reciprocal understanding between researcher and participant (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Narrative is different from other methodologies in that it comprises both the lived stories and in-between experiences understanding a particular situation. I was extremely interested in how students' narratives underscored where they entered oppositional consciousness processes by which they learn how human domination has influenced their lives, commit to eradicating injustices, or used organizations like the BSU to collectively organize. Connelly & Clandinin (2006) share that in conducting narrative inquiry, four key thinking principles are required: imagining a lifespace, living and telling, understanding the boundaries of time, space, and location, and understanding our own influence in the research process (Kim, 2015). The first principle regarding lifespace encourages researchers to think about the conditions that participants describe and imagine the design of the project. This can include where students might be interviewed and being cognizant of everything in that space. Next, living and telling are crucial as the stories shared are students' lived experiences and they are telling the stories in the moment, possibly reliving the moment (Kim, 2015). As such, and connected to the third point regarding boundaries, participants highlight occurrences in the past and researchers must focus on the social and personal aspects of stories to do narrative inquiry justice. This means understanding how events and experiences impact the student and how the time and place where the event occurred could play a role in the story. Thus, I provided students a positive and welcoming environment on Zoom that brought an inviting aura for them to share and not feel restricted. Specifically, initially receiving their email to participate, I reiterated my study's purpose, my positionality, and desire to amplify their story. Using Zoom allowed participants comfort in their chosen location while I also built rapport through candid conversation about mutual connections, sports, and life overall before delving into the interviews. Additionally, I scheduled ample time for our conversation. Furthermore, questions were open-ended and allowed what Kim (2015) refers to as the "narrative phase," permitting interviewees uninterrupted time to share their story while providing slight affirmations such as nods to show engagement. In this phase, the researcher is to use all the senses to remain in the moment almost imagining living the experience until the conversation phase where deeper questioning and follow-ups occur. As a trained counselor, I used active listening and employed this strategy to hear and feel with my participants at times when they pointed to pictures in their background, were emotional in reflecting on parental experiences, or sharing deep trauma with me.

Life Stories. Regarding questions, I shared participants' life stories in connection to their experiences in college, BSUs' role, and addressing issues in society. According to Kim (2015), "The point of the life story interview is to learn the interviewee's life stories as a whole and produce a first-person text in the words of the interviewee" (p. 246). This means that as the orchestrator of their story, I carefully and eloquently used my two-hour interviews to connect student or alumni experiences to my larger inquiry and theoretical positioning. Consistent with my epistemological foundation, my interview questions lived at the intersection of narrative inquiry and students' oppositional consciousness development (Appendix A). Oppositional consciousness seeks to interrogate power and highlight how Black people's gained knowledge and collective action seek to eradicate systemic oppression (Morris, 2001). My interview questions were situated upon how students have gained knowledge about their positioning in society, what is done to challenge or cultivate that positioning, and if it might facilitate larger social change. Furthermore, I probed students to share stories related to their upbringing, detail experiences learning from Black student organizations or Black staff and faculty, and share feelings and experiences related to racism and police brutality. These questions are crucial to my broader research questions because I benefitted from having multiple narratives learning how the curricular and cocurricular spaces on campus transform students' lives. Students also shared how their knowledge influences their actions to improve societal conditions for the Black community. Their life stories also illustrate ways the university can learn how to improve civic engagement practices and connect them to actual social movements and organizations that have power to change policies and practice.

Interviews

I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with Black students at the two universities. Semi-structured interviews allowed for open-ended questions and follow up to more theoretically arranged questions rooted in students' experiences (Atkinson, 2002; Kim, 2015). They tend to be unbounded by the rigidity and strict nature of structured interviews that allow me to probe and deepen conversation between me and the participants (Creswell, 2013; McDougal, 2014). I facilitated two one-hour interviews with participants via zoom. I began each interview building rapport with casual conversations about participants, mutual friends, or life events.

My timeline for interviews were over the course of five months. I conducted first round interviews over two months and participants sporadically engaged in second round interviews over the course of three months. Initially, one interview seemed appropriate, but because of the reflective experiences in the first-round interview and the detail of students' Blackness and schooling experiences that informed their early stages of oppositional consciousness, I benefitted tremendously from having a second round to discuss students' collegiate journey. In fact, I would engage another round of interviews to discuss students' engagement post college or specific change-altering behaviors to truly understand their desire for societal transformation and Black liberation that did not surface as much in my findings.

The first interviews were longer than the second on average. During that initial conversation, participants recollected stories about their upbringing, P12 schooling experiences, understandings of Blackness and communities most salient to them, cocurricular programs informing their college choice, and early aspects of their collegiate journey (Appendix A). A few months after I did initial coding, I conducted second-round interviews learning more about how their anger and frustrations from their past informed their major selection and how Black staff, faculty, and student organizations taught them more about reasons for their domination. Moreover, many named BSUs' presence, or lack thereof, in their first interview, so the second interview provided opportunity to explore what role their major-specific Black student organization served, their classroom experiences, understanding of Black liberation, and their vision for transforming the world in their current positions (Appendix A). Semi-structured conversations with participants allowed for very in-depth conversations leading to saturation. I assured there were not additional thoughts or missed opportunities by allowing participants to elaborate on points from the first interview to the second, member checking after transcribing, and revisiting moments they or their peers at their institution shared. For example, one participant at UM mentioned how sexual assault conversations surfaced on campus in her first interview, so I was able to interrogate how that phenomenon shaped the campus environment for others. My interview questions made space for more listening from the participant that then allowed analyzing and interpreting to occur in my analysis (Connely & Clandinin, 2006). Thus, my protocol asked students to share knowledge about their home environment and detail experiences of how they learned about Blackness in relation to human domination. It considered these questions across time and place with respect to learning from racialized experiences at home and subsequently if they developed deeper understandings in the BSU or from radical parents, or civil organizations. Nonetheless, I present my analysis process below.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, I conducted thematic and narrative analysis. I used the web software, Dedoose, to store my interviews, memos, and other data collected in addition to using a personal SharePoint account with stored audio files and transcriptions. In my three phases of coding in addition to my interview notes, I conducted initial emerging codes, engaged in paradigmatic open-coding, and used narrative mode of analysis to engage in sense-making. Additionally, I employed selective coding by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to organize my codes and ensure that themes are significant to my study. Thematic analysis was particularly useful with transcriptions. After data were transcribed and during the data collection process, I engaged emerging codes. Emerging codes were useful to obtain short and quick pieces of data that can be helpful in the moment (Merriam, 2009). Following this initial phase, I read stories based on

Polkinghorne’s (1995) paradigmatic mode of analysis and narrative mode of analysis. The paradigmatic mode focuses on inductive or deductive analysis, allowing themes to be generated from the literature or allowing data to generate new concepts and ideas (Kim, 2015). Employing Oppositional Consciousness was quite useful in this manner when considering how students shared narratives that illustrated if students moved from heated frustration at racial and class domination to strategic action aimed at redressing those experiences. The deductive and inductive codes I considered in the process were aligned with oppositional consciousness as a framework. Specifically, these codes consisted of gender, racial, and class domination, social and community group organizations prior to college, departments and staff/faculty support in college, and Black students’ overall consideration of action and commitment to service. These codes were selected to respond to research questions and to adequately structure participants’ narratives in a collective thought that would inform my findings. Furthermore, BSUs’ actions were important in the students’ shared narrative because they may not have always had the language to name the domination they experienced, which supported where BSU showed up in phases either at the onset of oppositional consciousness or later in participants’ development.

Memoing. In addition to constructing themes, I engaged in memoing throughout the research process. Memos can be a useful tool for organizing data and developing themes ahead of time (Carspecken, 2006; McDougal, 2014). I used notes to remember to follow up on experiences when necessary and combined my notes into memos directly after the interview that allowed me to both process what participants shared for analyzing purposes, make references in my second interview, and converge in my Chapter 5 and 6. I constantly questioned, interpreted, and analyzed my data to gain a deep understanding of the themes and ideas that arose from the research. I memo’d after each interview and conversed with director of the BCC at IU for member checking and to ensure reliability. As a peer debriefer, I spoke with the director about balancing commitments and honoring students' stories. As a Black woman, Dr. Glo showed how to preciously honor women in my study, especially around sexual assault experiences, and to find the thin line between distancing IU participants and honoring their narratives. My dissertation chair constantly encouraged me to analyze and reinterpret data through concept mapping, charting, and memoing. On a smaller scale, a UM alumna and IU graduate student, that did not meet my criteria, helped me understand institutional context to adequately support my participants' experiences.

Thematic Analysis. First, I used thematic analysis to interpret my data in conjunction with memos from interviews. Thematic analysis focuses on what is being said rather than how it is said in order to construct a group of collective stories together (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). In conjunction with my theoretical framework, I situated the stories within larger themes of students' orientation to college and their oppositional consciousness, their experiences in college or within the Black Student Union, and the BSU's impact in helping students imagine emancipation and liberation through collective action. Some of my thematic categories considered broad descriptors like Adolescent Years, P12 Schooling, and College. Embedded in those descriptors were more themes such as Blackness, supportive teachers, community supports, fighting racism, fighting sexism, cocurricular programs, summer bridge, and racist issues. I constructed and reconstructed themes multiple times that then took the above themes and connected them to oppositional consciousness phases. I included minimal states, phases 1-4, and mature states into the broad descriptor categories that then allowed me to complete my analysis.

Narrative Analysis. Next, I employed narrative analysis. This consisted of interpreting stories within the broader context to construct meaning about people's lived experiences

(McDougal, 2014; Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) offers a handful of different approaches to narrative analysis that includes interactional analysis, structural analysis, performative analysis, and thematic analysis. The narrative mode of analysis was then employed when coding by understanding the compilation of actions, events and occurrences, and orchestrating and illustrating why and how those events come together to logically make sense as well as why participants acted in the manner they did (Kim, 2015). For example, multiple students shared how filmed police killings in the media affected them and how after one of the countless killings, the movement encouraged them to learn where they can engage in conversation, and better commit to service and advocacy for their community. Concept and mind mapping was useful in this way as I used the themes from the previous approaches, combined codes, and connected stories that informed my findings. Specifically, I connected participants' experiences across gender, STEM/Major experiences, student organizations, and efforts to impact Black communities despite institutional type. This was valuable interrogating participants' individual experiences amongst the collective because it informed how BSU played a role in their journey at various points in relation to their desire to succeed in college. Moreover, I specifically coded students' experiences and stories along the cross-case by putting the ideas within the phases (Table 1). This created a visual and descriptive representation of students' positioning within the phases of the theory in which shared narratives and experiences surfaced. In fact, implication phase 4.1 emerged after this process because participants were (re)entering phases of learning and identifying with dominated groups after they had already done so earlier in their lives.

In presenting my data, I select individual narratives in Chapter 4 to set the stage for collective narratives and cross-case connections in Chapter 5. This process gives depth to the specific institution type and experiences while also connecting Black students' shared experiences across different locales.

Trustworthiness

Scholars suggest a wealth of ways to ensure research is rigorous, valid, and reliable (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Tierney & Clemens, 2011). Strategies such as triangulating, peer debriefing, and member checking are all tools to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which validate a study's trustworthiness (Lincoln, 2011). I obtained credibility by both establishing rapport with student leaders and triangulating data to ensure stories were shared accurately. I was in constant conversation with my committee and graduate student colleagues to consider transferability to different contexts and how my own reflexivity might play a role in my processing. Dependability and confirmability refer to being sound in the process so that the research can be substantiated in various ways (Tierney & Clemens, 2011). By continuously interpreting memos, engaging in member checks, peer debriefs, and the like, I worked to enhance trustworthiness throughout the study. Specifically, I connected with my dissertation chair, Dr. LePeau, Friday research group with my faculty mentor Dr. Wheeler-Bell, and with graduate student peers in the QualScholars dissertation group. My faculty mentors reminded me not to rush the process with codes and themes consisting of revisiting interviews, codes, themes, and conversing about how I interpret the data. Similarly, my graduate peers constantly checked in and shared how to value the students' experiences, as they know is my true purpose, but to truly honor them by coherently and succinctly connecting narratives to meaningful themes without my projection of their experiences.

Beyond that, the trustworthiness of my study was sound in a multitude of ways. First, narrative inquiry was appropriate for my study. Participants in my study freely shared how their life experiences have shaped their collegiate journey and how various entities or people in college provided opportunities to learn and grow. Thus, the semi-structured process allowed conversations to flow, and I repeatedly asked participants to connect pieces or if I fully summarized their articulation. Moreover, in terms of sampling I was careful to balance who is being sampled and how. I was not focused on sampling size, but instead considering how a multitude of students, involved or not, across different years in school, gender makeup, and more developed oppositional consciousness. As far as analysis and reporting, I worked closely with my dissertation chair, the IU BCC director, and my supervisor to ensure that I am boldly and accurately reporting students' experiences. To reiterate above, positioning participants along the continuum of the theory and mind mapping with my chair forged thoughtful deliberation of how individual and collective narratives were presented. Although they did not fully code and analyze transcripts, I shared my memos with pseudonyms and checked with them to ensure I constructed students' narratives in the best way possible. While I was unsuccessful in maintaining a relationship with UM BCC director, Mama Beth, beyond initial email, I benefitted from a UM alumna colleague that sparingly offered wisdom in describing the campus, contextualizing staff and faculty, and honoring stories. Further, I allowed students to remove and retract any statements or stories that may cause them harm, but none of them indicated wanting to do so. Finally, I aimed for a sound study that will allow replication, particularly for other historically excluded groups like Latinx, Indigenous, and Southeast Asian populations.

Ethical Considerations

Some scholars offer that research should be neutral and objective. However, Afrocentric scholars underscore the impossibilities with this notion because personal values and who we are as people are directly tied to our culture, which is a part of our morality (McDougal, 2014, p.80). Black lives have not been treated ethically in research or in praxis, which stresses the need to properly consider the standard I operated from conducting this study. According to McDougal

(2014), Black people are highly underrepresented in the research process for reasons such as distrust, stigmas, and financial challenges, among other prohibitive obstacles. To combat these challenges, she encourages researchers to build rapport including trust, engage research that can improve lives, and provide financial assistance where appropriate (McDougal, 2014). I offered students $25 gift cards for their participation in my study. Furthermore, connected with Africana Critical Theory, I hope to continually engage efforts with students helping them collectively imagine liberatory efforts and ways they might flourish in society, even beyond the study. Additionally, I kept a research journal to constantly reflect upon my decision making. Finally, I submitted my study to the Indiana University Institutional Review Board for approval.

Limitations

This study assessed the lived experiences of Black students at two flagship research universities. Access to students' physical environments is the largest limitation. The COVID-19 virus and pandemic have impacted society in drastic ways, so seeking to conduct research with students amidst this disaster proved challenging. I appreciated and valued the Zoom interviews and connections made, but I am interested in how participants' narratives, especially at UM might have been shared differently if I were able to visit and see the spaces or meet the people they named. Simultaneously, during any time, Black students and people are not distant from racial brutality, health disparities, and other forms of domination from multiple systems that plague our communities. Furthermore, participants were navigating these real issues along with finishing their senior year or graduate school while conversing with me. Nonetheless, I carefully adjusted meetings and member checked to ensure that participants had ample space to share and felt comfortable doing so.

The findings from this study normatively share how Black students at multiple institutions interact with their campus environment or the United States. While my sample size is sound, I did not have access to more Black students at each campus that may experience the environment quite differently. For example, my positioning suggests that the 45th President's era was quite tumultuous yet other Black students that my study might reach might strongly disagree. Additionally, while social media and networks were useful in recruiting participants from UM, my engagement and connection to their experiences could have been more meaningful if I had opportunities to connect in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Further research might consider if BSUs or students' institutions support students' desired goals and how it might contribute to the larger movement for Black lives. While I aim to highlight the many contributions of Black student groups and campus departments, a more nuanced focus could explore and interrogate how the institution should prepare and equip students with knowledge about sociopolitical events. While they financially support events and activities that Black units offer, they should not be absolved from more concerted and nuanced conversations, events, and activities that show their commitment to eradicating human domination and systems of oppression. Considering these limitations, I hope my study contributes to research and praxis about Black students' efforts for obtaining emancipation and liberation beginning on their campus.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I share 14 participants' experiences as students at Indiana University and the University of Michigan (UM) between 2017 and 2021. Each participant's narrative consists of relevant experiences from their upbringing and home life, P12 schooling experiences including preparation programs, early collegiate experiences with bridge programs and socialization, latter collegiate experiences, and current status and future endeavors. Included throughout their lives, each participant shares how their consciousness was stimulated, or not, and the dissonance they experience when developing new insights. Stories shared will be a microcosm of emergent themes that are presented, complicated, and evaluated in Chapter 5. Before sharing the narratives, I give a brief overview of the students' narratives within their institutional context.

University of Michigan

Many participants are from Southfield or Farmington Hills— Black suburbs of Detroit,— or from low-income parts of the City of Detroit. As such, many participated in Upward Bound or GEAR-UP, which are federally funded college access programs supporting Black students' college attainment. Black students at UM are often admitted through the Bridge program. Bridge is a six-week long initiative that allows students to take courses amongst same-race peers before their freshman year. Bridge provides social, cultural, and emotional support for students that embolden them to take on their PWI with a strong foundation of support from Black staff, faculty, and students. Students may then participate in the Black Welcome Week events comprised of Black student organizations who showcase their offerings in an organization fair. BSU at UM—established in 1968—is often known as a very activist organization and especially active among collegiate BSUs. They may teach students the history of social movements at the institution, which demands have been made that participants in the study have benefited from, and what students have continued to demand. Many participants credited BSU with connecting them to Black organizations specific to their major, responding to racist incidents that occurred on campus, and serving as an executive board or general member and complementing their academic studies. The Black Studies department at UM is called Afro-American and African Studies, hereto referred as Black Studies, whose students emphasize the many courses and professors that taught them various histories and sociocultural impact of structural and systemic issues impacting the Black community in the US and in Africa. Lastly, some students highlighted how sexual assault allegations on Twitter sparked controversy and trouble within the Black community using the hashtag, #BlackatUMich or #BBUM. Black women used the hashtag to call out countless Black men in athletics, Black fraternities, and general students for harm caused to women. Women retweeted their perpetrator in what added fuel to the #MeToo movement, of thousands of women bravely sharing stories of being attacked sexually. Participants, particularly those majoring in STEM, troubled how the allegations to members of their community informed how they supported their peers, learned more about Black public health, and sought to transform the Black community overall. While not all participants' narratives fall into these specific categories, a brief synopsis into the context of the UM environment is offered to support their stories. I situate the institutional context in this way to share some of the many events occurring during students' time in school and how those events were meaningful to fueling their anger or strategically setting them up for success.

Calvin

Calvin is a Black man from Atlanta, Georgia who graduated from the University of Michigan in 2020, double majoring in Political Science and Afro-American and African Studies.

He is a law student at Columbia University focused on civil rights law. Calvin is a second-generation college student and his mom and dad, who divorced when Calvin was young, equipped him to thrive in heavily Black populated area of Atlanta, Georgia. They raised Calvin and his younger siblings in College Park, but Calvin attended school in Newman/Dunwoody, Georgia, which the ethnic and socioeconomic status makeup diverged from that of his hometown—primarily white. Calvin's first understanding of differences and his Black identity stemmed from living in different parts of Atlanta; he describes College Park as a space where Black people were in critical mass and he knew about the various socioeconomic statuses of residents within the community from daily observation, such as seeing people enter the unemployment office, whereas that was not the case in Dunwoody. In Dunwoody, families were driving Audis and Teslas with seemingly very few worries or concerns in the world from his perspective. Calvin's family was exposed to A Better Chance, Inc.'s program, which equips 5th through 12th graders with opportunities to attend elite independent day and boarding schools for college admission and success. At the intersection of his upbringing and schooling experiences, Calvin shares how the multilayered experiences in his life have informed his Black identity, schooling, and future endeavors:

> Comparing my life in Atlanta, it was like, "Okay, well, you got people who take the bus, people who don't have fancy cars, everybody's not a homeowner down here, some people are just struggling." And you compare that to what white people are doing in North Atlanta. So, to me at a young age it was like, "Okay, well, to be Black is like..." I mean, we got the food, the music, the culture, but it also means that there's a lot of inequality or disparities. And then when Trayvon Martin was killed, and the Stand Your Ground law was upheld and all that stuff, to me that was a big moment, because I was in seventh or

> eighth grade. And so, seeing that and hearing over through the news, I was like, "Oh, that could have been me." Because after my parents divorced, my dad didn't live in a gated community, but it was a community with HOA fees, and a pool and a tennis court and shit like that. And so I was like, "Damn, what if?" So then I was like, "Okay, well, Black people are clearly not on the same level as white people." And that was basically my experiences. Unemployment office or you hear all this like when we were on food stamps after she lost her job, I mean, I love food stamps. Food stamps was amazing, but it was just like. "Okay." But I didn't see white people on food stamps. There weren't a lot of white people in that community taking the bus. There just weren't a lot of white people, period. So, I was like, "Okay. Well, this is how Black people are living and this is how white people are living." So, Blackness at a very young age was like we cool, we hip, but damn, some of us are struggling and being killed. And then as I got older and going throughout high school it was more death. It was Michael Brown, it was Eric Garner, it was Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, all the big names. A lot of that happened in high school. And I'm just finding my footing in all of this like what is my role or responsibility?

Calvin summarizes the challenges he faced unpacking his Black identity while navigating the social climate of the world seeing Black people being murdered in the community and questioning if that would be him. While his parents had some conversation with him about his thinking, he primarily had conversations and explored these topics in private Catholic school in Dunwoody. In high school, Calvin sought more opportunity to understand the world's social issues and sparked an interest in pursuing law school as a result. He participated in a group called Mosaic, which was a spiritual student group that discussed current issues and attended the national Student Development and Leadership Conference (SDLC) that provided him a chance to learn about and discuss current social topics. SDLC brought together high school students of color attending private school for lectures and debates about racism, oppression, and success. As a result, Calvin became distraught that teachers in his class would have surface level conversations about slavery, Civil War Reconstruction, and Jim Crow; he wanted to better articulate Black people's experiences and learn analytical tools to interrogate subjugation in his community. Calvin aimed for conversation in the classroom with his teachers and peers that would allow him to interrogate issues that mattered, not merely focus on historical events without understanding deeper meaning of causes and implications to Black people. As such, he found his footing with his school's debate team. In debate, he learned to develop arguments with his team—most debaters would typically use race and gender frameworks as bases for interrogating and articulating their viewpoints. Police brutality, income inequality, and housing were all important discussions he explored in debate and fueled his desire to attend college, where he knew he would have deeper engagement. Debate was also Calvin's ticket to college as he chose to apply to and attend UM to get out of Georgia and to join their debate team. He also chose to major in political science with hopes of enrolling in law school.

UM cultivated Calvin's desire to explore sociopolitical matters and expanded his career endeavors, particularly through his involvement with BSU. Unlike many of his peers, he did not participate in Bridge, and subsequently had a rough first semester, which he attributed to not attending the program. Calvin did not know anyone, he faced roommate conflicts with wealthy white students from Michigan, and racial incidents during the first few weeks of school ravaged the campus while he was also taking 18 units and adjusting to being on the college debate team. He could not attend many BSU meetings in the first semester because of class conflicts, but he joined their email listserv and had the Office of Academic and Multicultural Affairs to help him feel like he belonged on campus. After joining the BSU listserv, he applied and attended the Black Solidarity Conference at Yale with UM's BSU, which was an annual event for BSUs around the country to organize, strategize, and make demands to take back to their respective campuses. Calvin attended this conference his second semester of freshman year, started getting more involved, and was urged to take on a leadership role that next year. BSU was special to him because it was a space like SDLC in high school where he could discuss current events and it helped complement his Black Studies and political science classes. More specifically, he took an Introduction to Africa course where he learned about the African diaspora, fugitive Africans in South America, and was finally able to learn how Blackness was not merely relegated to their oppression. In BSU, he was educated about the powerful contributions of Black students and social movements before him at UM and nationwide, discussed Black leaders in society, and enjoyed participation in a group that catered its discussion and involvement toward issues that students felt needed addressing, like Black maternal health or income disparity. He served on the executive board every year going from historian to treasurer to president, where each position reminded him of BSU's importance, and the power Black students had to counteract racism on campus. Calvin shares that he is forever indebted to Michigan because he and other Black students were extremely intelligent and came from all over the US to attend UM. He iterated that they were less than 10 percent of the population but were at an elite public Big10 institution excelling across the 19 schools and colleges at UM. Even more, he describes their BSU as "the shit, shutting campus down, planning lit parties, and supporting other Black students."

Calvin cherished the opportunity to serve other students through his work in BSU. He used his curricular and cocurricular experiences to prepare himself for law school and to continue learning ways to liberate the Black community.

Calvin is currently in law school planning to explore civil rights law as a career. He is ecstatic that law school has been a space to interrogate and underscore how policies and practices have hindered Black people for centuries, and he can discover ways to solve them. He shares that while he was highly involved at UM, he has only sparingly been involved in student organizations and is indifferent to feeling like he is letting his community down from not being involved in organizations like Black Law Students Association. While he is grateful to just learn and study, but he also misses organizing and nuancing Black issues with Black people. As such, he shares that he has "too much skin in the game" for fighting injustices and racism in the world to merely accept internships and opportunities with companies like Tesla that do not have the same values as he or the Black community. Thus, he hopes to continue studying civil rights law and fight against housing discrimination, help Black families manage death certificates and will negotiations, and support his family in the process to Black liberation.

Jane

Jane is a Black woman from Southfield, Michigan who graduated from the University of Michigan in 2021. She double majored in Biology, Health and Society, and in Gender and Health and is currently working on a Master of Public Health degree at John's Hopkins. Jane is second-generation Cameroonian and gained self-definition of her Blackness through comparing her racialized life experiences in America with conversations with her parents about life in Cameroon and living up to expectations of why her parents moved to the US. Her parents instilled Cameroonian tradition in her through food and culture in the home, but cultural differences existed when she attended school and learned various slang and other communication from her Black-American friends. Jane had to navigate this dualism of home and school. Struggling with her identity, she sometimes felt too Cameroonian for Black people and too Black for Cameroonian people. Jane decided to lean on her schooling experiences to better develop her cultural identity. As first-generation immigrants, Jane's parents were somewhat strict, strongly advocated for college attainment, but were very supportive overall as Jane shares her inspiration as a child:

> I wanted to be a doctor, it was like, "Cool." But it also was like I didn't have to be a doctor. If I said I wanted to be a music producer, "Okay, fine." They would just be like "Be the best at it. If you're going to be a music producer, don't sit here on this couch. What are you doing? Are you making music? Don't tell me things that don't make sense." So, they were always just like, "Do whatever but work hard." And so, I would say that my parents always instilled that. And then also education was big in my household. I used to go to school on Monday to Friday and I had my dad's school where he used to get all these books and teach us units ahead of the classroom so that we would be prepared and be advanced. Because his mentality, he was like, "Your classmates are now your competition, it's everyone all over the world. There's a global competition." So we're very competitive in a sense, but in a nurturing way. I used to have my classwork and then I had my dad's homework. And then he put us in these free Saturday academic programs, my dad and my godfather they were all into this. So we were just going to school all the time, like *all the time*. So education was my thing, I guess. That was the one thing I was like, "Okay, I think I'm good at that." Then I got to college I'm like, "Dang, this needs to be my thing, but I don't know. These teachers are tough so I don't know anymore." But I

> think it was very much my parents and everything from whether it's the church to just speaking in the church, would practice with me. And that played a very big role in where I am. And it was never a facet of money, having the money or not. They did what they could, and I never felt like I didn't have anything even when stuff was hard.

Jane illustrates how her parents' pushed education in a heartfelt way that motivated her to succeed. She was educated at home and in school and the complementary tactics that her father used allowed Jane to thrive in her competitive high school and in summer programs.

Jane's schooling experience was characterized by learning about topics like CRT and Blackness that countered the overwhelmingly white-centered discussions in school. She participated in band and orchestra, competing in large classical music competitions lacking critical mass of Black people as performers or audience attendees, even in metro Detroit. This new reality became her normal as she advanced in classical music or speech and debate. Furthermore, she was heavily involved in summer programs and, one at Michigan State University (MSU), positioned her to learn about social justice, school-to-prison pipelines, and CRT. Jane was a participant in GEAR-UP, where she learned to search Google for summer opportunities (like the one at MSU) and attended other programs, including a science camp at Johns Hopkins University because she wanted free college prep opportunities, knowing that her parents could not afford them. She describes how tremendous the program was in her developing her career passion after completing tenth grade:

> I think that educational disparity was something I was really passionate about in high school, still am, especially after the program at MSU. It is really important to me, but I enjoyed reading the papers and the literature and understanding how history has created these structures that put Black people in, lack of better word, suckish positions. And

> having to go above and beyond to get half of where other people are. And so once I understood that, more on a structural level, because you kind of know. But when you start reading critical race theory and things like that. And fortunately, I was able to read that in the program, because in my high school they don't really teach that. But my summer programs, I was able to be introduced to different authors. That was something that I love to talk about and learn more about. And so that was one issue that I was passionate about and just got engaged in mentoring and working with students who didn't have opportunities that I didn't have because I knew how much...I don't know, how hard it is. And even things that I had, other students who looked like me didn't. So that was really important to me. Education was really big. For college I'm very passionate about health disparities. So that's something that I was aware of, but maternal mortality is what I'm really into like Black women dying, that's just my jam. That's what I like to talk about. And so I think that having the knowledge of history...I'm really big on understanding what's going on in the present day but seeing how it's a replica or it's a different format of things that have happened in the past, honestly. And so I used to not like how US textbooks glorified white people...So I think my extracurriculars helped me find those passions.

After experiencing this camp, Jane developed the language and mental framework to counter the damaging effects of whiteness in textbooks and curricula. She learned to integrate topics as best she could, but disliking US history and government because the teachers and textbooks failed to share opposing sides of the narratives. More than this, her high school was an academic-focused prep school that required a test for entry and had no competitive sports teams. Because of that environment, college success was not a matter of if she would attend, but where; she joined debate and robotics competitions with very highly motivated and achieving students that pushed Jane to excel. She knew that success in these activities would aid in her admission to Columbia, where she originally hoped to attend, but due to funding and being waitlisted, she attended UM.

Jane's welcome to UM was marked by Black Student Welcome Week mixers and programs that introduced her to Black peer networks and reiterated her commitment to being a Black woman in STEM, where she quickly learned how to balance being a student-activist. Although she did not participate in Bridge, several students from her high school had, and they all attended BSU and NAACP meetings in the Fall. She and her friends needed BSU and NAACP to counteract the social and personal impact of countless racial incidents that occurred starting at the beginning of the school year; this was instrumental in Jade learning to adjust to UM's academic environment. She elaborates on how she negotiated the academic and social tensions:

> The first few weeks of college were actually crazy. I think it was a lot of protests. It's just so interesting like I was protesting the second or third week of school. What were we protesting about? It was just so many things were happening. It was a lot of racial slurs, the n-word on people's dorms. We have a big rock where you paint it. So racial slurs were painted about different communities. So, it was a lot of protests and asking for the president to act. And so, I'm going to marches and protests and then these white men coming out the car and punching students. And it's so crazy because when I think about it ... I'm somebody who likes to reflect so I was looking at photos and timelines and I'm like, "This is the second or third week of school. I'm going to Black Student Union meetings and learning how to mobilize when we're trying to transition into learning how to use Canvas." And so it was like, I feel like I grew up really fast the first week of school

because there was just so much going on. And I asked the upperclassmen I'm like, "Dang, they didn't put this on a brochure. I didn't know this is what y'all had going on at Michigan." Because it was just a lot of that: protesting on the president's lawn, staying up for long hours, posters. Some of my classmates led and coordinated protests and then got into disagreement with leaders of the BSU because they were doing their own thing as freshmen. They didn't necessarily see what the BSU was doing as helpful so they did their own things. So had their own opinions about upperclassmen. It's interesting when you're a freshman because you've only been here a week but some of the homies are like in the news with blow horns and all of that. And so, it was crazy because I felt like it was so far into semester but it really wasn't. And I think the dualism of that is that like, yeah, you can be in a protest and all that. But you still got to go to class, you still have to take an exam. I literally was with my friend. We were on our laptop sitting on the grass in front of the president's house. We were at the protest, but we also had to do our homework. So, we were typing up assignments at a protest, one minute standing, one minute sitting. Because at the end of the day it doesn't matter, you still must compete against the same people whether or not that's a priority for them you're still ... In certain aspects you're not put on the same platform or the same level. But when it comes to performing, you are. And it's different because how is someone supposed to perform the same when they have to think about X, Y, and Z? And if you don't think about X, Y, and Z, it is difficult because you just want to be a part. You want to stand up, but you still need to excel, I still need to get good grades, I still need to go to class. And then my white ass roommate didn’t know what was going on, and I’m like how?! But I guess I’ll teach you today.

In her interview Jane detailed how challenging it was for her and other students to gain familiarity with the university's social and academic environment navigating student interface sites and adjusting to college demands while she and other students are exposed to racial incidents on campus during the first few weeks of the semester. Jane continues sharing that the Black student culture at UM provided her space to learn and act upon issues that mattered. After attending Black Welcome Week activities hosted by more than two dozen Black student organizations, Jane learned the history of student activism at the university, was astonished by the leadership of upperclassmen at UM and even got connected to an organization for Black students in STEM that helped shape her passion for STEM as a career and inspire youth to pursue STEM careers as well. Jane joined the Black Undergraduates in Medicine Association (BUMA) and climbed to leadership as vice-president. BUMA used the framework of the BSU to both provide a shared space for Black STEM students and create service initiatives to support Black youth's interest in pursuing STEM. Jane had participated in civic engagement since middle school, so she especially valued the opportunity to do so in college after learning about differing systemic and structural factors hindering Black people's experience with and access to STEM fields of study and careers.

Jane double-majored with degrees in the natural sciences and social sciences, wherein she learned about racial disparities in STEM education and careers and prepare herself for graduate school. During her interview, Jane emphasizes her love for the social sciences and learning of the many social factors impacting Black people's health, particularly when the fields of natural sciences do not always value this knowledge. She shares that one of the more impactful classes taught on Black Women's Sexual Health and Reproduction taught her how health issues were discussed in the media as being spread from the continent of Africa and how the "Black body was seen as inherently unwell, inherently sick physically and mentally, thus creating the structure that we have now where Black people are seen as lesser than and do not receive proper treatment or support." She laments national organizations in STEM suggesting students learn the social interactions of health and medicine while failing to provide curricula to support their suggestions. Still, she loves how emboldened she was by figuring out how to balance natural and life science in crafting her future academic and professional direction. Beyond this, she also volunteered with the sexual assault prevention office on campus that helped her apply theory and practice given the #BlackAtUMich allegations effecting the Black community. Specifically, she aimed to support Black women that were survivors of sexual assaults while also connecting with male friends in fraternities and athletics to do prevention type programming. This was contrary to many of her women peers, who just wanted to shun the act but she offered grace to the men. She shares that attending the university during her years as an undergraduate was quite challenging because she studied public health, worked in support services for victims of assault, and had to (un)learn ways to support and advocate for Black people and Black students at UM. The culmination of these experiences has informed her next steps toward graduate school and the future.

Jane is completing a Master of Public Health in Biotechnology and seeks opportunities to both learn and grow in medicine and advocate for Black communities to grow in STEM careers and healthy environments. While she has not been immersed in student organizations and service as she once was at UM, she is committed to mentoring students who want to attend graduate school and to volunteering at local organizations that support Black students' development. Furthermore, Jane is one of few Black students studying biotechnology in the nation, so she hopes to expand opportunities for Black people to learn about the field that allows her to conduct public health work and study medicine in ways that can transform the Black community. She sees this work as her form of Black liberation.

LJ

LJ is a mixed-race Black and white woman and veteran from Gurney, Illinois who graduated from UM in 2020, majoring in Movement Science. She served in the Marine Corps for five years before transferring to UM. Her understanding of Blackness was shaped by growing up primarily with her mom, who is white, and her experiences in the military. Her mom was a teacher for an under resourced Chicago Public School, while LJ attended a more resourced school outside of her district. Because her mom and dad were separated, her mother tried to have conversations and support LJ's racial development, but the conversations were surface level, and she could only go so far in empathizing with the experiences her daughter faced. LJ's mom struggled to teach LJ about her Black identity or to talk about things that mattered like Black hair. However, she did advocate for LJ's racial identity development in describing how certain comments from bullies at LJ's middle school were unacceptable behavior such as her being called oreo; or even challenging LJ's white aunt that called LJ the N word during a phone call and was subsequently ousted from interacting with LJ. In the military and in school, LJ never felt Black enough for Black peers she encountered nor white enough for the white peers and fellow students. As an only child coming from a white low-income family, LJ had limited opportunities to develop a strong Black identity. She maintained college aspirations and wanted to make a difference for her and her family, despite being ostracized for being mixed.

LJ's mother stressed the need for her to attend college and make the most of her experiences. Knowing that her mom could not afford to send her to college, LJ realized she would need to find out her most affordable option. Her high school was elite and she excelled at taking AP and honors courses, but she deemed enlisting in the military as the most cost-efficient post-high school option. It would also allow her to travel, since she had ventured far from her neighborhood, and would fuel her passion to give back to others. Her high school did not facilitate or generally have conversations about race and gender and how people that have those salient identities might experience differing forms of discrimination, especially in the military; LJ discovered how that played out quickly. The first time that she saw, or experienced overt racism and sexism occurred when she became a Marine:

> Obviously, the military is basically a good old boys club. It's not a joke, it really is. I did work in a Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) where there was... MOS is my job. There were women around, but also it was still few and far between. Obviously, there are lots of jokes, and inappropriate jokes, just in general. I mean, nothing ever happened to me, but I do know that a couple of the women that were with me, a few of them had been sexually assaulted, and that is a huge problem in the military. And it's one of those things, it just gets brushed under the rug. And usually, the victim is the one who ends up getting in trouble, which is just so wrong. But I mean, overall, it was a good experience. There are a few things where I was just like, "Eh, not really for me." That was also the first time in my life where I personally met someone who... I mean, I don't think they were a white supremacist, but they were racist. I mean, my man's had a Confederate flag tattooed on him. Just random things like that. People from Alabama, Tennessee, who've never seen a Black person before in their life. I think that's also a big thing in the military is that you get people from literally everywhere, and you just throw them together and hope for the best. So, it's a culture shock for everyone involved.

LJ describes how her experiences in the military generated a culture shock when she had to learn to deal with white men issuing disparaging comments about her race and abilities. She describes that these situations spilled into her experience of seeking medical attention with a military healthcare provider after a painful injury. After three scheduled visits, the white male healthcare providers constantly glossed over her injuries saying that she was fine when she was not. She was not, she had a very bad cut and limited mobility to her leg, to which she still attends physical therapy for today. Lamenting their lack of support, LJ details this experience as fueling her passion for going into healthcare and disrupting its predominantly white male narrative that does not consider women, Black people, and simply caters to white people's needs and desires. Thus, she completed her time in the military and obtained her associate's degree in general studies then focused her efforts on enrolling in medical school or enter the healthcare field directly. She spent the year searching schools, watched a UM football game, and applied to their school of kinesiology. A Black woman advisor in the school named Latoya invited LJ and her mother to UM to check out the program, creating a welcoming environment for them, and LJ decided that Michigan would be her new home. After committing to UM, she sought ways to gain admittance to medical school.

LJ's first semester at UM was quite rough until she connected with CSP and immersed herself in supportive Black student organizations that helped solidify her reasons for her healthcare career endeavors by validating her pursuit through staff and faculty supports. She was unprepared for the rigor of UM despite completing her AA degree and excelling in high school. She shares how entering the university at 23 years of age (rather than her younger first-year peers), as a veteran, and with her family not being wealthy, LJ failed to connect with students who were wealthier and wanted to party and socialize too often for her liking. She befriended a white woman in her apartment, but after the 2016 presidential election and enduring disparaging comments from the woman about Black people only being admitted because of affirmative action and the student's admiration for the 45th President, LJ could no longer communicate with her. CSP became a guiding light for LJ her second semester. She was connected with the director Dr. Waters through a casual student interaction at the veteran's center, and LJ took an introductory socialization and research exploration class through the program that catapulted her success and community building opportunities for Black transfer students moving forward. She shares how monumental CSP was:

> So, Dr. Waters, he was in charge as the Director of CSP, at the time that I was there. A powerful Black man, very approachable, very nice. And then, in the class, they taught you the history of Michigan, the history of CSP, and why it's important. They talk to us about career fairs, and resumes, and how to plan your three or four years at Michigan. How to approach and talk to professors, things like that, because I had no idea about any of that. I was like, "I'm never going to talk to a professor in my life, basically." I was like, "I'm just there. Get in, get out, and I'm done." But they're like, "No, when they have office hours, literally just go see them." And I was like, "What? I can actually do that." I didn't realize. I didn't know that. And, I think those were some defining moments for me, because I knew nothing about college. I didn't even know how I got in honestly, because I knew nothing about anything.

LJ describes how CSP demystified the collegiate environment and made her like she belonged. CSP eventually became a space for LJ to learn, grow, and develop—leading to her deeper involvement with student organizations and Black Studies to support her endeavors.

While at UM, LJ joined the Black Undergraduate Medical Association (BUMA) which helped aspiring healthcare and medical school students know of tools and resources to support their academic and professional goals while also inspiring youth to pursue careers. Because she was introduced to CSP and BUMA, she felt less connected to the BSU. She felt that her Black transfer community in CSP and her Black healthcare identity through BUMA were being tapped into, so although she knew of social and activist events going on in BSU, she was not active. She shared that because, throughout her life, both Black and white students would call her an Oreo or give her strange looks, LJ did not attend large events and activities because she would rather not feel like an outsider. However, in BUMA and CSP she was able to discuss issues impacting Black students in STEM, attend seminars that counteracted 45's actions and agenda, and learn about Black studies courses. In fact, after taking a Black studies elective course, a Black professor, Dr. Robinson, offered LJ an opportunity to participate in research on the impact of yoga experiences on Black children. LJ shares that she did not know what research was, but she was unclear of her direction in STEM as a career so research, so she gave it a shot. In studying Black children's psychosocial experiences in healthcare, she gained new perspective on how she hoped to tackle healthcare. Overall, LJ's few years at UM were fueled by her connection to CSP, BUMA, and learning more about her racial and academic identities. She sought to enhance her skillset in the healthcare field by obtaining a master's degree and seeking to disrupt racism and sexism in healthcare through sports.

To that latter goal, LJ recently completed a Master's in Athletic Training in South Carolina, where she focused on women's sports and healthcare. She shares how her research experience in undergrad helped her better consider students' holistic experiences when supporting their needs. As such, working with women athletes that do not receive the same resources as men and seeking to help under resourced communities. Due to her experiences in BUMA, LJ seeks more ways to learn and advocate for Black and historically marginalized communities through healthcare.

Leslie

Leslie is a Black woman from Detroit and graduated from the University of Michigan, majoring in Gender and Health with a minor in Community Action and Social Change in 2018. Leslie is the eldest of four girls and grew up attending a Pentecostal church, where her parents emphasized participation in church and cultivating a spiritual foundation in their children. One of her siblings had autism and their family experienced many barriers to obtaining access to resources and services in Detroit. Having her own speech disability, Leslie and her family sought creative ways to find support by traveling to other counties and locations to meet with speech pathologists and doctors. Additionally, her hometown was considered a food desert and their family went nights without meals; as such, Leslie began developing an understanding of public health issues. Her parents had some college experience and they also raised Leslie in a very pro-Black home where Leslie learned about Kwanzaa, truths counter to her school's notions of slavery, and Juneteenth. As such, she developed a very strong Black identity and understanding of the power of the Black community. She elaborates:

> Blackness was always a positive trajectory for me and it's literally because of what my parents instilled. I only played with Black Barbies. My sisters only played with Black Barbie dolls. Like I said, I knew of Kwanzaa. We celebrated Kwanzaa. It was always acknowledged in the household. I grew up in a Black church. Like I said, there were just different spaces I was in that just affirmed my identity as a Black girl. Outside of senior year and being called names, I never ever felt bad for the color of my skin or felt insecure

> and a lot of people cannot say that, but I'm grateful to say that I never had that feeling, and like I said, I've always been... When things had occurred or when I saw injustices in the media of that nature, especially with social media. Social media was an emergence in my kid, teenage years, and even in the ignorance that I did see online, it never seeped into me and then even though I wasn't fully encountering... but that's because I wasn't really surrounded by it. Yeah, just so when it comes to injustices and things of that nature, I was always fully knowledgeable and aware and even attending forums around surrounding them and just gaining outside knowledge, outside of school of course, and like I said, because I was mostly in predominantly white spaces, not to say... I won't say that that was a shun for me or anything. It was hidden from me, which is more so like this is where I grew up in and outside of the doctors and things like that, I wasn't fully interactive, and the one thing I would say is that self-hate is a thing too, and I saw a lot of self-hate from Black women and men and making comments about like people have darker skin and things of that nature, but like I said, that never really like seeped into my skin personally per se. Yeah, like Blackness has always meant, like when we say before Blacks, the term Black as what it was coined, I knew of that.

Leslie developed a strong Black identity inspired by her parents equipping her and her sisters with Black barbies and teaching them of Black traditions and spiritual connections. Her mother chose to be a stay-at-home mom and cultivate her children’s success while her husband worked as a manager at a retail store, which both aided in supporting Leslie holistically. They were very strict, not allowing Leslie and her sisters to play with other girls outside of their church community and keeping them in the house to cultivate their success and to keep them out of trouble. The culmination of these experiences encouraged Leslie to advocate for marginalized communities, develop a commitment to Black people, and concern for public health.

Leslie’s schooling experiences furthered her understanding of disparities, access, and more struggles in the Black community. She attended Detroit Public Schools, which is known as a very under resourced school district in the US. While her parents taught her the significance of her Black identity, her schools did not match that energy. She attended a struggling elementary school in the middle of Detroit, and they did not have the resources to support the success that her parents wanted for Leslie and her sister. However, Leslie was sort of a rebel. While she and her sisters progressed in school, their parents sought out and placed them in free summer and enrichment activities. One of her sisters became valedictorian of their middle school and was placed in Math Core, a program for high-achieving students to study high-level math techniques and practices. Leslie, however, took a while to develop, but notes that her saving grace was being in Upward Bound during high school; the program inspired Leslie to attend college:

> Every summer Upward Bound would take us on a college road trip based on an area of the country, and they're federally obligated to tour around the State of Michigan, which was perfect for me because like I said, my parents were strict, but they weren't too strict. So, we stayed on campus, we did ACT prep, college prep, and then at the end of the program, we would do our college tour and this college tour that year, we ventured around Michigan and my parents were always like, "We'll let you go where you want to go, but it got to be in the State of Michigan." They would not let me go out of state. So, I'm like, "Okay." So, when we toured the State of Michigan I knew that Wayne was probably going to be an option. Wayne was cool. I've been at Wayne State my entire life, like going to different programs that my parents would put me in. So, I didn't want to stay

> there. When we toured, I did not like Michigan State as in Farmland. Saginaw Valley is in Farmland. Grand Valley's far. Central was a contender. Central was a contender, and we didn't even tour Michigan formally.

Leslie’s assessment of her experiences in Upward Bound and her college going process illustrates how UM inspired her. She named loving the vibe of Michigan and it being unique from her hometown that sparked her interest and made it exciting to want to attend. Upward Bound-hosted workshops, activities, and travels provided Leslie with an opportunity to see her future self at UM. She was astonished at the architecture of the buildings and the prestige of what UM stood for, despite her not thinking that she would attend such a large school in her middle school years because of her lack of academic focus on school. She mentioned that her parents connected her to a service down the street from her home that knew her schools were not promoting college attainment, so they helped with ACT preparation and explained the application process for Black and minoritized students. As a result, Leslie and five other students from her neighborhood were admitted to UM and the Bridge program.

Bridge was a monumental experience for Leslie, particularly after enduring a very tragic loss at the close of the program. Leslie applied to Bridge knowing that as a low-income Black woman, barriers existed to her future success, and although she critiqued how most Black students at UM must go through Bridge to gain admission to the university, she was grateful for the program helping her socialize and interact with Black students and build the community needed for admission and success at the institution. Leslie explains that she questioned her worth and belonging once she arrived at Bridge because before arriving, she used various popular hashtags like #BeingBlackAtUofM to assess the campus climate from current students that shared many of their trying and triumphant experiences at the institution. Unfortunately, her own trying experience took a turn when her mom and little sister passed away in a traumatic house fire. Because of this experience, her first year was difficult as she sought ways to manage grief, maintain her major, and acclimate to the campus. However, Bridge—comprised mostly of Black students— still prepared her with a foundation of students from her hometown, and new friends that helped her get involved and become active in organizations. They were also instrumental as she progressed deeper into her major during her second year. Her major selection and career interest were sparked by her family's tragedy: "It was like an uprooting of your home, your childhood home, and losing two close family members to you, especially a woman that you saw yourself in, things like that. So, that's what the gender and health major came from." She seized moments in the BSU and on campus to foster that interest and build community with her peers. Her dad continued supporting their family and encouraged her to both ease into college by finding community and return home when it got too tough to manage the losses.

Leslie reestablished herself her third year on campus as a dedicated student leader while excelling as a Black woman majoring in STEM. Her sister joined her on campus as a freshman and Leslie supported her friends who had joined the BSU executive board and helped expose her to attending Greek parties, BSU events, and advocating for the community. She then stumbled upon and was selected as vice-president of BSU her junior year after she attended elections, and no one ran. Because her friends witnessed her leadership in a Black Bible study group and a mentorship program, they encouraged her to apply, and she was thrust into the leadership role. That year she learned more about advocacy and activism when a "Black RA's door was vandalized with 'Nigga,' an organization was bringing Richard Spencer to campus [a controversial alt-right speaker that Black students had disdain for], and Black students were contesting President Schlissel, who is leaving a year earlier than his expected term." The BSU's general body meeting was an opportunity for her to coordinate actions for students to participate in and she felt honored to be part of an organization that is looked at nationally to determine policy and practices because of its historical role in supporting or leading Black social movements. However, despite the love and support she experienced from BSU, she named how the organization and the university remain complicit in patriarchal misogynistic issues. Particularly, while she was running for vice-president of BSU, a man in a Black fraternity sought to sabotage the election and run after having not participated in the organization for most of the year while also not paying his dues. After seeing that Leslie was running unopposed, he tried to get his fraternity and others to vote against her and insert his name. Even after losing, he continued spouting negative remarks about her leadership in GroupMe messages. However, she continued focusing on advocating for the Black community at-large, but still wished that Black men would support her more intentionally instead of inflicting harm. Additionally, as an alumna, she witnessed men of the Black community be named as people that caused sexual harm to women that became quite popular on Twitter via the hashtag, #BlackAtUM. She emphasized that the stories occurred within her time at the university and she hoped that victims would find the support needed. Both situations had her taken aback because she spent considerable time advocating for Black men and their needs, yet her and her Black women peers faced numerous instances of these men failing to reciprocate support them. Majoring in public health, she aimed to learn about and address similar issues.

Leslie's passion for gender and public health grew tremendously at various moments of her life, especially the loss of her mother and sister:

> So, yeah, I chose the community action and social change minor before I chose the major technically. So, it just really builds up your skills and community work and activism, and

> being a proper ally, and then I decided to major in gender and health because I ultimately became interested in public health, and I did not know what public health was until I got to Michigan. And gender and health is basically focusing on women's health, reproductive health. What specifically sparked my interest in public health is I took a class titled The Black Feminist Perspective on Health, and I learned a lot and just I learned a lot about Black women's health disparities, the history of it, and at that time where we are now and what can we do to cultivate that and it really made me reflect on my experiences as a Black woman in health and the experiences of my mother, and I had a sister that was autistic and just these barriers that's not only placed on Black women, but these barriers that are placed in health in general. I'm from Detroit, so there is a lot of food deserts from where I'm from, and I just remember, I would venture out to the suburbs to go to physical therapy. I mean, physical and verbal therapy for my sister because it was nowhere feasible in my area. So, it was just a lot of stuff that was just coming out and helping me not only discover my career path or my interest in public health, but also myself as a Black woman.

Leslie shares how her introduction to studying public health was through a Black feminist perspective that demystified what it meant to study public health and allowed her opportunities to incorporate her own experiences in the field. She was later able to use that public health perspective in her graduate program and future endeavors.

Leslie is completing a Master of Public Health degree at the University of Michigan. She hopes to conduct public health consulting focused on understanding policies and practices impacting Black people's health. She struggles with finding the thin line between impact and making money, but is confident that her talents will be rewarded given her love for community.

She shares that her mom was performing public health work, but it was not validated by a degree, so she hopes to disrupt patriarchy, support victims of sexual assault, and protect Black women in public health. That is her form of Black liberation, and she feels indebted not only to her family, but also the many Black leaders in BSU and society that have paved the way for her to impact lives.

Malisa

Malisa is a Black woman from the city of Detroit, Southfield and Farmington Hills, Michigan, and an alumna of the University of Michigan. She graduated in 2021 majoring in Afro-American and African Studies with a minor in Education for Empowerment. She is currently in a Ph.D. program at Indiana University. Malisa comes from a two-parent household before her parents later divorced and her mom remarried to her stepfather. She grew up in one of the oldest churches in Southfield where her faith increased exponentially and instilled in her a sense of purpose and a frame by which to base future decisions. Her P12 experience and hometown were predominantly Black, and she heard stories from her grandparents about the many contributions of Black people from the city and around the world. She was also homeschooled by her grandparents after school and in the summer. Her schooling experiences shaped her Blackness because as a student in the predominantly Black Southfield school district, learning and excelling academically were not normalized or glorified. Her full-figure frame caused a lot of unwanted attention from Black men, and she began discovering what it meant for society to project upon her what a woman is and what her own experiences and family's definition of womanhood meant. Her perspective of that was tough given that the world wanted her to be promiscuous, but her faith and family encouraged her to stay focused in class and leave boys alone. Moreover, in middle school she was teased as the "white girl" or would be the student that everyone leaned on for answers and support, because, as she claimed, the students in the school did not earn the same high grades or have the same aspirations or familial structure she did. She continues saying that, from her perspective, Blackness was materialistic in many ways because it stemmed from having the latest name brand named outfits and fitting the description of what a Black woman should be according to her friends that were not inspiring her to be better. She shares those friends were using slang that she did not know, singing rap songs she was unfamiliar with, and doing teenage activities that would have her scolded by her parents. Malisa, meanwhile, was using stronger vernacular and did not dance as well as other students, so she struggled with her identity as a Black person and a Black girl/woman. At the intersection of becoming a Black woman from seeing her grandmother's and her mother's interactions with their significant others in which "the women would go the extra mile and the men would not," she was even more confused on relationships between men and women. The men's comments and interactions with the matriarchs made it seem as if they did not love their partners and it caused uneasiness in Malisa's life and informed her understanding of relationships between men and women. She reflects on the experiences of Black women, questioning if she will be relegated to a lesser status:

> I've heard and read all different types of stories of Black women since we've arrived in America, it's very traumatic, but it's also strange how this is our culture as Black women: to be sexually assaulted, to be mistreated, to be used to bring children to the world for different purposes, that all different types of things can happen. But the responsibility of the welfare of the world lies on women, yet Black women especially and we get treated this way so often, where men are allowed to treat them that way. And I never really understood why.

Malisa as a teenager rarely had an opportunity to learn about how to challenge or question why women were relegated to the margins. The older she became she had more conversation with her mother and grandmother concerning relationships with men and became conscious of those dynamics because she was better able to contextualize the power of Black women and the strength of marriage—as opposed to judging their response for persisting through hurt or harm caused by the men in her family. Moreover, she shares that her mom denounced and reprimanded her for voicing opinions on “grown folks’ business,” until Malisa was in a relationship of her own to navigate. However, even as an adult, Malisa shares that she still has unanswered questions from her childhood and because of her gained wisdom she feels defeated that many of them may never be answered, which is tough because she wants to understand for her wellbeing. Even more, Malisa was silenced as a young Black girl and aims to encourage Black women to share their experiences so that other Black girls do not have to sit in their pain and anguish from things they have seen or heard in their households or their lives. Although she did not have the language to name this when it occurred in high school or college, reflecting on patriarchy and gender domination contemporarily in a doctorate program, she underscores how her upbringing influenced how she perceived the world, including school.

Her community valued education and, in school, Malisa knew she would attend college and later determined what would be her focus. She did not quite know what she wanted to do but was always concerned about the welfare of Black people. Growing up in a Black community, attending a Black church, and attending a BLM rally all sparked her interest to study or learn more about Black people—but she was unaware of Black studies. Sociopolitical issues shaped her a bit, but she did not really know what her lane or angle to address those concerns would be. Although her high school had some conversations in a class or two about activism or strong

Black leaders like Angela Davis, she did not feel prepared to discuss them beyond the classroom. In 10th grade, however, GEAR-UP became a very integral space for her to learn. They hosted community service opportunities, taught her about inequities in education, and supported her collegiate endeavors. They empowered her, let her know she was worthy, and equipped her with resources. She shares the power of her experience in informing why she wanted to pursue college. She met the first non-medical doctor, attended conferences in New York and Chicago for spring break, and visited colleges in Michigan. She volunteered in inner city schools and understood the intersection of school and service. She expounds on the experience sharing:

> The big shift for me was to know GEAR-UP made this stuff feel like it was important, but that collegiate spaces don't. They expect us to come, but not necessarily support you holistically. Whereas GEAR-UP understood us for our demographic, for our age. I want to say they respected it, of course, but they also treated us like we mattered. At UM, we had to fight to feel like we mattered.

GEAR-UP was a huge component of Malisa's college-going process and helped her solidify a path in helping people through education enrichment. She compares the support that she received from GEAR-UP to that of UM.

Malisa seized every moment of UM participating in Bridge, becoming a student leader, and setting the foundation for her career endeavors. She gained conditional admission into Bridge and took a writing, math, and general social science seminar. She was grateful that Bridge helped acclimate her to campus and get connected with students, staff, and faculty that supported her transition to college. During Bridge, Black students taught Malisa "how to finesse,"—meaning tips on how to expose the hidden curriculum of the institution—like telling her that if the work would not be on the exam, then she likely did not have to read it. Bridge demystified the college experience for her because she thought that she needed to read everything. However, she was also sleeping in class and learning how to be a college student, so the experience helped her adjust among hundreds of Black and Brown students at UM. As the fall of her first year began, she was not only trying to adjust to the now predominantly white campus and did not fully understand how she should study. Simultaneously, she questioned if she should protest racial incidents because an RA had "Nigga" written on their door and that was where she saw Black students doing to build community and demand equity. She elaborates saying that as a first year, there was a lot thrown at her from "learning about what LGBTQ means to why Black folks at Michigan are always mad at administration to figuring out if [she] would not drop out and do something else to finding a Christian organization and determining how those values are (in)congruent with UM." Her difficulties adjusting were addressed by Black students in BSU facilitating her involvement, which also sometimes took a toll on her mental health.

BSU both provided Malisa an opportunity to explore her identity and social development while giving her space to critique the investment students place in the organization itself and the deleterious effects it may have on their mental health. Malisa shares:

> BSU was like, as a Black person, where you're born, where you get schooled. You going to BSU, you meet other Black people. That's where you meet the upperclassmen and meet people who you see popular, people who went to high school with you in leadership positions. And this is just what people do. You go take on leadership roles, and you get that experience, and you get involved, and you make a difference. You're going to inspire somebody else to do it. That's the culture: where Black people are helping Black people. But I don't know if it's because we thought we had an obligation to, but that's just what I saw the people that I admired on campus. They had a ton of leadership roles, doing all

> types of stuff, and I did not realize how much they suffered academically because of that. But because the academics, they were important, but they weren't everything to them. And that's what I was beginning to fall into myself.

Malisa shares that the "Black at UM" culture normalizes that students get involved and make a difference on the campus; most Black students are socialized into that environment. While she did not join the BSU executive board as connected to my initial assumptions about Black students' involvement, she did continue to explore Black issues inside and outside of the classroom by taking Black studies courses and seeking to apply strategies she learned in them through her leadership. She justifies her reasoning for skipping classes inside and outside this subject area by sharing that although Black studies courses taught her about issues, the tests and papers did not make her feel as if she could make a difference—leadership did. As she progressed in college, Malisa became an orientation leader and got invited in a special alumni event featuring BSU leaders from the 1960s who spoke about their work in creating social movements that transformed UM. This inspired Malisa to take on and do more to advance Black students' success in college. In fact, she was the president of Black Welcome Week, which is a subset of the university's welcome week. Black Welcome Week provides a counterspace for Black students to learn *the real* experience for students at UM. She appreciates how many of her mentees from the welcome week's executive board and its participants also joined her sorority, seeking to serve the community and looking to Malisa as a mentor. BSU and Black studies provided her space to learn about and interrogate issues that mattered to her, and she hopes to continue those efforts through her doctoral program.

Malisa is completing a Ph.D. in Black studies. She shares that her experiences at UM fighting to make an institution work for Black students, when it was not designed with them in mind, is what inspires her to continue advocating for the Black community. Her interests have expanded, though she still does not quite understand what she wants to do with her interest or passion:

> A working title is diplomat for systemic transformation. So, I want to understand how different systems that function on a global scale may infringe upon the human rights of Black people and what can be done to change those systems. I want to change those systems so that Black people can be well on a global scale, like what can be done because we are still all so connected and our struggles look different, and it's complex, it's a lot, but I want to understand human rights, Black internationalism, and how we can improve our lives because there's so much more than just what needs to be done in the United States. And I wanna help to make that happen.

Malisa has a transnational outlook on Blackness that was formed by her upbringing, schooling, and collegiate experiences. She hopes to disrupt systems and inspire students along the journey.

Martin

Martin is a Black man from Merrillville, Indiana and graduated from the University of Michigan in 2020. He majored in Viola Performance with a minor in Performing Arts Management and is currently finishing a Master’s in Performing Arts Management at IU. Martin grew up in a two-parent household before his parents divorced and his father moved down the street from his home with his mother. Martin shares that his hometown is very crime-ridden and impoverished, but his mother (a nurse) and father (a firefighter) provided him with every opportunity to learn and engage in the activities he wanted. He understood his Black identity through his predominantly Black hometown, where he did not have to question what Blackness meant because white people were the minority so he saw various facets of Black people loving anime, rap, or other engaging activities that may not seem like the norm in the community. However, after the killing of Trayvon Martin, Martin's parents began having "the talk" consisting of what racism is and how he should conduct himself if he were stopped by the police and other directions for protection. He felt that issues in society pertaining to Blackness or social justice were not as apparent to him at the time because Black people in his community were the majority and had not questioned much about what was happening until he began to have those conversations in college. The dissonance was that he faced domination and saw how it impacted his family and community, but he did not understand how to interrogate the domination until a decade later in graduate school. Thus, his schooling experience was an opportunity to explore more of his passion and where he discovered his love for music—but failed to consider identities and communities that mattered to him simultaneously.

Martin fell in love with music after a music teacher, Miss. Kowalski, told his parents that he really loved it and was actually good, so they should allow him to explore what that meant. Martin always had high aspirations and knew that he wanted a graduate degree, maybe in psychology. After Martin's father had him try karate and wrestling, Martin took a music class and was inspired to further pursue the viola when high school students showed him their instruments and he became instantly enamored. In this class, Ms. Kowalski placed Martin in second chair of the orchestra and knew that he needed additional assistance to perfect his craft and make it a career. After securing confirmation from Martin's parents, she connected him with Ms. Frisk, who taught private music lessons. Martin shares how crucial these two white women were to be supporting his new endeavor:

> I feel like most of the teachers that I was close to, Ms. Kowalski, Ms. Frisk, these were two culturally cognizant white women that were aware of the environment, and they were

> conscious of the fact that [racism and the lack of Black students in music] might have an impact on me. They were aware of what was going on in the media, and when she was telling me about colleges to apply to, she was like, "Yes, [UM’s] a PWI, but the music school was a really safe space for these types of conversations, and things like that." So, I always felt really taken care of in that regard. But yeah, so I had lessons with her weekly. With a teacher of her level, she should have been charging me at least $150 an hour, and she had a philosophy that anybody who wanted to learn viola would be able to learn viola if she was able to do so. So, she allowed me to pay $20 a session essentially, which is what she did for most students in the area, but it wasn't until I had decided I really wanted to do this that we started having lessons maybe two or three times a week. And it would just go how long it needed to go for me to get the information that I needed—an hour, sometimes it'd be three, because I mean, I had to get it together, you know? Because I decided in one year that I wanted to do something that students had been prepping for since the age of five. So, we had a lot to do. And even in those moments, she still was only charging me $20 for a three-hour lesson when she should be at a rate of between 120 and 150. So that's the type of like... She's in my history books. So, I am where I am because of what she did for me.

Martin shares that his P12 schooling and college preparation process were shaped by validating teachers that traveled hours and discounted services to see him flourish with his craft. As white women, they had limited conversations about racism and sociopolitical events occurring, but Martin wanted to perfect his craft and those issues were not at the forefront of his mind. He shares that he merely knew that overwhelmingly white and Asian students were the norm in orchestra but never questioned why/how that impacted him until much later in life. While those student populations paid $2500 and more for their instruments, his cost much less and were of lesser quality. With the help of his teachers, Martin stated that he still found opportunities to participate in competitions and musicals, but he had to work exponentially harder to compete with his non-Black peers. Nevertheless, Martin performed well academically in high school and chose to pursue music at UM.

UM helped develop Martin's music skillset, aided in his Black identity, and amplified his concern with addressing societal issues. He entered the university in "grind mode" because he felt outpaced by his white and Asian peers in the program. He sensed early on how the white environment shaped his existence —in his hometown he could escape to the safety of his home in Merrillville after his music performance in distanced predominantly white towns but could not do so in Ann Arbor. During his freshman year, he met a Black student named Susie who introduced him to the BSU at UM and added him to the Black undergraduate student GroupMe messaging application. He experienced "a spoonful of culture and heard of the multicultural center and Black floor in the residence hall and was even able to join the Black homecoming events but felt [he] had to go out of his way to find and explore these opportunities." He could not regularly participate in BSU and other events because the music majors were separated from the rest of campus, so he felt more like an affiliate than a member. However, he did immerse himself in leadership opportunities, becoming an RA his junior year and engaging in conversation with his peers and staff members on ways to address the sexual assault that was largely ravaging the Black community and, more broadly, UM. Beyond this, he and colleagues in the arts used the BSU's structure as a framework and established the Black Leaders in Arts Collective (BLAC), which focused on studying and celebrating Blackness in music beyond classical traditions and its racist, elitist, and misogynist nature. As the treasurer, he helped the organization stay focused on its mission and purpose, which became aligned with his performance arts management minor. As Martin became more engaged in student organizations and after taking a course his senior year with Professor Gordon, who started a private organization called The Sphinx, Martin’s passion for music performance, performance management, and equity-based issues merged and dovetailed into his purpose.

Martin began volunteering with the Sphinx organization at the tail end of his senior year in college and started critiquing and hoping to expose racism and the erasure of history in music for the Black community. He volunteered at a Sphinx conference and saw and appreciated that the organization providing a space for Black musicians, artists, and managers to hone their artistry and excel in the field. After a few conference sessions, he realized that Black people in the music field, classical namely, were fed up with the erasure of history, selection of lead performers, and the use of Blackface to perform some of the classic musicals. Martin illustrates how these experiences have emboldened him to fight this structure and create pathways for Black and historically marginalized communities to thrive:

> the classical music field in and of itself is historically and inherently very racist, very elitist, misogynist, it's a lot, and there is a huge push right now to sort of get rid of that and abolish that. So, we're kind of having this sort of awakening moment, and it's kind of putting a lot of Black musicians in a space of like, "Am I being tokenized right now? Did I get this because I earned it? Did I get this because they needed to diversify their orchestra, so they can look modern?" What does that look like? These are the types of questions that we're having. How are we experiencing racism in the field? Some people had worse experiences than I've had, but like, let's say in opera, for example, there's a lot of acting, you have to get cast, you're all on stage, are you not casting me because I'm

> Black? Or things like Porgy and Bess, where they're using Blackface because the characters are all Black, you know? So, are they using Blackface in this opera? Is that opera even appropriate at this point because does it showcase Black people in an appropriate light? Things like that; those are the types of conversations that we're having on our classical music side of things that are kind of happening in tandem with this whole cultural sensitivity awareness awakening that's just kind of happening around the country.

Martin's awakening fuels his desire to inspire youth to pursue music careers and expand their understanding of the possibilities. He shares that people studying music do not learn about the contributions of Black composers and musicians or the relevancy of his community to the music tradition. He now aims to find creative ways to share and teach people that movies, R&B music, and people's everyday interactions are shaped by the Black music tradition and the artists, management, and those who consume this art should be more aware of how.

Indiana University

Participants at Indiana University come from various regions of the state with varying income and wealth distributions. Programs like those of the Center for Leadership Development, which hosts workshops and civic engagement opportunities in the state, serve as an additional or supplemental support system for students' collegiate attainment. Students overwhelmingly name the GROUPS Scholars Program as a supportive bridge to recruiting and acclimating them to IU's campus. GROUPS is a summer bridge program started in after student activism in the 1960s where students receive a full financial package, participate in a six-week intensive summer experience, and receive holistic support and advising throughout their collegiate career. BSU at IU, although not as radical as BSU at UM, typically serves as a social space for students to learn about various inequities, network with peers, and get connected to more major-specific or other Black organizations that meet students' needs.

Angie

Angie is a Black woman alumna of Indiana University, where she majored in Earth and Atmospheric Science with a minor in chemistry in 2022. Angie comes from a strong two-parent household, of which both parents work in higher education, and has two older sisters who also majored in STEM. She moved frequently as a young child so does not consider herself tied to a hometown but claims Bloomington to be most appropriate. Angie developed a passion for STEM through seeing uncles and aunts thrive in STEM and having a genuine passion for science and math in her early childhood. In sixth grade, she participated in a STEM camp at Central State for a few weeks in the summer and had the opportunity to meet Bernard Harris, the first Black man to walk in space, and work on introductory level physics projects. Navigating her passion for STEM and moving frequently, she learned more about her Black identity through attending racially polarizing schools where one was predominantly Black, while the other was predominantly white, and she was the only Black girl in the entire school. She elaborates on how other kids sought to standardize Blackness in ways that were not always befitting of her:

> I didn't fully understand what my color meant or what people thought of Black people until I started finding a little bit more Black people the more schools I went to, but then Black people became in a box and a stereotype of what they had to act like, what they had to wear. Can't be too smart. It can't be ... I don't know. It's either you're white or you're Black. If you don't fit the category of what it means to be Black, then you're not Black, even though my skin color's Black. It's very confusing. More other Black kids placed those ideals on me, and then it was more ingrained by the white kids as well.

> Yeah, I guess one of the things when you're in middle school, you just want to belong to people and fit in a little bit. For me, finding other Black people was so important just because I like that culture. I'm Black and it was nice, but if you don't talk a certain way, literally, then people will be like, ‘Why do you talk so white,’ or, ‘why do you dress this way?’ Just things like that, but then white people would also go into it and be like, ‘Wow, Angie, you're the whitest Black person I've ever met, but you're so pretty and it's weird because you're Black,’ things like that. There's that.

Angie struggled to fully understand what her Black identity meant, especially in school. She shared these experiences with her mother and was able to receive wisdom on how to move about in society as a Black woman, which she still heeds today. That wisdom entailed her mother telling her she is powerful beyond measure and helping Angie develop a strong Black identity through engaging Black thought and authors like Patricia Hill-Collins that complemented the affirmations. Her mom was one of her first educators teaching her about Blackness, diversity, equity, and more. In this instance, Angie felt unaccepted and excluded until her mom reminded her that she can learn, grow, and become the best version of herself despite what other kids said to or thought of her. Angie took a while to learn this truth, but it would manifest later in her collegiate career.

Angie was determined to excel in STEM throughout her middle and high school years and received the additional support from Black leaders needed to do so. Although she did not quite feel discriminated against in seeking a STEM career, she credits her parents for placing her in STEM programs for underrepresented minoritized students, as she was validated through these opportunities. Unfortunately, in other ways—namely her college-going process—she was discouraged and not made aware of resources for college through her predominantly white high school. She had two run-ins with school figures that showed her their lack of concern for supporting Black students:

> Well, I'll say, so actually applying to college, I didn't even know about the GROUPS program, which is ultimately what led me to come to IU. The reason I didn't know about it is because a counselor at the school, was supposed to give the information to students and let them know, but it just wasn't encouraged at my school. They just didn't expect, I guess, the Black people to go to college or go without a sport's scholarship, because there was very few of us. When I found out about it, I had to go and say, "Hey, give me the information, give me what I need to do," and make those steps myself. My school had already been known for not really encouraging Black excellence.

Angie describes the hardships she faced seeking college success. While her self-awareness and self-advocacy increased considerably, she was disappointed that her school did not equip her with resources to succeed in high school nor her future career endeavors. In fact, she even tried to bring a step team to her school, a skill she learned in Texas, but the school pushed back against the idea on account that other Black students were not meeting learning expectations. A Black teacher eventually came and helped launch the team with Angie but was fired a week later and Angie realized that she “couldn’t depend on [her] school or [her] STEM teachers to help [her] get to those levels and help [her] find those extra things. It either happened from [herself], [her] family, and that's basically it.” Nevertheless, she applied and was admitted to GROUPS, specifically the STEM initiative that allowed her to take classes and participate in research during the program. She originally had no clue what research was, but she worked in the astronomy department because her original majors were astronomy and chemistry. The STEM initiative had a class designed to support students in STEM to both prepare them for the rigor of the summer program and the rest of their collegiate careers. She loved her experience and growth sharing that it set the tone for her college career because she did not have an idea of what to expect from college for herself. The program helped her create a resume, find an internship that she participated in from her first year and beyond, and establish a support system that she saw other students did not have or could not find. GROUPS instilled confidence in Angie and provided her with community in STEM prior to beginning her first year. This would be one of many other organizations that helped her persist as a Black woman in STEM.

Angie's early collegiate experiences provided her opportunities to wrestle more with topics on race, identity, and sociopolitical events. The killing of John Crawford III, a Black man who was shot dead by Ohio police happened down the street from where she lived. In high school at the time, she did not fully understand the significance or reality of what had happened. So, her mom made sure she was aware of what was going on by bringing her a stack of papers documenting hundreds of Black people killed by police in the US. Later in her college career Angie was disgusted that there were not on-campus conversations about what was happening, and it seemed like the university wanted Black students to move on normally, especially in the sciences. She laments that science professors simply taught while moving on without mentioning societal events as if her Black identity did not matter. In GROUPS, she took a class with Dr. Jackson, entitled Racism as a Social Problem, which taught her about systemic racism and the history of Black people in society. This class, combined with what her mom taught her about inequalities and with issues happening in society, was her first experience understanding how to merge STEM and social sciences. She states that after sharing the class with hundreds of Black students since not having a predominantly Black class since second grade, when Angie does STEM, she "does it in the lens of, I'm Black, how is the science affecting everyone rather than just affecting science for the sake of science, which I think a lot of scientists get caught up in when they're doing their work." Although this course would be the only Black studies course she would take until her senior year, Angie's new outlook on STEM education and careers shifted and she began choosing to get involved with organizations that could enhance her understanding of Black issues in STEM.

Angie immersed herself in many Black student and support organizations that cultivated her identity and belonging. While the BSU was not relevant to her experiences (her schedule conflicted with the meeting times), she participated in a mix of organizations such as the African American Choral Ensemble that is a Black musical performance group at IU, the GROUPS STEM initiative that is a continuation of student and staff support after the summer, and the I Can Persist (ICP) STEM initiative which is a Black woman support group for students interested in pursuing STEM as a career. Angie grew holistically through these organizations. She was able to counteract not having Black students in her STEM courses while also singing, studying science, and discussing meaningful societal issues related to Black people and/or STEM. She addresses the importance and need of a program like ICP to her persistence as a Black woman because:

> it was not only women in STEM, because when you get women in STEM you get a lot of white women, you might not know it. Or you get people of color, and then it's men, who are…men. Now you have women of color in STEM as faculty, staff, and students and it was just a really great environment of something that I had never gotten before.

Angie names how having a space strictly for Black women to learn and grow was crucial for her success in STEM. In ICP, she was given tools by Black women who had gone through the struggle of being Black women at IU and/or Black women in STEM and encouraged her to overcome obstacles even when she experiences race- or gender-based issues in the class, *because she belongs.* She took those messages and actualized them by providing programming and tutoring to her peers in the GROUPS student organization. She also sometimes participated with the BSU, but mainly used the space to network. Her organizational experience helped develop her identity as a Black woman in STEM and she now hopes to figure out her next move in her career.

Angie recently graduated and will work in student affairs while applying to law school. Most recently she completed a course on African American politics and attended a geology trip, its only Black participant. These events helped her realize that she aims to bridge the gap between Black students in STEM and opportunities within the profession like geology that do not have strong Black representation or presence. Because she had not taken a Black studies course since GROUPS, she shares that she had not deeply questioned how science may influence the Black community but was grateful for those courses reminding her of her passion. The affinity programs that supported her hoped to make space in science for Black people. Now, her goal is to attend law school where she hopes to combine her science background to understand how the Black community is negatively impacted by NGOs and their policies. She is taking a different leap and still unsure if this is the correct route but is excited to explore this path and mentor students in STEM in her current position as well as students behind her at IU.

Ashley

Ashley is a Black woman from Rialto, CA, and West Indianapolis. She graduated from Indiana University in 2022 with a major in Exercise Science and a minor in Social Work. She aims to work for a nonprofit providing services and support for Black youth. Her hometowns have primarily been urban and predominantly Black, so her understanding of Blackness was grounded in seeing familiar faces, hardworking people, and even some violence in the community. It was not until her arrival to IU that she began to question what Blackness meant because she gained an overall understanding of how policies and practices impact the community. In her interview, she names how she hoped to address issues of getting Black people elected to public office, but she was not having conversations about race and prejudice as a high school or college student until President Obama's second term when she began identity-searching after the unjust killings of Black people in the media. Specifically, the killing of Breonna Taylor, which occurred during her second year of college, caused her to carry herself differently so that she was not perceived as a threat to white people. She unlearned this behavior as a student leader in BSU and began to find her place in the larger conversation. Although she did not have many questions about issues going on in her community at the time, she participated in preparation programs that helped cultivate her identity.

College-going Experience

Ashley was a member of the Center for Leadership Development (CLD)—a student development and leadership organization supporting teens through workshops, community service, and mentorship. Her mother enrolled her in the organization and after completing multiple workshops and activities, she won a scholarship to IU. CLD equipped her with leadership skills that she later connected to BSU where she thought showing up and following through were normal. To her surprise, Ashley's mentors kept giving her more work because many other students lacked that foresight. More significantly, her grandfather was also supportive in discussing relevant issues with her, explaining how the 1992 uprising in Los Angeles was very similar to what Black people are experiencing contemporarily, so Ashley could lean on history to improve outcomes. She was saddened that her school only taught about staple stories in the CRM and mostly focused on Black men without a concerted focus on sharing other stories like Black women and the true purpose of their interest in rebellion. As such, she started to develop an interest in supporting Black people in sport and learning more of the challenges they faced, particularly after an injury. She knew she wanted to attend college and, after her own injury, became intrigued with science and physical therapy.

GROUPS Experience

Ashley intended on attending Florida Agriculture & Mechanical University (FAMU) for college and toured the campus multiple times, but she and her family could not afford it and she could not withstand supporting her family financially or emotionally 2000 miles away from home. Since her community was predominantly Black, she prioritized colleges that were too, yet had not considered distance or cost. However, she attended a GROUPS informational at her school and heard about students' experiences in the program, applied, and loved the proximity to home and the full-ride scholarship. She shares that she would have been a completely different person without the support of GROUPS because of the close-knit and familial aspects of the community in the summer and throughout the school year from Black students, staff, and faculty. She shares that once she completed GROUPS, she questioned what she would do without the RA's support after they "really went out of their way to connect with students, whether it was them being up at 3:00 in the morning on a Friday, just hanging out and studying together (the RA's on their summer classes), or taking [them] to Walmart to make sure [they] had school supplies for August." GROUPS student staff mentored Ashley and set her up to excel in leadership and as a Black woman in STEM. Originally an intended physical therapy major because she aimed to help people. However, her passion for leadership and engagement led to her exploring social work and the possibilities in advocating for Black youth in her community. In addition to not wanting to leave Indiana for college, she played an integral role in how her family functions, so she dealt with mental health issues trying to balance switching majors, but she also had a group of friends to support her. Because of her mental health experiences, she is more passionate about being an advocate for students and people experiencing mental health. She shares:

> I know how personal that is to me. And I also know the stigma behind it. Like, it literally took for me to not be able to get out of bed to call my mom and be like, "I need help." I don't ever want someone to be in that position where they feel like they can't talk to someone. And that goes for sexual assault too because there are not enough people advocating for women victims and I hope to do so as a social worker.

Ashley hopes to use her experiences to protect and advocate for young people that may not have the language or power to advocate for themselves. She has even expanded her focus to women experiencing sexual assault because later in her BSU career, she sat on committees and witnessed friends share their stories of how the university did not honor or support them in ways they needed post-sexual assault. Her leadership efforts in the BSU furthered her understanding of how to combat social and campus problems.

BSU and Collegiate Experience

Ashley was a member of BSU and joined for the communal aspect. She then began having conversations with other peers, mentors/advisors in the BCC, and began engaging in the political aspects of the organization. The BSU events and leaders were what kept her coming to learn as the leaders took her under their wing and she stumbled across a leadership position. Ashley was attending BSU's general meeting quite often and members tried to point her to join a subcommittee, but she became Education Chair overseeing communications and messaging. Furthermore, as she developed more of her Black identity and passion for community, sociopolitical events and the US election compelled her to became more conscious:

> I always tell people, I was one of those people that were like, "I'm not into politics." Not really realizing that politics is as simple as me being able to get in my car, or me paying a parking ticket. I didn't realize that politics was an everyday thing. And so, I was just very uninformed of everything that was going on in the world. And I felt like BSU really allowed me to play catch-up in a comfortable setting. So, feeling okay to ask these questions about what's going on? Why is everyone so mad? What is this piece in the election? I didn't even know how an election ran outside of the stuff that you learn in US history. But to see it play out on TV and then be able to go ask someone more educated than myself like, what does this mean? What did he mean by this? How is he going to execute that and blasé, blasé? And I feel like BSU really allowed me to discover some pieces of politics that I didn't know about. And still to this day, I'm still learning, and we have a political chair on our board who really loves that stuff. And so, to be able to have them to help inform us and then inform the community is really great.

Ashley illustrates the dissonance she experienced with understanding politics' influence on the Black community and how BSU was a safe space for her to learn and grow. She eventually progressed up the executive ladder and respectively served as vice-president and president her final two years at the university. She shares that it was difficult to serve during the pandemic, yet as a Black woman in STEM and a campus leader, she catered programming and support to advocating for her community. BSU was her home and informs how she hopes to serve her community in the future. As a Black woman in STEM, she hoped for more opportunities to talk about Blackness and STEM rather than the overwhelming white-centric topics and examples addressed in her courses. She was thankful that BSU could be a space for her to counter the microaggressions she felt in the class, but also hoped that her STEM professors could challenge their privilege and use examples featuring Black or non-white people and subject matter or mention current events. She shares that being a Black woman in STEM was often psychologically defeating because she did not see others that looked like her and then had to face white men in the class who never listened to her during group projects or faculty that did not value her experiences. What Ashley realized she needed was for classroom experiences to compliment or align with her leadership experiences. Nonetheless, she hopes that her next steps can make a difference in her community.

Future Endeavors

While Ashley loves her collegiate experiences, she does not insist that all Black youth should aspire to attend college. As such, she hopes to use lessons and skills learned as a student leader that helped her discover her passion more intentionally, like career and leadership development for at-risk youth. Ashley was recognized in the inaugural NMBCC Hall of Fame for her leadership efforts. Staff and administrators at the university have also given her the blueprint for what student support looks like because they have taken her to lunch or invited her to their home to show she matters, and they care. Similarly, she hopes to gain a Master's in Social Work and learn about successful strategies to support Black women and prevent violence like sexual assault or trauma that youth, women, and those at the intersection, endure.

Blake

Blake is a Black man and graduated from Indiana University in 2020 majoring in Community and Public Health. He is also a 2022 graduate of Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University. Blake is from Elkhart, Indiana where he was primarily raised by his single mother after she and his father divorced when he was nine years old. The divorce was the foundation for creating many of his identities and was his first traumatic experience. He describes himself as very sensitive and shares that he used to "cry a lot and nothing even needed to be wrong. [His] mom or anyone could yell at him and did not have to touch him and [he] would cry. And [he] had a big heart for helping people” One morning when Blake was crying in elementary school, a white woman teacher stopped to console him as he shared that his parents were divorcing. The teacher, Mrs. Law, was his kindergarten and third grade teacher, and eventually became his godmother. Mrs. Law was a beacon of light for Blake during a troubling time in his life when he was trying to learn himself, hang out with friends, and discover what he hoped to do with his life. Blake hung out in Mrs. Law’s classroom quite often, escaping the reality of a dysfunctional family and a troubled community ravaged by crime. These experiences fueled his passion for helping people, although he cannot recall a lightbulb moment that created the drive. However, he did share that when playing games as a kid, he always leaned toward playing “school” with his sister. This, combined with the love given by his favorite teacher, Mrs. Law, resulted in him realizing that he wanted a career helping people in a similar way: “if I could be somebody like how she is to me in my life or half of the person that she is to me in my life to people that I meet and connect with, then I think that would be good." This would carry him through his adolescent and early adult years.

Early Childhood

Blake sought to develop an escape plan to create better paths for him and his family. He not only had to wrestle with struggles at home, but he also had to navigate police brutality in society and Black crime in his hometown. He shares his thought process in middle and high school:

> So I was like "Okay, if I apply to college, I'll be able to escape this environment. I won't have to experience this, and this was police brutality or just gun violence in general, not knowing that it could still happen in college, right? Or regardless of wherever you're at.

> And so, applying to college, I was just trying to get out and get out of the city. That was the biggest goal for me, and I feel like that was the way to do it.

Blake developed a commitment early on to continue doing well in school with college being his dream of an optimal route to help him get out of his small hometown. He aspired to attend University of Notre Dame and knew that he needed to have a 4.0 GPA to be competitive. He played sports and was very active as a child and hoped that could contribute to his success. At 16, he was a manager at Starbucks where he developed soft skills that would later translate to communicating about issues that mattered to him and contributed to his overall growth. Also, Mrs. Law, showed up again in a monumental way. An alumna of Indiana University, Mrs. Law took Blake on his first college tour, showing him the campus, local restaurants, and introducing him to staff members and her colleagues. Blake instantly fell in love with the campus but noticed a stark difference between Northern and Southern Indiana. After mistakenly being pulled over by police from being guilty by association to his father with the same name, he again was reminded of the immediacy to leave his hometown. However, despite the many conversations with his godmother, she did not have the wherewithal to prepare him for confederate flags and the tense racial climate that pierced Bloomington, IN, let alone the police murdering Black people in the United States. Blake, like many other young Black kids in the world, sought to understand their positioning in society and how they could survive. However, he did participate in a local cotillion with a Black fraternity chaperone that provided space for him to connect with other Black men aspiring to change the world, briefly discuss strategies to counteract racism, and even network with one of the members of the fraternity—all these factors would later be the reason Blake joined the fraternity at IU. Fortunately, Blake's stellar academic achievement landed him admission to Indiana University by way of the GROUPS Scholars Program, which became a platform to help center his goals around helping people.

GROUPS Success

Blake heard about GROUPS through a family friend and was encouraged to apply. He visited IU for the second time and discussed how this time was different than the first time he visited with Mrs. Law because she had not connected him to the Black spaces on campus. However, on a trip with his mom and sister, they arrived at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center with R&B music blasting through the speakers. Blake recalls how at-home they all felt, so much so that his mom teared up at seeing how happy Blake was in the environment. This visit was one of three GROUPS students are required to attend in order to participate in the program and move beyond their conditional admission to the university. While at the time just grateful to attend IU, Blake later noticed that most Black students at the university were admitted through the program, had their own orientation, and were separated from the other majority white and Asian students:

> Or even orientation, I feel like that was really eye-opening to where I clearly saw that, yeah. GROUPS was the reason that Black students were coming to IU because Black students weren't getting admitted through general admission practices. They were not. And throughout that whole summer, I had *two Black students* in my student orientation group out of a summer…So I used to try to have conversations with my supervisors at the time and just talk to them more about what this means or why is it this way? Or why do students not get admitted to IU through general admissions? Why would they have to kind of get pushed to GROUPS? And then long as you pass GROUPS, you can be fully admitted. And these are students who had really great test scores, really great grades. And

> then even some white students would talk about, "Oh, I had this SAT score," or, "My GPA was this," and it was low, but they still got into general admission.

Blake complicates his frustrations with Black students being relegated to second-class status in admissions. However, at the same time, GROUPS was his route for attending IU. The students that he connected with in the program were crucial to his growth and development. He stressed the fact that the resident assistants and student leaders in the program were all heavily involved on campus and shared their experiences as involved student leaders during tabling fairs and late-night conversations in the residence halls, while the GROUPS administrators underscored the importance of student involvement. As a first-generation college student, Blake was unaware of the need to build community with peers that share similar identities. Blake became enamored by the cocurricular opportunities at the university and connected with an RA, who was a leader on the BSU executive board and would help bring Blake on board in the fall. Blake later became a GROUPS RA himself where he thrived at being able to help younger students discover their identity and socialize them into *Black IU*. He shares how his collegiate journey taking classes in Black studies, joining more student organizations, navigating sociopolitical events, and expanding his knowledge through conducting research on Black masculinities informs his passion for countering toxic masculinities and eradicating racial and gender policies in the world.

BSU and Black Studies

Blake entered Indiana University as an exercise science major and sought to become a physical therapist. His first year he succeeded academically, performing well in chemistry classes aimed at weeding students out, and was extremely involved. He was called to be President of the Freshman Action Team, which was a subset of students in the BSU implementing programming specific to advancing success for first year students at IU. While his classes provided opportunities to advance in STEM, his engagement with his community cultivated his ambitions to intentionally learn more and impact his community:

> Yeah the BSU definitely helped me learn about the inequities of being a student at IU Bloomington and knowing that, as a Black student, there were certain things that we had access to and didn't have access to base on our identity compared to white students on campus. Anything that was going on with police brutality at the time, we would have conversations about. We would talk about different things in terms of hair and microaggressions. I remember we had a big thing when we talked about microaggressions, and I feel like everybody just kind of just stood up and just shared their microaggressions that they experienced in their courses and on campus. In the residence hall, what that looked like, and trying to plan events that were more supportive for us as Black students. And then there was the 2016 election watch party that happened at the Neal-Marshall that the BSU was a part of it as well and we just had to lean on each other and look out for each other after the results because we were protecting each other for whatever white people were going to do. And so all those different things definitely played a part in understanding how politics worked, and even on the college campus, policing or safety as concern as a Black student and what that looks like.

Blake immersed himself in the BSU and the BCC early into his collegiate career, and those cocurricular experiences equipped him with language to name issues that mattered and gave him space and solace during traumatic experiences he and his peers endured during their collegiate journeys. While he balanced his co/curricular commitments well during his first year, Blake's second year proved more difficult as he did not find value and struggled in his chemistry courses, but still sought to develop strategic ways to impact his community, particularly through pledging his fraternity. He used all campus resources he could access to persist in his Chemistry major, but he could not overcome the challenges of organic chemistry as a weeder course. Nonetheless, he landed on community and public health beginning with a Black studies course that encouraged him to learn more about contributions of Black people in society and how they might inform decision making. One course in particular shaped his endeavors, he shares:

> I took modern sports with Dr. Gary Sailes, and that was something that changed my perspective on a lot of different things of just what I was taking at the time and our class discussions and stuff like that. So that opened the door more for me to learn more about my Blackness and Black sports. I didn't learn about any of these Black people in high school. Yeah, I think the thing that stuck out the most about the AAADS course my sophomore year is that just a lot more of the different Black athletes that I learned about, I feel like I didn't really know prior to college. Really, whenever we did talk about Black History Month in K12 it was always Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., maybe Sojourner Truth, and then Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman. But other than that, I feel like we didn't really press the issue. Given the state of our nation, we need to talk about a lot more people. And so taking a AAADS course and just hearing about different people, different experiences, or even George Taliaferro was talked about within that course and his experience and stuff in Bloomington and everything like that. And so that was just eye-opening.

Taking a Black studies course showed Blake more about how he can better help people in conjunction with his experiences in student organizations. As president of his fraternity, he committed to redefining what masculinity meant and using the organization to cultivate his passion for public health. He worked closely with a staff member in the school of public health, also a member of his fraternity, to create a public health symposium for students and organizations to better engage diverse topics. Following this interaction, Blake began to have conversations with other Black staff members in the culture center, Black graduate student organizations, and student affairs units that helped him realize his passion for higher education and student affairs.

Blake's Future

Blake completed his undergraduate and master's degree amid a global pandemic, yet still committed himself to redressing domination against the Black community, while committing to disruption. He shares how the Black IU community's small size necessitates highly involved leaders do the bulk of the social justice work for the campus, yet those efforts also contribute to him considering ways to liberate the Black community:

> And with the Black student population being so small and that as soon as you get involved, you kind of...You're the person that gets shoulder tapped pretty much for everything. And so knowing that that was kind of the role that I fell into, and so anytime I was able to help and support or advocate for other Black students or just kind of even trying to figure out my own way and trying to reach out to people for support, I feel like that's how I was able to be a part of the movement and also lead them towards Black liberation and what that means for Black IU students. How can we change certain policies, certain rules, certain procedures? Challenging different people in different spaces, whether that's an experience that they had at orientation, or housing, Greek life, culture centers.

Blake formed this identity counteracted the impact of domination he and his Black peers experienced and named multiple facets of the institution that may have been complicit in his domination. On the contrary, he was reminded and empowered by the potential of Black students reshaping societal landscape through his time as a GROUPS RA:

> Yeah. Knowing that I feel like that picture can be filled with way more Black people. "And those two students that I had that entire summer and knowing how they clinged to me throughout the entire two days. And the first full day, we spent all day together, and so just talking to them, I knew that... That was actually my introduction to higher ed, truly. That's when I found out that that could be a career, and I can do that line of work advocating for students who are trying to figure out how different policies and practices can be changed, even from an admissions standpoint, and knowing that that should be a priority for the campus to be like, "It was right. Why don't we have more students of color coming through general admission?" Why do we feel like GROUPS is the only way that these students can be admitted to IU, when they're definitely qualified, even more qualified to some of their counterparts?

Blake's reflection and interrogation of his campus involvement both serve as validating spaces to enact his future endeavors while also critiquing how to make improvements and opportunities for other Black students. Finally, the combination of his experiences in his fraternity, majoring in public health, and considering liberation for the Black community call into question how to tackle the intersection of race and sexuality. Specifically, Blake shares his future endeavors as a researcher considering how to advance the Black community by better understanding Black men's experiences:

> I think what I'm fighting for more now to be more intentional about leadership and so kind of like taking it all in and figuring out this concept of leadership and leader and like what all that means. Cause it's different in a lot of different contexts and especially

> looking at it from the perspectives on like masculinities in terms of leadership. I think that's more so what I'm fighting for now to deconstruct toxic masculinity in terms of leadership and by figuring out who can be considered a leader as a Black man. Does a leader have to be heterosexual, or can homosexual men be considered strong leaders? That's most interesting and is something that I've just discovered as a student leader, as somebody that helped advise different student leaders on campus and supervise RA's. You see a lot of it in a lot of different roles. This is a research interest of mine now as I move into the doctoral program. And so, I, I would say that's kind of what I'm fighting for just leadership, leadership education, specifically to Black students and Black men.

Overall, Blake used the power of his story to propel himself through his undergraduate education and major in the health field. His family and community's experiences informed how he navigated college, and he joined organizations that could help him better understand ways to counteract issues in his community and society. Joining the BSU and his fraternity as well as connecting with staff and faculty through the GROUPS summer program facilitated leadership opportunities that lent itself to two degrees. He is now pursuing a doctorate degree with hopes of continuing opposing unjust laws, policies, and practices against the Black community.

Cierra

Cierra is a Black woman and graduated from Indiana University in 2022, majoring in Political Science with a minor in African American and African Diaspora Studies (AAADS). She is from West Indianapolis, which she defines as a community ravaged by racial and gun violence, poverty, housing, and food deserts—all of which she hopes to tackle as a lawyer in the future. Cierra has had a close-knit family comprised of her single mom, twin sister, and younger sister. Her mom fought to create opportunities for her and her siblings despite their struggles, and

Cierra attended a predominantly white private middle school and a predominantly Black private high school after attending a public elementary school. She came to know what Blackness meant through her schooling and upbringing. On the one side, she had some knowledge that there was a mismatch between the stated agenda and infrastructure of the schools she attended and what they taught or deemed important. For example, her high school used to be an old grocery store, did not have windows, and was in the middle of a tough neighborhood and students were required to wear uniforms, but they had few opportunities to critique problems like gun violence that were happening directly outside of their school grounds. Yet, the school touted being an academically and civically enriching experience for students to solve societal issues, which Cierra denounced. On the other side, her mom developed a strong Black identity and put her kids in the accelerated school that would focus on solving world problems and success, and it inspired Cierra to seize the moment. As such, she became interested in law after being a part of policy advocacy efforts in her community.

Upbringing and Engagement

Cierra participated in preparation and youth programs that helped her develop a passion for community service and advocacy. For example, she attended a girl's youth summit in middle school with a local organization that originally began as an opportunity to prevent violence in the city and prevent teens who may have been exposed to the activities and later became a supportive student movement impacting local Indianapolis policy. Students would engage in summits to discuss crime or health concerns in the city and determine the best ways to resolve them based on their career endeavors. Cierra shares more of her efforts in the organization:

> So, one of the topics I had one year was around food deserts. And I researched that and kind of connected it and tied to reasons why that exists, due to poverty. There's also a lot of racial disparities within that. And so that's one of the things we did. But also, one of

> the major things we did was create a Youth Bill of Rights. So, it essentially identified key areas in Indianapolis where, of course, I got to keep mentioning, where areas that we really needed to improve upon and that really impacted the youth, especially Black youth. And that was passed in the Indiana General Assembly and the state of Indiana and the city of Lawrence, Indiana. So that was one of the major things that we did to help build a coalition behind and advocate for youth, particularly Black youth within the city.

Cierra learned about politics and policies as a youth and built camaraderie among other teenagers passionate for advocating for their community's interests. She learned about the organization through her (now lifelong) mentor named Missy. Missy was her track and field coach, became a third daughter to her mother, and is now considered a big sister to her sisters. Missy initially provided familial support to Cierra and other girls in the program because of their exposure to gun violence, but later those conversations turned to intentional efforts to combat the situations they faced. As such, Cierra's family welcomed Missy with open arms for the sacrifice she made to ensure their needs were met. Moreover, Cierra credits her mom, who is now also in college with her and her sister, for overcoming poverty and homelessness, yet placing Cierra and her sisters in programs that gave them a chance to interrogate how those factors impacted them. In fact, her twin sister and mom gave her a platform to better understand problems she hoped to address, and she knew that college would be the space to do it.

GROUPS and Collegiate Journey

Cierra originally hoped to attend Howard University to better understand civil rights issues as a route to combat the ones she faced and faces in her community, but GROUPS and the organization opportunities present encouraged her to attend IU and excel. Cierra struggled with the decision, but financially, GROUPS and IU was the best option for her family. She credits GROUPS with helping her build a foundation through its RAs, advisors, and even administrative staff members providing a homey environment through deep conversations, holistic support, and being hands-on prior to the beginning of the academic year. She describes Mary and Sam, the director and associate director respectively, as critical to her development because they were “not like other directors in programs that are disconnected from the actual participants but really wanting students to be successful and being people students could confide in.” Moreover, Cierra discovered a passion for Black studies and using her coursework to complement her experiences. She entered IU as an international law major, but later switched to political science with a minor in AAADS. She was already aware of what Black studies was as a high school student but did not know about double majors at the time so settled for the minor. She describes their fit with political science and Black studies:

> I would say it was rooted in the work that I did, because I knew that I wanted to study the law to help Black people understand the laws well. Understand that because it is the functionality and basis of society, and that's what really has, in a lot of cases, hindered the growth of the Black community. So, I wanted to be that person that helped Black people navigate through life and through law and through society, but also knowing that I wanted to make a positive impact on people in general. And I, of course, felt law was the way to do that. And knowing that I could still be an advocate and be a lawyer and adding lawyer degree on there just makes it better, in my opinion, for me personally.

Black studies allowed her to better understand the racial and cultural diaspora and gain a better sense of policies and how to disrupt them through the connection to political science. Thus, her collegiate experiences as a leader and participant in Black organizations complemented her desire to be a civil rights attorney.

Collegiate Journey

Cierra’s collegiate experiences sit at the intersection of Black identity development, leadership, and creating space for Black activism. As a Black Christian woman, Cierra recalls her mom blasting gospel music on Saturday mornings while cleaning and Cierra learning that she could sing, before eventually singing in the choir. As such, she took the AACE course with the director, Dr. Wise, who made her feel at home beyond the classroom, while the organization validated her existence as a Black student on campus:

> He's one of the most authentic people that I have met probably in my whole life. And I would say that meeting him was also a very life changing experience. But I'm sure as you know, singing has always been a part of the Black experience. Music has always been a part of... It's almost like it's embedded in our DNA as Black people. And of course, singing gospel music. I remember freshman year there was one song gospel song in particular that I listened to. It was Greater Is Coming by Jekalyn Carr. I was listening to that every day and every morning before going to class because it really helps me to get in the mindset of continuing down my path, again, being redundant. So yeah, I would say in being able to sing those songs within school, within a class at a white campus was really impactful for me. It's where I felt like I was at home and has inspired me and helped me to keep going.

Cierra’s participation in ACE both fulfilled her class commitments and provided a familial organization to learn and grow from. However, she still sought to develop more of her interest in advocacy and activism. She was a general member of the BSU and NAACP and appreciated their social programming and activities but was unappeased by their social justice efforts. Thus, after creating a social media page highlighting the various perspectives of Black students attending a PWI, she created the outline and structure to create a student organization, initiated the application process, and is the founder of the Black Collegians organization. Her goal in founding Black Collegians was to be more politically and socially engaged than the other student groups on campus presented. She exclaimed that it was initially tough to differentiate the purpose between her organization, NAACP, and BSU, but she hoped for more to be done to address political unrest in society and put more pressure on the university so creating her own organization was the route. Her biggest accomplishment was leading the creation of a BLM mural on the campus, where she worked closely with student affairs and student government staff to make a more intentional statement on how to support Black students. Cierra's contributions have led to her induction into the inaugural NMBCC Hall of Fame. While she is appreciative of the moment and the work, she names this as only the beginning and hopes to do much more to advocate for the community in law school.

Her Future

Cierra's passion for addressing homelessness, food deserts, and civil rights inform her aspirations to be a civil rights attorney and give back to her communities. She is appreciative of her upbringing and working with organizations that fueled her passion for service. She is even more grateful to staff and faculty that poured into her and helped her navigate creating a new student organization, whose mission is to "unite Black voices in order to claim rightful and equal place in this society through Political/Civic engagement." However, she now hopes that she can impart wisdom to her peers on how to balance their mental health better despite the challenges on campus and hopes that as a lawyer she can prevent other students from having to create space for themselves to just be students on their campus.

Ella

Ella is a Black woman graduate of Indiana University, where she majored in International Law in Global Institutions with a minor in Communication and Public Advocacy. She was born in Atlanta, GA, raised in Guinea, Africa, and relocated to the far Eastside of Indianapolis. The Eastside is known for a lot of crime and violence, but her parents shielded her from both. Ella loved her community and her school, Warren Central High School, where she was extremely involved in organizations like student council and National Honor Society, played sports, and volunteered in the community. She developed a deep desire to give back because of her experiences living in a highly impoverished city in Guinea, where her peers did not have the luxury of having relatives in the States that could provide basic needs such as foods and clothing like she did. Ella is not sure why the Guinean culture in the states sends young children to Guinea and later return, but the experience contributed to her sense of community and social impact while it also caused struggles during her schooling experiences. Her maturity allowed her to appreciate free lunch and meals that she received at school, while her peers did not have similar perspectives. Ella was supposed to enter second grade upon returning from Guinea to Indiana but was placed in first grade as an English Language Arts learner because she did not speak English. Additionally, students would demean her country and the African continent making "click-click noises saying this is what you speak" or call her "uncultured because kids in Africa walk around with no shoes." On the flip side, some students would marvel at her mother's African garments and be curious about her culture. Ella's Blackness was then further developed by paying close attention to immigration issues, particularly for Black and African communities. Her family's circumstances have shaped those experiences to which she is interested in going into immigration law. Specifically, she served as the liaison between her parents and school officials and highlights how her family's immigration experiences spiraled downward:

> I was the little eight-year-old in parent/teacher conferences telling my mom what the teacher was saying, or filling out the documents every year, keeping track of school

> supplies, and helping my siblings with their homework, translating government documents I had no business translating. So, there was just a lot of experiences that growing up, I could see how hard it was for my parents and being an immigrant in this country. And not only are you trying to survive, but you also got kids that you must take care of. And you're also in completely new environment that you know nothing about and you're trying to adapt to that. So that's why I'm so interested in immigration. And it really was a breaking point for me before going into college because my uncle, who spent most of his life in this country, was arrested by ICE a week before I came to IU. And so I remember that being the deciding factor for me. I was like, Yeah, I'm definitely going into immigration because this shouldn't happen to people. People that are coming to this country looking for a better life and have kids to take care of should not have to go through these different types of issues.

Ella's traumatic experiences with her uncle's deportation and her parents' difficulties navigating the world inspired her passion for studying law and taught her more about her Black identity. Many other issues impacting the Black community became important to Ella given the sociopolitical context of 45's election in relation to immigrants and religion. As a Black Muslim woman, Ella understood the former head of state's clear positioning on not wanting people of her community in the country. She became even more disgusted at the differences in treatment of white internationals fleeing their homes as 45 dismissed the realities and efforts of Haitians, who are from a US territory. Furthering her disgust, she laments P12 schools for "spending considerable time teaching about white people and less time learning about Native Americans and the Trail of Tears or relevant issues with immigration and the Black Lives Matter Movement." Ella did not have space or feel comfortable having conversations, but wanted to, and became empowered when a friend at her school was killed due to gun violence. Finding her voice, she started an organization to address gun violence and societal issues, where she facilitated a march to address leaders in her city and schools. The reserved girl was no longer silent or shy but instead embraced the news stories and moments with her friends' parents who befriended her and supported Ella's efforts to strategize and create change in the community. These experiences shaped her collegiate endeavors and experiences.

Precollege Experiences

Ella knew that she wanted to attend IU and initially hoped to attend Kelley and graduate with a business degree before later committing to law. However, during her junior year of high school she participated in Model United Nations, which included a weekend trip with other brilliant high school scholars studying international topics. She would go to her friend's international relations class and the teacher would ignite small debates about international issues and encouraged her to attend the weekend trip. She was admitted to IU and further immersed herself into learning about Black and international matters. She did not participate in GROUPS, but her cousin YoYo did, and she was able to help Ella acclimate to the campus by rooming with her on the Atkins Living Learning Community (predominantly Black student floor), taking classes together, and even supporting Ella being treated as an honorary GROUPS student by YoYo's cohort. Ella was used to taking courses with a lot of white people, but the overwhelming number of white students on campus and in her classes, despite living on the Black floor, was troubling for her. Wearing a hijab outside of the floor was tiring as she was often prompted to explain details of her culture and religion. Fortunately, she was validated by a Black graduate student, Zeba, who not only mentored her on the floor but introduced her to African and African American history. Ella was grateful to read books like *Eloquent Rage* that taught her about intersectionality and Black womanhood, especially from, the first Black woman Ph.D. she met.

Furthermore, classes taught by Dr. Zeba encouraged Ella to take more Black studies courses, study Black community in her major classes, and to serve her campus community to address societal matters.

Ella Takes IU

Ella was heavily involved in the African Student Association (ASA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at IU. The BSU was instrumental in her social development through helping her connect with Black students across campus. However, NAACP helped her focus and learn more about social justice, despite her not knowing that the NAACP still existed contemporarily beyond the Civil Rights Movement. At the end of her first year, she and YoYo randomly attended a meeting that happened to be held on an election night and they were nominated to run the organization without much collegiate experience. They left the meeting as executive board members in a smaller capacity, and eventually became president and vice-president their senior year. Ella shares that because of her experiences as president she "spends more time learning about environmental racism, voter suppression, health disparities, and other concerns affecting the Black community," which compared to BSU, was more active and less social experience. Ella also shares that as a leader she was able to tap into the intersections of her identity by joining Muslim Student Association and talking about Islamophobia, becoming a member of ASA and addressing Black transnational issues, and joining the NAACP and delving Black issues primarily occurring in the States. She loved learning more and having space to discuss topics, yet especially compared to her predominantly white community, she wished she did not have to foreground them and fight racism constantly. Moreover, she received membership into the NMBCC Hall of Fame for her leadership efforts on campus. These leadership experiences empowered her even more and will carry her through law school.

Ella Esquire

Ella is in her first year of law school, focusing on international law. Her familial trauma, experiences in her community, interests in Black feminism and international issues, and desire to uplift her communities will ground her throughout her journey. In law school she hopes to serve as an advisor to her former student organizations, while also creating new community and discovering ways to transform society.

Emmanuel

Emmanuel is a Black man who graduated from Indiana University majoring in Community Health in 2022. Growing up in the Northeast area of the state was quite difficult for him and his family. His mother was working class and provided resources as best she could for him and his brothers, especially while his father was frequently incarcerated. To combat those experiences at home, Emmanuel read books, watched TV, and stayed in the house as his mother shielded him from the realities of the city. He shares that his mom would not allow him to perform household chores and monitored his every move, so he only read books or played video games. Emmanuel initially hoped to become a doctor, but chemistry derailed his path. He realized that given his experiences in his community and engagement on campus, the major of Community Health gave him better scope of local and regional health and figure out ways to serve them, which could help him engineer another path to gain admittance to medical school. Connected to his concern for public health, Emmanuel shares that he never saw issues in his city as tied to Black people problems—as his classroom studies sometimes taught—but instead, as community issues that necessitated Black people do more to solve them. Because of his mom's work ethic and his grandparents owning local stores, Emmanuel saw how his family defied odds, and created space for him and his brother to thrive, which became a microcosm of how he saw possibilities of thriving for the Black community. However, he "did realize that Black people were more susceptible to falling into these toxic traps of selling drugs or staying on welfare and things like that. But it's not too much their fault. It's just more so the environment that they're in." Part of his understanding of the environment's influence stemmed from his reading of history and fiction that taught him about different life events or that would allow him to imagine himself in a new universe or world free of disruption and chaos. As such, prior to President Barack Obama's election, Emmanuel aimed to be the first Black President of the US. He knew that to be President, he needed to be smart, so reading and engaging with books increased his vocabulary to the point that he was academically performing far beyond most students in his elementary school. Additionally, given his father's incarceration and his own hometown experiences, he became interested in the US prison system. Emmanuel describes how he noticed a different behavior from his father after he was incarcerated and did not know why:

> Every time he got out and came back, he was like a different person, more darker person, like a more non-loving person. So, it was just like, what happened there to make you act like this out here? Yeah. That, and just the treatment of Black people as a whole. Just, I don't like it. He was more like strict with what he allowed us to do. I wouldn't say I walked on eggshells around my dad, just because I feel like me being a more sensitive person, he was very much in tune with that. But I had to be very careful with information that I presented to him about my siblings. Like if my brother angrily threw a ball at me, I might not say anything because he was very rough, that was his outlet. So, just being very careful about how I presented information to him, just because it's like things are a right way and a wrong way in his head. I feel like that's how he thinks. So, making sure that when I presented something to him, it was the right way because it could go wrong very quickly, and it could be very bad. So, I became interested in things happening within the

> prison system, just because seeing my father go from a very loving person to a more hardened and reserved and less vulnerable person. And the only thing that changed was him going to prison and getting out of prison, and going back to prison, and having to go to court, and dealing with probation and things like that. Because my family pretty much stayed the same. It was my mom and her three boys, and him coming in and out because he was in prison. But the behavior change had to have been caused by prison or what's going on there because there was nothing outside of the prison system that would have made him, to my knowledge, behave like that.

Emmanuel’s relationship with his father and his family inspired him to understand systems like those of prisons and find out how or why they caused harm in his community. Simultaneously, he was figuring out his identity being sensitive, understanding gender roles, and escaping through reading which show up later in his collegiate career.

P12 Journey

Emmanuel’s schooling experiences were shaped by learning more about police brutality and community issues. He was well aware of Black people being murdered by police for no reason in addition to the social and economic destruction happening in his own community, yet his mother kept him very sheltered and was very overprotective, forcing him to be in the house by a certain time or not allowing him to spend nights at his friend’s homes. Emmanuel did fear that those police-driven attacks could happen to him or other men in his family like his uncle, dad, or little brothers. Unfortunately for Emmanuel, conversations on these topics were unaddressed in his middle and high schools and he felt uncomfortable initiating them. He attended a predominantly white private high school and felt like an outcast throughout his journey but could not share that with his mom because he valued her creating opportunities for him. He elaborates sharing:

> I was one of literally ten Black people, and there were only four Black people in our freshman class, and two of the other Black guys that were in our freshman class, they grew up in that school system. So, it was very almost black sheepish in a sense. That's how I felt, like I didn't belong there. And I just kind of stuck to myself, or I talked to these two Black upperclassmen women who my older brother knew. They went to public school together and things like that, so I knew I could relate to them a little bit more about things that I was going through. And I did have conversations with them, but they were more so in private conversation for the simple fact I know that I didn't want to be judged for having views and feelings about a certain situation that someone whose parents make 200k a year, like you literally cannot relate to me. So, with that, I just was quiet. It made me feel inadequate. Like, I didn't belong there even though my parents and my friends, they tried to put their best foot forward to try to make me feel included. But it was literally impossible because I just could not relate to the other kids who were my age, who were going across country or going out of the country for spring break, or going to their summer house, or going to a different house in California for winter break. I'm still in the same house. I'm catching the bus to go to school. I'm packing my lunches. I'm not able to do all these things that they are able to do. I'm getting mail, I'm opening letters to my mom from the school talking about, "Oh, well you're late on the tuition payment, things like that." So it was just like, dang, you really doing all this for me to be here and I don't even feel like I belong here. I don't like it at all, but I mean how can you tell her that

> when she thinks that this is the best thing for you to achieve in life? And to get your foot in the door.

Emmanuel's experiences as one of few Black students in a predominantly white environment was only a microcosm of what he would eventually experience at IU. In complicating how he felt ostracized in his private school, he found value in being connected to resources in his community that helped him advance. Specifically, prior to his enrollment in the private school, he met a white woman named Ms. Rutledge who paid for him to attend a prestigious summer academy in middle and high school. He heard about the summer program through his middle school social studies teacher. He, Ms. Rutledge, and a counselor at his private school were connected as the women saw potential in him and offered to support him financially. They too, were in his mother's shoes trying to raise children in Northwest Indiana, except they had college degrees, and sent their kids to Ivy League schools; so, they hoped to remove all obstacles that might hinder Emmanuel's ability to thrive. Emmanuel appreciated that the academy taught him well beyond his middle or high school did. He engaged in difficult math and science courses and was exposed to Black feminists and educators that discussed relevant issues in society. These programmatic experiences encouraged him to attend college.

Collegiate Experiences

Emmanuel sought to attend Morehouse College and eventually pursue medical school; his decision ultimately came down to attending Morehouse or IU. He chose IU and was admitted to GROUPS where, he shared, that "it felt like a mini-HBCU at times, though he did not have that expectation." He shares that his experience in the program was the opposite of what he experienced in his private school. In the makeup alone, he shares, there were 350 other students of color, many of whom became family to Emmanuel, to connect and build with for six weeks prior to the fall semester. Emmanuel also valued connecting with current IU students, staff, and faculty. They inspired him and he was excited to get involved in the campus community because he saw his RAs as mentors who he could follow in their footsteps in various leadership capacities. For example, he shares:

> And I'm literally talking with president of pre-Black Law Student Association like, ‘Hey, what are you guys doing this upcoming year? When do y'all have meetings and things like that?’ And even getting I think, yeah, the vice president of BSU had come by one day and the Associate Director, Mr. Young introduced us we exchanged numbers because he knew I wanted to be involved. It was so cool to me, especially at a PWI, I didn't even know we had Black Student Union at a PWI. So yes, seeing that and just connecting with who I needed to connect with. So when I came to campus, I wasn't a lost puppy. And even in classes that I took, I felt like helped give me this small, like HBCU experience, because I took AAADS, A150, intro to African American African studies. And I also took Latinxs in the United States, which was a history course over Latinx and Hispanic people, and their struggles that they faced while being minorities in the United States as well. So just taking those two cultural classes was very eye-opening to me because, I'm not going to lie. Coming to IU, I just knew there was more than what they promoted on websites.

Emmanuel loved every aspect of the six-week summer program and eventually returned as an RA of the program to inspire younger IU students to take advantage of all the resources the university has to offer as he did. The classes were a continuation of the experiences he had while reading when he was younger, except now he felt that he was learning among and with people that shared similar thoughts and he could learn more. Thus, the connections he made through

GROUPS facilitated his leadership in student organizations throughout his collegiate career. Although he connected with the Presidents of Pre-BLSA and BSU, he was disappointed in their lack of action or the relevancy of their programming. While he appreciated the communal aspect to network, he knew there were societal issues to address and there needed to be more immediacy to those issues. So, it was not until later in his collegiate journey when he joined the executive board of these organizations that they discussed issues impacting the Black community like 45's presidency. He describes how his BSU board initiated a debate program with the College Republicans to understand and challenge dissenting voices. Dissention on the board existed as some wanted to have the conversation among the alt-right and liberal groups, but many felt it was a waste of time. Yet, Emmanuel illustrates his feelings toward the meeting:

> And not just white people, white people who voted and were Trump supporters, to see why they decided to vote him in. Why did we care? I can't speak to everyone else, but I will say that I cared about gaining their perspective just because I feel like college is a great place to explore yourself and your true interests and things like that. But what I also realized is that a lot of people's political affiliations literally boil down to their childhood and what they've been brought up, and that's all they know. Like me, I'm more liberal than I am anything else. But growing up, you cannot tell me that I wasn't a Democrat because that's what my parents were. That's what my grandparents were. That's just what everything was. And so I wanted to have a conversation with them to see, is this truly how you feel? Or is this what you've been taught to feel?

Emmanuel describes how BSUs negotiate programming and what issues to tackle. Such programs were meaningful to his experiences because he not only wanted to learn more by discussing sociopolitical events, but he also hoped to inspire his peers and younger students.

Even more, limited teachings and conversations of the election, conversations on race and class, or space for students to debate and deliberate existed at IU for Emmanuel and his peers. He was grateful that BSU could serve in that capacity, and also questioned if faculty would show concern for Black students grappling with racism and human domination.

Next Steps

Emmanuel's future is unclear, but he knows it is comprised of his leadership efforts and commitment to his community. As such, working as an RA for GROUPS, Emmanuel shares his mistakes and lessons learned with students so that they do not feel self-isolated or as lonely as he had at many points. Moreover, while he managed to do well majoring in community health, he is unsure if he will continue that path. The COVID-19 pandemic both allowed him to realize his passion for supporting students and learn more about how he could potentially merge public health and higher education. He is empathetic to younger students who were not privy to the same support in the Black community through programming, networking, and connection to faculty/staff. Simultaneously, in his connections with the students, he has learned that he loves building community as an RA, he loves when students knock on his door late at night, and he enjoys building camaraderie among the students. Overall, Emmanuel carries the weight of his family and the desire to impact young people; he developed many of those passions at IU.

Adele

Adele is a Black woman and graduated from Indiana University in May of 2021 majoring in journalism with a concentration in public relations (PR). She will also complete a master's in media at Indiana University in 2023 with aspirations of working in higher education overseeing communications for a diversity unit. She is from Brownsville, Tennessee which is a suburb of Memphis that is majority white, but still quite populated with a substantial number of Black people. Adele loved everything about her small town growing up, including the intimacy of everyone knowing each other, a solid proportion of Black and white communities, and being surrounded by so many of her family members. However, she names how the 2016 presidential election and her teenage years, particularly in her town, was met by racism and uncomfortable feelings that diverged from the warm experiences of her earlier years because white people, specifically white students, were emboldened by rhetoric from 45. She shares:

> Yeah, then that's when everybody was like, "Oh. We can actually say these things now?" To which the Black kids in our school are like, "No." But it all went downhill from there. The class became a little bit divided and became segregated, physically. The Black kids were sitting on one side of the room. White kids were sitting on one side of the room. Partially my fault, because I tried making a joke because I thought we were all on the same page. I was like, "Can y'all believe that this man is running for President?" This is around the time when he said the very insensitive comment about Hispanic people. The white kids in the class responded with, "Well, he is a viable candidate." Then every Black person in the class was like, "Oh." They just all shifted to the other side of the room to keep from starting an argument. Ever since students separated and exited the conversation. When he was elected President, there were obviously people running around the school saying, "Trump 2016." We had an argument in homeroom, to which the teacher said nothing about it. She just let us have it. At some point, we just stopped talking about it. We were all like, "We're not going to waste our peace on it." Even then, it was like, we're not going to go back to messing with each other the way we used to before all this came out. Because if you find his actions acceptable, then we're not on the same page of how life works.

Adele situates her interactions with peers she had built lasting relations with prior to high school with rhetoric from the 45th President of the US, suggesting that her peers' philosophy and agreement with 45's stance on immigration and Latinx people necessitated ending any type of relationship. She also complicates how teachers are to navigate instances of disagreement and dissent in the classroom when students physically separate and cannot deliberate sociopolitical issues in a democratic way. She ties the lack of deliberation to her school for barely teaching her about prominent Black leaders outside of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, to the extent that she did not learn about Juneteenth until her grandfather angrily ensured she knew her history as a tenth grader. Thus, in learning more about Blackness and her identity, she shares:

> I always think about that because when I was in high school, I was in the honors classes and things like that. I feel like slowly, growing up, because my family, they were all teachers. My granddad taught history. My grandmother and my mom were both English teachers, and then principals, and things like that. So, it's just little things that were deemed ghetto, I was always corrected about it. If I spoke with AAVE or something like that, my mom would always correct me, things like that. So, I spoke proper. I was in honors classes at my school and they were majority white. So, I would get called Oreo and stuff like that. Or they say, "Dell's white on the inside." I would just roll those off because I'm like whatever, cool. Sometimes I'd laugh about it, too, because I didn't really think about it that much. I honestly want to say it was 2016 when I realized, "Oh, crap." Not oh, crap. "Wait. I am a Black woman. I need y'all to stop disrespecting me." Around that time because even though I knew I was Black and I did know I was treated different because I was Black. Because when I was a freshman, one of my teachers tried saying a comment and I thought she was asking a legit question where she was like, "Well, racism

> still exists." I thought she was asking a legit question. I thought she wanted us to legit answer it so I was like, "Yeah." She looked at me and she goes, "Why would you say that?" I'm like ... “You're asking a Black person why she would say racism still exists?” I didn't think the question was rhetorical. I think I just knew those things were happening. But because at that point they never outwardly happened to me, because I didn't know what microaggressions were until I got to college. So as long as no one was calling me an "N word,” I was like, "Yeah, cool." So, it slowly came to realization at that point.

Adele’s experience deciphering between microaggressive racist remarks and outwardly racist remarks was a trying time as she sought to learn in the classroom, but instead had to navigate racial domination without the support of a teacher that could advocate for her. Simultaneously, her middle-class family shielded her from experiencing or perhaps having the language to name and identify racial incidents, while her Black peers at school may not have shared the same experiences because they were not from her town. Nonetheless, Adele still chased after her goals and ambitions.

Aspirations

Inspired by her family members that attended HBCUs and had earned master’s degrees, Adele sought a lucrative profession like a lawyer or businesswoman. Her search for colleges and opportunities landed on public relations because she was interested in business and was encouraged to find a concentration that would become a passion. She developed a passion for business at a young age, selling drinks at family gatherings despite no one having told her to do so, and she loved it. Once in high school, she joined a student marketing club, participating in competitions and attending trips. During one trip she realized her future endeavors:

> I was the person who was more focused on the written portion of the product, so the wording of it, and the organization of it, and then also the presentation of it, so making sure it looked pretty and things like that. More so trying to sell our team than trying to sell what we were presenting and things like that. Then we did this field trip to a marketing agency, and they showed us their public relations department. At that point, I'd never heard of it, but when she explained what it was, I was like, "That's what I want to do. There's a name for it." So with that, that just stuck with me, so I started looking for public relation degrees and things like that. In some schools, public relations is in the business school or in the communications school.

Thus, she hoped to attend an HBCU like Jackson State and major in business but knew that the more lucrative option would be a PWI. She stumbled upon Indiana University, known for its prestigious business school, Kelley. During her senior year, Adele had the option to attend Governor's School or Girl's school, which were national summer preparation courses housed through the local community college. She shares her love for the experience:

> We took a three-credit college course over business and intro to business. There were 30 of us, total and they put us in teams to come up with our own innovative business product and business, and make a business plan, present it, get investors, all that. It was pretty interesting. That helped me figure out what college was. My school actually did not promote college but tried to send us to community college. But Governor's school really helped me a lot, especially because I did have a little breakdown over the fact that I was not as well educated as the other people at that program. Because they were all saying all these terms, and knew all this stuff about math and science that I'd never even heard of. I was like, "I cannot keep up with y'all. What is happening?" I was able to contribute in a

> way I was able to. It's what helped me figure out that I wanted to do business and public relations because our product was more science and math based. It was this detection software to see if someone left a baby in a car. They were figuring out all the logistics like, "We're going to use facial recognition. It's going to have this, this, and this." I'm like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." But when it came to marketing the product and things like that, I was the person. I was the person who took that whole section. When we were trying to get investors and someone asked about the marketing and the communications of it, everybody was like, "Oh," and grabbed me. I was like, "This is what I know how to do, despite my educational background or my school," and things like that. It helped me feel more confident. I can always learn math later.

Adele's experiences in Governor's school and the public relations student organization prepared her to attend school for public relations. After learning of Kelley, she realized that the public relations major was in the media school instead of business like other schools she considered. HBCUs did not offer her much funding so her goal of leaving Tennessee was met by attending Indiana University.

Adele at IU

Adele's socialization into Indiana University was centered on countering the white racial environment and counteracting fake news and misreporting in the media. Her angst toward issues in the media stemmed from false communication in journalism and hot, quick takes via social media that become click-bait. She shares how "a Fox News headline was posted as 'School Bribes Student with Pizza,' but what actually happened is, this school in California had a pizza party incentive if students were to get vaccinated." Adele spent considerable time and energy in her classes deliberating tough societal issues broadcast on Fox News that seemed continuous of her experiences from high school—“white students were white student-ing [not considering Black people’s experiences with human domination or racial issues] that frustrated Adele. Similarly, on her dorm floor she was one of three Black students and hardly saw the other two and faced troubling situations from white women on her floor who had likely never seen or interacted with Black women and sought to touch her hair, get into wild drinking, and trouble, and make her living accommodations extremely uncomfortable. She named the experience as a microaggression but admitted that she did not have that language during her first year. The experiences forced her to lean on a Black staff member in the School of Education, Dr. Darnell, who she was connected through traumatic experiences her first year and needed the support of her now mentor and Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center Director Dr. Glo. Adele eventually secured a work-study job from attending a social event with Dr. Glo and was hired by Dr. Darnell and the Balfour Scholars Program (BSP), which served as a youth academy and diversity initiative to recruit and retain Black students at IU. There she learned more and became excited to develop ways to challenge racism and, subsequently, called upon her Public Relations Student Association to develop and include an executive seat on their board specifically to address diversity in media and PR because they lacked any inclusion of diverse thought. Adele’s early experiences with racism in college, connections with staff members to support her success, and plan development to create space for Black students continued throughout her latter stages of college.

Leadership at IU

Adele participated in the BSU and it led her to join a historically Black sorority and also start the National Association of Black Journalism (NABJ) that helped her address diversity related topics. For Adele, BSU was a social organization wherein she knew she would see “all

Black students at IU, network, party, and find community" but she could not be optimally involved because her schedule did not permit it. Nonetheless, the sheer presence of the BSU and their organizational model combined with conversations and topics she learned about through BSP, she established NABJ at IU. She shares that the main PR organization for her school would have meetings and discuss collaboration and events with predominantly white organizations like the Pan-Hellenic Council and Interfraternity Councils but fail to address or acknowledge the NPHC or Multicultural Greek Councils that are overwhelmingly minoritized student-based. Because the erasure and lack of acknowledgment of diverse perspectives, she questioned how to advocate for her community and acquire equitable resources similar to comparable white-majority organizations. For example, she shares that her experiences in the Public Relations Student Association and the NABJ were day and night:

> PRSSA could go on trips to Chicago, and didn't have to worry about funding. They sent me to Portland and I had to buy the plane ticket and then I get my money back. I'm sittin' here like plane tickets to Portland are really, really expensive! I was like, I get that. I get you're saying you're going to reimburse me, but I've got to have the money in my bank account in the first place in order for you to reimburse me, you know." It was that kind of thing. But in NABJ, pshh we couldn't even afford lunch or an event. We were like, "What's happening?" It took probably a day for PRSSA to get approved for something, and then two weeks for NAJB to get approved for it. Which is why whenever I was in the PRSSA spaces, I advocated so heavily for a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee. We got that, so that was pretty interesting. I graduated before it was actually implemented, but it was really interesting. And so they had this thing where they would have a Greek social media seminar, so they brought in all the Greek houses and were like

> we'll reach out to PHA, ICF." Because the person who planned it the year before was planning it again. So I asked, I'm like, "Are you also reaching out to NPHC and MCGC?" She looks at me and goes, "What's that?" I'm like, "The two other Greek councils on this campus." This was before I was Greek, but also I was like, "How are you hosting a Greek seminar and not inviting all the Greeks? What is happening right now?" So, it's just little things like that where I was like, This is why I put myself in these spaces and who is fighting for these voices? It's like minoritized groups can't get advocated for unless we put ourselves in those spaces, but then we get back to the racial battle fatigue where it's like, "We can't fight for ourselves all the time, because then we will just shrivel up at some point." That's so dark.

Adele's tussle with white students failing to recognize the multilayered experiences of Black students related to funding, visibility, and support became infuriating. She found solace in her Black organizations that validated her ambition and success. She spoke to how the NABJ differed from the BSU and filled her spirits because Black people studying journalism did not have to explain Blackness to non-Black people or journalism to Black people, so learning to address journalism media politics, implement programming, and apply to graduate school was more seamless.

Future

Adele is completing a Master's in Media at IU, which has rekindled old wounds while also inspiring action. In her undergraduate coursework, she had few classes in her major focused on diverse perspectives, yet her leadership experiences helped her secure a teaching position addressing Race and Gender in the Media. Adele did not anticipate the backlash she would receive as a Black woman instructor until her majority white introductory media students challenged her teaching, failed to contribute to class, and offered irate instructor evaluations. Students had varying negative opinions, sharing that "she dumbed diversity down too much" or on the opposing side, "DEI isn't necessary as long as you're qualified because inequality does not exist." She shares that she was grateful to have mentors that study and reflect on teaching experiences of Black women faculty in the academy that validated her experiences, reminding her of her purpose in doing the work. In that, she maintains that she can alter her pedagogy, but cannot change *being a Black woman* and that allowed her to improve her teaching the subsequent semester. Adele also mentions that her fight against white people's presuppositions about Black people and racism, and her demand for Black liberation in the community is quite complicated. She mentions that she might have PTSD from experiences of discussing 45's election in high school and experiences with her mom and her family because she never learned how to assert herself or provide substantive evidence to prove his senseless behavior. She sums it up sharing:

> But because I never properly learned how to assert myself verbally, like I can send a nice little passive aggressive email, but verbally I have too much anxiety for that. So because I never learned how to like assert myself verbally in high school I let a lot of things slide because I was just like, whatever. It probably doesn't mean what I think it means that da da, like, I just didn't wanna talk about it now. It's kind of like, okay, that was completely outta pocket. I should say something, but what do I say? So it's been like, I don't know what I should say, how I should say it, especially in a classroom setting cuz if I was in a classroom and I was speaking to another classmate, it's completely different than how I would speak to a group of students. I am teaching. I can go at 'em the way I would just someone else. So then I freeze because I'm just like, what exactly do I say without causing a bigger issue? Without this becoming without getting even too emotionally tied

> to it because like as soon as like something goes wrong and things like that, it's gonna be like, well, like you are not impartial or you’re the angry Black woman, da, da, da. And I'm like, of course I'm not impartial. Like you can't say these things and want me being impartial about it. You're not living it, but like that's how people operate. Who told me that? My mom once actually, because like one time we were having an argument and I was like, well, this happened to me. So like, does that mean like I fall into the category, it's like people you're talking about and she's like, well, when you are arguing, you can't just like bring up personal experiences. That's not what arguing happens. And I'm just like, well, that's why I stand so strongly on this position because I know what this is.
> I guess no one really specifically told me that I just always assumed that's how it worked.

Adele asserts the difficulties and challenges with navigating parental relations in her home and how it might have implications for how she navigates experiences in the classroom. Specifically, she tries to situate not fulfilling the angry Black woman stereotype while asserting herself, feeling confident, and connected with her students. She shares these same feelings in her current capstone project, and how she hopes that carries her into her career post-graduate school: “My capstone is on tokenism and psychological safety within the workplace and how that affects racial battle fatigue, and specifically how those three aspects among women of color in the workplace affect the work that is produced.” She describes a magazine writing on transgender people in the workplace but failing to include any transgender perspectives or photographs of the group in the article. Recalling too many times where the media causes burnout because they cannot find the line between writing on marginalized groups or having critical mass of authors qualified to do justice to the narratives presented in the work. She continues saying “that burnout can lead to a decrease in the deliverables and things that are going out to the actual public. And then once there's scrutiny on those projects, it's gonna go back to that woman of color who was assigned to it, who didn't even wanna be on the project in the first place. So just things like that." Adele's project not only focuses on the experiences of Black women in media, but it is also grounded in the many experiences she has had combatting 45 supporters, advocating for equity in student organizations, and seeking to understand how media can be a means of Black liberation whether in the workplace or in higher education. She is unsure if she wants to oversee communication for a diversity unit in any university setting like IU's or work a corporate job, but she aims to dismantle human domination through internal communication because, "It affects the movies we get, it affects the news articles that are written. It affects the broadcast that we see on news channels, the advertisements that we see, like all of that affects what we get and then the things that are put out there to the public affect society." Adele has developed angst, found support, and aims to change the world in connection with other people and organizations.

Kobe

Kobe is a Black man and graduated from Indiana University in Sports Marketing and Management in 2019 before he obtained a Master's in Sports Administration in 2021. Kobe is from the West Township of Indianapolis, where he shares that his school and community were comprised of families in all income and wealth brackets—making it quite diverse and supportive all around. Specifically, Kobe and close to 10 of his friends played sports and were active since being boys. Their families were tight knit in creating opportunities for their kids to thrive leading to all of them graduating college. Kobe participated in almost every sport including football, basketball, soccer, Taekwondo, gymnastics, and even ballet. These youthful experiences, in addition to joining his high school's newspaper as a sportswriter, influenced him to attend

Indiana University as a Sports Journalism major who intended on working for ESPN. Moreover, his understanding of Blackness, including gender, developed because he participated in sports that were not necessarily perceived as “boy activities” (like ballet) but because he did them in community with his friends, he understood the power of how ballet or swim might enhance his skillset in his more beloved sports, like football. Aligned with his interest in sport, Kobe named the murder of Trayvon Martin as infuriating and fueling his desire to improve the world for Black people and him identifying how sports and/or athletes can address such issues. He shares how this became one of the first ways that he began to question why Black people had to conform to the norm:

> But when Trayvon passed and was murdered, like a big thing for the hoodies and our moms, all of us having Black moms, they were scared, and it was frustrating. We would be out, they would be like, “Don't be out with that hoodie on.” And just even being seniors in high school, it was frustrating. We understood, but it was just like, no, this is not right. The jacket has a hood on it for a reason. I shouldn't wear a hood because of the way white people perceive me. That's something that in senior year going into our freshman year was tough. We'd go to each other's houses or whatever, and say, you're sitting outside the crib, waiting on me to come to the door. You got your hoodie on, you in the whip. It's like, our moms, especially our moms for sure, frowned upon that. That was just huge. And they did not like us wearing hoodies when we were out. And it was real frustrating to go through that and try to explain just because they do this, don't make it right. And we shouldn't just conform, you know what I'm saying? We were real strong on that even though we understood if it comes down to that, that we would want to live, you know what I mean, if we could avoid it, but I feel like we were very much vocal, just

> because this is how they feel don't mean we should just conform with it. You know what I mean?

Kobe interrogates how whiteness permeates into Black boys' and kids' lives to which he was deciding and questioning how to move about in society as kids would normally do, but he and his family and community were hyperaware that their lives were under attack so they had to be mindful of what they wore, and generally when and whether they would choose to conform or not. Connected to sport, he also had conversations in middle school with his peers about the lack of Black coaches both in his community sports teams and in the National Football League (NFL). He is currently coaching high school football and connects his younger and present-day experiences by sharing how Black NFL coaches would win and be fired in a few years, while white coaches had much more grace. Conversations about sports politics that he had with his friends fueled Kobe, and he is considerate of how they inform his coaching and experiences with a predominantly Black player-driven sport with overwhelming white coaches. Specifically, growing up around the Indianapolis Colts, he questioned why star Coach Tony Dungy was fired after taking his team to the Super Bowl when the coach prior to him could not do it. Simultaneously, he saw the firing of his own high school's offensive coordinator after the coach was only given three years to learn and acclimate to the system. Now, Kobe questions his own role in connection to those experiences:

> And now for me, it's just, it's so much bigger because now I'm coaching ball at a high school level. I'm actually in the city in the public school system that's not very wealthy, this is like the bottom of the bottom when it comes to just the experience of my students. It's like they are going through it, some of them get out of school, go to work. They don't see their mom and dad because they got to provide for their family. They can't focus on

> ball 24/7 because they got to go to work, or they got to babysit, or they got to clean up the crib. Now you have to factor in all these other things that young Black people go through. So now that political nature was even bigger. You know what I'm saying? So going through school, yes, but also being a person that is experiencing every day. And I coach under, in our biggest conference in Indiana, there's only two Black head coaches and I coach under one of them. So now I'm seeing it from a whole different level.

Kobe's process of wrestling with issues in society and his experience as young boy influenced his future ambitions in a plethora of ways. He felt incapable but was encouraged by his parents, both IU alumni, to attend college and change the world. Additionally, his pre-college experience participating in the summer bridge program at IU and early college experiences advanced his understanding on the issues named and more.

Collegiate Journey

Kobe's college transition and early collegiate experiences were enhanced by community programs and activities like the Center for Leadership Development (CLD) and the GROUPS Scholars Program that provided a foundation for him to thrive on campus. Kobe sought to attend an HBCU because a few of his relatives had and he wanted an opportunity to further explore his Blackness. Unfortunately, funding was not available through those schools. He participated in CLD that exposed him to leadership, civic engagement, and college preparation. Thus, due to conversations with his mother about financial investments and knowing that he would not have debt from college after admission into GROUPS, he chose IU. Kobe shares how his participation in the program as a student was wonderful because he built lasting connections with his peers, who are now family. The program connected him to the BSU; so, entering his first year, he had two programs connecting him with students that looked like him after only having few in his actual classes throughout the week. CLD taught him the importance of being civically engaged, but as he connected with current IU students who were RAs in GROUPS, he immersed himself in BSU during his first year before focusing more on organizations tied to his major. Specifically, Kobe was one of few Black students majoring in sports marketing and there were no organizations that spoke to the issues he and his peers sought to talk about. A Black staff member, Brian, coordinated the creation of the George Taliaferro Student Association (GTSA), an organization named after one of IU's most prestigious student-athlete alumnus, who had mission to support Black students studying sport and create and facilitate resources for them to thrive. GTSA used the BSU's constitution as a framework for conducting meetings and programming. Kobe elaborates on the need for GTSA and its purpose:

> It was definitely lit just having that space to share, if you got an interest in sport, we want to build a family, just like if you got an interest in owning your Blackness, BSU was a family, you know what I'm saying? We navigated a lot from just being the only person of color in your sport class to wanting to have a job in a white dominated field. We navigated so much. And then it was tough starting out but just because some of our professors just basically said we were going to segregate the program, *segregate*. And that was the word choice used. And it was just like, wow, we're not supposed to create space for ourselves, but there's no space already provided on their end. Early on in our development, man, it was frowned upon. Some of our professors definitely did not support us creating our own organization, which was cool. And which was something we really had to sit down and say do we want to do this? You know what I mean? So it definitely made us second guess, should we do this? And then I was like, well, if we feel like this, if we do not do this, who's to say in a year, in two years somebody's going to

> come around and be just like us feeling like this. If we got a chance to be proactive and prevent people from feeling like this, why not do it? Yeah, there was a need, but it also was weird that this is a place of higher education. This is a place that's supposed to be a land of opportunity and white professors telling some students don't partake in something that could be providing resources and opportunity for other people. It was weird. It was weird to be in classes with a professor that basically said they're going to support you and they care about you and they want you to be successful for you to then tell me that, hey, I don't think that's a good idea to segregate the major, when no space is provided for, in this case, where we were coming from were Black students, but for minority students in this major—or the university for that matter, straight BS.

Kobe was taken aback by the lack of support from white faculty and subsequent erasure of conversations on Black issues in sport. Fortunately, a Black man faculty member who's expertise was in Sports, Dr. Gary Sailes, mentored and supported Black students like Kobe. They loved his class: Modern Experiences of African Americans in Sport. For Kobe, this course was pivotal in learning about CRT and advancing knowledge on race in America through sports. Kobe explains:

> Dr. Sailes was that guy, he was the advocate for all things Black in sport. So, I took every class that he taught, I was taking it. We would have these conversations and he's going to let you talk, he wants you to share, he wants all of that, those spaces to be of multiple thoughts. He doesn't want everybody just to be in here agreeing, if you got something to say, he wants you to say so we can then tackle why you think like that. Yeah, we were talking about critical race theory freshman, sophomore year. His classes were 100 percent

> that space that I got on integrating, diversifying inferiority and superiority complexes when it comes to sport, we were tackling all that.

Kobe developed a mentor relationship with Dr. Sailes who in Kobe's eyes had already undergone through similar experiences as a Black man studying sport. Their relationship developed to the point where Kobe will text or call him twice a week for wisdom or discussion on sport topics. Although the larger, mainstream sports major and industry relegated Kobe and his peers to discussing issues pertaining to white people, creating organizations and taking classes specifically tied to studying Black people was crucial for him.

Kobe's Future

As aforementioned, Kobe is teaching and coaching at a public high school and views that as his role in advancing the Black community. While Kobe acknowledged the multitude of challenges that Black students, particularly Black boys, experience while seeking success, he offers a critique of students' whose mindsets often focus on playing sports professionally as the only way to thrive. He thinks of his experiences playing sports with his peers, facing hardships, and having highly considered playing sports professionally, but having the power of community that showed other opportunities in the profession overall. He shares how the summation of his experiences inform his outlook for inspiring Black youth:

> So I think being able to capitalize on what sport brings, if we get out of the mindset of thinking, man, I have to play and I have to play at the highest level. We'll be, we'll make a lot more money. And I think watching a documentary in Dr. Sailes class while at Indiana University called 'Broke,' and it just talked about mostly African American athletes who were, you know, the top one percent who went on and became broke because of whatever happened, whether it was gambling, whether it was women, whether

> it was having babies, or whether it was jewelry. And, it's something that we have to understand. If our mind does not start to advance with our money, we're gonna still be the same person, just with a lot of money.

Kobe’s description of the impact the movie “Broke” had on him highlights how his opposition was cultivated further in the sport and field he cherished so much. He not only wanted to discover more about how his community had been impacted by the possessive investment in sport, but he also interrogates how the desire to play professionally and counter economic domination plays out through materialistic items once Black people become professionals. He shares:

> And I think in these positions that I'm talking about, when you talk about director of player development, or you're talking about the director of partnerships or chief financial officer of a team or president of a team, these are, these are positions that your mind advances, you don't think like an athlete you're doing totally different things than an athlete does. So that's, that's a part of that process of your mind advancing with your money. And man, I deal with partnerships right there, or I deal with teaching kids, how to be responsible on a college campus, being a director of player development. There's no way I'm gonna spend my money irresponsibly. So I think it puts us in this different lane, this avenue that we've never tapped into before. Cause hey, I'm Aaron Donald and I got six figures and I gotta make it out. And my first purchase gonna be a chain. You know what I mean? My first purchase is gonna be a house for my mom. We love that. And that’s us. That's how we're bred and built. But as the Black community, you know, when

> we look at our white counterpart, our money and our Hispanic relatives, their money, all of our money goes up. We trying to take care of our parents and grandparents ands and uncles. White community, their money goes down. They're preserving money for the next generation. So how can we tap into that, to where we're putting our people at an advantage and not a disadvantage.

Kobe offers an analysis of the Black community and advancing in the socioeconomic realm. He aims to liberate the youth through shifting mindsets and employs Angela Davis' famous quote "I'm no longer accepting things I can't change. I'm changing things I cannot accept" to ground him in the work. His experiences growing up in a two-parent household with a father who is a pastor gave him the spiritual grounding needed to influence Black kids in his community.

Chapter Summary

Stories shared by the 14 participants in this chapter illustrate the various ways Black students gain consciousness about their positioning in society, navigate societal barriers, explore cultural and familial values in relation to school, counteract the erasure of Black history, and seek liberatory practices for the advancement of the Black community. In particular, students at UM benefitted tremendously from Black student, staff, and faculty support organizations like Bridge, BSU, and CSP, as well as Black studies in counteracting racism on campus, navigating sexual assault conversations, learning and gaining access to graduate school, and creating, while also joining, a culture for Black activists. Participants at IU benefitted from Black student, staff, and faculty support organizations like GROUPS, BSU, and NMBCC, as well as Black studies in directing students to major-specific organizations, building familial communities to support retention, challenging racism in the classroom and on the campus, and facilitating post-graduate attainment. The next chapter places participants at a BSU conference among the two institutions where participants host sessions related to their shared experiences of access organizations and bridge programs, BSUs and leadership organizations, learning and developing consciousness related to gender identity, and civic engagement and liberation.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

In the previous chapters, I contextualized how Black students historically used BSUs as opportunities to live and thrive in society and at collegiate institutions that helped further social movements. In this chapter I illustrate how participants in my study utilize BSU and other Black campus resources to flourish. Specifically, I address problems illustrated in Chapter One that suggest predominantly white schools and institutions do not create supportive environments to cultivate Black students' desire to empowered to make sense of and transform the negative impact or influence of their home and neighborhood life, address sociopolitical issues influencing them, or discover inroads to their career aspirations. As such, the purpose of my study is to determine if Black students do indeed develop opposition to domination they face in society, and if so, what organizations or persons, like BSU or other Black people, help them learn more about the domination or strategies to counteract and fight back against that domination. Lastly, I consider once Black students do gain oppositional consciousness identities, does doing so lead to more concerted efforts of learning and acting against harmful systems or structures? My research questions, then, are: 1. Do Black students develop oppositional consciousness toward human domination? 2. How, if at all, does the Black Student Union play a role in cultivating Black students' oppositional consciousness development? 3. What do Black students do because of their gained oppositional identities?

Chapter 4 illustrates that Black students do experience human domination related to their gender, socioeconomic status, race, and their desire to enter various career fields, like those in STEM. Moreover, Chapter 4 details how Black students face various dominations in their adolescent and schooling years. This chapter is informed by how participants' upbringing and early years influenced their collegiate transition, on campus curricular and cocurricular experiences, and/or their post-graduate choices and actions. I conversed with Black students at the University of Michigan and Indiana University, who attended college between years 2017 and 2022, which overlapped with the single term of the 45th President of the United States. I wondered if their potential experiences with human domination furthered opposition to sociopolitical issues given 45th's controversial commentary, policies, and impact to the Black community. Participants chose to participate in my study because they were Black student-leaders on their campus and were concerned about the local social and campus environments and sought ways to transform the world. They directly and indirectly participated in BSU—serving on the executive board, exploring sub-groups of the organization, and connecting with other Black students, staff, and faculty to find support. Thus, my first theme explores BSU serving as a catalyst and generating desired change in Black students' oppositional consciousness development and success. Subsequent themes illustrate the importance of counterspaces in schools and colleges that help students critically engage and explore ways to counteract their subjugation; and how the culmination of students' experiences shape their future endeavors that further their oppositional consciousness identities, with them often naming new or connected forms of domination that they hope to address for community and social advancement.

Black Habits, Black Excellence, Black Organizing

Black students were overwhelmingly grateful for BSU because of the critical mass of Black presence it provided students at their PWI and the subsequent opportunities to engage with their peers. Many participants had never heard of BSU before attending college, but once introduced were appreciative of the organization and how it could support their success. Then of 14 participants, 10 participated in their institution's summer bridge program where their resident assistants were BSU leaders, and the bridge program held space for the organization to recruit and support its students. To illustrate the participants' narratives and experiences, I organized the 14 participants as panelists of various sessions for Black students at IU and UM to learn and gain wisdom. Participants will hear about panelists' roles in their campus's BSU, students' use of counterspaces and Black staff/faculty, and their overall desire to improve conditions in the Black community. I describe my reasons for this fictional depiction below.

Connected to narrative theory and lifestories, I sought to creatively share how Black students experience higher education and Black student supports that develop their oppositional consciousness. Before presenting the plenary, I share how my analysis led me to the connected themes, why I engage the themeses through the questions I pose as the moderator, and how this connects to my overall study. I then expand on its relation to narrative analysis, how the stories are relatable across participants, and implications for expanding the narrative literature.

As participants shared their experiences as leaders on campus, many of them referred to being immersed in the BSU as a platform to their leadership. They shared experiences inside the BCC or in summer bridge having opportunities to listen and learn what it meant to be Black students on their campus. Consequently, as they imparted wisdom on their oppositional consciousness development much of their contributions and learning in that development centered giving back to their communities and engaging in critical efforts inside and outside of the classroom that could create opportunities for their community to succeed. As such, I sought to honor and extend their ideas by considering how this dissertation research might influence and impact Black students largely. Thereby giving a nod to the power of counterpublic spheres by which BSUs have general body meetings or attend student conferences, I placed participants as panelist to illustrate how their individual experiences collectively create powerful lifestories. For example, many Black women in STEM benefitted greatly from affinity programs that validated their existence as Black women and reaffirmed their desire to thrive in the STEM profession with a nuanced focus on lifting as they climbed. Therefore, at the intersection of my theoretical framework, analysis, and amplifying students' narratives I uniquely positioned students in conference sessions where they recounted stories and imparted wisdom to their peers.

Life stories or storytelling confirms Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) articulation of lifespaces and living and telling across time and space. My analysis led me to the collective themes in this fictional tale at the intersection of my theoretical framework and themes surfaced after multiple rounds of coding and analysis. Specifically, narrative and oppositional consciousness led me to this portrayal because it provides space for participants to articulate their experiences in a traditional way that highlights how Black students tend to communicate in BSUs across the nation. As I categorized their perspectives into themes like "Black Women in STEM," "Fraternity and Sorority Issues," or "Fueling Oppositional Consciousness," or "Countering Domination" I noticed that participants' narratives were individually seeking to inspire younger students and overwhelmingly connected to shared experiences amongst peers. Thus, I engaged the themes through the questions I asked as moderator to illustrate individual narratives, connect them to life stories related to my methodology, and center students' collective identity and critiques of how they seek to transform the world. It amplifies their voices from the interview process, emphasizing the powerful narratives shared during interviews that set the tone for analyzing in Chapter 5 and interrogation in Chapter 6. Related to my research questions, I share how students in fact developed oppositional consciousness, how leadership experiences varied in BSU or not, and what they did or hope to do as a result of their oppositional consciousness experiences individually and collectively across both institutions. Aligned with narrative analysis, I provide structural and interpretational analyses of participants experiences with oppositional consciousness that surfaced in their interviews expanding their life stories from adolescent through post-graduate (Kim, 2015). More importantly, space is given to share their individual experiences critiquing and affirming their power as Black students wanting to change the world in college. Both individual and collective stories are amplified so themes are connected well through shared perspectives in a panelist type manner as if Black students in the Midwest are attending an orientation or conference session hosted by BSU or Black people that prepares and affirms younger Black students' experiences. Participants in the study emphasized that their collective efforts were connected to service and Black liberation by lifting up their Black peers and ensuring they knew about ways to thrive on campus and in society so this format was crucial for that depiction. Through this fictional tale, participants serve as panelist for a particular theme or issue pertinent to their experiences. I serve as the moderator for each panel, making slight connections for the Black student attendees in the room from the two institutions. Participants are not solely placed in sessions with others from their institution, but each session is comprised of topics that students experienced across both universities. I also nuance Black students' experiences at each institutions unpacking the multiple ways that students' oppositional consciousness narratives played a role individually and collectively at their respective institutions. Overall, I arrived at this format by understanding how Black students' experiences with oppositional consciousness was connected to their drive for service and amplifying the Black community, which connected to much of the literature in Chapter II. Through my theoretical framework, this format affirms how students experienced oppositional consciousness and sought ways to transfom the world. Further, it expands understanding of narrative theory through Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) through the imaginative space across time and location connected to the Black imaginatory tradition. Specifically, each participant's story depicts the individual power of their narrative that creates subversive tales of counteracting human domination at multiple points of their lives. As such, scholars and community members alike learn how oppositional consciousness development influences students' lives and offer perspectives for eradicating human domination and creating opportunities for Black people to thrive.

Opening Plenary

Welcome to the Midwest Black Oppositional Consciousness Conference (MBOC). I am your host Dr. Miller and I am excited that you are here. We have representatives from both UM's and IU's Black student populations for the inaugural celebration of Black excellence in the Summer of 2022. At MBOC, eight student leaders come from IU and six are from UM. A host of workshops and conversations on their experiences as Black students on their campuses will be shared in panel sessions on various topics. Participants' stories and introductions were shared in the previous chapter and will be referred to as context for how they experience different phenomena. The first day of sessions focuses on their desire to impact community after their investment in BSU or other Black-focused student organizations.

I know I can be what I wanna be…BSU

The first session discusses how participants' varied experiences at home not only inspired their desire to address issues in the Black community as raised in the initial phases of oppositional consciousness, but also by how the BSU community taught them how to wrap their arms around their peers. Kobe kicks off the session sharing how sports and school were his first introduction into love and support for community and that without Summer Bridge (GROUPS) RAs, who were also in BSU, he would have struggled to connect with other Black men on campus. He shares that “the GTSA was started because as Black men in sport we did not have an outlet to talk about what I know now as racism in sport. The conversations were surface level where we would talk about the lack of Black coaches and players in the NFL, but after having Mr. Richardson give us the BSU layout we were able to create an organization strictly for us to address issues on us. I had never had an opportunity like that prior to IU.” Thank you for sharing, Kobe. Kobe illustrates how Black staff like Mr. Richardson made space for him and his peers to thrive. It seems like the layout BSU provided gave him a structure by which he could tailor his experiences as a Black student at the university to then narrow his focus and efforts on Black students in sport.

Angie, might you have a similar point? Yes, I just hope that I can show other Black students that they do not have to always be doctors, lawyers or nurses, and the Black student community showed me that. I guess what I mean is:

> I would love to give back in meaningful ways and if I can just give back to like the scholarship programs that helped me get here in the first place, I would love to do that as well. It’s important to me because it meant a lot to me that the people before me came and set that up and allowed me to even be here because like I don't take it for granted especially going into senior year and almost having to go without scholarships. Like having scholarships was nice and having that support was great. And even the mentorships, like all the panels I went to hearing upperclassmen speak or alumni speak that set with me a lot and some of it didn't really hit till later, like you know, being comfortable with being uncomfortable, like failure is okay. Like I didn't really, I was scared. But <laugh>, as you're living, you know, like that advice really hits in times when it's needed. So I hope that y’all participants take that into account.

Yes, Angie thank you for sharing that. Students I think that you all should focus in on the fact that Jackie could not be where she is without GROUPS and Hudson and Holland introducing her to BSU. She attended those programs, and the wisdom of the various lecture series and mentorship provided by the advisors in the program helped develop her oppositional consciousness. Specifically, she gained wisdom from ICP faculty and leveraged that to lead student organizations and galvanize Black STEM students. Yes, Angie continues, “BSU was cool and all, but when I wanted to specifically focus on Black STEM issues. I valued the ability to just be Black and STEM and that being foregrounded. I’m sorry.” No need to apologize; you are illustrating for students in the crowd that the multiple arms of BSU or the Black community can be crucial to meeting Black students’ needs more intentionally. In fact, I think Cierra might have a similar perspective that is not BSU-related but still shows where her concern for community lies after creating her organization. Yes, most definitely, she shared. I just feel like:

> Black people are not all meant to be on the front lines. I think we should all be cognizant of these things. But I understand and realized that I had already started down the path of advocating for Black lives through my work in high school. And I would call myself being on the path of wanting to be a Black liberator. And that's part of the reason why I'm choosing to go into law, because some people look at it [Black liberation] as a game. And we have to navigate through the game so that we can get through it. That’s why I created Black Collegians not just for advocacy, but I want to help Black students become more enriched in what it means to be Black and what it means to learn about our history and those who have come before us and how we can navigate through all the challenges that are thrown at us within the society. And understand that we can be powerful and successful in a space that wasn't created or intended for us to be those things. And again, I do feel myself to be a part of all of those movements. And I feel like I will always consider myself to be a part of those because I feel like it is in my life's work and duty to be an active member and participant within the liberation for Black lives. We're already disconnected from our roots and we already are facing this double consciousness as Dr. DuBois would have said. In order to be able to live a life worth living, we have to understand ourselves and where we come from. And so that's why I really think it's important for us to be in tune to these things and understanding that while some of these things might seem surface level, they're actually a lot deeper than just the surface that we're seeing them at. And understanding that while some people might not want to get participating in social issues that affect Black people in particular, that we can't allow things to continue on for generations to come because it could go either way, it could get worse, or it can get better. I would choose for the better, especially for my younger Black brothers and sisters.

Whew, I think you are getting a lot of snaps there from others. One interesting piece to nuance from your comment is that Black Collegians, although more radical than BSU in your eyes, still became a pivotal space for you to develop a keen and intentional love for Black people but from a more systemic and structural level. The other point is that you still had the same love and passion for the community that was instilled in you at a young age but also took the opportunity to expand Black student advocacy in your unique way. Yes, Angie responds, and I still vibe and work closely with BSU because as a Black community we did not have the luxury to be siloed. I just wanted us to be more radical, she shared. Jane spoke up, Can I say something? Of course! I'll start by saying that it is wild to me how similar that is at UM:

> So, I would not be in many positions I've been in without other people helping me. If I'm being honest, it's been outreach programs like GEARUP that I was a part of. It's been mentoring from like the medical association when I was in the undergrad or BSU. Seeing representation from an early age, seventh grade, like I'm Black. So Black people pursuing their bachelors, their masters, their MDs. And you know, that became my norm of knowing that it's possible because I was fortunate to be a part of like outreach or pipeline stuff that allowed me to see that. And so, when I think about it, it's like, of course you have doubt as you're pursuing things, but it was, it was always a tangible reality because there were other people doing it and as they were doing it, they were helping us get there too—and BLACK people, specifically. And so, I just wouldn't be in this position without other people helping me. Like I didn't get here on my own. It was God and people working, God working through people. So, because of that, I feel like that is something I have to do: Also share the knowledge and opportunities that have been given to me and I have responsibility to help other people get there as well. I can't gatekeep the resources that I've been given. I can give them to other people or do what I can and what I learn to help them get there. And that brings me a lot of joy, right? Because I'm not someone who wants to be the only in the room. It's like, once you get into the room, how do I bring other people there? Honestly, how do *I take it over* with other people like me to enter? And so it's, it's more of a, like, I don't know, I'm also like religious in a sense of like, I find joy in helping others. And I can't just, when I've been blessed, I have to share those blessings. And so because of that, that has fueled my desire to want to always be in some type of outreach as I grow or make myself available to students, whether they're in high school or middle school or in undergrad, or even my peers because I've been given those things. And that's why it's so important to me to, as I grow, to bring others along and do the things that I can to help them because we can't just hold onto what was been given to us. So.

Yes! That is so real and again, your participation and learning in those pipeline programs not only showed you the power of being Black in STEM, but also facilitated your interest in the BSU, which led to you wanting to eradicate racism for these young people in the crowd. She fought for you students so that you do not have to and that you know, access, and understand resources to help you thrive in college. And I would be remiss if I did not echo your sentiments about God in your lives, because we saw in your biographies from earlier how impactful that spiritual connection kept you grounded. Yes, Jane continues, because my role in the BSU was not of me it was to serve as God called me to do and I am excited to keep exposing Black students to STEM. Emmanuel, might you have something to add from what you shared in your biography about your experience as a Black RA? Absolutely,

> I never get tired of being an RA, like two, three o'clock students knocking on my door saying “Hey, I need some advice, Hey, I need to talk, Hey, can you help me send this email to this professor?” Like I just never get tired of it because that's what I have. And so to consistently do that for other people so they don't have the same mishaps or could avoid things? Like I'm all here for that, because college is hard and I want the next four years for you to be as easy as possible. And I want conversations that we had your freshman year to resonate with you throughout life and if not life, at least the next four years, because that's what happened to me. And so, like just regifting a gift. Yeah, regifting a gift that was given to me that can consistently be given over and over and over again, like it just made, it feels harder. And I’ve thought about other fields to have this impact, but it's just something about the college population that like just draws cause it's like, you're, I don't know. It just draws me in and I, I love it. And come to think of it, it’s because of my GROUPS RA who also was the President of BSU that got me excited about being in both and BSU helped me become a better RA

Love the impact. So often in higher education we hear about the impact that students have, and feelings associated with being a resident assistant. Additionally, however, I hear you naming that your experience as a Black man being a resident assistant for the summer program that you also participated in serves a different, yet very fulfilling purpose for you that also fuels your future passion to enter the field of education and change lives. Yes, Emmanuel states. I was able to be a better leader in BSU because I cultivated relationships with my residents in GROUPS and they wanted to come to BSU and figure out how we improve campus policies, Emmanuel shares. Calvin, how about you wrap this portion up sharing your experiences? Oh of course I can.

> So I wanted to be much more and see how can I help Black people do what they want to do? And I think college debate, the BSU and even my early observations as a kid have all... I don't know, it would be kind of raggedy if I was just like, "Okay, I don't know any of that shit." Like I can’t turn my back, because I'm too deep. I know too much. I can't go into the world and see somebody get killed by a police officer and be like, "Oh, damn. Well, it sucks. Maybe we should pull them up or they should pull themselves up by the bootstraps." I just can't do that. So yeah, no. I'm on a path to help Black people. I really just have to stick to that path. And be honest with myself about my capacity limits to make sure I don't burn myself out, to make sure and remind myself that the reason I care

> about this is because I want everybody to be great. I want Black people to be doing their thing and I experienced all that as President and participating in BSU.

I most definitely understand the feeling of not being able to turn back. What is even more intriguing is that as a BSU president during COVID, an Ivy league Law student, and through multiple trials as a kid growing up in Atlanta, you have seen various facets of the Black experience so your empathy and grace in wanting to serve and support Black people is awesome.

Scholars in the room, the countless stories shared illustrate the gamut of experiences that may or may not be like your own. From the brief bios we provided to you, you saw the overview of how the panel has come to know what they know and build angst toward various injustices. This session reflects how they further cultivated that energy and intent with specific hopes to address a system or structure, or a sheer desire to impact change. Involvement with the BSU became a platform for your peers to seize opportunities to create organizations, get involved as RAs, and be unapologetic in nuancing the experiences of Black people, despite institutional context. *cheers* This next session explores more of how mentoring shaped your peers' opposition and desire to combat inequalities.

Mentorship and Counterspaces as Empowering Oppositional Consciousness

Welcome back scholars. I hope your break was pleasant. This session of the MBOC Conference is to illustrate how your brothers and sisters intentionally mentored students like yourselves, filling their cups for their future endeavors, and how aunties and uncles as staff or faculty proactively mentored your peers in meaningful ways. So, who would like to kick us off? I can, Adara shared. I have a sort of long example, but I think it touches on how Black faculty shaped me, but also how I stumbled across and eventually cultivated very strong relationships with Black staff like Dr. Glo and Dr. Carl who set the tone for me to continue supporting others. So long story short,

> I got into some trouble early on when I got to IU and I got connected with Dr. Glo and she got me a job working in the ODEI/Balfour office with Dr. Carl and that shifted my life. I knew what Blackness was, but I learned so much more about advocacy and getting involved. So currently for my grad school capstone project, the discussion topic of it is tokenism and psychological safety within the workplace and how that affects racial battle fatigue, and specifically how those three aspects among women of color in the workplace affect the work that is produced. So for example, in some workplaces you might see that the work that is portrayed, especially like the work that comes out that relies on the perspective of people of color, may lack in some places or they might just not be fully fledged out. And that's just because either some workplaces do not have people looking over it. So I know there was one magazine that wrote this whole article about trans identity and trans people, but there was nobody who was transgender working on that story. Or we see like some commercial, like, you know, when you look at a advertisement and you're just like the whole boardroom must have been a white male, because how did that get through and things like that. And when you do have one or two people of color, so specifically women of color looking at this, then how much do they have to fight tooth and nail for adjustments to be made just for adjustments to not be made in the end? <"Facts!" from the crowd> <laugh> or for them to be the sole person working on this project and not getting extra compensation for it. They're just a default DEI person and that's not in their job description. So then that extra work can lead to burnout and stuff like that. And that burnout can lead to a decrease in the deliverables and things that are going out to the actual public. So, in terms of mentorship, I now look at it in the perspective of higher education as well, because like there's always that there's just always the tactic of recruitment. IU just really good with slapping Black students and Black professors and Hispanic students on flyers and things like that. And when you get here where they at, they get us here, but do they keep us here? Like, are they <laugh> like the recruitment process has been studied and dug into to death, but where are we going with the retainment and the culture aspect of getting people in these places? But these white kids don't wanna hear nothing about that. So having my faculty mentor, who is a Black woman and being able to now bounce ideas off of Dr. Glo because as the Neal Marshall director she helps with recruitment, I feel super proud to merge communications and journalism with higher ed and like I may even look into jobs for that with like a DEI communications group because of those mentors. So yeah, sorry I know that was long.

No, no need to apologize. Your peers clearly agree with you about the façade the university sometimes evokes when promoting diversity and how fortunate you were to have Drs. Glo and Darnell to prepare you for the work needed to override the pushback you receive from people that may not be a part of the movement. Even more important to you in the audience, she slowly discovered her true purpose in conjunction with her mentors, she was angered by issues in society, worked in an office addressing structural issues like access and retention, was involved in various leadership positions, which led her to graduate school, and now to complete graduate school and prepare for the workforce she is considering how best to deploy all the aforementioned skills in her toolbox to disrupt systems in media and/or higher education. I enjoy this graduate school trend, let us keep it going. Martin, you care to share how mentorship was powerful for you in such a hyperwhite field like music? Sure.

> I'm doing a project on the Sphinx right now; their whole mission is reaching Black and Latinx musicians, giving them a platform, honing their artistry so that they can go out into the world, and represent for our communities, and they're also doing a lot to foster Black leaders in the arts administration space. They are my idols. I love them. The founder, and the current executive direct are two of my mentors that I try to keep very, very close. So, that was how I really got into it. I was like, "Whoa, this is a whole thing. And I'm kind of in the best place to be, to hone this skillset." So I think that's definitely where I got started with taking some of the founder's classes, his name is Aaron Gordon, and he teaches at the University of Michigan and the school, and he has an arts leadership course where he essentially brings all of these high level names in the arts administration field, many of whom are people of color, and he's like, "Here, talk to them, ask them questions." He interviews them. And then we have the little Q&A, and he drops their email, and we can connect with them, so he introduced me and a bunch of other students, some of the biggest names in the field, so now I have those connections, and all of that started at the Sphinx organization. One of my other mentors, he's currently a CEO and he's in his early 30s, and he is a Black CEO of an arts organization, and I also have him in my back pocket; I can reach out to him if I have questions, or if I'm looking for recommendations, so on and so forth. He's actually how I learned about this program, because he also was in this Master of Arts Administration program. I always wanted to take some of some classes that surrounded Black Studies, or African American Studies, and surrounded those issues, but I always felt like I really curated my coursework to be specifically career oriented, and that is what always kind of deterred me from leadership and connections early at UM because it was like, yes, I could take this class to get this information, but how is that going to advance me career wise? You know? So I felt like all of the information that I was getting was kind surrounding just kind of general DE&I, because I can leverage that in a career space. Anything else was something that I just kind of took on my own time; like going to, I don't know, a presentation and hearing a professor talk about X, Y, Z, because I don't have to sign up a class for that. I can just do that Thursday night, 7:30 to 9:30 PM, I can do that. Or just trying to be involved, and active with it, that was kind of how I sort of supplemented my excuse. So I did not make those connections early on or have that person to support me in my major because it is

> majority white and Asian industry, but the Sphinx was monumental for me. But now I can mentor young BIPOC students, so they don’t have the same experiences.

Shoutout to mentors, like your faculty Dr. Gordon, who can share internal and external resources with students that not only connect them with a person in their field, but that also provide transformative experiences exposing them to the plethora of opportunities to learn about their community and concerns that they now find relevant. For many students in the audience, we hear quite often that for majors lacking a critical mass of Black students, they are the only ones and it is hard to connect; yet your story gives hope for them to connect with a Black faculty member or see if there are external constituents, like the Sphinx, to support. It is especially helpful if the university has staff and/or faculty to support those undertakings. No, that is real because UM also had Black yield events so I can say more about mentorship, but from my peers, Malisa shared. Oh, please continue:

> I have mentees that are still there, mentees that have graduated just this past year. And people that see me now, like I just dropped a post about how my first year in grad school went and people are hyping me up like specifically Black folks that went to Michigan. It's just like, the love is so real. And it's showing me, it's a moment of also reflecting on how you are reminded you brought up again that black people in leadership, it takes a toll often. And seeing that there are great things happening, but how mindful I've been of just taking it step by step and not letting the list of things overwhelm me to where I feel like it's too much, or I can't do it. But I'm learning from, I guess, experiences I've had in the past, how not to pass that on people who are in those spaces or coming into these different spaces of leadership too that are my mentees and people that are grinding and working hard to get into their grad school programs or begin their careers or go to med school. Like it's a lot, but the network and support is so real. It's so genuine. And it just makes me feel loved, like to think about the love that was shown to me, coming into Michigan, getting through it and love that I can give back to people and to hear what they have to say to me about my impact in their life. And to be able to tell them how they've impacted me and see the impact that they have on the community as well. It's amazing. And I think that's the biggest thing. That's, that's been resonating with me since our last conversation and learning as a Black person and I'm a believer in Christ. So for me, instead of having to think about how hard I have to work to do well to fall back on to, to sit with and trust in what I believe in, which is that as a Black woman, I, and it is as a Black woman, the world says that we have to work twice as hard as to get half of what a white person has, but I'm learning to not let that run me, not let that reality run me. I'm

> learning to believe in my truth, which is that I can just be me and that's enough to take me to a place I to go. And that's the truth I'm hoping to share with other Black people too, that you are enough as you are. And it's always more for us to do and more for us to become, and that's gonna come with time, but let's not push it and press it just to get somewhere and let's enjoy the, the journey there. So that's when I'm, I'm starting to rest in as I'm making my way through grad school and hoping, hopefully setting a tone for my life too.

Malisa, you offer very astute wisdom in both sharing how scholars should consider their mental wellness and leaning on mentors and centers on campus that may contribute to their success. Significantly, what I hear her sharing with you all is that sometimes the campus culture might necessitate and impress upon you that you need to do everything, but do not lose yourself while also trying to save the world. I see you raising your hand, Angie. Might you have something to add?

> Yes! That resonates so much for me because I was so fixated on STEM, but staff mentors in GROUPS helped me see different paths. So I had some conversations about injustices in the community, or Black people being killed in the media, or things of that sort, but I didn't have the background knowledge with those conversations until coming to college. Racism as a Social Problem was the first class I took during that GROUPS summer. That blew my mind of just how systematic racism actually is, and what's actually been taking place, the history behind what's going on. Because you just don't learn that, especially in predominantly white schools. That's just not in the history books. Even though my mom would teach me a lot of history and we'd go to the Black History museums and Alabama and things like that, it was just so much that I didn't know. A Black woman, Dr. Pamela Jackson, was the instructor and I was learning with a whole bunch of other Black students, which I had not been to a Black school since second grade. Hearing other people's perspectives who came from predominantly Black schools, and we ended up talking to a KKK member, or he wasn't in the KKK anymore, but he used to be, this is something I never thought I'd do, and just hearing what people believed and why people believe those things and what people do about their beliefs. The class was amazing and just made me appreciate just how many boundaries the people who came before me had to go through, because now I realize how many paths have actually been created for me. When I do my STEM, I also do it in the lens of, I'm Black, how is the science affecting everyone rather than just affecting science for the sake of science, which I think a lot of scientists get caught up in when they're doing their work. And I went four years before I would take another STEM class, but I will never not include or consider US when studying an issue because it's so multifaceted.

Black faculty can play a very special role for students and counter what many of you assume or think that you need to do or prioritize. Dr. Jackson demystified what it meant to study STEM and how race, class, and social sciences inform how you might better understand and find meaning in STEM. Angie expresses the importance of GROUPS and Dr. Jackson showing her that path so she can bestow that knowledge unto you all and serve her community more intentionally. And the Black faculty reminded us in GROUPS to take advantage of our campus and our peers and they put me unto the fifth floor of Wells Library. Unfortunately, these new students cannot experience that like we did because of COVID, Emmanuel shared. Can you share more? Yes, the fifth floor of Wells is:

> The fifth floor on the west tower of Herman B Wells library. And my freshman year my older cousins, that is where they took me to study. And to like, when I went to the library, I was always going to the fifth floor unless I was gonna check on a book, but I would go get the book and come back to the fifth floor. And the reason why, like me and my friends stayed on the fifth floor is because that was a space that was occupied by majority of Black people, like throughout the school year with exception to when Kelley, like students had their finals and they needed like the workspaces. But for the most part, like that floor was occupied by Black students, like the entire school year. And I knew like, okay, I could go to the fifth floor no matter what time, because someone's always studying since it was open 24/7. Like I could always go up there and hopefully find a familiar face or make a new friend, had a lot of great memories, like up there being unbothered, being unapologetically Black and creating like a sense of camaraderie. Like with my friends, like we were having dance battles, playing music out, playing music out loud on the, on the computers, but we're also like studying and it had like group tables to give us like a space to sit together. And actually, like we could be study partners or just bounce ideas off of each other. And also like even late, late at night when there's only you and your friend group there, like time for like that could be a time for y'all to have like similar those deep talks that people have, which being like the past year, when I've gone into Wells, I've tried to get like underclassmen to come up there, but they just don't find the importance of it. They don't feel it. And I too much can't blame them because you can't find the importance in something that I feel like you like never have experience and well in that particular situation. And they would have needed to experience that, to see why it is as important as it is.

You all at IU created and sustained a space to be your full selves and continued sharing that sentiment among the rest of the Black community. More importantly, the gamut of activities—

from studying to building community and having free access to the building—highlights the power in having full autonomy to engage as needed but know the power in community. But I am shifting gears here a bit and I want to talk about the sociopolitical landscape. You all attended school during heavy societal unrest, and I am wondering if you all might share some of the support you experienced on campus.

AmeriKKKA Never Loved Us…

For this session, we will keep it relegated to your campus and then I can connect some of your experiences across the institutions. UM, can you start us off?

UM

Yes, I can, LJ shared. I think that we all can share the power of CSP. I did not connect with them initially and coming from dealing with racists people in the military, I was not prepared for what was to come at UM.

> I didn't even know CSP was a thing. I just got into admitted into Michigan like a normal transfer student. And, I mentioned I was involved in the veteran group. Someone in the veteran group was like, "Hey, have you heard about CSP?" And I was like, "No, what's that?" And so, he walked me over to CSP, and then that's when Dr. Waters was there. I just went to Michigan because it seemed like it was a good fit, it was a good school, it was a good choice for me financially. And I was like, "I'm going." But, I didn't really think about what it would look like when I got there. I was not prepared for Michigan level anything, especially... I graduated high school six years before that. I'd done an associate degree, but super small classes, super easy. I didn't study, I didn't do anything. I did the work, and I got A's, and it was fine. And then, at Michigan I was just like, "Whoa, this is not fine." And so, Dr. Waters was the one who actually taught the course that I was in. And, that helped me, I ended up meeting some people through. And then, that's when me and Dr. Waters started working on forging a collaboration between CSP and the veterans center, just because we didn't know about it. And, it's a valuable resource for us, because we're not typical, traditional students. And, we fall in line with what CSP offers overall. But I would say one of the big things, taking that CSP101 class, or whatever it was, was just learning the history of the university, and then learning the history of CSP itself, and why it was so important to the Michigan community. They talk to us about

> career fairs, and resumes, and how to plan your three or four years at Michigan. How to approach and talk to professors, things like that, because I had no idea about any of that. I was like, "I'm never going to talk to a professor in my life, basically." I was like, "I'm just there. Get in, get out, and I'm done." But they're like, "No, when they have office hours, literally just go see them." And I was like, "What? I can actually do that." I didn't realize. I didn't know that.

Thankfully you were able to find support during your second semester and ask Dr. Waters questions that helped you find support for other veterans and transfer students. Calvin, interjects:

> When Shanice had “Nigga” written on her door it just was the extra cherry on top of Trump and his madness. So, when I was President and Breonna Taylor’s situation happened, they wanted me to write a statement and that is what universities and companies were doing and I did not want any more of them because everyone and their grandma put out stupid statements. I hate statements but everybody was like "Oh, we got to put out a statement." I was like, "all statements say the same shit” So I was like, "Okay, if we're going to do the statement, then we're going to say the things that we are going to do." And so we did care packages, small I guess in hindsight. I thought they were pretty sick. And yeah, so we put some cool stuff in there, but the purpose of those was like, "Okay, we want to let you know we are here for you all. And if you need anything, the BSU got you even though we're virtual." And we've never done care packages before that was new. And it wasn't just like we ordered some care packages, because we ordered all the supplies. We assembled them and we shipped them out. We hand delivered them. We put together a little like know your rights primer, because we were like, "Okay, well maybe this is a protest year. So we just need to be able to have a resource for members of our community. Mama Beth was crucial to this effort because we wanted to support Black students and knew the president wasn’t gonna do shit. But she told us to look out for US in the way we needed and know that Black staff were there for support and I am forever indebted to her for that.

Calvin was able to process compounding negative social events from both his childhood and in college and use BSU and Mama Beth as a platform to hold the institution accountable and advocate for his peers. And to Calvin’s points, those demands that we made to the president, who was really not in our favor, doubled down 45’s ideals and were extremely anti-Black, Leslie shared. She continues:

> A lot of UM community members were just not fans of... I mean, I don't blame them, are not fans of the president. He's leaving now a year early than his expected term. Not surprising there, but basically just cultural competency was not there, and then even the

> one... Who was it? Royster was the Black woman. I forgot her role, but she had a huge role under Schlissel. She always liked to play that field type of thing and we weren't there for that... it's just like we did as much as we could socially, social movement-wise. A lot of the times, it just came down to the fact that just talking, like we had access to the president like that and we had access to the administration like that, and we just needed to...For us, it was just more so like, okay, we need to work with what we have, and like I said at that time, it was just a lot of pushback, and like I said, people were protesting on Schlissel's lawn, doing this and doing that, and I'm not saying it didn't help anything, but at the end of the day, it's like... I'm not trying to be funny and it sucks too because I seriously do believe in social movements and that's why we have the new Trotter on campus. That's why we have an uptick in Black students, but already for our year at times it just was just what they were doing was more so like we're just going to do it out of rebellion, and also we're the BSU, but we are not the spokesperson for the Black community either. There are so many other Black orgs thankfully on U of M's campus that catered to us that could help as well and it was an experience. But the president?! He was not trying to increase Black student representation, he did not want to address the N word on my Shanice's door, he did not want to denounce Trump's rhetoric, just not for the culture at all. We protested him, his white army of faculty, and the puppet students who did not want to see us win—but look at us now and look where it led him.

Leslie, your commentary on the President is a poignant one as it highlights both the anti-Blackness that you felt and experienced and illustrates the effort needed in combatting structural and systemic processes. It can be hard for students to identify a particular issue or person to target in their activism, but it seems as if you all were intentional about ousting the President and making demands for the institution—even if it came years after your graduation. No for certain, Jane said. Even more, she continued, as I shared earlier:

> We were learning to protest before using canvas, so it was the BSU and OAMI that taught us what the history of UM was for Black people, connected us to alums in various decades, and helped us I don't wanna say overhaul the university, but taught us the intermediary steps to do it and stay committed. And at the same time, well for me at least, it was double majoring in the hard sciences and social sciences to study Black issues that was monumental because I lived it, see my community ravaged by these systems, and I get to both study those issues and serve as a mentor and leader for improving Black people's health conditions and their endeavors in STEM.

Protesting and learning how to not accept the status quo because of BSU leaders who came before you is a form of what you are doing for the audience. But see that's the thing, Martin interjects, because of the erasure of Black musicians in my field, “I did not have much of these relations with Black students, Dr. Gordon, or Black faculty to even think about these safe spaces on campus, I just wanted to thrive in the industry.” And that is not the end of the world for you or any of the participants in the room. As you all have shared, you came to know and learn more about BSU and Black student concerns at multiple entry points. Black staff and faculty created space and encouraged Calvin to take on leadership roles in the BSU or Jane furthering her understanding of CRT and Black liberation by taking multiple Black Studies courses, you all are forging a path and inserting yourself in the conversation on what it means to be successful as Black students. Your faculty and staff members saw that 45 and his presidency, anti-Black sentiments, and other systems of domination were at play, so they committed themselves to supporting your success through their time, resources, and treasures to combat those systems. Yes, Malisa shared, and other students, who had their classes, taught us how to finesse too. I shared a little earlier, but want to also mention that:

> They defined what an active student looked like and that legacy of being Black at Michigan carries weight. When I attended the event with the leaders who were apart of BAM 1 fifty years ago, I was only a first year, but it was the platform I needed to know that whether it was the university president, US president, or whoever, you can’t stop Black people from demanding what we need, and I learned it and passed it on to mentees.

Exactly, hence why we are having this conference so you all can share stories as such. UM already had a legacy of activism from leaders in BAM 1 or BAM 2, affirmative action, and more; you all learned all about that and continued the legacy fighting against various domination. Also the application of those leaders creating opportunities for generations to flourish, you all did powerful work providing care packages for students during COVID, academic workshops, and creating programs that inspire the younger generation. One last thing to add to that, said Calvin:

> Now that I am in law school, I really miss student leadership and I have not been as involved as I used to, but I am shifting my perspective of what service to the Black community looks like, because as I read about fugitivity for Afro-Latinos, their movement was connected to action and policies. So now knowing that I can learn about the law and apply it to my family in GA or Black UM students, I know this is the beginning of the revolution. <applause>

Well, thank you UM students for sharing how Black staff, faculty, and students afforded you opportunities to learn, serve, and impact your community and fueled your endeavors to do more. IU, I am sure you have similar thoughts.

IU

Yes, similar on so many levels, Ashley shared. So like UM students, we obviously dealt with 45's madness and controversy. So, for many of us,

> The Neal hosted a watch party when the election happened, and it was just this really eerie feeling. I would always say in high school, I did not do politics so this was quite new for me and so when it was announced that he would be the president, you could see the energy in the building melt. Outside of the building, it was a totally different story like white people were screaming and cheering and for BIPOC students we just didn't know what was to come.

No for real, Kobe shares, "we as Black men just knew that we had to have our sisters' backs. White students were on something wild runnin' around with confederate and US flags and cheering, like we didn't know what could happen to Black women so me and a couple others made it our mission to walk them home and make sure they were safe," Kobe shares. Ella adds, "It was not just the fact that 45 said antisemitic things about Muslims and Latinx people, but the problem was also that Black students only made up four percent of the student population at IU on top of Black people being killed in the media, on top of Black students in Indy not being adequately prepared for college." Wow, as I unpack this context you all provide, we see how deeply domination shapes how you all think and experience college. Many of you shared before how you attended NMBCC's watch party because you knew a little bit about what he was saying but were grateful that Dr. Monica Johnson and her team created a space for you to learn and not be judged for your lack of knowledge regarding politics. Blake adds, "Yes, Momma Monica knew we needed that space and to keep it real, the rest of the campus was not hosting any similar event so we kind of knew where they stood. Right! The president and a bunch of other departments sent out a few emails denouncing some of his statements, but it seemed quite passive." Well can I speak to that, Cierra shared, because:

> That is the reason I started Enough is Enough because just as the name says I was tired of empty promises and talk, talk, talk. So, working with a lot of the students on the panel, because Black students had to come together even though we sometimes work in siloes, I got support from Ms. Mary Stephenson, the director of GROUPS, and Dean O'Guinn. It was a very long journey of learning how the institution works, my power as Black students, and just wanting to do something out of the norm. So, creating a Black Lives Matter mural when like they said many people at the institution already don't like us or were not in support of the movement, even some Black folks, was a very challenging process. But when it happened, it was so beautiful to see, and we got buy-in from the institution and other students that still come to me and say that they are glad we did something so powerful.

That is very true, but I feel like we could not just stop there, Ashley added. Like not saying Cierra's efforts were meaningless by any means, but I think a lot of students, especially because of the pandemic, did not have a follow-up or see how the mural addressed concerns that we really cared about. "As BSU president, I know a couple panelist have shared that we were not really an activist group, but my focus was really figuring out what the larger population wanted. Sometimes we talked about politics, other times we focused on mental health, and our main thing was working with Black faculty and staff that cared about some of the same issues."

Got it! So, I think this is a great dynamic happening here and it was like experiences of the UM students, where your entry points into your consciousness and path for advocacy varied tremendously to where you all generally have interest in liberating the Black community. Yet each step to get to that understanding or action is quite nuanced. Spaces like the Neal and the Black staff and faculty like Ms. Mary or Dr. Darnell, as Adela shared earlier, help you situate and expound upon your intrigue in your passion around solving issues in your major. Also, what I am hearing is leadership spaces—like fraternities for Johnnie and Kobe, choral ensemble for Cierra and Jackie, and overall mentoring for many of you—are not merely a means to an end. Instead, you are constantly seeking out and reevaluating how to create better conditions for your Black brothers and sisters. What you all have illustrated in this section, in connection with your UM peers, is that countless Black resource centers and programs, a handful of campus offices, and more specifically, Black students, staff, and faculty reiterate their passion for seeing you thrive for the power of the collective movement. I appreciate your interrogation and thoughtful commentary on how and when your consciousness increased and perhaps furthered experiences from your adolescent years that you wanted to destroy. In the next section, facilitators will highlight how they retroactively made meaning of many of the experiences they have shared and how that cyclical process propels them forward into various career endeavors.

Retroactive Meaning Making and Reassessing Future Endeavors

Settling into this session, we continue exploring your peers' meaning and sense making of consciousness throughout their collegiate journeys. Specifically, we explore how they further delved into their major and career endeavors in conjunction with leadership and academic success, how many of the more seasoned panelists have a variety of reflective thoughts about how they could have enhanced their collegiate experience or community, and the cycle of (re)learning and demystifying notions about them or the Black community. So, we will mostly mix it up across institutions, but let's begin with the sisters.

Feminism and Womanism

Of the 14 panelists, nine are women and that could be attributed to countless factors, but it is quite intriguing when thinking of how women tend to be at the forefront of student leadership. Given that you all have such a strong presence, in this session I hope to unpack more about your leadership development and how you navigated, or not, various feelings and notions imposed on you by structures. Jane, want to start us off? Sure, I can. So I have shared that I am grateful for my GEAR-UP and pre-college mentors for teaching me about CRT and feminism prior to my arrival at UM. However, given the experiences, and I am going to get a little deep here so trigger warning for sexual assault, I do not know how to adequately prepare you as Black women for how to navigate the terrain. She shares:

> I am studying public health, working in a victim office on campus, and trying to advocate for the Black community. I had some of this language to talk about womanism and feminism, and then I'm still interested in some of these things. But it was seeing the language that I did not have as a child, have and in the middle of learning the content in classes in reality. We can read, we can know. I mean, feminist is weird. I say feminist is feminist the feminist in people. No <laugh> cause like, I think a lot of like feminism, the first wave of US feminists didn't even include Black women. But anyway language, when I remember talking to some of my peers, conversations, it wasn't defensive, but it was like people were apologizing as a, a precautionary measure. Like I don't think I've done anything, but just in case, I just wanna make sure, like, I didn't do any, like it, it was, everyone is scared. They're scared their name is gonna pop up on a page, whether or not you did something. They're just in a state of fear. Mm-Hmm, <affirmative head nods and murmurs> it's a state of fear especially for men. And so the language became very, like, I don't even know how explain this. It was weird. Like talking to my male friends of like, I hope I don't appear on the page. And I told my cousin, I said, if it's burn and let it burn, like, if we're about to air all this out, we might as well, this is the time. So I wasn't like, I would tell them, I was like, it's not that I hope you're not on the page. It's that I hope you didn't do anything. Like it's not that I, I <laugh>, I hope nothing actually occurred. That's why you're not on it. Not oh, X, Y and Z situation occurred, and I just didn't appear. And so it was, there were a lot of, I just, it became draining. Yeah. Like every time you talk to someone, it was about the same thing. I deleted my socials for the first time, because I was like, it was just too, it was just too much. And then I deleted my social media and then I had people sending to my phone, text messages of like, oh my gosh, this person. Oh my gosh, that person. So it was, I think it was seeing it in real life, which made it very hard. But it's in a certain aspect. It's like, you have knowledge, but you're also running

> away from it because it's not fun to talk about things, especially when it's important it's to you all the time. Yeah. And it's, I think it's mentally tax. It was mentally taxing for a lot of people for a long time.

That is a lot. In your understanding and learning of feminism and public health, you are seeking to meet the needs and advocate for Black people, namely Black men, despite the harm they may have inflicted on people closest to you. Yes, Jane continued, and I then had to navigate how my friends would see me on social media with someone and it was just quite messy. Even more messy, it impacted whether or not and how women joined sororities on campus. So after the summer of all of this it was a weird time to be a part of the NPHC because

> I think that people in Greek life weren't the only people on the page, but there was a lot of narratives. Like why would you wanna be at this or this organization of people who do X, Y, and Z understanding that these are not the values of the organization. These are people, these are people who chose actions that don't represent the org, but it became very much associated with this group, with that group. Like, y'all do that, y'all do this. Why would when new members are being brought in, like, why would you wanna be an organization of rapists? Like this is the language that's there. And it's like a constant defense mechanism.

That is an interesting dynamic too because given the challenges in Black Greek life to increase membership and representation, negative portrayals such as sexual assaults compounded the difficulties in the organizations' success. Additionally, UM students then, perhaps, miss opportunities to know the history and impact of the NPHC that could contribute to their own success. No, exactly, Leslie shared, because on the opposing side,

> I had to navigate dealing with men in fraternities and on the football team because there were certain organizations that were named up to ten times! Not only the organization, but also individuals who were named as a violator three or four times and some people, men and women, were still cappin' for them! So again, I care for my Black men and community, but this experience was a blessing and a curse for my investment in public health because I learned during it all and this is my life's work.

I can understand how that is and was frustrating for both you and Jane, and while you developed the on-ground training and preparation for collective and individual success in your current graduate school in STEM, the expense of seeing a community you love not thrive can be difficult. At the same time, you all prospered and can lead the graduate STEM associations that you manage because of your role in these Black organizations, like BSU. That opposition you have built over your lifetime persists in ways that allow you to interrogate systems and structures that do not meet Black folks' needs. May I add as a Black woman in STEM?, Angie asked. Yes, please. While we did not have or I was less aware of allegations against men in our own community and men in general, specifically white men, force us into a similar dilemma that they were mentioning:

> When you are around white women, you can bond over being a woman, being a woman in STEM even, and what that means, and how people can still talk over you and things like that. You're not taken seriously, but one thing that they don't also think about when we're having conversations like that is what it means to actually be a woman of color because not only maybe are you talked over, but also you just aren't respected. People don't think of you as smart. You have to constantly, constantly prove yourself. In that aspect, Black men might understand that and understand the fighting process of getting to where you need to go, and constantly advocating for yourself, even same as women. When it comes to being a Black woman, you also can't be too strong because then you're too aggressive. You have to be this certain je ne sais quoi, I guess, that people will actually listen to you, respect you, hear what you have to say. When you're in that space with women of color, we just get it. We just know. We just know. We don't have to

> explain the background. We don't have to explain the different situations. When we do, it's just like, "I know. I've gone through the same thing. I've I felt the same way." I had even experienced in one of my chemistry classes, I was having a group project and the white men took leadership roles immediately. I was just like, "Y'all are wrong. The way you're going about the answer is just wrong. It's not going to work." One of the white girls had said, "I agree with you." I was like, "Thanks," but she said it in my ear. I was waiting for her to say something, but no one listened to me. I just sat down, waited, watched the project fail. That was my first experience of, oh, so it's not just about being Black or being a woman, but there's going to be issues. I mean, every time I think about it, I'm happy that it happened actually. Because if it didn't happen so in my face, I don't think I would've noticed it growing, getting more ahead, talking to people who are in upper divisions of my field. I wouldn't know, I guess, that I would need to advocate for myself in that way. It really sucks that that's the case and that that's what happens, but it's also the reality of spaces where you don't have a diverse environment. Because I'm in STEM and that's just the norm that there aren't diverse environments, it's good to know what that means rather than go in blindly thinking that I could just ... Because, like I said, I've been in a bubble of being uplifted, being supported, always being encouraged, always having places to go. When I don't have those places or when I don't have those spaces, how am I going to actually deal with it in the situations as they come?

Thank you for sharing, Angie. Not only do you feel that you must go through it, but in being connected to the women before you, you also are expecting it to happen as a matter of when, not if it will. As Black women and STEM majors, you sought out groups and organizations like ICP that taught you about what it meant to be in STEM and how to persist in lieu of students like the one you named who might advocate behind closed doors instead of seeing issues as structurally or systemically important. And professors too, Ashley shared. I may have mentioned this earlier, but I had a professor that refused to use a different or non-white mannequin for CPR and would not call on women in class to answer questions. And yes—he was white.

I appreciate you sharing, and I know others like LJ can add how her experience in the military and experiences from that male dominated space to STEM can be connected, and on her journey to law school Ella will not escape the gender domination present in your lives. What you all have highlighted for your peers in the session is that you experienced gender domination knowingly and unknowingly at multiple points in your lives. Sometimes, programs and departments or student organizations were able to help you discuss, interrogate, and deepen your understanding of the problem, but often those same spaces heightened the need to fight and defend yourself. Nonetheless, you discovered your resistance tactics to learn more, support your community, and lean on each other to persist. Your peers in the audience know and see that now. So can you all give it up for these amazing women? <applause> We will talk later at the closing ceremony about how we might further disrupt gender domination and other forces that may hinder your success and the panelists have given us a great initial launch into that discussion. Prior to diving into that, I would like to continue our conversation of persisting and gaining consciousness, but we will turn to an issue more intentional to some of our panelists: identifying actions that they might have done differently given reflections resulting from some of their current endeavors.

4.1 Retroactive Meaning Making and New Endeavors.

Panelists' development and passion for Black students is not relegated to a linear or rigid process that may sometimes align how the education system designed. Instead, learning is an iterative process, and they will now share how their processes informed future goals. Participants will illustrate their various experiences in short snippets that connect to the whole. Malisa, can you start us off? Yes, so I can start where I am and am planning to go. I want to address systems that were not made for me. The Black people in my life equipped me with sound doctrine and a relationship with Jesus Christ that got me through the toughest moments since forever. As a Ph.D. student, I want to continue studying us in the larger diaspora. We are so powerful and beautiful and connected to higher spirits, and I just hope that I can exude that and empower my people to do the same. I wish that I would have taken more time for my mental health because I did not truly understand that until this graduate program, but I am doing me for me and prioritizing everybody Black <cheers>! Malisa, UM offered space for you to learn and grow as a Black student, but you are also saying that now that you are in the Ph.D. program in Black Studies, you can reflect on all the toiling you were doing to now being free to focus on direction. Yes, and as a I shared at the beginning; I do not know where exactly that is, but I know I am committed to us being free whatever it may look like. Oh, and I want to keep having an impact because like even though me and Jane are in different sororities, we still found power in that and talk about post-graduate life flourishing with our families and our sisters at homecoming doing God knows what. Well, I guess I will jump in since you mentioned me, Jane said. I shared a lot that public health was my jam because of college prep programs like GEAR-UP and Black UM students but at the end of the day

> I found what was important to me is creating an experience for students where they're surrounded by health professionals who are minorities, who are successful in their fields. But also understanding how they can make steps even if they're 12 years old and seeing themselves in spaces. Like I remember a student saying they just didn't know that they could do research. They didn't know that it was something that they could do. They hadn't seen so many Black doctors, deans of medical schools. Exposure is a big thing. It's not everything. But literal the lack of seeing something, is hard to imagine something you haven't seen. And kids have a strong imagination, but it makes it easier for them when you show them that these are realities. And so, I got very involved in that doing poster presentations and leading student access groups. And I think that having my student orgs really helped me keep on medicine because I was also surrounded by other people who wanted to do the same things and it transcended that way. Oh, the other thing was, I also liked debating with other students. It was like a policy debate but a lot of arguments were on anti-Blackness. And so we would relate like surveillance, one topic when you was like, "Yeah, it's surveillance and danger in talking about anti-Blackness and how that functions when you survey different people." So I think my extracurriculars helped me find those passions. So all of that combined with my relationship with God, my sorors, and my passion for Black people I am ready to impact the field of Black public health in the diaspora.

You very much reiterated your desire to improve health conditions for Black people and I admire how your life's experience has connected you to supporting Black students' holistic success. In a similar way, Kobe's passion and drive to liberate youth through sport may connect? No, it definitely does, Kobe states, because at the predominantly Black and Latinx high school I work at:

> The mindsets are a lot different now and understanding and just giving them authentic love and advice, understanding that there's more to life than money, cars, clothes, that whole idea of that only thing that we can do to be successful is be an athlete or a rapper. And it's like, hey, you can make a million dollars without doing either one of those things, feel me? And giving them just both ends of it. Not necessarily telling the youth that they're necessarily wrong because we was all young at a point and made mistakes, but just trying to give them another way out. So just being a part of that and liberating the youth and trying to get their mindsets to change versus trying to force things on them, I think that's the generation in which we come from, just whether you talking about faith or whatever, that's something that when we're young, we go to church, we don't really know why, but hey, if your grandma said you going to church, we going to church. But just giving them those options to explore their minds, because their minds are very malleable, but you have to be putting the right things in them. They might not know nothing about a freaking two step equation, but they can quote every song, the NBA YoungBoy, or Pooh Shiesty or NLE Choppa. And that's the biggest thing, being in school for seven years, so going straight into my master's and now coming down to work in high school, it's like, dang things have changed in seven years. And I'm young, I'm probably one of the youngest teachers at the school, but it's still like, wow, this is what you all doing in school now, this is what you all talking about. And they've grasped that they don't need school so young, it's just like, as an educator, as a person who obtained a master's degree, it's like, man, we got to find ways to get art students just being very intentional on the hour or young Black students to look at education from a lens of opportunity, not they forcing me to go to school. So I guess that's my role in Black liberation is just trying to get the youth to see this thing from a totally different lens.

Understandable. And I see the power in you impacting youth through sport because you shared extensively that personally studying and participating in sport and your desire for impacting community seem most appropriate through coaching. Yes, and I thank my parents who instilled that in me and my friends, who many are now my fraternity brothers, and we just care about leading the youth and creating avenues for them to eat. I wish I could have done more planning and organizing for the youth in college, but I am glad that I was able to support my peers who will go on to be doctors and lawyers and can inspire them too. Thank you for sharing. For the audience, note that Kobe found inspiration from coaches and mentors and sought to do that as an undergraduate, and is continually learning how to expand his reach through coaching and mentoring. And to that note that Kobe just mentioned, I have wanted to figure out my impact but not really knowing in what sense I could further push inclusivity and equity for students of color on campus, Emmanuel shared. He continues:

> Thinking of e-board meetings and things like that when I was quiet or events that I missed out on, like, was there potential for me to add anything productive or valuable to that space had I took the time to go to that space and interact, besides that? The piece I really feel like is due to COVID and the pandemic came in and threw everything out of whack. And I know it's been very hard for younger students because I came to campus, I had a freshman year experience living in dorms, things like that. And I didn't have my experience then could get cut short. So, for them I felt really bad. And that's like, when I referring back to earlier, was there anything like more that could have been done in that sense of making sure that the underclassmen were still included in things reaching out to those people who may have had like their contact information and things like that, just to make sure that when they came to campus, they felt prepared and were included in something, which finding out now has not been the feeling. And it just kind of like breaks my heart and knowing that I could have done more towards that situation, but I didn't do it. And also in the, in addition to that I would say like the feeling of always needing to like, do more it's I know, like personally speaking it comes from my parents wanting me to be great, but it's like, I mean, I'm only one person and I don't even know that maybe I need to relax and take a break, but the fact that I feel that I need to always be doing something is like, it's like weird in a sense, but yeah.

Emmanuel offers a profound point about balance and commitments, but also having a strong urge to impact community. It is not as simple as doing programs and activities to support each other. Instead, he is suggesting that the world's situations, his own desires, and what the community actually needs is everchanging; so you cannot be too high or too low on yourselves for what you hope to do, and grace is just as important. So, I know for many of you, beginning graduate school has sparked a lot of reflection of what you have accomplished and a few of you received accolades.

New Intentions

I have reflected quite a bit since I am moving from Indiana and will soon start my doctorate program in higher education, Blake shared. I and a few other panelists were recognized by the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center and inducted into their inaugural Hall of Fame for students who graduated and made positive contributions to the center and community. So in my reflection:

> I started to think about like how would my legacy continue on campus? I was looking at this picture of the Black O-Team and the lack of Black students in that pic knowing that picture can be filled with way more Black people. And those two students that I had that entire summer and knowing how they clinged to me throughout the two days. That was actually my introduction to higher ed, truly. That's when I found out that that could be a career, and I can do that line of work advocating for students who are trying to figure out how different policies and practices can be changed, even from an admissions standpoint, and knowing that that should be a priority for the campus to be like, "It was right. Why don't we have more students of color coming through general admission?" Why do we feel like Groups is the only way that these students can be admitted to IU, when they're definitely qualified, even more qualified to some of their counterparts?" So, my time as President of Sigma, working as a GROUPS RA, volunteering for different events in the Neal and in the community I just wish I had more time to impact Black people in Indiana. Like that will be hard to learn in another state doing my doctorate. And so like my passion for the younger students that I did impact and stuff like that, how are they also doing that to like the next people after them? And kind of like making sure that that type of environment is still around campus. Especially like being dedicated to the Neal that's something that I tell a lot of people that are connected to me, whether that's like my fraternity brothers or whether that's like mentees and stuff like that. I always tell people like, oh, make sure you get involved in Neal-Marshall. Like that's always my go-to especially with Black students. I would just say I am grateful, humble. I think it, it kind of just reminded me to always stay humble, even moving forward cuz you can win so many things in life or like so many good things can happen and it could like make somebody develop a really big head, but that's never something I ever wanted to do or ever aspire to do. So that's the biggest thing. Like it just continues to tell me to stay humble and remember that like it's a lot of things that I've done is like bigger than me. It wasn't just like for me to be this person that was known, it was kind of more like impacting how was I helping other students or how was I creating more voices and spaces? Like it was a lack of Black students in certain spaces on campus. And I know that is a phenomenon in higher ed so I just want to shake this world up for all Black people.

That is what this space is supposed to do for participants here. Your deep reflection suggests that you were already heavily immersed in several organizations, but you still do not feel that is enough and see the larger goal as influencing Black people beyond IU and Indiana. The Neal and Black IU taught us about that, Ella shared. We came into campus wanting to do our major and obviously solve issues in the community in Indiana and, for me, Guinea but graduation was monumental for my reflection:

> I've just kind of been thinking about is just how grateful I am for the Black community at IU. And being connected with so many people that have been a part of that journey for me, that journey of exploring my blackness. It was inspiring. I would say it was so inspiring. Just seeing all the Black excellence, you know, just everybody graduating and I remember Dr. Glo was saying like the percentage of Black people that have college degrees and I don't remember the percentage, but I remember it was really low and just hearing that and then looking around me and seeing like, you know, a lot of my friends and like people that, that I would see around campus people I would see at events, people I met through different Black organizations and things like that. And I was just proud, like even though I didn't know, you know, a lot of the people there, like I was just still so proud and like just amazed at all the Black excellence, like everybody, like, you know, we did it, we did something that, that not a lot of people can do. And so that's, I guess that's how, that's how I felt at Black grad, was just proud and amazed at the Black excellence. And even more it just made me think like because I am staying around for law school and I wish I could have done more for Black students so I will stay in contact with Dr. Glo, the Neal, and NAACP so that students do not have to feel like they missed out on an experience like I sometimes did.

Ella that is powerful that your experience with the Black community was so rewarding and that you feel a sense of responsibility to improve the experiences of students entering and attending college behind you. Your purpose in going to law school, as you shared earlier, is to ensure that Black Muslim and international communities do not have negative experiences with deportations or a US President’s outright denial of entry from any countries not named the United States. Yes, I hope that my experience in law school will give me more of the language needed to enact laws and policies that can impact Black and New Guinean people. I am confident that the second-generation Africans in the building can surely relate and appreciate your leadership and paving ways for them to prosper. Furthermore, I notice this maturation of your experience that relates well to others deepening their concern for Black people. Your law school counterpart, Calvin, may have something to add for the final point. Surely, I can share about my current:

> So in terms of student involvement, I am the admissions co-chair for the 1L’s just cause I like to work with the, the youngins, like doing the recruitment stuff and the law school

> needs more Black people. And last week I sent out we had extra like goody bags, but they were like these very deluxe boxes from our gala that we had and now I am being asked to be the treasurer and things like that from my BSU experience. So in the fall I'll be doing an externship with the legal aid society. I'll be representing tenants and landlord tenant disputes. So I can't wait to piss off some landlords <laugh> for being on fuck shit. Just cause it's like that's the work I wanna do. Those are the people I wanna represent. People who are just like at their wits end, out of options, facing eviction who don't know how it's supposed to work, who don't know the rules that's stuff I want to do. And so as I think about like the rest of it I'm or the rest of my career, it's all about helping Black people just in, you know, different ways. I think like short term civil rights, housing, labor employment. I don't want people being fired or mistreated unfairly in the workplace. If I could do like some union work pro-union I am not a union Buster that's for the birds making sure people have house a roof over their head. I getting kicked out for the wrong reasons and make sure that people's civil rights are not violated. I don't know if I wanna be Ben Shapiro, he got way too much attention <laugh> way too much. But those are, those are ways to help black people that are in court. So, you know, it's all litigation, but I imagine sometime I get tired. So it's like, what can I, how can I still serve my community in a way that's effective? And I was like, alright, I write rules for people because I think it's important that people plan for what happens after they pass on. So you don't have like these, you know, families fighting each other suing each other for like 200 dollars or stupid shit. So I think that's where the focus is, how do I continue to give back to my community while also thinking about what I need in terms of like time free time think about my own mental health capacity, all those kinds of things. Yeah.

So much to unpack here but related to the maturation and Calvin rediscovering his passion, he illustrates how current students' experiences will change at different points. Calvin was in speech and debate and thought that was his calling. He continued into leadership with BSU and did research on children and now is concerned about policies and wealth inequality for Black families. In law school, he was able to take a break from leadership, learn more about how domination disproportionately impacts his community, and forge a new path to his angle of support. Give all your panelists a round of applause for sharing. I will sum up this section for what we have learned.

Chapter Closing

Findings from the Black Midwest Oppositional Consciousness Conference illustrate how Black students developed and enhanced their commitment to countering oppression through BSU and Black staff and faculty supports. After students complemented their curricular experiences with the cocurricular activities in Black student organizations, they learned how to readjust and deepen their desire to change communities they identified with. Lastly, as they mature into graduate school or post-undergraduate opportunities, they seek out ways to creatively give back to the communities that inspired them or expand their reach to the larger Black community. These findings cross both IU and UM, where students shared similar experiences from being one of few Black students in STEM at their undergraduate institution, countered racial domination in the classroom and on campus, and possessing a strong desire to serve. Findings identified in this chapter have major implications for how educators, students, and the Black community can learn more about oppositional consciousness identities and where students’ upbringing, schooling, and life experiences converge to serve as a platform for Black people wanting to do great work. In the next chapter, I discuss these implications for the aforementioned communities and higher education.

Chapter VI: Discussion & Implications

The purpose this study was to interrogate how Black students discovered their oppositional consciousness toward societal issues impacting them. By seeking to understand whether the BSU at their respective institutions played any role development Black students' critical consciousness, I found that these student organizations provided the knowledge and tools necessary for them to assume an active stance against certain issues affecting their lives. There is a dearth of current higher education literature on Black students' oppositional consciousness because it primarily focuses on Black student success (Burt et al., 2013; Harper, 2007; Howard, 2013; Tichavakunda, 2021) or examining Black student activism aimed at redressing societal or campus issues (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Davis & Stokes, 2022). Extant literature further explores histories of Black student activism (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012) and Black liberation literature (Kelley, 2018; Wheeler-Bell, 2013) with a specific focus on understanding how Black people have called for liberation through movements and are now considering how the language in movements and civil society can intersect. Contradistinctively, liberatory and philosophical pieces exploring how to challenge systems of oppression (Apple, 2014; Ermibayer & Desmond, 2013) may not consider the racial pieces needed to redress a given issue. This study strengthens existing literature pertaining to Black students in higher education contexts by demonstrating how Black students utilize the BSU as an space for collective mobilization and knowledge building, and in turn, develop a passion and vigor for civic and political participation. BSUs have historically served as impactful institutional mechanisms for which students could create and sustain social movements aimed at countering systemic anti-Blackness and cultivate critical meaning-making (Dawson, 2003). Black students have faced domination for decades hindering their ability to possess the basic needs to thrive in society (Painter, 2014) Nevertheless, Black students have not only become successful lawyers, engineers, and educators, but have also create a self-sustaining generational foundation for future Black students on college and university campuses to establish more equitable opportunities for our community. For example, students in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and BSU teach students strategies to not passively accept negative conditions in the campus environment or society by developing multi-level action plans that address various institutional and societal issues (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Tichavakunda, 2021). Black students at the University of Southern California used a physical space called "the stoop" to find a sense of belonging and placemaking to assist with their camaraderie among Black students and the extra push to obtain their degree (Tichavakunda, 2021). That extra push was a student initiated and validated space that was not created or established by the university in the name of Black student support; instead, the stoop was critical to Black students' success and ability to thrive on campus as an informal space for Black students to freely create and maintain their own norms and customs. Further understanding how Black students arrive at this notion of creating intimate cultural spaces or feeling that they matter from their upbringing, life's experiences, and systems of domination necessitating they optimize community to counter the oppression was crucial to my exploration in my dissertation.

Human Domination

Exploring how forces of power and domination (Apple, 2014; Kelley, 2018) inform students' experiences with class and gender dynamics in their family and schools helped contextualize participants' college-going culture and sometimes the onset of their oppositional consciousness development. I then investigated how their adolescent years and experiences with domination played a role in their college experiences as Black students at two elite predominantly white institutions in the Midwest United States—University of Michigan and Indiana University. Moreover, considering the highly politicized collegiate environment during the 2016 U.S. elections and student reaction to the subsequent elected President, I selected participants that attended school at some point during the 45th Presidents' term, 2017-2021. This study contends that power and domination angered Black students at various points of their lives and they learned to channel their anger through Black student organizations like BSU where they could acquire more knowledge or action.

BSU. Lastly, Black Student Unions have historically played a major role in supporting Black students in college and amplifying their concerns through social movements and civil participation that changed policies and practices for Black people, such as the creation of Black Culture Centers (BCC) (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012). As such, I also explored how BSUs assisted students with understanding how to combat the oppression they faced or began to experience in college. The crux of my study, which is discussed further in this chapter, focuses on the culmination of those experiences, informing how Black students developed those varied interests and oppositions to then decide their life's work and careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), education and coaching, law, and more with a nuanced commitment and focus to the Black community or the Black community's liberation. My study extends existing discourse about students' oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001) by illustrating the myriad ways to support and enhance Black student success in via student organizations, academic support, enhance cultural and ethnic ties, and facilitating career and civic engagement during post undergraduate life. I hoped to understand if Black students move from anger to strategy about issues they care about and what objectives they develop or implement to counter the oppression. As such, my dissertation helps answers the following research questions:

1. Do Black students develop oppositional consciousness identities to human domination?
2. If so, what role, if any, does the Black Student Union play in developing oppositional consciousness?
3. What outcomes or successes have come about if students do indeed develop oppositional consciousness?

Connection to Methods

To answer my research questions, I interviewed fourteen Black students that attended IU (N=8) and UM (N=6) between 2017 and 2021, interacted with BSU on some level, and who expressed some angst toward societal issues. Across both institutions, students' degree of interaction with BSU varied, as some held leadership roles in the organization, were general members, or used strategies or practices from BSU to form their own organization. Students hailed from various predominantly white or predominantly Black communities—including cities in Indiana and Michigan, had differing social statuses (from low-income to middle-class Black families), and participated in a multitude of activities that helped shape their childhoods. To learn more about their experiences I conducted two rounds of interviews that totaled 90 to 120 minutes. Employing Connelly & Clandinin's (2006) narrative inquiry analysis, I focused on four principles crucial to understanding participants' shared narratives in my dissertation study: imagining a lifespace; living and telling; understanding the boundaries of time, space, and location; and understanding our own influence in the research process. Narrative methodology provided ample space for students to share their life stories, drawing upon crucial moments across time and space to a particular phenomenon (Kim, 2015). Thus, narrative inquiry allowed me to analyze students' reliving these moments by nuancing the social and personal aspects of their stories, whose narrative quotes I shared in Chapters Four and Five. I will now explore many of the major themes reflected in the findings chapter.

Summary of Findings.

Participants' recollections of their youth experiences and upbringings were partial, yet critical, components of their development of consciousness and interpretations of the world that contextualized their understanding of their current passions and endeavors. Each participant reflected on how traditions, ethics, spirituality, pain, and empowerment became prevalent because of their family's or community's place in society, and they discussed how they made meaning of their life's conditions while experiencing these moments or retroactively. Considering participants' socialization and adolescent years reaffirms Mansbridge & Morris (2001) notions that students' presuppositions and experiences with oppressive systems have major implications for how they navigate the world. Even further, participants' ability to interrogate their circumstances supports Apple's (2014) assertion that power and domination create harmful conditions for people in society, and necessitates they be equipped with tools to interpret and eventually counter their subjugation. Participants in my study most often deciphered their lived experiences on a surface level and associated that meaning as normality for persisting through life as Black kids in America. For example, some participants were second-generation college students and benefitted from their parents earning college degrees that presented promotion of pro-Black outlooks, expectations of attending college, and some level of financial and social comfort compared to many of their Black peers. Therefore, participants' value of and commitment to schooling and education set the stage for students to enter STEM fields, obtain training through preparation programs, and have exposure to positive views of success (Howard, 2013). Said exposure and preparation as youth aided their opposition to human domination because they learned early on how societal forces in the environment and education prohibit Black people from essential participation in society (Apple, 2014; Rogers, 2008). Participants witnessed gun violence in their communities, family members being deported by ICE, parents' interactions with the prison and carceral state ravage their family, and that their sheer existence as Black boys and girls considered a problem in their schools and society—both of which they needed support navigating. While education is not the only way they can combat social inequities, their rise in consciousness came from supportive mentors and programs to support their growth, particularly as teens.

P12 Experiences

Most participants' formative years as teens were marked by participation in sports and activities, college preparation and summer programs, and connection to mentors that contributed to their learning development and skillset acquisition outside of the traditional classroom setting. Students named countless experiences in formal school settings of being devalued by white teachers, called racial tropes like "Oreo" by white students, or sensing considerable gaps in their curricula that became banal and antiquated because the pedagogy failed to include experiences of people that looked like them or amplified issues they hoped to address. Unfortunately, these notions are consistent with scholars that call for more culturally relevant and civically engaged curricula that debunks anti-whiteness and racelessness in the classroom and, instead builds upon the contributions of Black and other minoritized student groups to improve society (Apple, 2014; Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Wheeler-Bell, 2018). Thus, through their participation in cocurricular activities, participants discovered teachings of feminism and critical race theory, cultivated cultural meaning making and community through sport, and even connected with white allies that defied social norms to ensure students had access to similar resources as their white peers. For example, recall a white teacher that discounted music lessons for Martin, who grew up low-income in Gary, Indiana. Those private lessons empowered him to attend UM as a music major. Similarly, Blake's elementary teacher became his godmother after tough times at home. He still seeks wisdom from her today. These examples are not intended to highlight the white savior complex, but instead, illustrate countering approaches to the countless ways white people reinforce racial domination in education. The positive outcomes demand that white people, including the two mentioned, must do more to disrupt structural oppression that prevents Black students from thriving. Moreover, preparation programs like GEAR-UP and STEM initiatives were crucial tin exposing Black students to better academic outcomes than their classroom studies permitted. However, that should not absolve schools from creating more equitable and sustainable curricula that support student development with a particular focus on culture and democracy that resolve societal issues (Strayhorn, 2012; Wheeler-Bell, 2014). In several ways participants articulated how they came to know more about their initial majors and career endeavors through lived experiences in their community and often through their external K12 cocurricular experiences. As such, their oppositional consciousness development ran the gamut between learning or experiencing issues or being able to name and discuss relevant social problems. Examples of students persisting on the oppositional consciousness continuum were enhanced by their socialization and meaningful interactions with Black students, staff, and faculty on campus.

Summer Bridge

Participants overwhelmingly participated in summer bridge programs—GROUPS at IU and Bridge at UM. Bridge programs were traditionally initiated at the onset of affirmative action policies (Rhoads, 2009). The programs have served as conduits to increase and improve Black student enrollment in colleges. According to Rogers (2012), Black people established the framework for bridge programs through their movements to aimed at voicing colleges and universities with their demands to optimize resources and amplify concerns of the Black community. As such, participants flourished through bridge programs as a result of their connections to Black and other historically excluded groups. For example, Black GROUPS students at IU repeatedly named Mr. Sam Young and Ms. Mary Stephenson as critical conduits to Black student organizations like the BSU, Black Greek life, or supporting their socioemotional development through mentorship. Students like Cierra shared how the leaders helped enhance her knowledge of student organizing, originating in her Indianapolis high school, through her participation in creating an activist organization and Black Lives Matter mural at IU. At UM, Black students shared how Bridge connected them with Black student peers in BSU who shared strategies of how to advance through coursework, while learning and participating in the movement that Black alumni and students had established.

BSU Impact

BSUs continue their historical impact on Black students' lives, albeit through contextually different experiences. Black students in BSU not only benefit from summer bridge initiatives that provide critical mass of students, staff, and faculty to build coalitions, discuss current issues, or socialize with but they also have a longstanding foundation to build upon and cultivate from alumni, staff, and faculty that once participated in BSU. The uniqueness in this student experience as compared to movement actors of the 1960s-80s historicized in Biondi (2012) and others' work is that Black staff and faculty have expanded their internal power to liaise or connect students with others. For example, my study's participant, Martin, related to BSU at UM, but was relegated to using the organization socially because of the campus landscape and his music coursework restricting his time to connect with other Black students across campus. He eventually discovered a Black professor, Dr. Gordon, who connected him with a national Black music organization aimed at countering the erasure of Black people's contributions to the industry. Martin was able to use the BSU framework to help establish a Black arts organization and used inspiration from Dr. Gordon to learn more about Black musicians and artists, enroll in graduate school, and cultivate a refined trajectory of increasing knowledge and representation of music to Black kids. Furthermore, while higher education and Black studies scholars articulate how Black students develop meaningful connections with Black staff and faculty, they may miss the nuanced understanding of how movements grow and develop, particularly in fields like music that traditionally lack a critical mass of Black students. BSUs framework was also extremely instrumental to my participants' success, particularly in STEM and in conjunction with Black studies.

Black Staff/Faculty Supports

Black students' strong relationships with Black faculty helped them persist in challenging majors when they often wanted to quit and helped them solidify future majors and careers. Participants learned about and experienced various injustices related to STEM prior to arriving to college such as food desserts, impoverished and environmentally oppressed neighborhoods, and white students and faculty hindering their ability to thrive in their majors. BSU leaders like Ashley at IU and Jane at UM learned swiftly that the BSU or Black student STEM organizations were the avenue to finding academic support. Scholars underscore the importance of support initiatives in STEM uplifting Black students in their majors and connecting them with resources to persist. My dissertation extends this narrative to consider what specific issues influenced their desire to choose a STEM major, how they developed a network of students and faculty through the BSU, and how combining the two help them see how they can thrive in their field. However, this concept extended well beyond STEM. Scholars like Blake and Angie at IU or Calvin at UM, immersed themselves in student leadership positions in BSU, Black Greek life, or participation in faculty's research. Contributing to research helped them learn more about harm inflicted on their communities and helped them ask critical questions whose answers could support their peers in college and disrupt barriers to future Black students from accessing and thriving.

Theoretical Frame

Findings discussed in my study are consistent with my theoretical frame. My study considered three general buckets of scholarly research: student success in higher education, social movements to counter racial domination, and the influences of human domination and how Black studies and critical pedagogues' strategies address domination. My dissertation considers these buckets in relation to Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris's (2001) discussion of oppositional consciousness, which illustrates how people move from anger to strategy about issues that matter. They explore how people experience domination with an issue, learn to name that issue, build coalitions with others facing the issue, identify a target audience stimulating the domination, and act to counter the domination. A person's oppositional consciousness might also extend beyond this minimal state to a mature one in which they lead and facilitate movements or galvanize groups to fight against their subjugation. Thus, higher education scholarship helped me understand how retention and success initiatives supported student learning and development. Black studies supported how Black students and people have experienced domination and used higher education and movements to counteract racial domination and the subsequent strategies that may have been used, or not, to obtain liberation. Lastly, social movements and critical pedagogues have devised plans for how liberation might occur, but those often failed to consider Black students' movements or experiences in higher education. Thus, my study explored how Black students learned and experienced human domination, who or what cultivated their knowledge, and how they responded, if at all. In the next section, I detail oppositional consciousness, map out more of my study in relation to the theory of oppositional consciousness and my theoretical framework. I expound on how minimal and mature states matched my participants, delving into the ways BSU showed up for Black students, detailing participants' placement in the various stages of the theory, assessing the campus environment during their time, and highlighting my study's importance and subsequent contributions.

Discussion of Oppositional Consciousness Raising

Black students developed oppositional consciousness at a minimal state, which translates to identifying with a dominated group, learning to name the domination, opposing the domination, and forming collective group consciousness and seeing the group as a venue for upending the domination (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Oppositional consciousness was an ideal frame for my study's connection to the developmental aspect of minimal and mature states. Minimally, people develop oppositional consciousness by experiencing human domination, naming their domination, forming and believing in the power of groups in resolving domination, and engaging in activities at a surface level (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). At a mature state, people develop a target audience or group, devise active strategies to counteract domination, challenge hegemonic ideologies, and use collective action to engage social action (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Most participants in my study were at minimal stages of oppositional consciousness wrestling with learning and relearning how domination showed up in their lives both as young adults and retroactively once participating in my study. Participants' narratives in Chapter 4 illustrate the complexities of time, place, and understanding of the implications of human domination in their lives, but participants eventually move from anger to strategy about injustices. In fact, in the various phases, Black students tended to become angered by and identified with subordinated groups in their adolescent years. Experiences in elementary and middle school classrooms, particularly predominantly white ones, create an othering of Black students that suggested they do not belong or are unqualified for academic rigor because their intellect is questioned by the white majority teachers or students. Moreover, household conversations and experiences of consistently living among dilapidated homes or unequal services in their community yield questions of why they or their family members that are not socioeconomically stable must navigate impoverished environments and seek alternative means (e.g. drugs, gangs, etc.) if not given opportunities to thrive. Thus, the identification of oppositional consciousness can often occur quickly, but how deeply students identify, or participants' mental investment varies, informing how well they understand the problem. Recall, participants shared that their family, community members in churches or sports, or mentors in pre-college programs supporting their inquisitive nature helped them not simply blame their families for their subjugation but continue questioning the world. Some participants struggled to name the domination they endured until later in their college career or briefly named the domination but did not understand the full ramifications connected to their lives, as they sought academic success as their escape. Sundkvist (2023) brilliantly articulates the complexities in the first three phases suggesting: "Oppositional consciousness is not static, and its elements do not develop in a special order. It draws from a mix of cognitive and emotive processes that are informed by our social world, particular moments of history, political opportunity (Tarrow, 2011), mobilizing structures (McAdams et al., 1996), and self-understanding (Mansbridge, 2001)" (p. 4). As such, the variability in oppositional consciousness for participants reifies the spaces where students opposed human domination and formed coalitions that saw the possibility of action to respond. Recall participants like Kobe, who absolutely loved sports but learned of the mistreatment and inequities for Black players, coaches, and other personnel in sport. After testing out the predominantly white student organization for students interested in sport, he found the George Taliaferro Student Association where he and his peers could interrogate issues at the intersections of race, gender, and sport. Oppositional consciousness scholars share the dynamic nature without qualifying multiple examples of what happens in various phases (Houmenou, 2012; Mansbridge, 2001; Phillips et al., 2005); my study extends the flexibility in how students move about within the phases and connects it to the possibilities of implications for more in-depth studies of how Black students learn about and respond to social issues.

In connection to 4.1 oppositional consciousness, I highlight how participants' retroactive meaning making extends the theory as some students entered the latter stages of minimal states by forming collective action and identifying target groups while also having to learn new language to better engage their desired goal. Moreover, my study foregrounds BSUs in considering Black students' oppositional consciousness. Higher education scholarship overwhelmingly places the role of BSUs in the background in influencing student success, campus environments, activism, and social movements. BSUs have been a major component of higher education resources, particularly for Black and historically dominated groups, but their contributions to the field and to Black students is relegated to the margins. Thus, at the intersection of oppositional consciousness development for Black students and considering what actions they take once they learn of how domination impacts their lives, I considered if BSUs facilitated opportunities for students to increase in their development of minimal or mature states. My findings revealed that that intersection was critical from Black students serving as RAs in summer bridge programs, facilitating workshops and activities in conjunction with Black staff and faculty, preparing Black students to branch out or create Black organizations tied to their college majors, and empowering students to pursue graduate degrees prioritizing issues that impact Black communities. Beyond countering the erasure of one of the longest-running Black student organizations in advancing higher education research and practice, my dissertation extends how Black students employ various methods—prior to and during college—that activates or enhance their knowledge and skillset in tackling world issues. Next, I discuss BSU in relation to oppositional consciousness. Subsequently, I illustrate entry points of where students fall into oppositional consciousness and if BSU or other Black student support initiatives serve a role in their development.

BSUs and Oppositional Consciousness

Few participants in my study were in mature states of oppositional consciousness, especially participating in BSU. Only a handful of participants served as BSU presidents or vice presidents on their executive boards. While this does not disqualify their capacity to engage in meaningful action, participants did share strong connections to specifically targeting policies, people, or structures to eradicate for their upward mobility. They all negotiated many of the factors around why movements become hampered that Tarlau (2014) highlighted in her work. She contends that social movement actors that connected their causes to conversations in civil society, counter spaces, and in the public sphere were able to amplify movement concerns with synergy to tackle pressing issues in Brazil. In this dissertation study, students questioned how they would be connected to movement concerns when they were already burdened with coursework and facing racial and gender domination on campus and in society, while considering their lack of opportunities to be connected to movement concerns outside of that realm. Nonetheless, at a minimum state of oppositional consciousness, Black students took more classes discussing Black students relative to their majors, attended events in the Black Culture Center (BCC) created space for them to feel like they matter and learn more about how to counter oppression, and created space for their Black peers to both gain more understanding of activism and how to balance school. However, Black studies scholars like Rabaka (2002) and Kelley (2018), do not account for the psychosocial and emotional tax burden on Black students (Givens, 2016; Smith et al., 2007). Instead, their historical accounts speak to the mental and physical investment Black people exerted in the name of emancipation that might urge today's Black students to examine the fight for Black transformation. My study shares that both can be true that the BSU in fighting for more Black students having critical mass on campus while also considering self-care and Black joy through their college careers can facilitate success or activism.

BCCs and Black staff members often helped connect students to university alumni or a few civil organizations focused on equity for Black people, yet the depth of those conversations did not facilitate meaningful alterations of policy or practice for the Black community. However, this negotiation warrants further and more nuanced study of BSUs. Specifically, scholars such as Haynes et al. (2019) discuss the extensive role of the Black Lives Matter movement and its implications for higher education and Black students, but do not account for or interrogate if Black students in BSU collaborate with BLM or how the movement in civil society might help initiate or facilitate the urgency for higher education administrators to act in support of Black students. Thus, the distinction between social movements and civil society is reified and gaps may exist for how we think about hotbeds for activism. Stated differently, entering BSUs back into higher education scholarship could underscore how they develop oppositional consciousness from their interest in how their chosen major or career could be of service to the Black community and liberation. Similarly, typically when we think about Black students as political actors (Morgan, 2019) consider their congregation areas and counter spaces (Jenkins & Tichavakunda, 2019; Keels, 2020), and investigate their racial identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007), conversations are relegated to the individual student or their student organization without understanding the full gamut of domination that influenced their positioning and if BSUs have capacity to facilitate political action on campus. Further, assumptions that civil organizations understand or have a democratic process that includes Black students or the tense negotiation of power and challenges with relationship building in the demand for liberation must be further interrogated. Recall Cierra naming that she did not feel BSU at IU was as radically engaged as she had hoped, and Black staff and faculty sometimes acted as gatekeepers toward her activism decisions or tried to pacify her. Yet she still executed creating a Black Lives Matter mural on the campus through the support of student government and the more radical student organization she founded. As such, extending conversations on the democratic process aimed at Black liberation must include BSUs, relationships or challenges with undergraduate student governments, and how to create counterpublic societies where deliberation can occur for subsequent action. My study initiated this conversation by extending activism and success literature while considering how Black students' anger influenced their ability to strategize and learn more about the possibilities of transforming the world, especially with support of BSUs.

Overall, BSUs are still relevant to US colleges and universities and supporting Black students. They are not an extinct or defunct mid-1900s organization that engaged in activism and social movements that simply reproduces efforts of Black staff and faculty. They are deeply seated in the infrastructure of Black student life, inform and socialize Black students to college, and serve multiple unique functions in exposing Black students to passions, resisting domination, and strategies to liberation. They are the prototype— not the exception—to studying Black student success and activism. I now delve deeper into oppositional consciousness as it played out in my study.

Participants Fit Within Phases

All participants, but one, concluded their collegiate journeys with a minimal oppositional consciousness and slightly stepped into more full-fledged identities as they considered or were in graduate school. The one exception, Martin, was heavily immersed in building his musical prowess in his field yet was still active as a resident assistant and in a Black arts club at UM. As with many other majors on campus, Martin emphasized the erasure of Blackness in his school's curriculum and at that their building was separate from other UM students in social and physical sciences, so various structural factors hindered his ability to form collective identities with students or oppose different forms of human domination. At the close of his senior year and before beginning graduate school, he encountered a professor, now mentor, at UM that told him about the Sphinx organization, a national music organization focusing on Black and other marginalized groups' representation and success in the industry. As Martin notes, that connection changed the trajectory of his career because while he was well aware of racism, police brutality, and related issues in society, he was focused on his studies so when he had an opportunity to see how the two could work together, he wanted to master it. This meant making sure that Black people do not simply minimize music to rapping or singing, but instead that Blacks and all groups know about Black people's contributions in orchestra, opera, and the possibilities for careers in the predominantly white industry. On the contrary, other participants developed oppositional consciousness at minimal states prior to graduating college. Some, like Jane, Emmanuel, Angie, Calvin, Leslie, and Cierra, benefited greatly from pre-college programs or summer initiatives that equipped them with knowledge about theories like CRT, helped them investigate current issues in their community and write policy, and helped them learn to debate and critique issues. They then used those frustrations and energy to lead once they arrived to campus. Others like Ashley, Malisa, Blake, LJ, Adele, and Kobe had precursor knowledge and awareness but better assessed the campus environment through BSU or the lack of Black discussions in their major's primary student organization and countered those actions through support of the BCCs teaching them about various issues, joining fraternities or sororities, or participating in BSU or Black student organizations. Important to the next section and extending the minimal oppositional consciousness, participants reentered various phases of oppositional consciousness depending on the issue and their investment or desire to upend the subjugation, which also connects to more mature states.

Deepening the maturation or full-fledged stage, participants tended to (re)cycle through various stages—4.1. For example, students may have possessed surface level understanding of a particular phenomenon during their collegiate journey, but from a more reflective lens and some level of graduate school they can now better assess their feelings or opposition to their original frustrations or expand them. Take Malisa, for example, who majored in African American studies at UM and was quite knowledgeable about racism and its impacts on her family, particularly at the intersection of gender domination connected to how men treated her as a full-bodied woman in middle school. At that time, she operated from a naming and collectively opposing state in which she would discuss issues in her sorority and plan programs aimed at empowering women. However, currently in her doctoral program, she is not only considering gender domination and hoping to empower women, but is also reflecting on the sexual assault cases at UM and connecting those cases to more systemic and transcontinental concerns from Africa that may have more implications for how Black people achieve emancipation. Thus, she reenters a cycle of naming and renaming various forms of domination and finding new collective coalitions to build with, while also considering mature oppositional consciousness ideals like identifying target groups or policies to overhaul. In the next sections I summarize areas where students developed oppositional consciousness in relation to their schooling and lived experiences.

P12 Oppositional Consciousness

Assessing students' upbringing connected to their oppositional consciousness development was crucial to my study. Participants experienced human domination in multiple ways, including growing up poor, experiencing parental divorces, facing environmental and health concerns, or being ostracized for their gender. In addition to those life circumstances, they dealt with teachers that failed to validate their experiences and missed opportunities to connect their race or gender to classroom conversations. They were subsequently forced to learn how to combat their oppression through external institutions or cocurricular programs. While these programs intentionally equip students with content knowledge and skills that may not be covered in traditional education, they often absolved students' schools from teaching about important topics of concern to students. For example, all participants that attended IU grew up in Indiana, where the schools they attended failed to address local and national topics like gun violence, crime, and poverty plaguing their state. As such, the first stage of identifying with a dominated group occurred very young as they knew and saw mistreatment of incarcerated family members, being one of few Black students in predominantly white schools while living in highly Black populated cities, or having relatives at home or church that shared why the students differed from their white counterparts. Furthermore, participants began questioning why their lives were the way they were, but rarely found answers that helped them name their subjugation. Thus, sports teams, mentors from precollege programs, and even students' parents helped them name racism. Similarly, UM participants mostly grew up in Michigan, albeit two were from Georgia and Indiana respectively. Their experiences were quite similar with schools failing to teach them about the subjugation they faced in their communities. In fact, participants' parents sought more advanced schools outside their home district to create better outcomes for their students to thrive. However, that thriving happened when students attended speech and debate clubs outside of school, discovered private lessons to play in the orchestra, and participated in GEAR-UP and Upward Bound to develop college-going cultures. Overall, these resources propelled students into Phase 3 of oppositional consciousness where they began to form collective identities.

At the intersection of students' experiences entering Phase three and the role of cocurricular programs, my study underscores the importance of bridge programs in channeling students' anger into strategy. Oppositional consciousness emphasizes that students enter these phases, and my study adds to the precollege literature that informs how Black students have used programs for decades to gain access to college (Howard, 2014; Keels, 2020). Even further, I illustrate the myriad examples that Black students lean into to counteract the years of domination and marginalization experienced in P12 schools. Scholars have critiqued high school and college curricula extensively, yet students are persistently relegated to bridge programs to support their transition to college and build their support network.

College Bridge and Oppositional Consciousness

Summer Bridge at UM and GROUPS at IU were of utmost importance to supporting participants' collegiate endeavors, social networks, and beginning or continuing the quest to understanding human domination in the Black community. Phases 3 and 4 of oppositional consciousness posit that students build collective identities and start to believe in the power of that group in addressing oppression they faced. Only three participants did not partake in summer bridge on their campus (one from IU and two from UM). Overwhelmingly, summer bridge has been a program birthed out of the 1960s BPM and CRM with support of BSU that called for supportive programs and resources that would aid in Black students' admission into college and facilitate their success through college (Biondi, 2012; Patton, 2006). Participants loved their experiences in Bridge; and because community was built during those 6-7 weeks of the summer prior to their first year, Bridge participants already established friendships, staff and faculty mentors, and research and career interests that caused non-participants to feel isolated from not participating. Therefore, Black students in Bridge built collective identities with their RA mentors that were a part of BSU while also taking classes that engaged them in topics that they longed for in high school, such as Black studies. Abundant literature illustrates the purpose and value of Bridge in equipping students with tools to counter subjugation (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Howard et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2011) and is consistent with minimal states of oppositional consciousness, namely identifying with a dominant group, naming and opposing injustices, building collective action, and believing in the power of the group in eradicating injustices. However, my study extends these notions by underscoring how Bridge demystified students' understanding of how they experienced domination in the past, counteracted the overwhelmingly white curriculum in high school, and used members of BSU to provide wisdom and guidance on how best to be successful. Overall, Bridge does not simply act as a pipeline program to support Black student success. Instead, Bridge is where learning happens that students may not ever get again throughout their college career but serve as a conduit for students to begin deeper critiques of hegemonic structures while also being empowered to join BSU and other Black student organizations after Bridge to continue fighting domination. In the next section, I illustrate how participants at both schools used college to extend their oppositional consciousness by revisiting learning through classes and Black culture centers, further engaged in BSU that platformed them into other Black student organizations and deepened their desire to pursue post-graduate success with a nuanced focus on service and, transforming the Black community.

IU and Oppositional Consciousness

Participants from IU developed oppositional consciousness in various phases. As previously stated, only one participant, Ella, did not participate in GROUPS. However, Ella's experience internationally in New Guinea and fighting gun violence on the Far Eastside of Indianapolis kept her in line with the other seven students at forming collective identities and believing in the power of those collective groups to resolve domination. Higher education scholarship emphasizes the need for Black students to form social networks that aid in their academic and social advancement in college (Harper, 2010; Morgan & Davis, 2019; Strayhorn, 2012). Scholarship also points to developing activist identities and agendas that counter subjugation students faced in their lives while using university resources or social movement organizations to enact change (Kelley, 2009; Okello et al., 2020; Stokes & Miller, 2019). However, while extant literature discusses Black student success, activism, and supportive networks, BSUs are secondary to scholars' analysis or missing overall in how their studies, albeit historically (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012). On the contrary, BSU served a major role in IU participants' oppositional consciousness development.

BSU at IU

Black students in BSUs served as mentors in GROUPS, connected students with Black staff and faculty, and facilitated students' growth in leadership positions outside of BSU. All participants engaged with BSU at IU, but most of their participation in BSU ended after their first year in college, except two that held leadership roles throughout the rest of their journey. Those two students, Ashley and Emmanuel, emphasized how their leadership in BSU allowed deep connections to BCC directors, IU administrators, and providing an outlet to counter 45s election and other domination in the world. Unique to this study connecting BSU to oppositional consciousness, these participants cultivated their understanding of the power of building coalitions in addressing issues. Moreover, other participants illustrated how BSU sufficed in teaching about domination but failed to fully execute action against various structures. Kelley (2009) and others have also deeply critiqued BSU and Black communities for engaging passively and tempering their power as Black people to facilitate movements. Thus, participants created and enacted more radical activity creating a Black Lives Matter Mural on campus and working with local cities to change law and policy hindering Black communities from thriving. Activism literature illustrates how Black students deploy various tactics to challenge the status quo on campus and in the world, but do not capture the breadth or depth of how that occurs in BSUs or other Black student organizations (Cho, 2020; Morgan & Davis, 2019; Okello et al., 2020). My study extends how students use those organizations to build upon previous knowledge, learn new tactics, and connect with university mentors that recycles them through the oppositional consciousness phases.

4.1 at IU

Oppositional consciousness identities were developed in various fashions at IU. Participants entered the phases at different points of their lives, but experiences on their campus provided opportunities to grow in their desire to transform the world. Scholars illustrate the dynamic nature of the phases, but do not highlight how people can learn, unlearn, and relearn various strategies and topics that can further fuel their oppositional consciousness development. Participants in my study underscore how that learning occurs, specifically through the support of

Black staff and faculty curricular and cocurricular experiences. The NMBCC and AAADS departments equipped participants with tools to question and interrogate their preconceived notions about the Black community and the participants' role in combatting oppression. Participants learned this in GROUPS or after immersing themselves in major specific organizations like Kobe in GTSA and Adele in NABJ. BSUs prepared both participants for leadership, teaching them how to organize events, lead meetings, and foreground Black people to address societal issues. Furthermore, participants' experiences taking Black STEM courses in GROUPS, attending events to learn about 45s attacks on Black communities, and finding mentorship from Black graduate students and faculty taught students more about their community's history, propelling them to devise strategies to counteract the injustices they face. Thus, the combination of Black undergraduates in BSU, Black graduate students, Black staff, and Black faculty serve to consistently build Black students' oppositional consciousness. Beyond creating culturally inclusive and relevant environments (Museus, 2014), establishing sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), and engaging activism for social change (Morgan & Davis, 2019) Black students learn multiple tools to make every day and long-term decisions to graduate and prepare for post-graduate success. More specifically, the anger and frustration from dealing with human domination in their personal lives, being isolated in the classroom as one of few Black students, and having to balance multiple dominated identities encourage them to create programs that support their peers, develop service initiatives to give to their community, or attend graduate school to learn more of how to address issues and questions they had as children and young adults. Take Blake, for example, who described himself as emotional and warm as a child but faced ridicule for boys calling him soft to then joining a Black fraternity and challenging gender norms in their chapter, and now in a doctoral program studying gender and toxic masculinity in higher education. Likewise, his peers were positioned in oppositional consciousness phases in similar ways.

Black students at IU used BSU, NMBCC, and other Black student resources to enter early stages of mature oppositional consciousness. Participants like Cierra, Blake, and Ashley learned to target specific groups and actions to redress campus issues or work to eradicate a structure on campus. The other five participants are deeply positioned to begin targeting specific issues and engaging civically to address human domination. Through law school, teaching, and other graduate school programs participants are excited about the possibilities post-undergrad that present themselves to allow Black people freedom to live and to create equitable pathways for future success. Concerns in Indiana, the campus, and the world regarding access and success in higher education, healthcare equity, combatting gun violence in relation to Black emancipation were issues that Black communities historically addressed in the BPM (Rogers, 2012). Consequently, issues have not been fully addressed, so Black students at IU through BSU and other organizations use institutional actors to build their oppositional consciousness and address domination like Black communities before them.

4.1 at UM

Black students at UM enhanced their oppositional consciousness throughout their time in college. BSU, CSP, and the larger campus environment served as a conduit for students to learn more about issues plaguing their communities and discover ways to solve them. UM and Michigan created conditions where participants sought to challenge the lack of critical mass of Black students on campus, the lack of support to retain Black students on campus, and a need for Black communities to forge coalitions to counter racial domination in the state. Deeply rooted in activism and Black history, BSU at UM armed students with knowledge of their decades of contestation of power and domination (Rhoads, 1998). Contemporarily, BSU at UM imparts knowledge of that activism and engagement to students that fuels their desire to become active agents of change on campus. Bridge served as the beginning opportunity for students to build coalitions with other Black students on campus, but BSU and CSP amplified students concerns after completion of Bridge. Specifically, Black staff and faculty in CSP and teaching in disciplines like Gender and Health taught courses on Black life that allowed participants opportunities to engage topics they wanted to learn as children. Scholars have illustrated how culturally relevant pedagogy and infusing students' identities into the curriculum and campus environment supports their learning and desire to serve those that face human domination (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Museus, 2014). Particular to UM participants in this study, some scholars also illuminate the power of kinship in STEM and how building collective identities supports sense of belonging and confidence in students' ability to thrive in the competitive STEM fields (Wilkens-Yel et al., 2023). For example, fighting gender and racial domination, Black women at UM sought to resolve issues on campus related to overwhelming sexual assault allegations toward Black men, working to thrive as Black women in STEM, and advocating for equitable pathways to be created for Black people in society. Women at UM's anger at gender domination, typically from adolescent experiences, was consistent with oppositional consciousness in that these two women participants became engaged in student leadership, led BSU engaging in actions to counter issues on campus, and are completing graduate school and creating opportunities for students to thrive. Calvin also developed oppositional consciousness in ways that he invested in BSU and connected with Black resources while also complementing his leadership with courses in Black thought through his political science major. These experiences place nearly all UM students in early maturation stages identifying target audiences for action (Houmenou, 2012). Martin later developed oppositional consciousness and deeply connected to advocating for Black students in music, subsequently placing him in phase four or five of oppositional consciousness.

Overall, being Black at UM necessitated students develop latter forms of oppositional consciousness. Related to scholarship on student success, Black students formed affinity through Black student organizations and Black culture centers and resources support their endeavors and success (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Burt, 2012). Participants from UM complemented that literature and formed oppositional consciousness identities that encouraged them to both create pathways for their community and find a career that specifically nuances Black people in world issues. In the next section, I further contend why oppositional consciousness was important to my study and my contributions to expand the framework.

Contribution to the Theory

My study's theoretical framework considering higher education, critical pedagogy, and Black studies theories in relation to how Black students develop oppositional consciousness was appropriate for investigating students' experiences at IU and UM. I begin this section by reiterating what my study confirms about the theories, where differences exist, and extend what is not covered.

My study confirms much of the scholarship on Black student success, student organizations, and supporting students' future endeavors. Black student success literature in higher education overwhelmingly highlights that Black student organizations (Harper, 2010), culture centers (Hypolite, 2020), counterspaces (Keels, 2020), and activism (Davis, 2019) support students' development in college. Similarly, scholarship, albeit historical, contends that BSUs contribute profoundly to Black students and communities in ways that support their success in college and create connections with social movement organizations to enact change (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012). Students in Black student organizations' contributions are fueled by the domination they faced as students in P12 schooling, during their adolescent years, and contemporary issues in society (Apple, 2014; Strayhorn, 2005). A clear underpinning in my theoretical frame and my study was that Black students in BSUs historically tied conversations in civil society to the university and used university resources to amplify movement concerns in the public sphere (Biondi, 2012; Kelley, 2009; Rogers, 2012). I sought to understand how/if Black students in BSU or in the general campus still saw their antagonism or passion for change connected to movements and if those actions considered emancipatory principles beyond the, sometimes, co-opted social justice language that may be warped into official knowledge. I begin sharing how my study confirmed and revealed new perspectives of BSU. Next, I share other differences to the theory.

Black Student Unions

Limited research on Black Student Unions exists in higher education, but my study confirms the organization is still relevant to Black students contemporarily. The work that includes higher education is overwhelmingly historical (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012) or secondarily mentions BSUs as a result of supporting Black students' identity, success, and belonging (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hypolite, 2020; Okello et al., 2020). In this work, I center BSUs as a core component of acclimating Black students to college, socializing them into the Black or counterculture of the university, and connecting them to Black resources typically from Black staff and faculty members. Even more, I nuance how BSUs serve to set the foundation for Black students' oppositional consciousness development. Recall the works of Biondi (2012) and Rogers (2012) that illustrate the historical connection between BSUs and movement activities in the public sphere. Furthermore, works by Keel (2020) highlight how BSUs work closely with Black Culture Centers echoing how the demands from BSUs historically allow current Black students to benefit from the programmatic structure, matriarchal love and support, and teachings of Black history. This work extends Hypolite's (2020) work to which BCCs serve as a counter space to the white dominated campus environment. More than this, success and belonging research connected to other Black student affinity groups (Burt, 2020), STEM initiatives (Wilkens-Yel et al., 2023), and gender initiatives (Davis, 2019) are abundant but lack consideration of the role and power of BSU. Recall participants in my study naming Black STEM initiatives like I Can Persist at IU and the relationships with Black staff and graduate students as critical to their success. However, as many Black radical scholars acknowledge, BSUs and Black people cannot simply accept the norm that suggests they get involved, take meaningful classes, and obtain career success (Kelley, 2009). Instead, their efforts were traditionally tied to social movements and civil society that may amplify their concerns. I problematized and investigated the intersection of Black students' activism and success through Black students' anger to strategy as components of their oppositional consciousness development. Black students at UM and IU used Black student organizations like the BSU as counter spaces that encouraged them to take upper division classes like Race and Gender in Sports or Gender in the Media. These classes and experiences encouraged them to go to graduate school in their career field and to identify policies and practices that may have attributed to the domination they faced in their lives. Black students and Black Student Unions are not monolithic. While the immediacy to respond to the world's most pressing issues persist, Black students do indeed engage in activism and contesting the racialized environment; but simultaneously Black students want and desire space to just be themselves. Therefore, BSUs remain one of the most crucial components of Black students' experiences in college as they did historically (Rogers, 2012). The BSU at UM serves as a prime example of one that has a rich history of activism and stellar success that persists until today (Rhoads, 1997). The BSU at IU also has an extensive role in activism historically and have shown glimpses of critical engagement in movements contemporarily, as shared through my participants.

Alternative Perspectives

Different perspectives of BSUs role and impact, or lack thereof, connected to students' oppositional consciousness exist. Participants like Cierra shared that she was heavily involved in understanding relationships between civil society and education through her high school mentor program that allowed her to craft a policy for gang and other violence in Indianapolis. Yet, she did not feel BSU was a space for her beyond the social networking benefits, which while very crucial to her holistic success, does not fully address her socioemotional and academic success that would allow her to assess a problem as causing domination, build coalitions to learn and understand how to contest the domination, and identify a plan(s) to attack the person or group complicit with using their power as domination (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Given the limited references to BSU in higher education scholarship, myriad studies point to how Black students enact change and transformation in lieu of BSU (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Okello et al., 2020; Stokes & Miller, 2019). Thus, Cierra and other scholars have other venues by which to engage activist endeavors, but Cierra's case opens discussion into how collective identities in phase three and four can be enacted across student organizations and could BSU miss out on opportunities to engage all Black students. Humbly, my study highlights the inter- and intra-distinctive dynamics in BSU that could be addressed in capturing the ostracizing of LGBT members in BSU, how students perpetuate gender domination, and the complexities of including less-privileged majors in the literature on Black students. Contradistinctively, several participants emphasized committing to BSU or Black student organizations more than and in lieu of attending classes that would not address social issues occurring in social media or would fail to consider the benefits of students' extracurricular activities albeit false encouragement. For instance, Kobe shared that before creating GTSA, a Black and diverse student organization for students to discuss culturally relevant topics in sport, he had one Black faculty member that would teach the diversity class for his major and his white professors and peers lauded him and his co-creators for even thinking that a specific student organization to talk about race and gender issues was necessary outside of the main major curriculum or main student organization—both overwhelmingly white. Thus, Kobe's engagement with BSU and political discourse was in a minimal yet mature state of oppositional consciousness by which he had the language to understand domination, form collective groups, and name/oppose a dominant power while teaching them why it mattered to him (Houmenou, 2013); however, Kobe was not equipped with the tools to see how the very discourse that he had in his major and school bubble could be expanded to social movements and organizations, some of which he knew about, that sought to alter policies and practices for Black and other marginalized populations (Tarlau, 2014). Even Leslie, who attended UM, valued her membership and the extent her BSU was quite active staking out the President's house, pushing the university to create better conditions for sexual assault survivors, and amplifying concerns of Ann Arbor's local Black community but she wished she could have done more or that the institutional resources could have been better. An interrogation of how change occurs is necessary while at the same time, a concerted effort to empower students to have intentional targets or objectives in their movement that consists of both radical imaginative ideas and small substantive wins could be crucial to the success of Black students' efforts (Kelley, 2009; Rabaka, 2002). My study contributes to works like Tarlau (2014) that bring about social movements and critical pedagogy in conjunction with higher education scholarship as a frame for sharing the contributions of Black students' oppositional consciousness development and how they use BSU and other Black organizations to thrive. My study of BSU furthers Tarlau's work as another example of the complexities of a movement organization and how their activity is sustained or fades in relation to their subjugation. Overall, the long-standing debate of tactics and approaches to Black liberation have been contested for centuries and will not cease. However, participants in my dissertation illustrate the various constraints to the discussion when considering their institutional and BSU history, their own knowledge and upbringing, and their own wherewithal or capacity to address these issues, of which I end my discussion section.

Gaps in Oppositional Consciousness

My study revealed two important gaps in the oppositional consciousness theory connected to time of oppositional consciousness development and deepening meaning behind anger to strategy. Thus, it is equally important to investigate how the dynamic nature of oppositional consciousness is influenced over time and place. Education merely studied from a linear perspective could possibly limit our understanding of how, when, and where Black people gain language and power to contest the multiple layers of domination faced throughout their lives. While oppositional consciousness considered that people progressed from anger to strategy and it could be categorized into minimal and mature states (Mansbridge, 2001), participants in my study illustrated the importance of considering time as an influence of their development. For example, when participants did have monumental pre-college programmatic experiences learning about CRT or conducting STEM research, how does their minimal or mature oppositional consciousness position them to counter domination as they progress in their education or career goals? Furthermore, because the domination is such a systemic and structural power, can people's oppositional consciousness ever cease, or do they revert to various stages—as I articulated in my findings with 4.1. My study includes foundational pieces by which to build upon how and why students' consciousness initiates actions and change, and as they mature or expand their toolkit Black people (un)learn more that helps them address domination. Addressing these gaps might consider the usefulness of oppositional consciousness by understanding efforts needed to effect change minimally and systematically and connected to social movements or differing levels of decision-making bodies.

Aside from the relationship between the maturation stage and implications on time, the theory also revealed a gap in how to better conceptualize anger to strategy. More specifically, considering anger as a positive feeling or tool to combat subjugation and injustices could be furthered. For example, students' anger and frustration for a particular issue may have been cultivated from a BSU meeting and they had an opportunity to study it more within their classroom experience. However, to what extent does the level of anger they experience relate to the amount of knowledge they received to help them process the anger, learn about ways to combat the oppression, and continue to fight past the multiple structures in place to eradicate the issue. Said differently, if anger as an emotion has implications for strategy, then how do Black students contend with anger and what specific strategies help create strategy? Participants in my study answered these questions particularly with critiquing the 45th president and his spats about international communities or Black communities, in which they were angered by what he said and continued saying, yet they persisted in learning more about how best to create space for Black students and people to thrive on campus. Knowing the power of BCCs as teaching spaces, Black staff members as critical to mentorship, my study provides opportunities for scholars to grow intentions to shape Black students’ anger into strategy.

Overall, through studying Black students’ oppositional consciousness, I introduced an overlooked piece of data in the theory, expanded the methodology in a meaningful way, offered a different interpretation to the usefulness of the theory, and upended a well-established theory in my field. Studying Black students in BSUs offers an investigation of an unfairly overlooked component of higher education institutions. BSUs have historically paved the way for higher education and Black student resources and have not been properly acknowledged or understood (Biondi, 2012). Thus, scholar practitioners miss opportunities to fully capture the depth and breadth of Black student success, activism, and the capacity for Black emancipation. Furthermore, my study provides a much needed, rich context informing Black students’ behavior in college. Other qualitative methods do not provide depth of where students’ passions and anger facilitate their belief in transformative change, but oppositional consciousness gives space to understand this more intentionally. More specifically, narrative inquiry and life stories (Kim, 2015) allowed for me to underscore the gamut of Black students' lives while compounding ideas of the Black tradition and its role in movements aimed at emancipation and liberation (Rabaka, 2002; Kelley, 2009). Specifically, the methodology helped contextualize groups like BSU or BCCs that served a major role in helping Black students grow their understanding of human domination's role in their lives, build coalitions to combat it, and strengthen their strategy and desire to overhaul it for them and their communities. Moreover, while oppositional consciousness is mostly used in sociology and extant literature in higher education uses CRT as a framework for interpreting Black students' position in US colleges (Patton, 2016; Patton et al., 2018), I am offering the uniqueness of oppositional consciousness to our field. Oppositional consciousness has been used to interrogate social movements (Mansbridge, 2001), feminism (Phillips et al., 2005), disability groups (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001), and other areas to upend human domination overall. CRT has overwhelmingly supported the advancement of Black student activism (Cho, 2020), success (Patton et al., 2018), feminists' movements (Harris & Patton, 2019), and liberation of the Black community (Dancy et al., 2018). Beyond critical consciousness and understanding racism as endemic, oppositional consciousness gives space to better understand why students are mad, why they are coming to college, and what fuels their drive for transformation and impact. It gives voice to that narrative. Higher education institutions are not creating conditions for Black students to thrive and better understand what they are mad about and why which often gives us a lens for understanding passion that could lead to different levels of change. As such, I now delve into discussion of how my investigation into Black students' oppositional consciousness revealed a few sub-sections that can improve Black students' mental health, extend Black joy, reconsider official knowledge, and create pathways to Black emancipation.

Reconsidering and Evaluating Official Knowledge

Official knowledge converges with oppositional consciousness, forcing Black students to learn how to see themselves or create opportunities to see themselves in the overwhelmingly white curriculum. Apple (2014) identified official knowledge as the dominant knowledge bank that school systems instruct. Numerous scholars have called for various teaching modalities that are inclusive of positive portrayals of multiple students' cultural identities, communities, and histories (Hooks, 1994; Howard, 2013). Black students and people have had to lean on oral histories, charter schools, and other alternative options to teach Black children the truth of who they are and what they represent (Painter, 2016; Walker, 2018). For participants in my study, students greatly benefitted from federal programs like GEAR-UP, Black support programs outside of school, and a handful of Black teachers and parents that demystified the poor Black narratives students read of in school. Participants varied in the support services they gained throughout their P12 schooling, but they all detested the overwhelming negative notions of Black people and how late they were to learn their *true* history. In fact, many participants developed angst toward the official knowledge after participating in BSU and Black studies courses in college because the countless white savior examples, lack of Black people examples, and other racialized incidents in the classroom did not help them survive their majors. Recall, Malisa shared how majoring in Black studies in college affirmed many of the lessons her grandmother taught her and inspired her to continue learning about her community by pursuing a doctorate. Exploring how Black women are the "most hated and despised beings on the planet" has helped her contextualize her experiences as a young girl and interrogate and question of how Black people transnationally become freed from the corruption of the world. While Malisa and other Black students' experiences could seem particular to IU or UM, feminist scholars and Black radicals alike have called for more culturally relevant and intentional opportunities to connect the curriculum to Black students' experiences (Hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, domination necessitates that Black students cannot engage and see themselves in their college curriculum because Black faculty and graduate students seeking the professoriate are reduced to the margins by the same systems the students are aiming to address (Walkington, 2017). Thus, while in addition to helping cultivate Black students' oppositional consciousness in naming these oppressive factors, forging relationships in sororities or BSU (Tichavakunda, 2021), and extending themselves despite the mental toll they endure (Givens, 2016), addressing official knowledge needs much more work. This work consists of innovative culturally conscious scholarship that considers diverse perspectives and civil education that equips students with knowledge and tools to counter domination.

Domination and Official Knowledge

Rather than conform to traditional standards and practices of education, my study calls for new innovative approaches to counteract the centuries of oppression embedded in official knowledge. While many cases of schools and colleges educating their students on culturally responsive methods, connecting them to democratic processes to fuel movement activity (Strayhorn, 2005), or alternative forms of expression through less traditional teaching like music (Phillips et al., 2005), a combination of these options would aid in my participants' oppositional consciousness development. Instead, colleges and universities' leaders are either complicit in maintaining structures that prevent Black students from thriving (Harper, 2010), fail to create democratic processes by which official knowledge can be questioned (Wheeler-Bell, 2018), or force Black students to find their own support network (Hypolite, 2020). Recall, students at IU naming that their professors scoffed at the idea of a Black career student organization because an organization—participants' labeled for white students—exists already and students could raise concerns to that specific group. Black students also solve their own mental health concerns (Keels, 2020), and are relegated to having to connect with their own community or not find support to question how domination persists (Tichavakunda, 2021). Notwithstanding, the lack of critical mass of Black students on campus (Morgan & Davis, 2019), BCCs and Black studies being under attack (Rabaka, 2002; Kelley, 2009), and gatekeeping Black people from the academy (Walkington, 2017), Black students are in a whirlwind. Yes, some of my participants shared that college sometimes felt like an HBCU from their extensive connections to Black staff, faculty, or counterspaces; but unlike PWIs, HBCUs have contested official knowledge through the fabric of their curriculum underscoring Black history, Black success, and multiple forms of Black studies or thought (Kelley, 2003; Rabaka, 2002). So, while PWIs simply fixing the curriculum and dismantling official knowledge might not fully support Black students, a huge step in the right direction could facilitate meaningful transformation. My study comes to fill this hole by calling on Black studies and thought to be ingrained in the official knowledge of the university catapulting institutions into thinking of supporting Black students, movements, and emancipatory principles. This process provides value to our current understandings of how best to recruit, retain, and help Black communities thrive.

Alternative perspectives to students' oppositional consciousness development in relation to challenging official knowledge consists of familial and community relationships at home and school that underscore the importance of multiple perspectives. Scholars have illuminated how other-mothering and other teachings by Black matriarchs or ancestors have been excluded from traditional research forms (Dillard, 2014; Fries-Britt, 2003; Hooks, 2013; McDougal, 2014). Aligned with that scholarship, participants in my dissertation study shared countless perspectives of how they felt they learned or imagined contrary perspectives to the norm that were grounded in frames from their grandparents and families, extended relatives and mentors, summer or academic program specialist, and especially women who served in the Black Culture Centers. For example, every participant at IU named Dr's. Monica Johnson and Gloria Howell, former and current directors of the NMBCC, as shaping both their trajectory in their academic endeavors while also serving a crucial role in "getting them together." One participant, Adele noted that Dr. Glo embodied how to blend activism and advocacy by teaching her about powerful Black women to illustrate how successful Adele could thrive in her major while advocating for Black women on campus. This notion also extended countless stories Adele heard from her grandfather when she worked in his store in Tennessee and learned how to operate a business through love and compassion, which were contrary to how she learned about or debated with peers about capitalism and money in her predominantly white high school and college. Other participants like LJ, who took a non-traditional route as a veteran prior to college and was mixed-race, approached her life's work with compassion and love for everyone; so, her contestation of a predominantly white male industry fueled by outward racial epithets and demeaning women’s worth did not surface until she connected with CSP director, Dr. Walters. LJ did not have many opportunities to learn about her Black identity because her mother was white and could not explain much but immersing herself in teachings and research and eventually learning about Black women’s contributions to health and sport, she found a chosen family at UM that expanded her ideas of her profession. Scholars have shared extensively the power of familial capital (Yosso, 2005) and others have extended that concept to more culturally engaging and validating ones (Museus, 2014). My study amplifies these theories and extends scholars and practitioners to delve further into students’ familial uproots and upbringing that might better inform collegiate experiences and oppositional consciousness identities. While the focus when assessing upbringing is more of how it informs collegiate experiences, my study suggests understanding the why and cultivating relationships with students to help them expand their life’s purpose and solve world issues after experiencing human domination.

Overall, participants clearly identified and detested the decades of learning about the history and teachings of white people and erasure of Black people in the world. Their passion and love for their community and the myriad experiences they had during their upbringing necessitate they learn alternative perspectives of how their situation came to be and become equipped with the knowledge, tools, and resources to counteract that subjugation. Their narratives help me contend that despite how engulfed they are in opposing the social norm, they have witnessed and have strong desires to shake the fabric of society that has dominated their existence for years. However, participants’ combatting human domination must still take care of themselves and I articulate how oppositional consciousness, mental health, and joy reveal missed opportunities in the theory.

Implications for Practice

In this dissertation study, I maintain that understanding the maturation of Black students’ anger and passion areas from adolescence to college-aged adulthood is critical to considering success for the Black community and, more importantly, to imagining emancipation from human domination. I provide implications for practice and research germane to faculty and staff in colleges and universities, K-12 teachers and community leaders in college preparation programs, and the Black community and members connected to social movements, especially BSUs. I maintain that educators and community members cannot only approach Black students about Black issues. Instead, understanding the central location of a critical mass of Black students with multiple experiences with gender, race, and class domination while also connected to movement actors that can amplify their concerns is critical to the intricacies of teaching, scholarship, and practice.

Teachers, Schools, and Student Affairs Educators

I employed Apple's (2014) contestation of official knowledge as part of my frame to interrogate what is taught in classrooms in relation to how participants came to know about and became prepared to address world issues that mattered to them. Participants vehemently detested the predominantly white and underwhelming knowledge bank provided by their classrooms and teachers. They lamented the erasure of Black people in their learning, teachers lacking the skillset to facilitate meaningful discussion on relevant issues, missed opportunities connecting curricula to real issues students faced, and the absence of equipping them with tools for college preparation or solidifying career endeavors. In contrast, participants shared that representation of Black leaders and instructors, civic engagement learning opportunities to give back to their local communities, and teachings about race and class domination provided excitement and genuine passion with learning and supported their future endeavors. Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Woodward & Howard, 2015) and civic education (Wheeler-Bell, 2014) contextualize how educators can better infuse democratic principles of understanding problems, debating issues, and building collective identities to create structural and institutional change that is, most importantly, connected to students' culture and passion areas. Wheeler-Bell (2014) calls for educators passionate about solving societal issues to empower students with tools to effectively challenge and deliberate on human domination. Congruently, this study maintains that students' experience of race and class domination outside of the classroom aims to not repeat past failures of society and not use schools as a means for capitalist reproduction and interest. Instead, educators must consider how to complicate official knowledge and provide alternative perspectives. Participants' narratives of their extracurricular and pre-college preparation programs, wisdom from family and community leaders, and actively engaged classroom teachers combine to illustrate the possibilities of contesting official knowledge with civic education and culturally relevant pedagogy to build oppositional conscious identities and future success. As such, I challenge K-12 educators to engage different teaching and learning modalities that affirm students' culture and empower them to contest the domination they face.

Additionally, official knowledge is not relegated to the K-12 context; instead, scholars contend official knowledge is imbued in the fabric of American higher education and must also be contested (Apple, 2014; Fries-Britt, 1998; Museus, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012). In fact, Museus's (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments study informs how colleges and universities can respond to the erasure of diverse perspectives and divert from one-sided cultures that do not consider students' familial backgrounds, locales, or interests. For Black students, the erasure of their culture in higher education has existed for centuries, yet they have influenced cultural traditions that are co-opted or sometimes temporally celebrated such as marching bands at halftime shows, stepping and performances by Black Greek letter organizations, or the sheer number of student organizations like BSU that host cultural shows or guest speakers on campus (Milburn, 2022). Thus, Museus's (2014) CECE framework and cultural relevance arm that suggests institutional leaders provide proactive and holistic support, culturally validating environments, and consider students' cultural backgrounds also provides a valuable lens by which participants have called for disruption of the overwhelmingly white knowledge production in higher education. As such, I hope that educators learn more about current BSUs on their campuses, work to amplify their members' concerns in the public sphere, and support their desire for emancipation. I next expound on how participants collective identity building in student organizations, classes, cultural centers, and help fuel their desire for change on campus and enhanced efforts to pursue graduate school and career opportunities, especially connected to service. As my findings suggest, participants' oppositional consciousness development is quite iterative, so in the follwoing section I reflect both on their K-12 and higher educational context to inform takeaways for educators and community members alike. I then nuance implications for faculty members' future praxis.

The Cop Out

First, cocurricular programs like AVID and GEAR-UP, or external program initiatives, cannot simply bandage the centuries-long flood of human domination that hinders Black students from seeing themselves infused in their learning or lacking opportunities to interrogate truth behind what they are taught. Black students shared that their parents often sought to escape the local public school system or lean on churches and community members to discover the best school or program to teach their child about relevant topics (Walker, 2018). While Black people have always and will always implore alternative teaching methods to educate their kids by any means necessary (Walker, 2018), public schools and teachers must be pressured and accountable to educate the masses through democratic principles. The external programs, well-funded or not, provided students space to question their upbringing and life's experiences, discover new theoretical frames and movement language like CRT, forged collaborative debate and collective identity, and share differing methods by which to define success. On the contrary, schools and teachers have failed to include different cultural perspectives, especially in history courses. Teachers did not adequately handle classroom debates and debacles during the 2016 US presidential election and allowed or inflicted ongoing harm to Black students. School leaders must reevaluate how their practice reinforces exclusion in the classroom and marginalizes Black students by not providing space for discussion in class. They could benefit from the instruction and practices from cocurricular programming that, while not perfect, enhance the cultural relevance and familiarity that schools need. Subsequently, Black students channeled anger into strategy, identified and named their subjugation, and felt validated and empowered to see themselves capable of disrupting or responding to the human domination they faced. Pre-college initiatives warrant further investigation into how to serve as launchpads that help Black students name and identify domination while also connecting students' anger and concerns to public discourse that challenges the domination students face. This includes why the program serves as a counter public sphere to public schools in addressing and solving social issues. The first step was students envisioning themselves in a collegiate setting with a passion needing direction.

The Black Village

Furthermore, BSUs and Black student services, including Black community resources, create conditions for Black students and should not be siloed or othered by educational institutions. While BSUs have decades worth of service, programs, protests, and more in higher education specific to their collegiate institution, Black students in BSU are demoted to second-class status particular to decision making, holistic support, and academic endeavors. Representation and critical mass demands have been the foremost concern of Black students for decades and participants shared how most of their concerns begin with them constantly feeling like "the only one." Despite whether students are first-generation college students or highly engaged in BSU, PWIs must make more concerted efforts to incorporate Black students into the fabric of the institution. UM participants in BSU shared that their long-standing history and impact on the campus community along with their connection to historical leaders as part of those movements hold administrators to higher standards that do not allow for empty promises. While powerful, BSUs and movement actors as such must discover and share how to demand power in that manner and extend demands that do not simply replicate historically issued demands that have yet to be fully addressed by administrators. Therefore, Black students in BSU would have myriad channels and synergy by which to demand critical mass of Black students, hiring more Black faculty and infusing Black teachings in the curriculum, increased financial support, and securing resources to support the tireless labor of Black women and others in culture centers. Activism scholarship has shown glimpses of these contemporary student demands (Morgan & Davis, 2019; Haynes et al., 2020), but historicizing and marginalizing these actions to mid-19th century BSUs is disingenuous to the longstanding efforts of Black people. Administrators cannot continue to mostly or solely rely on directing Black students to the SGA for their demands because, as participants who served in the student body contend, their issues are swept under the guise of holistic diversity. Participants denounced situations when faculty sought to redirect their work through the SGA or felt the existence of a student's major-specific organization would not suffice in overhauling systems. As a result, concerted efforts and strategizing with Black students, staff, faculty, and community members across the institution and in the public sphere must be made to create new pathways to amplifying concerns for transformative change. Stated differently, understanding where Black students are located on campus, how their issues get amplified or pushed forward to higher education decision makers, and become enacted or not must call into question if SGAs can meet Black students' needs. Black staff and administrators face gatekeeping and ostracizing despite their overall support in mentoring or advocating for students, but interrogating the limits to public discourse, structures, and domination is necessary. Not tasking students to do this work, addressing small but impactful concerns of students' wellness, desire for service, and future endeavors are equally important and is my final recommendation.

Coalition building with formal educators and community members that focuses on democratic strategies and imagines liberation must be central to wraparound support for Black students. In fact, participants overwhelmingly suggested that after experiencing race or class domination, their anger was fueled by the dire circumstances of their family or Black and Brown people in their local communities and the feelings of disbelief or uncertainty that they could escape their realities, sometimes included family members incarcerated or involved in gangs. Thus, once BSU or other entities empowered them to understand their role in countering their subjugation and they made small strides through leadership in student organizations or in classes, participants became fully committed to extending knowledge to Black communities. This cyclical service-orientation that Black students espoused has been discussed extensively and serves as a microcosm for movement actors and civil society to provide wraparound support for students. Specifically, the individual supports that afforded participants opportunities to develop fictive kinship with white godmothers or trumpet teachers, learn of communal resources for speech impediments and private summer programs, or cultivate spiritual relationships in churches or with mentors will not happen in a vacuum, but must instead be connected to a policy or practice that is substantiated in society. Student affairs leaders serve a crucial role in leveraging these connections. Often, culture center leaders are alumni of the university, homegrown in the community, or have NPHC or spiritual ties to the community that facilitate opportunities to bring speakers and events to build coalitions for students (Hypolite, 2020; Patton, 2006). However, student affairs educators in housing and residential life, student activities, and student support services like CAPS must see themselves connected to more intentional support for Black students too. Having the institutional knowledge and wisdom from achieving collegiate success while maintaining ties to the community like culture center directors can amplify support for students' wellbeing, success, and life goals. This town and gown collaboration is not new, yet is inconsistent, and Black movement leaders have demanded universities better implement public service (Rogers, 2012). Black students have to learn to manage multiple responsibilities and must consider their mental health when fighting systems of domination.

Black Mental Health Crises

Black scholars suggest that racism and forces of domination have hindered the success of and traumatized Black people for years (Biondi, 2012; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kelley, 2018). Moreover, according to Mansbridge and Morris (2001), those forces of domination have necessitated that Black people build opposition to fight back and challenge systems of oppression. However, the authors did not nuance or consider the mental tax or exhaustion Black people take on or exude when fighting systems of oppression or their sheer existence is under attack (Givens, 2016; Smith et al., 2007). Compounding on this point, current literature illustrates the importance of affinity groups like sister circles (Patton et al., 2018), responses to subjugation in society (Okello et al., 2020), and thoughtful considerations for higher education leaders to support Black students' mental health issues that surface (Grier-Reed, 2013; Hope et al., 2018). Higher education scholars and students alike are not ignorant to the prevalence of mental health issues and mental health support needed to enhance students' belonging and success in college. More specifically, Black and minoritized communities share their sense of exhaustion and navigating human domination that enhances the need for support. Recall Martin developing more anger after attending the Sphinx conference because he was disgusted that the erasure of Blackness in music has prevented him from true joy in his craft. Or Ella being extremely frustrated and disappointed by the system failing her family went through during her uncle's experience with ICE, combined with being low-income and having to interpret documents for her parents as a child, though now she can nuance those experiences in law school. Participants vehemently expressed they *just want* the Black community to experience joy. However, much of the literature in higher education is reactive to mental health concerns and does not highlight the beauty in the struggle and the enjoyment students experience in organizations (Tichavakunda, 2021). In the next section, I highlight how scholars call for more positive scholarship that rather than simply relegate Black experiences to negativity, instead channels those feelings into strategy like oppositional consciousness frames.

Black Joy

Recent scholarship on Black joy and placemaking in higher education share how narratives need not always be wrapped in resistance (Jenkins & Tichavakunda, 2019; Tichavakunda, 2021), and that sometimes Black people's resistance may just be their existence. In fact, Black students in my study found joy in the mental discovery of their oppositional conscious identities. Countless students expressed the power of a shared Black identity, impacting Black communities on their college campus or in their communities, and possibilities of emancipation for their culture despite the pressure and tax. Students' joy and love for their Black identity fueled their oppositional consciousness and served as a springboard to impact their community despite racism. This expands Tichavakunda's (2021) work considering racialized emotions, and research that highlights how "Black people experience race in positive or joyous ways" (314). At the intersection of demand for Black mental health resources, oppositional consciousness, and Black joy is where my study offers conversations to see Black students in anti-deficit ways. Particularly, BSU is a contentious space that could be further investigated to understand the full gamut of how students experience the concepts. Tichavakunda (2021) illustrates, and the sheer erasure of BSU in higher education scholarship reiterates, that Black students find joy through different modalities not wrapped in resistance, which can but may not always include BSU, and can inform a culturally engaging environment (Museus, 2014). Museus's (2014) CECE model and students' association with cultural communities might push us to consider the uniqueness and dynamic nature by which students can float between multiple groups, passions, and identities that facilitate or are meaningful to their success (LePeau et al., 2022). This pushed my thinking throughout the dissertation process in which I hoped to nuance BSU because of my participation as a student and the myriad studies that fail to acknowledge their contributions, yet participants highlighted other groups like Upward Bound, Summer Bridge, sports and even individuals that helped cultivate their passions, find joy, and sustain their mental well-being. In sum, Black mental health cannot be simplified to stressors from human domination, erasure of Blackness in curriculum, or exertion of mental energy with life itself. Instead, it also contends with Black joy and the many ways Black students find venues to throw parties, plan cultural shows and events, and create or sustain Black traditions in spaces they occupy. Faculty and staff have served roles through BCCs (Hypolite, 2020), Black studies (Kelley, 2018), and more routes in seeking to validate Black students' experiences. However, the interplay of Black joy and mental health is necessary for higher education leaders to interrogate how they reconcile and prevent structures like campus policing that stifle Black joy but facilitate oppositional consciousness (Tichavakunda, 2021). My study also nods to scholarship on Black life that interrogates intergroup and intra-group dynamics of Black joy that complicate or support our understanding of Black mental health in relation to gender domination (Jourian & McCloud, 2020; Jones & Harris, 2019), anger as a positive emotion or fue for passion (Mansbridge, 2001), and exploring anti-deficit studies to make room for Black life (Harper, 2010; Haynes et al., 2019;

Jenkins et al., 2021). Support for the vast number of mental health opportunities could facilitate more holistic models aimed at validating Black students' experiences and expressing genuine concern for their success. Black joy and oppositional consciousness also consider racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2007).

Black Battle Fatigue and Balance

Participants in my study emphasized the need for Black people to continue finding joy and spaces to simply exist without becoming ensnared by the sociopolitical discourse surrounding activism and protests. Scholarship emphasizes students should not become consumed by the physical, psycho, and emotional toll that being Black in higher education takes on them while negotiating whether to engage in political or social activism, while the pressure or support from leaders within or outside of the Black community have been discussed extensively (Givens, 2016; Smith et al., 2007; Tichavakunda, 2020). As such, findings shared extend and nuance these points of tension that Black students need space and outlets for expression that support oppositional consciousness. For example, Jane, a graduate of UM, shared that when sexual assault cases and conversation ravaged the campus community, she felt multiple realities with being a part of the larger Black community, Black Greek community, working for the sexual assault prevention office, and majoring in public health to which she could not simply study, as some scholar-practitioners might suggest she do. This advanced and hindered her holistic wellbeing because she joined a seemingly participatory action research or ethnographic process of being immersed in studying and learning about a particular group or phenomena, while also being a part of and extremely interested in advancing health equity in her community (Carspecken, 2013). Thankfully, Jane credited mama Beth—director of the Community Support Program, her sorority sisters, and Black STEM groups for equipping her with space to vent about her struggles, plan and implement programs and healing circles, and most importantly, helping her reflect on how her efforts would help her think about graduate school and the impact she aimed to have post-college. My study amplifies the nods to BCCs as a crucial component to student success (Patton, 2010; Hypolite, 2020). Beyond the culture center, my study emphasizes and extends notions that Black staff members serve a critical role in supporting Black students and facilitating their oppositional consciousness for future success. Scholars contend that Black students tend to lack institutional support (Keels, 2013), but this study supports notions that Black staff support can be monumental for students even as early as middle school. Simply put, Mama Beth gave love and support needed to humanize and holistically support Black students at UM.

Faculty Members' Practice

Beyond the focus on what is being taught and implemented from a practical standpoint, faculty members play instrumental roles in using their agency to advance success for Black students. While the prior section interrogated the official knowledge production and the ways that partnerships among various movement actors can occur, I question the conceptualization and engagement of faculty members and the perception of how they see themselves as part of the movement for Black student emancipation. Many faculty members do exceptional jobs checking boxes for their research, teaching, or service to the institution or the field, but may fail to call into question the critical role their scholarship, praxis, or voice may have in setting agendas and amplifying student concerns. As such, implications for how they can consider the benefits of student organizations more deeply, be better partners with staff and students, and align their scholarship to inform or frame actions is discussed further.

Value of Student Organizations

Faculty must be far more intentional in engaging with students and student organizations. Although faculty may conceptually agree that student organizations serve a cocurricular function in expanding students' skillsets and equipping them with enacting ideas learned in class, it seems to end there. Participants shared and reiterated scholarship suggesting that like their white teachers in high school, faculty in college tend to disregard any cocurricular activities, fail to include current issues in class, or disregard Black students' contributions by never calling on them after raising their hand or making eye contact (Allen, 1992; Salazar et al., 2010). The mistreatment and reinforcing of domination in the classroom toward Black students must cease

(Harper, 2010). Black students are at odds with faculty members because Black students are choosing to engage in student organizations like BSU *in lieu* of classes despite the organization being cocurricular. Students would sometimes prefer skipping class to attend a protest or program that feels more fulfilling and affirming than their lecture. Black student organizations, especially connected to an academic major, fill a curricular gap in classroom discussions that should serve as an example for how to fully embody research to practice that faculty's lectures and discussion sections fail to uphold. Faculty must then assess their understanding and feelings surrounding learning objectives and how they view student engagement. Passivity and rote learning where students are expected to show up to lectures, take exams, and work in study groups will not suffice for students hoping to disrupt societal structures. Even beyond social science and humanities, Black STEM participants named that faculty using different examples of Black and other historically excluded groups in a lecture and facilitating discussion on the distinctive needs of that group within their discipline could be very impactful. Instead, students are only learning about white men's, women's, and non-binary health concerns or treatment without ever interrogating how to support racially or environmentally dominated groups, which later reproduces problems in the health field through misdiagnosis or understandings of how to support patients. While domination is so entrenched in the fabric of higher education classrooms and institutions, BSUs have given a blueprint by which to interrogate these issues and its application in society. As a result, faculty's role in encouraging student leadership, deepening understandings of what occurs in student organizations, and collaborating or facilitating workshops with students is crucial. Museus's (2014) CECE model extends these notions, encouraging faculty members to be proactive in their support of students, create humanizing environments that encourage students to thrive, and validate students' experiences so that they can be equipped to respond to life's circumstances. Thus, faculty build coalition with student organizations and help to cultivate students' oppositional conscious maturation to augment their skillsets.

Faculty/Staff Synergy

Furthermore, faculty must cultivate stronger relationships with staff and advocate for them to support student learning and success. Faculty hierarchies still exist, partly due to tenure, academic freedom notwithstanding, and their lack of fully conceptualizing the role or impact of staff members on their campus. This dynamic not only creates mismatch with executing decisions and building camaraderie, but also means that students cannot adequately understand the players in the democratic process to enact change on campus or get resources—combined with not having student organization structure to amplify concerns as mentioned in an earlier section. Participants highlighted staff members that went out of their way to advocate to a faculty member or took time to help them devise a strategy for altering a policy. However, students often felt at odds with faculty and could sense that the assisting staff person could not get through to the faculty member either, especially if the faculty were white. LePeau's work (2015a) on faculty advocates serving as social gadflies that not only advocate for students, but also build collaborative partnerships with staff on vision setting and disrupting normative practices hindering students' success, contributes greatly to this notion. Even more, strengthening academic and student affairs partnerships takes investment of movement actors and faculties to listen to students' voices and concerns in the campus environment, work across departments and siloes in the academic structure to share concerns (LePeau, 2015b), and create meaningful democratic pathways for issues to be interrogated and pushed forward. Whether the advocacy is directly connected to students or not, strengthening staff and faculty bonds creates streamlined processes and coalitions that can magnify concerns on campus or spread language and knowledge needed to fuel movements on the ground. This includes faculty members fighting for increased resources and support to student affairs and other staff members that may also be aligned with sociopolitical concerns students aim to address. Tarlau's (2014) and Rogers's (2012) work provide examples of shared commitment to movement activity from faculty and staff in Brazil and historically in BSUs, respectively. Their work symbolizes the power of those partnerships in setting policy and achieving marginal and monumental success in their movements from strategic action. As a result, once Black students arrive to a point where they have identified target audiences, they can strategically consult with leaders on and off campus to discover how to tackle harmful structures from multiple angles. While not oversimplifying the capacity needed to overhaul the domination they have faced and the various interests of faculty and staff in this dynamic, Black students' and people's anger—at minimum— must fuel their desire for emancipation and collective action among these higher education constituents is imperative.

Research Amplifying Movements

Finally, implications for faculty to consider their research and praxis as parts of the path for democracy, the public, and liberation as essential. Rogers (2012) and Biondi (2012) illustrate how language from movements outside higher education were used in colleges and universities and language was sometimes co-opted into diversity initiatives. Participants in my study varied on how connected they were to people or organizations outside of the university that could help them identify a policy to tackle, but they rarely mentioned faculty playing a major role in their efforts. Graduate students who were connected through STEM initiatives or served as teaching assistants as well as some Black faculty members that had administrative positions seamlessly aligned activities and workshops for students to see the full gamut of research to action and using peers for transformative change. If students are missing or incorrectly using language to counter domination or make decisions, then faculty must consider their role in resolving the issue. Even if students choose not to engage more deeply with movements, providing content and institutional knowledge on who to reach out to and how to go about change could aid in students' success and desire for transformation.

Overall, teachers and educators can lean on the historical ties of BSUs and education institutions to see the value of community and camaraderie. As students continue developing oppositional ideas and maturing in how they come to know an issue, community leaders and formal educators should work together to be sure that students have the language needed to engage deliberation, embolden students to learn and do more to respond, and inspire continued building of necessary relationships and content knowledge wherein they feel successful in supporting the Black community. I nuance research implications to conclude my dissertation.

Implications for Future Research

I am wholeheartedly immersed in understanding the trajectory and nuances of how Black people move about in society and become free. During my undergraduate journey, BSU served as a catalyst for my activism, passion for disrupting systems, and my network that still informs my outlook today. As I continued my graduate school studies, I read and learned more in higher education about how best to support Black students, while also reading more about philosophical and critical conversations outside higher education that could inform not simply obtaining success in our current state, but also demanding and continuing efforts to counter human domination. Further questions and ponderings persist in the academic realm that are worthy of research exploration stemming from this study.

Black Student Unions at UM and IU proved to be supportive organizations that provided a social venue for Black students to network with peers or staff and faculty, discover new passion areas related to their major or future, and offered space to generate new ideas, programs, and initiatives. All participants had some level of interaction with their BSU and used it to their advantage to create extensions of the organization specific to their liking or, at minimum, knowing where a critical mass of people that looked like them would be on campus, especially during challenging times in the sociopolitical environment. However, BSU for some participants was simply a hangout space and not engaged in political activism that yielded conversation and connection to movements. Much of this was institution-based, so I am interested in how the state and institutional context of BSU might compel students to engage in social or political action. Moreover, the relationships and connections to BSUs at neighboring campuses or in similar institutional contexts might enhance students' understandings of the conversations happening outside their bubble that then set their students in motion to make demands from their administrators or find their place in the larger movement. One example to consider is the

African/Black Coalition (ABC) Conference in California, which comprises BSUs in the University of California and California State University institutions at an annual conference to contend with and discuss actions to support Black students on their campuses and throughout the state. This coalition resembles activity underscored in the historicization of BSU and Black student movements, but contemporarily illustrates the fight for emancipation.

Put Some Respect on Their Name

Next, more intentional research on BSUs and Black student organizations is warranted. Particularly in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic, Black students and the larger campus have largely lost connections to seniors and juniors who would have served as mentors for entering students helping them adjust and acclimate to campus, but as one participant noted, “their experiences are quite different, and more people should be talking about it.” Additionally, one underlying question throughout my study considered if BSU was connected to social movements and conversations that enhance the path to liberation. Although my study nudged at pieces of this question, I am interested in how BSUs across the country and the world serve Black students in multiple capacities and the extension organizations like Nigerian and other African student organizations, major-specific associations like National Society of Black Engineers or Black Law Student Associations, and less explored but new groups like Black hair groups are equipping students with tools to be successful and seize opportunities for career and social development that may aid in Black liberation. These organizations inform and facilitate college success in various ways, so deepening our understanding of their capacities could be insightful to emancipation and activist discussions. Further, recentering the history and political history of Black people is essential. Researchers cannot only approach Black students about Black issues but must better understand where Black students are centrally located on campus, how they have been informed by movement activity of organizations with longstanding traditions on campus, and how they are understanding the issues they want to address.

Until We Are Free

Finally, my study explored the gamut of Black people's experiences to better understand the possibilities of Black liberation. However, the frame by which disciplines and conversations in various public spheres work in siloes may prevent active engagement from happening and could be worthy of exploration. While activism research is abundant in higher education (Morgan et al., 2020; Okello et al., 2020), nuances of the role student organizations serve in cultivating and sustaining activism and considerations of what expectations or outcomes of their activism students demand can be limited. Also, BSUs have been excluded or secondary in activist scholarship or research studies largely, and I am suggesting a return to our roots in studying this organization to inform future research. More specifically, while this study was not historical, limited research exists from 1980s to present day of how BSUs have shifted the higher education and public landscape through political discourse, social movements, and contestation of people and other groups of power. A historical exploration of these dynamics and events might help avoid recreating the wheel that may stifle movements and might also inform how collective action can be sustained to support Black and other minoritized groups during tumultuous sociopolitical climates that compound domination they face.

Black and Minoritized Student Research

My dissertation study extends scholarship on Black and racially dominated student populations in higher education. While largely extending works on activism, student success, and critical scholarship for Black students, this dissertation might also inform how other groups learn about and discover passions and who or what is helping them cultivate their anger into strategy. For example, Latinx and Southeast Asian organizations formed shortly after BSUs and might also develop or have developed oppositional consciousness identities. Racially dominated groups might also experience oppositional consciousness in graduate school programs that fail to counteract official knowledge and human domination equipping students with opportunities for deep interrogation of their subjugation. Furthermore, while other points surfaced secondarily, findings from my study and alternative perspectives that consider spatial analysis and how students redefine place and space in educational institutions (Jenkins et al., 2021), Black joy and if students' existence must always be resistance (Tichavakunda 2019), and investigation of how Black trans, non-binary, and other members of the LGBTQ+ community consider emancipatory principles. The origin and ways racially dominated groups develop passion and interest in conquering the world deserves further exploration. Moreover, additional tensions may exist for these dominated groups and their student organizations' relationship to the Student Government Association, which might be a gatekeeper to equitable resources or additional support on campus. I contend that educators understand these unique tensions that students have written about in personal statements and scholarship applications that may be thrown aside after admission into their institution or graduate school but inform students' objectives. Lastly, I assert a few notes for BSUs to consider.

BSU Considerations

I entered this project knowing the history of BSU (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012) and having engaged in civic action to challenge human domination in society. Initially, I expected participants to have some deep levels of oppositional consciousness in mature states in addition to their minimal contributions in learning how to transform the world. In addition to the discussion and implications provided for practice and research, I offer suggestions for BSUs. First, BSUs extension and connection to other Black student organizations and campus supports must be strengthened and cultivated. While some student organizations are started in lieu of what BSU does, BSU leaders must confidently know their purpose at their institution and how other organizations contribute to their larger movement. The combination of the history of the BSU, connection to Black staff, and new organizations pushing the campus to consider new perspectives forges opportunities for Black students to push boundaries and continue movement activity. Next, BSUs must not solely relegate themselves to a social organization. While many participants in this dissertation named how critical Black students in BSU were to socializing them into the student life at their campus, BSU leaders must consider how they create better conditions for Black students to use BSU as a training ground to interrogate the varied career interests and cultivate learning that is student centered. Partnerships already exist between BSU and BCCs, but both entities must ensure that efforts are inclusive of differing perspectives and students entering various phases of oppositional consciousness. Said differently, Black spaces on campus providing space for deliberation could be useful for students seeking healthy ways to learn about issues impacting the Black community and collectively determine strategies to counter the oppressive structures and systems they face. Lastly, Black students in BSU have been doing liberation work at various scales and must strategically amplify their efforts and strategies to support the larger movement. I highlighted much of the work from UCLA, participants underscored efforts from their campus, and some scholarship featured examples of the role of BSUs to the higher education and Black liberation landscape but more can and should be shared. Whether BSU is morphing from its activist roots, serving as a conduit for other student organizations, preparing students academically, or is lacking in any way must be further investigated. Black students can (have) contribute greatly to the discourse needed in the public sphere about ways to enhance experiences for Black students and Black communities largely.

Conclusion

The purpose of my dissertation study was to explore how Black students came to learn and develop passion about their life's work and the influence of BSUs in helping them think about how to counter human domination. Whereas existing scholarship focuses on what students gain from being activists, how to support student activists, and how Black students are retained in higher education, my research focuses on the push points that encourage Black students to learn more about countering their subjugation, coalition building with peers and others who can assist them, and responding in strategic ways—including activists' endeavors or graduate school studies. My endeavor is that this dissertation will enhance the communal efforts inside and outside of higher education that stimulate democratic discussions and movement activity so that Black students will thrive in higher education and Black people will be free. Further, I hope that it will expand inquiry that centers Black students' anger or passions aimed at countering human domination and the various reinforcements of domination, including but not limited to curriculum, classroom engagement, student and national political processes, and more.

BSU served multiple impactful roles in supporting participants' oppositional consciousness development. They historically connected conversation in civil society to formal education public spheres that equipped students and Black people with knowledge to counteract domination. BSUs at UM and IU established foundations that benefitted participants, including culture centers, summer bridge programs, scholarship initiatives, and Black faculty and staff expanding students' knowledge of Black studies and concerns in society. Although not all participants were positional leaders in their BSU, the social interactions or the overall framework of the organization helped remind students of critical mass of people to support their endeavors or facilitated students creating new organizations specific to their major or passion areas. Black students were not only validated by BSU, but in learning the history of why the organization was established and how they benefitted from Black people's struggle, participants felt encouraged to find their footing and ensure that people from their communities received similar resources to thrive.

Black students' development of oppositional consciousness yielded an array of outcomes and further inquiry that could enhance Black liberation. Some participants benefitted from pre-college programs or pro-Black households that equipped them with empowering identities, knowing that they could succeed in any profession despite forces of domination pushing back against them. Others, while dominated young, did not develop language to interrogate their subjugation until summer bridge programs, interactions with BSU, or experiences with Black professors or classes that expanded their knowledge on how to strategically counter domination. Therefore, participants in my study created Black Lives Matter murals on campus, protested and eventually supported the ousting of a university president, and worked with Black staff and community leaders to expand resources for Black kids. This is on top of their stellar academic accomplishments that gained them admission into graduate programs in law, higher education, public health, music, and medicine.

To conclude, I highlight one last illustration of my participants' commentary connected to my theoretical framework and summarizing my study. I employ participants' narratives as life notes, which are unique ways to illustrate how Black students' resilience from sociopolitical events, their upbringing, and human domination can be shared in an honorable manner (Dillard, 2006). I choose to share participants' wisdom as an open letter and final implication to Black students and to higher education agents that may discover deeper understanding and reflections from the alumni in my study. I use this letter as a format to encourage student activism and stimulate Black students' oppositional consciousness to aid dominated groups' efforts in transforming the world. This contributes to truly understanding the gamut of Black student experiences and creating and sustaining ways that Black people can thrive, freely!

Letter to My Younger Brothers and Sisters

Wattup Fam,

We wanted to make this note very special to you and let you know to be encouraged. This letter is a compilation of our experiences as a forewarning and light to you on your journey.

> <Laugh> Keep the laughter, it is your medicine. I guess just be ready. Life comes at you fast and you are going to have to be prepared for it and you are probably not going to be sure, but you will find a way to get through it so always strive for the best. And don't let anyone put you in a box. A lot of times people would try to like only see me as one thing or in one way. And like, I don't fit in a box. I should not, you should not, that is not how we live freely. We gonna do whatever I want. Like your notions of me doesn't have any effect on my life. So just like do what you want and live, live life. That's all I got <laugh>. You think you're gonna fail. You think you don't belong here. You think you're not smart enough, but you are. And you're gonna make it. And I think, I mean, everyone's heard about Michigan, right? Like I heard I'm from Illinois. I knew Michigan was a thing. Like I've known they were a good school. I've known they had good sports. I've known they have great academics. Like I've known this. And I just was this found [on a] whim. I was like, I'm gonna apply. Right. And then I got in and then I was like, wait, did they mean to accept me? Like, is this like, did they make a mistake? And then you get there and you're like completely overwhelmed. Like, I mean, I had been out of like formal school, like I did a year of community college. And then I did some classes online when I was in the military. But like, I wasn't in like, like a formal school for a really long time. And then having to come back and being in such an environment that's so academically focused and being around all my peers who weren't worrying about money, who, you know, weren't worrying about studying, who had tutors, who could do everything under the sun. They wanted to, and it was just like, no big deal or, oh, mommy, daddy's gonna do whatever they need to do. And you're gonna be fine. And just to be like on the outside of that and trying to just find your footing period is hard when all of your peers are completely different from you but keep your head down, try to find your group try not to focus on them because their life is completely different than yours. And I guess try not to

compare yourself as much, like you got there for a reason, and you deserve to be there. (LJ)

Keep an open mind because I came in with like double major, try to get some minors. And I think if I didn't have that set mindset that this is what I have to do. I would've been able to open my mind up a little bit more to the different paths. (Angie)

It's not easy to do what's inconvenient, it's hard to do what's right. Biggest growth comes with being uncomfortable. All these experiences that I've had, I never thought that that those would be the experiences. So, I think the person with the expectation is the person that doesn't get the most out of it. I think when you just go and trust your gut, you trust your heart and what you're passionate about at that moment, just letting it take you wherever it takes you. And then when it stops you, you find a new passion. I think my avenue and outlook and the lens I see sport through is just totally different than what I seen it coming out of high school. You know, I wanted to go to the next level. I wanted to play Division 1 football and then go to the league. But man sport has expanded so much that you really have to dissect and really have to sit with yourself and say, what part of this train do you wanna be on? Do you want to be a player and just get the most out of it and make millions of dollars and serve the masses as a piece of entertainment, or do you want to be an agent of change? Do you want to be a trailblazer? Is it in creating a way for people that come after you to be successful and to have difficult conversations amongst people who know nothing about you and have no interest in understanding what you come from, where you trying to go, or what you've been through? But sport is a place where you can navigate all those things and truly understand a purpose and understand where you want to be, but also understand how far *WE'VE* come, but also how far we still gotta go. Sport has opened that up for me. And young Kobe would truly understand that. Man, I wish I would have been doing more coming out of high school, but I would not change my journey for anything like it is. It has been a really, really cool ride in navigating this thing and talking to high school and college kids like it's so easy to get lost in stuff. It's so easy to look at this big old house and you be like, man, this is beautiful being here and being a college athlete or being a professional athlete…Fans don't look at athletes and see themselves. Right? You see him as this figure that you idolize, you know what I mean? No, I see him as a man, as a Black man. I see myself in him, he got struggles just like me, may not be the same struggle, but it's a struggle. And so I tell these young bucks, take care of yo chicken and take care of yo mental like Marshawn said. (Kobe)

I would tell y'all you're not tripping <laugh> every single time. You think that something going on is not right and not well, and that it means something deeper that you should not be okay with. Don't tell yourself, you're thinking too much about it. You are definitely not tripping. If you feel like it needs a second gloss over, then give it that second gloss over. And if you are not okay with it, then say something and never let anybody gaslight you into thinking you don't know what you're talking about. Cause you do at the end of the day, you do, you are smarter than we give ourselves credit for. Trust me, you ain't tripping. It probably means what you thought it meant and don't let it go. Like don't let it go. So yeah, that that'd be it. <Laugh>. (Adele)

<Laugh>. I wanna be like homegirl, hold in, hold on. It's gonna be a rocky road. It's gonna be a lot and is, think about how much it is until I reflect on it for real. So it really was a lot, but I think I would just tell her, listen, I'm looking at her. I think I would tell her don't stress. That's something I've been working on. I think the most is not being anxious and to keep my priorities, my priorities, like my family, my loved ones, my love for myself, Christ like keep those things the priority. And don't be afraid to be who you are and who you were called to be. Don't feel like you can't be you. And don't be afraid that that will change or that who you are changes and it's not a bad thing. Change is a part of life that's unavoidable and you have to continue to evolve. And that's the great thing about life that you don't forget who you are, where you come from, but those experiences that you continue to have help you understand how to process them and how to continue

to grow into the person you're supposed to be. I would definitely tell her don't stress out. It's not worth it, but don't be afraid to do your best to enjoy life. Please, try to enjoy don't be afraid of adventure or the new. Don't be afraid of that stuff. Or when people tell you that you are doing a great job, believe them. Cause I'm still struggling with that. But it's the truth. Cause when I reflect, when I I've seen this, this picture, that was like, we often some so much worry about how we're going to get this one thing done or like a few things we have on our plate at a time. But we forget about all the things that we've done before, and we don't take that into account enough and I'm learning to be more proud of myself. So positive self-talk and gratitude and just be okay with where you are today. Enjoy that above all else and focus on what you can do for today and not the future. Don't be pressed by no man fasho, do not. Don't do it. Don't do it. They don't do that. Yeah, but you're also doing amazing where you are, like look at youuuu. And you're at UM and may not seem like you belong, but you're here because you can make it. So don't feel like you cannot. Everything you thought you wouldn't get done on time is gonna get done on time and it's gonna be a great road. Don't be afraid to not get good grades, but all that you do as long you put your best energy and effort toward it, your best will not always look the same. Your best looks different day to day but focus on what you can do for that day and just enjoy life for every step that you take. Don't be pressed. Don't be stressed. Don't be anxious. Get you a therapist. Oh, don't be hangin with no men for real don’t hang with them because it ain’t nothin over there. (Malisa)

So many things I would say. Okay, it's not that things get easier, but your knowledge will reach new depths. And with that, as things get difficult, think about the core of what you're trying to do and why you're trying to do it as you learn about critical race theory. And it may seem like it just focused in this particular area, understand that these are ideas that are gonna apply honestly to everything. And so, as you're advancing, always take a step back and don't see things as what they think they seem to be. Don't just look at a situation as an isolated situation but consider the surrounding ideas around that. And that's a general statement, but I think it applies to everything, whether that's an exam question, whether that's sexual assault and harassment, whether that's experience and racism, like everything is not an isolated event. There are things surrounded that people like to look at everything as isolated. But if you remind yourself that there is a bigger picture, it's gonna help, it's gonna give you some ease. I think it takes away the pressure of situations when you realize it's not just you, it's not just them, it's not just this. But it'll also help you in your interactions with other people and to express more empathy, to have more understanding. And it's a way to, I don't know, like I think it's the way to care about life. Not to think the worst of a situation, not to be like, oh, why isn't this person doing this? Why aren't they doing that? But what are the larger issues? What are the larger things? And I think if you just think, if you always remember that nothing is just simply that situation, it's gonna allow you to approach things with more patience and understanding and be able to do the things that you wanna do and take away pressure from yourself and other people. And that's what I would, I would say. (Jane)

I would say, look for sure live in the moment, like take everything in and allow yourself to feel every emotion that you have because they're all valuable or else they wouldn't have come. And I think also just knowing that it's okay to have fun. <Laugh> like, it's really okay. Like, you should wanna have fun. You should wanna hang out, you know, be socially explorative, if that makes sense. But I think for me, I also have social anxiety <laugh> so that's why you know, a lot of things social wise I could have done better, but yeah. That is another issue, but I think, you know, of course definitely taking and living in the moment, taking everything in. And also just making sure that I prioritize myself as well would also have helped, you know, at the younger time and knowing that things are gonna be okay, like you are going to accomplish your goals and God is actually gonna show out in your life in the future, but just, you know, stay there and remain faithful to what you're supposed to be doing. (Cierra)

<Laugh> little E and other Black students need to know don’t get down so easily and to not set expectations for others, but only yourself. And I feel like that tremendously would have helped throughout my life journey, especially reflecting over the past 22 years. Yeah, not, yeah. I learned that I can't blame people for being them. And I have to take everything with a grain of salt. I mean, someone may hurt me, but then again, is that me? Or is that a reflection of them and learning that everyone is their own and everyone that I allow in my life and I can kick you out just as easily as, so that's that. (Emmanuel)

I think the first thing that I would tell her is that it's okay for change. It's okay to be different. It's okay to try things out and like/not like them, like, you don't have to go to things that you're familiar with, like step outside of the box, try something that you've always wanted to try. I would also tell her about my experiences, like they're gonna be scary. They're gonna be challenging. Like you're gonna wanna quit. Like you're gonna be intimidated by people that are older than you, or like trying to get into these leadership positions, but like, just stay true to you. Don't try to be anyone else. Don't try to persuade someone to like you or to like vote for you or to take advice from you. Just be authentic, be you, and move in the notion that if they see the best in you, they'll see the best. Don't try to portray yourself as someone different. And I also would tell her don't go home. <Laugh> Like, I know you're gonna want to go home. And I know everybody always says oh, they wanted to go home. There is gonna be a time where you literally are sitting in your room crying and are gonna wanna pack your stuff and go home and you just gotta stick it out. It’s so worth it. And the experiences and the friendships that you make and the faculty, it will change your whole perspective of life, what you wanna do in your career, where you wanna end up in life, and what you wanna focus on. So yeah, I think that's like mainly kind of what I would tell her, but I think like the main thing just be you. It’s all trial and error. You will deal with a lot of stuff and be uncomfortable. And so I feel like once you finally break out of that box, you'll see like a different side of IU in general and cultivate your personality. And so it's okay, you don't have to be nervous. Go get it girl! (Ashley)

It is gonna be okay and like everything I say is now actually tattooed on my arm. Really everything happens for a reason, whether it makes sense now or later. I think that, I wish that was something that got really, really honed in on more like growing up or like before college and stuff like that, especially in high school and everything like that. I worked really, really hard. I was a supervisor at Starbucks at 16, did that for years. I'm working, you know, 40 plus hours a week going to school, like just grinding, like working, working, working, involved at school. And it was because I had family dynamic things shift so drastically for me. It was, I think it was hard for my parents, for them to embrace me being like 16, being old enough to have a car being old enough to get a job.

And then it was like, they tried to give me like this taste of the real world, I guess, or was kind of like, oh, okay, you, you more so think you're grown. So here you go. Now you must pay for this, you gotta do this. And I think because things that I look back on in terms of my leadership style and experiences here at IU, it literally a lot of it has stemmed from Starbucks. Like I, I never would've thought that that job was gonna be that impactful in my life. Like I was 16 supervising people who were 23, 24, like I was the youngest supervisor there. I was the youngest staff member that got promoted literally six months after getting at the job. So just knowing that that was gonna happen so fast. So I could be able to know how to deal with stressful times and dealing with like stuff hit the fan and like my direct supervisor, isn't there. Like, how am I gonna handle it? How am I gonna problem solve? Like all of those things. I never would've thought that it was literally gonna help me in a lot of my leadership styles and whether that's communication and talking to people, training people.

But how are you teaching people how to do something? How are you being supportive? How are you being viewed as a leader? Am I going to be the person that come to work at Starbucks and just sit in the back room and watch the camera the whole time? Or am I

> going like help them and like help them when the rush and stuff happens and like how literally all of that has impacted my leadership experiences and stuff on campus. Yeah, this idea of a strong black man or this person that like got it all together that I'm going to work so hard because I have to work hard. You are just like grind, mentality, like go grind, go get your car. I gotta do this. And that's how it was with Starbucks because my family didn't have the funds to support. Like I would be like, I need the hours but it was just like I was just working. I kind of liked to be at work. It was kind of another way to be away from reality at the time. Like it was my safety net school is kind of still my safety net now I would say too, like I've always just enjoyed school. And so, yeah, I think it was that, that whole, like trying to be your strong man, like I, I could do it all the whole time. Like you still need help, but you could do it all, but you still gonna need help or you still gonna need to be able to effectively communicate that, you know, stuff. (Blake)

Young brothers and sisters, we implore you to take care of yourselves. As our peers have shared, you will be tested. You will face challenges due to your race, gender, or other identities but know that you have support and others that have your back. Know that whatever your spiritual beliefs you have a higher being or multiple higher beings—our ancestors—to ground you. They are fighting for you. Do not stop or give up.

We love you. A Luta Continua.

Appendix A

Initial Interview PreCollege-2nd Year

- In this first section, I want you to reflect a little bit on your home life, schooling, and culture in relation to issues in society
- Can you share your Name, Year, and Major, and Institution?
    - Can you share how you identify?
- When you hear the word Blackness what does that mean?
    - Please tell me about a story of your childhood and if that helped you develop your Blackness?
    - Might you share what your hometown or community means to you?
- When you hear consciousness what does that mean to you?
- What was the culture at home or in your community regarding issues in the community or in the world? Were there any songs or ways that made you aware of what you or your community might've experienced?
- Did anything in your story shape why you chose your major or career interest?
- What types of things did you cover in high school? What did you enjoy learning or talking about? Were those issues that you cared about or that impacted your community?
- Before arriving to college, were there any issues or events that made you feel less than?
    - Please tell me what it was like applying to school or attending school during heavy police brutality and the 45th president's term.
- Before arriving to college, what dreams or aspirations did you have for yourself? How did you come to find those as important?

- Please share your college application and selection experience—how many schools, where/why, testing experience, support from high school?
    - Probes- did you talk about anything in your essays connected to what you were angry about with society, tell me about that
    - So why did you want to go to college or specifically IU/UM?
- Can you share a meaningful experience from your first year—your major choice, trials and tribulations, adjustments.
    - How did you expand on those anger or frustrations you mentioned in your essays or identified as important?
- Injustice in social media was quite prevalent during your upbringing and collegiate experience, can you share how the social environment impacted you?
- So now you're at ___ university
- Tell me about a campus or societal policy that may have impacted you or you were made aware of?
    - Was there any organization or department that helped you learn about those issues? Can you share what it meant for you to get involved or not with those organizations?
    - Was there any particular event you attended that was meaningful?
- Please share a story of your most enlightening class and how that shaped your experience in college.
    - Did that help you understand more about issues you cared about or experienced?
- Think back to first year ____, what was that experience like academically?

- Is there anyone a grad student, professor, or someone at the university that had a lasting impact on you early on in college?
- 2017-2021 was a lot politically and socially, would you agree? did that impact you at all? How or why?
    - How did those events or 45's comments make you feel? Did you do or want to do anything to respond?
- Where did you hear about all of the events or commentary that transpired? Were there spaces at home or school or elsewhere to discuss those issues? Was it common?
- Would you say that you were conscious of issues in society? How would you define consciousness? What factors make you say that you were or were not conscious?
- Can you describe any type of show or song that helped articulate some of these issues? Or was there anything that helped you cope with what was happening?
- What types of activities did you participate in as a first year?
- So you said x about your consciousness when you were in HS, did your first year help cultivate that consciousness? Can you illustrate how with an example?
- At this point in the interview, are there other ways that your culture was impacted by events in society or historically that upsetted you or made you want to create change?

Interview2- 2nd Year to Graduation and Beyond

- So last time we discussed how society impacted your schooling and life's experiences early on, so now I want to hear how you continued learning more or if organizations at um/IU helped build on those passions

- Have you assumed a leadership role at your university? Is that connected to those issues you mentioned before?
- Can you share how you are doing academically and what your future goals are?
    - Are any of those goals connected to your life experiences from the last interview?
    - Have you decided on a major?
    - Did the BSU or other departments help you decide on what you wanted to do? How?
- Were there programs or classes that discussed issues that mattered to you? Can you share how? Or how did that make you feel that there weren't?
- You mentioned your various levels of consciousness before, would you say that you are more conscious about those issues now?
    - What helped you learn more? If not, what would you have appreciated learning more about?
- We talked last time about music or other cultural influences, can you share if there were more mediums like songs or movies that helped you learn more?
- Some of the sociopolitical events in society have not ended, do they impact you at all? Can you share how, how'd it make you feel, and if you were able to do anything about it?
- Were there any faculty that you connected with that helped you understand those issues? Have you been able to connect deeper with them? Can you describe how that came about?
- Do you have meaningful or impactful relations with faculty/staff? Can you share experiences with them and what made them impactful?

    - Probes- do you have a BCC, is the space meaningful to you? Has it helped you do more work that matters to you? Like what? Why not?
- Tell me about what you’ve learned about issues that matter to you. Was there ever a time that you changed perspectives about an issue or were challenged to learn more?
- Tell me about concerns Black students have had on campus.
    - How has the university administration been involved with those concerns?
    - Has there been other forms of dissent or pushback for your concerns?
- Are you involved in BSU or other organizations?
    - Please share an impactful program to support student success. How about an impactful program to hold the university accountable to your belonging?
- You did/didn’t mention the BSU, have they been supportive of your consciousness? Can you share a memorable experience that helped or that turned you away?
- How about the Black culture center? Do they help you learn more about issues or do something about it? Tell me how that happened or why you didn’t feel the need to attend?
- How does your Black community engage with the campus environment? How do you assess what issues to tackle at various levels? – Can you share a story on an impactful event or two that you all executed?
    - Probes- did that validate you in any way? Did that inform your outlook on what is possible? Did that help you develop consciousness?
    - If you all had an issue that you cared about do you know who to go to fight back?
- What does engagement with other Black organizations on/off campus look like? How about with faculty or staff on campus?

  - With police killings and racists issues in societies happening, have there been any meaningful events that support Black students/community
  - What about reactions to 45 and how you dealt with that?
- Do you identify as a Black student leader? Can you describe two to three accomplishments as a Black student leader? Why are you proud of those accomplishments?
  - Probe- can you share how you or someone else galvanized Black students to execute those accomplishments?
- How do you think your efforts contributes to larger movements in society, if at all?
  - What does it mean for Black people to truly be free? Have you had opportunities to explore what that means?
- Has the BSU or university informed your career success/endeavors in any way? If so, how?
- Now that you're a ___. You've experienced a lot, been involved, now have a major, what have you done or do you want to do with the consciousness you have?
  - What are your 5-10 year goals? Who/what do you contribute to having developed that goal?
- You did/did not mention uplifting your community, what needs to be done to truly do so? We talked last time about what liberation means? Can you share what that would look like for your community? If it has changed.
- This study is interested in what you do or have done that help you talk about or create actions to address issues that concern you, are there any considerations about your

experience as a Black student at the university or ways that you all have tried to transform the campus/society that I have not addressed.

Appendix B

Call for Participants

Hold Up, We Can’t Take It No More

Black Student Unions have existed since the 1960s and America has failed to understand how they operate contemporarily. Black Lives Matter is a powerful organization, slogan, and mantra but Black students have always played a critical role in social movements and demanding liberation for Black people. The goal of this study is to hear stories through interviews of how Black students have learned about critical issues in society like race and class and if Black student groups like BSU have helped students learn about and/or how to solve these issues.

Largely, this dissertation study seeks to understand if and how Black students gain oppositional consciousness in college and if they choose pathways like student leadership or majors that help tackle issues that matter to them. By hearing student narratives, we might learn about Black students’ struggles before and during college, how and why they chose to be involved in student organizations, and potential actions and outcomes of how they demand the university and society create better conditions for Black people to thrive. Said differently, we might learn of how Black students learn about injustices today and what entities help them act.

Please contact Donté Miller at donmill@iu.edu if you would like to participate. $25 gift cards are offered for your participation.

Appendix C

DISSERTATION STUDY

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You have been selected to participate in a research study investigating your experiences in college and involvement in the Black Student Union in relation to the campus and societal racial climate. This form is designed to give you information about this project.

Project Title:	A Contemporary Investigation: Black Student Unions in Higher Education
Lead Researcher:	Donté Miller Indiana University Bloomington School of Education donmill@iu.edu

Study Description

I am trying to understand the relationship between students lived experiences, involvement in college, and if that may shape how students understand how to address sociopolitical issues and help liberate the Black community. Students will be asked to reflect on their home upbringing, collegiate experiences, and share if/how their oppositional consciousness influenced their civic engagement and understanding how to transform society.

You were invited to participate in this study because you are a current student attending the University of Michigan or Indiana University. You will be asked to participate in two interviews with the lead researcher. It will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes and will be audio recorded.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

Benefits

DIRECT BENEFIT: This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your collegiate experience in the BSU amidst the 45th President's term and numerous senseless killings of Black people by police. Ultimately, you can aid in helping scholars across the world, community members, and your institution understand the power of your student organization and its role in supporting other movements like Black Lives Matter to help liberate Black people. This can also lead to new policies and practices to help Black students flourish on your campus.

INDIRECT BENEFIT: You have the opportunity to help society better understand how to participate in civic engagement and help other universities invest resources in Black students, staff, and faculty success.

Compensation

Study participants will receive $25 Visa gift cards.

Audio Recording

All interviews for this project will be audiotaped using a digital recording device. If you agree to be interviewed, your responses to the interview questions will be audio recorded. The digital audio file will be professionally transcribed within one week after the interview, and then permanently destroyed.

Privacy/Confidentiality
You will choose a pseudonym (a fake name) that will only be known to you and the lead researcher. Your actual name will not be used in any publications or presentations based on this study.

Hard copies of each participant's interview transcript (which will include your pseudonym, not your real name) will be kept in a secure location in the lead researcher's office at Indiana University. Electronic copies of interview transcripts (which will include pseudonyms, not real names) will be kept on a password-protected laptop, to which only the lead researcher has access.

Within three years of the interviews, hard copies of all interview transcripts and the spreadsheet with pseudonyms will be manually shredded. Electronic copies of interview transcripts will be deleted.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You will not be penalized should you choose not to participate or decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions and Concerns
The lead researcher conducting this study is Donté Miller, a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Donté at donmill@iu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Statement of Consent
I have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in this study while having the interview audio recorded.

Your Printed Name: ____

Your Signature: ____ Date: _________________

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: ____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____________________________ Date: ________________

The researcher will keep this consent form for at least three years beyond the end of the study

Table 1

Indiana University *Interviewees with name, major, classification, hometown/origin, and status.*		**Phases of Oppositional Consciousness Development**				
		Identifying with Dominated Group	Experience and relating Naming	Collective Identities and Opposing	Belief in Power of Group	Actions
	Cierra *Senior* *Political Science, African American African Diaspora Studies Minor* Westside, Indianapolis, IN Aspiring Law Student	-Racial & gun violence in West Indianapolis -Faced Poverty, housing & food insecurity, -Experienced homelessness w/ single mom, twin, and brother -Black woman	-Saw a differences in resources allocated between the majority white elementary & middle school versus majority Black Accelerated high school -Passed a collective youth bill to Indiana General Assembly participating in a student leadership group growing up.	-GROUPS-mentor from HS program connected her to GROUPS Summer Program; -Built strong relationship with admin team; -Inspired to minor in Black studies course because of her experience attending a majority Black High School.	-Voices of hope gospel group, ACE/Dr. Wise, Gospel music connected to her life & validated her ability to attend college. -Had a positive experience with her Black assemble group. ACE- and was inspired to be of service to the Black community. -Got involved in BSU/NAACP but saw flaws in political and civic engagement so created Black Collegians.	-Chose to major in law and Black studies to learn how she could impact people. -Started her own org called *Black Collegians* that created to liberate Black people. -Led her org. Black Collegians to create a BLM mural that speaks to the importance of civic engagement in the Black community while also highlighting the struggle in implementing Black community initiatives due to systemic injustices.
	Angie *Senior* *Earth and Atmospheric Sciences* *Bloomington, IN* Aspiring Law School	Called “Oreo” in School 2nd Generation college student, mom works in higher education and dad works in STEM. Noticed differences in her experiences versus non-wealthy family.	Mom works in DEI and taught her about identity & raised her confidence in Blackness. Mom also helped her talk about Black people killed in the media (John Crawford) down the street where she lived in OH. Always loved STEM but never felt discrimination because of validating family.	Participated in GROUPS STEM and did research with faculty that validated her ability to thrive w/ a support system. Took “Racism as a Social Problem Class” exposed her to how STEM and Science intersect. She then joined Black STEM Organizations and a Black-Faculty Graduate led STEM	Participated in ACE, GROUPS STEM, & ICP. ICP helped her think about identity surrounded by Black women not white women or Black men who could not relate to Black women’s experiences. Dr. Wilkins-Yel and empowerment luncheons illustrated the power in surviving as Black STEM person.	Engaged more w/ ICP to merge STEM and social justice especially instead of the BSU. Participates in a Friday group therapy that provides space to think through liberatory practices. Considering what civic engagement looks like and creating opportunities for other Black people to access STEM fields

			COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd caused her to switch her major in STEM and question how conversations were had about injustices	program in lieu of her majority white classes	Defines Blackness in STEM and importance of bringing in identity to disrupt. STEM orgs were an opportunity to learn and discuss liberation for Black people	
	Ella *Senior* International Law in Global Institutions with a minor in Communication and Public Advocacy New Guinea, Africa Eastside, Indianapolis, IN In Law School	-*Despised the narrative of "Eastside Indy [Warren Township] is Ghetto"* although she was shielded, she valued being surrounded by diversity in Black community. From Warren township & developed love for service. -Also lived in New Guinea where she was privileged in international context where her family sent her money in the continent. But low-income in the states	-Named how Blackness looked more tribal in New Guinea and changed her perception back at school in Indianapolis. -Faced questions about hijabs and "speaking different." -Cared about immigration and addressing poverty because of her experiences. An uncle was deported by ICE.	-Trump Administration and International bans was her reasoning to pursue International Law and support Muslims & immigrants from countries not spoken of largely. -Built relations w/ Warren township citizens after a student was shot and killed and led a protest against gun violence & started, *WE Live Inc.* beginning activism as adolescent.	-Participated in a US Model UN trip through a teacher's recommendation. -Lived on Atkins Black ResHall floor -Did not participate in GROUPS but her cousin did and helped her develop community at IU. -Named Zheba Khan, Black Grad student as exposing her to Black feminism/ intersectionality.	-Atkins inspired her to take classes focused on Africa/Black intl issues whereas peers focused on Europe -was in BSU but was more social and African Student Association helped her learn about conflicts on the continent. -stumbled upon leadership in NAACP but has tailored the student org to fighting specific issues like environmental racism and voter suppression
	Ashley *Senior* *Exercise Science, Minor in Social Work* *Rialto, CA; Indianapolis, IN* *Physical therapist to social work and interest in nonprofit*	-Challenged stereotypes of Black professionalism related to Black women should be -President Obama's term and lack of Black representation in politics encouraged and facilitated her leadership.	-Did not feel Black community had power or conversations on racism and politics to challenge the dominant group -Breonna Taylor's death facilitated lots of introspection and reflection that forced her to "act white" to accommodate white people. - Involvement and conversations about Blackness with grandparent shifted perspective to positive view of Black people	-CLD exposed her to mentors to support her ambitions in PT. -Family taught her about value of self-acceptance to race and identity -BSU, NMBCC taught her more about her Blackness, the immediacy of social issues, and helped build social and political identity through leadership -Participating in and serving as RA in GROUPS provided outlet to connect with faculty, staff, students	- A Black Literature course focused on civic engagement and history empowered her to continue studying Blackness -BSU allowed her to play catchup and ask all questions on politics and Blackness in safe environment and lit a fire for her to tackle the world -White professors would never use examples of Black people in class so student organizations taught her about being Black in STEM	-stumbled upon serving on BSU Exec board as a freshman and now president of BSU focusing on mental health and success. This was as a result of her own mental health struggles. -Using STEM as opportunity to make sure her brother and others identify strongly with their Blackness and thrive

	Adele *Graduate Student* *Journalism concentration in Public Relations 2021* Master's in Media 2023 Memphis/Brownsville	-Upper middle-class background and family of teachers but faced a lot of outward racism and microaggressions in predominantly white neighborhood. -Students called her “an Oreo” for speaking proper and surrounded by white people.	-Angry about fake news in the media. 45's election caused a huge stir and divide in her classes and community because white people showed their true colors. Caused physical divide in class with Black students sitting on one side and whites on the other. -Had verbal spats with people in community about killings of Black people in the media, 45, and Blackness because high school students wore confederate flags, said the n word, and supported 45's racists remarks. -white students told her that she's unqualified to teach as a grad student or that DEI issues don't matter test her as a Black woman.	-Collective identity shaped by family of educators teaching about power of Blackness, inspired her to get a masters, and be great compared to under resourced family in Memphis. -Taught to “speak proper” and was shielded from Black issues by family. Taught grad school was normal and aspired to make money -Participated in Governor School focused on politics cultivating college aspiration and Public Relations interests.	-After Gov school, she joined a hs club, did an internship, did competitions, and worked with her grandpa doing PR work to really hone on her craft and address false news from various channels -Found support through Dr.'s Carl and Glo and worked in Balfour that equipped her to learn more about DEI. -Balfour empowered her to get involved and fight back against racism.	-Created NABJ to focus on specific Black issues in journalism especially because PR org was super white. -BSU was more social so she used NABJ to address racism and issues in her major/career and used BSU frame to create org. -Leaned on mentorship with Dr. Glo and a Black woman professor to know how to improve teaching skills as grad student and challenge whiteness in the classroom. -Wrestles with both her family and white people on anti-Blackness but committed to Black people and liberation.
	Kobe Sports Marketing and Management 2019 Master's Sports Admin 2021 Pike township/ Westside, Indianapolis, IN High School Football Coach	-Played variety of sports-taekwondo, swim, football, basketball, baseball, ballet and connected with boys in his neighborhood on that level that inspired love for sport and cultivated community. -Did journalism in high school equipping him to explore more about racism and issues in sport. -Began interrogating Blackness in college because Pike was majority Black and	-Killings of Black men and conversations with other Black boys in Pike and larger discussion in media sparked interest in using sport to contend with issues. -Kaepernick kneeling conversations happened in classes while 45's era caused Black men and community to find ways to support each other from racial incidents. -Interrogated issues about Black NFL coaches in high school	-Built collectively with peers in sports leading to conversations on Black coaches, racism in college classes and no room for these conversation in white student orgs -Participated in CLD and GROUPS and instilled a sense of civic engagement and finding ways to support Black people. Served as GROUPS RA for 3 years and advisor in masters -Class with Dr. Gary Sailes on Black People	-Conversations and community in GROUPS facilitated start of GTSA -Was really involved with BSU attending events as a freshman but then focused more on major and used BSU framework to create GTSA. Still used BSU as a social space. GTSA countered the sports marketing org because of whiteness -Received mentorship from Black staff that complemented belief in	-Founded GTSA to address racism in sport, increase representation, and support URM in sport -Now coaching football at HS and seeking to impact young lives and equip them with tools to succeed and interrogate issues and turn their passion to power

		Trayvon martin's death enhanced the need to understand being a Black man.	-Interrogated how Black men support family and obtain success	in Sport helped validate ambitions to address issues in sport and now his mentor	relevancy of the organization and sustaining it beyond its creation.	
	Blake- Community & Public Health 2020 Masters in Higher Ed 2022 Elkhart, Indiana Higher Education Ph.D. Student	-Attended majority white elementary school. White God mom was his teacher. Parents divorced at a young in elementary and God mom validated him informing why he wanted to help people. -Adolescent experiences deemed him "sensitive" but did not know how to manage emotions. -Difficulty navigating violence happening to Black men at hands of police and generally in community.	-Sociopolitical environment encouraged him to explore more of what it meant to be an activist or leader in P12 -Visited Bloomington with Godmom and questioned why IU was not representative of Elkhart	GROUPS, NMBCC, and BSU connected him to Black community especially serving as a GROUPS RA -Wonderful visit to IU for groups informational, connected with family and friends, and became an RA for the program impacting others -Dr. Sailes modern sports class demystified Blackness and facilitated changing his major from Physical Therapy to Public health	-Served as President of the Freshman Action Team with the NMBCC -Racism happening on campus and in society sparked conversation in BSU -Events during 45s election taught, empowered, and protected students in ways he needed because campus was "scary" not knowing what white people could/would do as the majority	-Learned how politics and campus worked after engagement in BSU -Instrumental in Black IUnity Conference that brought together Black orgs for holistic support and mentored students -Questioning systems and structures like admission for Black students in GROUPS and Black Masculinity in higher education
	Emmanuel- Community Health 2023 Fort Wayne, Indiana Aspiring Student Affairs Professional	-Read books, watched TV, and stayed in the house to escape reality of gangs and shootings in ft wayne. -Mom and grandparents owned stores, defied odds, and created space for he and his brother to be. Father was incarcerated most of his life. -Third grade, white girl called him a "burnt fish". Caused him to have "the talk" about being Black with his dad and the conversation was on how to appease white people.	-Used reading as an outlet to immerse himself in stories and learn about states and politics and desired to become the 1st Black President associating it w/ reading, vocab, age, and built confidence -The US prison system became of interest because of his father and the impact the system had on his father's behavior and impacting their relationship -Mom was overprotective for her Black boys with killings happening nationally and he feared it could be him. Had no other outlet to process experiences because he was one of	-Miss. Rutledge hosted a summer program from middle to high school that taught things beyond basic math and science, fed him, provided transportation, had a hardcore feminist instructor, and more -Wanted to go to Morehouse but did GROUPS and wanted to be close to home and the program helped him choose law and public policy as a major and encouraged him to get involved in orgs in college	-Served in BSU and BLSA but critiqued their activist agenda as a first year. Eventually joined the executive board and sought to make change. -Networking, connecting, and socializing in GROUPS felt like a "mini-hbcu." All 28 Ras were involved, directors supported, faculty were Black or Latinx teaching about their communities and history. -BSU supported students during 45 era emotionally and physically. A program with IU Republicans was going to happen but did not but they wanted to	-Worked with peers to advocate for more funding for BSU, more space, and seats on IUSG - As a GROUPS RA and mentor to Black students, he sees liberation as an opportunity to help others not self-isolate like he did and find their voice and have action especially with them being less than 5% of the population. -Aspires to converge passion for supporting students and STEM to work in higher education

			few Black men in private school. -A Black woman, Miss Rutledge, paid for his private school attendance but it did not mask the elitism and racism he felt from peers whose parents made 200k and he was just trying to get by, but his mom made it work too.		shed light on his rhetoric.	
Michigan *Interviewees with name, major, classification, and hometown/origin and status*		**Phases of Oppositional Consciousness Development**				
		Identifying with Dominated Group	Experience and relating Naming	Collective Identities and Opposing	Belief in Power of Group	Actions
	Malisa- UM Afro American and Afro Studies, Minor in Education for Empowerment Southfield & Farmington Hills MI, suburb Detroit PhD Student	-Questioned identity from growing up in predominantly Black places vs. predominantly white schools. -Raised in church, and partially homeschooled. -Growing up in Southfield as a smart, full figured Black woman forced her to understand her identity.	-Learned differences in Gender and Race dynamics from grandparents and parents' relationships informing her Blackness and relationship to men. -Silenced when voicing issues to her mom about parents' marriage. -Always had a deep love and passion for studying Black people from her experiences growing up. -Began learning about issues of diversity first year from power of BSU and angry Black students responding to issues	-GEAR-UP instrumental to teaching her about Black issues with workshops and activities w/ college students, tours in NY, volunteering & it inspired her to want to give back similarly -Family and church family created culture of attending college that became the norm -Admitted to UM conditionally w/ Bridge & critiqued how/why based on GEARUP experiences -BSU is where Black students are born and meet people and learn to lead and take action from there -Black studies space to learn & teach, BSU space to impact. Learn from decades of students before.	-Black students teaching her that she needs to finesse outside and inside the class because "they stay mad" and she tried to find her way w/ that pressure despite not fully agreeing -Began fighting for the institution to change but also realizing the need to take breaks because UM is exhausting and the fight -Understood development from Black students investing in her and encouraging leadership while doing bare min to pass classes but wants accountability for that too	-Participated in a BLM rally as a hs student to learn more about Blackness -Led Black welcome week in order to socialize students and cultivate their success -Now a PhD student wants to continue advocating for Black people transnationally thrive.

	Leslie UM Gender & Health, Minor Community Action & Social change Detroit, MI Graduate student in Public Health	-Has a disability, sister has autism and they experienced access issues to obtain resources including Detroit being a food desert. -Received negative comments about being dark skinned, but was raised in strong Black household taught to love Blackness. -Mom and sister passed away tragically and friends her first few years.	-Took a class on Black Feminist Perspective of Health learning of history of domination of women in conjunction with sister w/ autism and mom's experiences. -Attended Black HS, parents are pro-Black and taught her of Black issues. -Attended high school in Trayvon Martin era and #BBUM at UM popular. Played with Black barbies and celebrated Kwanzaa.	-Participated in Upward Bound & inspired to go to college esp for free tuition with a 21 on the ACT. -Participated in Bridge and that helped socialize Black students largely. -Called out patriarchal misogynistic experiences against her and Black woman president in BSU.	-Bridge and BSU became critical to helping her navigate traumatic experiences her first 2 years -BSU rallied together when the Nword was written on a RA's door, protested UM president, and supported students during 45 era and she helped lead efforts	-Aims to do public health consulting to be a part of process and policies impacting health for Black people -Despite negative experiences with Black men, still focused on advocating for Black students and supporting community
	LJ- *Movement Science* *Gurney, IL* *Suburb of Chicago* *Marine Corps/Vet* *Transfer* Sports Psychologist	-Raised in single parent family with white mom and distant relationship with Black dad that shaped her identity -Mixed identity and being called oreo shaped her throughout her life -Experienced financial hardship so knew she could not afford school and chose military -Always fueled by helping people and giving back	-President Obama's term was opportunity to converse with mom about pertinent issues -Military was a boys club of racists white men/45 supporters that never saw Black people nor a mixed Black woman. Silenced fighting back against authority -Injured herself in the military and critiqued healthcare for being predominantly white and not listening to Black women's concern	-Took Black studies class and joined the Black Undergrads in Med group after her first semester -Black studies courses taught her of issues in healthcare that nuanced her focus in her major and career interests -Took a class with Dr. Waters, CSP Director, on socializing to UM and history of Black UM and supported her after struggling 1st sem.	-Black med org helped determine she wanted to do healthcare instead of medicine -Connected to CSP where the director helped create a specific program for transfers and vets through her leadership -Attended workshops on race through Black studies and CSP to hear about issues that pertained to her. -BSU did not play a huge role because of her transfer status	-Despite UM being all white, she aims to diversify it and healthcare and support women & vets in the process -Empowered to have conversations about race with a white roommate and challenge her notions about Black people
	Jane- UM Bio, Health & Society, and Gender & Health Southfield, MI Graduate student in STEM	-Navigated nuances of experiences and identities tied to being Cameroonian and Black. -Participated in band and orchestra at a young age	-Participated in a hs summer program at MSU in education on social justice, school to prison pipelines, and Blackness in HS that equipped her w/	-Did not participate in Bridge but social personality connected her with Black students from attending protests and marches w/ BSU.	-BSU at UM necessitated that the racial events happening be resolved and empowered her and her peers to learn the history of how and to act and "the thing to do."	-Protested on the president's lawn about lack of Black students on campus and support. -Learned early on about the importance of taking

		and learned quickly that she was always one of few Black students. -Strong parental support dad encouraging and teaching her beyond the text in her class and Saturday classes that eventually facilitated her love for reading about history of Blackness and disparities in education. -navigating Cameroonian identity w/ parents' immigration status also encouraged need to go to med school.	consciousness about Black issues. -Participated in GEARUP in 7th grade starting her college path and searched for summer ops to support college endeavors. -Learned about CRT and it facilitated her interest in service and giving back in HS. -In college, health disparities and Black women maternal mortality and how it's a replica of history and cultivated interest in med school. -President Obama empowered her that she can do anything and Michelle empowered her to do public health. Compared to 45 disempowering because of racial landscape	-Critiqued how someone is to learn and be an activist compared to non-Black peers. -Involved in Black in medicine group and became on exec and started Future Physician Summit for children.	-Inspired by upperclassmen in BSU protesting who taught other students the history of Black UM. -Took class on history of prisons that furthered interest in health and education for Black people -Women in media and sex health and reproduction class that talked about Black people in the diaspora and how health is transcontinental. Class taught by a Black woman on Black women.	social or cultural classes outside of med and that has shaped her experiences now and gives advice to mentees.
	Calvin- Political Science Atlanta, GA Law Student	-Parents divorced as he was a teen. Split household forced two different lifestyles with lower resources with mom and wealthier neighborhood with dad. -Attended private school in Dunwoody, GA. -Saw white families driving Teslas, but came home and saw Black people going to the social services building.	-Participated in A Better Chance, Inc.'s program attending boarding school participating in debate that was his ticket to college and interrogating issues. -Numerous killings of Black people by police and lack of discussions in class about them infuriated him. -Attended Student Development Leadership Camp to discuss and dialogue about social	-Did not participate in Bridge, but served on the Debate team in high school and college that helped build community. -Immersed in BSU quickly and attended National BSU conference at Yale as a first year that sparked interest in serving. -Engaged in research on child psychology with a Black woman professor	-Encouraged to run for BSU as a first year and served as treasurer and eventually President -Served as President during COVID and sought out ways to support students through the pandemic and social unrest with Breonna Taylor and George Floyd	-Learned about Black fugitivity and took classes in Black studies to complement plan of action for BSU -Sought to dismiss and denounce Black students that were a part of #BBUM sexual assault conversations

			issues amongst other catholic schools.			
	Martin Music Performance Gary, Indiana Graduate Student in Music	-Second Generation college student whose parents encouraged him to participate in variety of activities -Saw social unrest in society but never began to question if it could happen to him -Raised in impoverished area of Gary with a predominantly Black student population thus never a question about what Black people could not achieve	-Questions about security in his high school sparked interest in supporting Black community -Received discounted music lessons from a white teacher, continued performing, and learned that he was the only Black student in the orchestra -Focused extremely on trumpet to gain college admission and blocked out everything else	-Joined BSU but was not seriously active because of the campus geography. -Served as an RA and focused on Trumpet to perfect craft -Joined the Sphinx Organization focused on increasing representation of Black people in music	-Mentored by professor Michael Gordon and the Sphinx Organization exposing him to Blackness in music and the variety of offerings in the field	-In graduate school aiming to inspire Black children to engage music and counter the erasure of Black people in the field

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Donté Marquis Miller, Ph.D. | dmiller4@pacific.edu

PROFESSIONAL OUTLOOK

Servant leader and intellectual entrepreneur with over 8 years of experience in Higher Education. Passionate about creating an impact in students' lives, with a predilection for creating equity and achievement in the lives of Black Students and people facing human domination. Research interests include Black student success, activism, social movements, education counseling, Democratic education, & education philosophy. Determined to leverage my personal, in-class room, and educational experience to cultivate educational success within marginalized communities' cocurricular experiences.

EDUCATION

Indiana University Bloomington (Bloomington, IN)
June 2023
Ph.D. Higher Education
Dissertation Title*: Investigating' Black students' Oppositional Consciousness development and success in Higher Education*
Committee: Lucy LePeau (Chair), Dionne Danns, Quentin Wheeler-Bell, Oscar Patrón, Samuel Museus

University of Southern California (Los Angeles, CA)
May 2017
M.Ed. Educational Counseling
Master's Thesis: *A phenomenological study of Black student leaders in a Predominantly White Institution* Committee: Kristan Venegas (Chair), Darnell Cole, Frank Harris III

University of California, Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
June 2015
B.A. Sociology; Minor- Education Studies

University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley, CA)
Summer 2014
Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of the Pacific Student Life (Stockton, CA) August 2022 –Present
Executive Director of Campus Life

- Responsible for designing and administering inclusive student programming to enhance and reinforce the
- Oversees Student Involvement (Student Activities and Programming, Student Government ASUOP, Clubs and Organizations, Fraternity and Sorority Life), and the day-to-day operations of Pacific Recreation and DeRosa University Center programs, services and facilities.
- Supervises, trains, and evaluates Pacific Recreation, Student Involvement, and University Center staff and contributes to the selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of staff, both students and professionals.
- Develops, coordinates, and assesses a comprehensive student activities program of educational, recreational, social, and cultural programs with opportunities for social engagement, student employment, and personal growth which appeal to a diverse audience.

- Develops and oversees the units annual budget of over $1 million in accordance with University policies; develops multi-year capital repair and replacement plan; exercises budget authority for units departments and student organizations; identifies and generates revenue sources to support Units budget; develops and maintains vendor relationships and formalize contracts.
- Oversees Pacific Recreation programs, services, and facilities related to competitive and recreational sports; health and fitness; outdoor and informal recreation across three campuses.
- Oversees all aspects of Greek Organizations, including, but not limited to recruitment, leadership, programming and activities.
- Developing strong partnership with Athletics so that utilization of space is maximized and support Athletics priorities to engage students in the fan experience at Pacific
- Partnering with Athletics colleagues to improve academic success of men's basketball team through proactive and invasive advising
- Teaching STDY 012 course focused on equipping students with academic toolkit demystifying hidden curriculum and providing strategies for them to thrive
- Visioning, designing, and implementing Pacific Esports lounge that includes competitive, recreational, and academic opportunities to engage Pacific students in video games that support yield and retention
- Overseeing the design and rebuild of Sacramento recreation facility to improve graduate student experience on satellite campus

Hudson and Holland Scholar Program at IU (Bloomington, IN) July 2021 – August 2022

Assistant Director of Programming and Administration

- Responsible for designing and administering inclusive student programming to enhance and reinforce the academic engagement and experiential learning capacity of the student experience.
- Develops and implements programs and initiatives geared at enhancing and reinforcing the academic engagement and experiential learning capacity of the student experience.
- Crafted, applied, and secured an internal $10,000 grant to implement a summer program and welcome events for students in the program
- Revamped and created program culture by consolidating communication to students, developing a programming model connected to students' cocurricular learning, and adapting building space for student utility
- Supervised, hired, and supported leadership of 4 professional staff, a graduate assistant, and 4 work study students
- Operational oversight of $80,000 budget for programming, administration, and staff support

Center for P16 Research and Collaboration at IU (Bloomington, IN) March 2019 – June 2021

College and Career Readiness and Success Coordinator

- Coordinated tutoring services and partnerships among various constituents in the city of Bloomington
- Liaised between the School of Education and Monroe County School Corporation to enhance services and address student needs related to identity, belonging, and success
- Worked with the Indiana Kids Foundation to assist in meeting reading and learning objectives for students in the state

Balfour Scholars Program at IU September 2019 – July 2021

Balfour Scholars Program & Academy Coordinator

- Co-managed 15 student leaders working in the School of Education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office

- Empowered student leaders to coordinate projects related to mentoring, outreach, DEI, and summer academy
- Coordinated and planned the Balfour Pre-College Academy for over 50 high school seniors to explore IU in the summer of 2020 and 2021
- Managed and planned daily workshops and activities throughout the week for the summer and monthly workshops on financial aid, scholarships, academic exploration, cultural exploration, and with other IU campus resources
- Ensured college student leaders in the academy connected with high school students equipping them with tools to gain admission and facilitate success in higher education

Sigma Pi Fraternity, International at IU (Bloomington, IN) August 2017 – December 2020
Live-in House Advisor

- Oversaw and engaged 80 students in activities and provided socioemotional support during their collegiate experience
- Reported to and coordinated with Sigma Pi National organization and constituents
- Liaised between Sigma Pi members, House Manager and the Indiana University Student Learning Life office
- Served as first-responder to health and safety concerns and managed risk management and conduct

National Survey of Student Engagement at IU (Bloomington, IN) July 2017 – June 2018
Project Associate

- Coordinated survey administration for over 100 schools in the US and worked with Institutional Research officers to ensure efficient and consistent reporting of student data
- Engaged with data to improve campus interactions, structures, and systems through research and post-survey data analysis
- Worked with research analyst and professors to inform research and practice on colleges and universities

USC Office for Residential Education (Los Angeles, CA) July 2015 – July 2017
Graduate Residential Community Coordinator

- Trained and co-supervised 15 Resident Assistants that facilitate programs and activities for over 800 residents in 12 buildings serving upper-division and graduate students
- Managed an annual budget of $20,000 for faculty, building government, and RA programming
- Oversaw and coordinated faculty-in-residence programming for 3 faculty members
- Adjudicated judicial hearing review cases for students violating student conduct policies in housing facilities
- Launched a one-day social justice summit and initialized a semester long social justice course that teaches student leaders to practice and implement social justice initiatives into their daily lives

USC Rossier Office of Admissions and Scholarships (Los Angeles, CA) August 2015 – May 2017
Graduate Assistant

- Coordinated and facilitated campus visits for prospective graduate students for the Rossier School of Education
- Streamlined programming for over 100 prospective student’s Preview Day by soliciting volunteers and serving as emcee for the event

- Served as an admissions representative at graduate school fairs and other recruitment events throughout the year
- Read, Reviewed, and scored over 100 master's program applications utilizing Salesforce and Webadmit

USC Pullias Center for Higher Education (Los Angeles, CA) June 2016 – July 2016
Academic Instructor
- Advised, mentored, and taught 12 academically at-risk college sophomores for 5 hours per week attending California universities about learning, motivation, and retention strategies to fuel their academic success
- Helped students strategize and maintain study behaviors, maximize their financial resources, develop a sense of belonging, and develop attainable post-graduate plans
- Met with academics to construct qualitative research and interview over 5 students about their experiences

UCLA Vice-Provost Initiative for Pre-College Scholars (Los Angeles, CA) June 2015 – July 2015
Academic Mentor
- Facilitated college involvement, goal setting workshops, and college-preparation activities for 11th grade students in a college preparation program at UCLA
- Recruited and advised students on academic eligibility for UCLA
- Served as on-call advisor and tutor ensuring students attended college-level courses and created thesis prep and writing workshops to engage students writing abilities

UCLA Black Male Institute (Los Angeles, CA) Winter 2014, 2015
Blacklimated Co-Instructor
- Worked with Director and Professor Dr. Tyrone Howard studying Black male retention at UCLA for 5-10 hours per week
- Instructed a winter course for 2 years equipping 30 first year Black Freshman and Transfers and Black Athletes on strategies to improve retention and experiences at UCLA
- Ran focus groups on student's experiences in the course and provided students with opportunities to get involved in the research the following year
- Instilled and enhanced camaraderie amongst Black faculty, staff, and students on campus through networking events and workshops
- 96% retention rate of students that have taken the course matriculating through UCLA

RESEARCH EXPERIENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Research Assistant (Indiana University Bloomington**)** Fall 2017 – January 2023
National Institute for Transformation and Equity. Dr. Lucy LePeau, Dr. Samuel Museus
- Conducted cognitive interviews, coded data, and wrote literature reviews on the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Survey
- Evaluated and generated report of the Cox Scholars Program at IU to incorporate transforming practices to improve their overall operation

Research Assistant (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2017 – Spring 2018

National Survey of Student Engagement

- Analyzed student comments prompts from the core NSSE survey
- Analyzed a subset on student activism and social causes from the NSSE survey understanding student activist causes and its implications for student success

Lumina Project Research Assistant (University of California, Los Angeles) Fall 2013 – Spring 2015

UCLA Black Male Institute. Dr. Tyrone Howard

- Crafted 2 white papers focused on student trends on Black male access and retention to UCLA
- Provided personal narrative and research experience to donors to solicit funding for the program
- Facilitated over 10 focus groups and interviews to gauge the Black student experience at UCLA and revise the curriculum for Blacklimated course
- Planned and participated in annual ThinkTank discussions with community leaders and researchers to improve educational experience at UCLA

Publications

LePeau, L., Silberstein, S., Sharp, S., **Miller, D.,** & Manlove, J. (2022). Validation of the Term 'Cultural Community'in the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Survey. *Education Sciences*, *12*(12), 881.
Stokes, S., & **Miller, D.** (2019). A Case Study of Supporting Student Activists at UCLA. In D. L. Morgan & C. H. F. Davis III (Eds.), *Student Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education*. New York, NY: Routledge

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Study-012 Academic Skills for Success (Stockton, CA) January 2023 – Present

Lead Instructor

- Teach two 8-week sessions equipping students with tools to thrive at Pacific
- Develop and create full syllabus focused on holistic wellness, creating daily and weekly big 3 items to achieve goals, bouncing back from failure, and critical thinking
- Support students' personal goals to translate academic experiences to personal life story, current leadership opportunities, and future endeavors

Educ-U215 Foundations for Undergraduate Success (Bloomington, IN) August 2018 – May 2021

Associate Instructor

- Taught over 300 high achieving Hudson and Holland Scholars Program students and help socialize them into Indiana University
- Collaborated with Dean Emeritus Dr. Gerardo Gonzalez and 3 peer AI's to identify opportune pedagogical processes to facilitate learning as instructor of record
- Planned, designed, and implemented full course syllabus and discussion section topics
- Facilitated strategies to help students develop research to identify, evaluate, critically examine and propose solutions to complex social and academic problems
- Lead students in formulating effective plans for academic and career success, based on their understanding of the complex individual, institutional and social issues they study

Adjunct Assistant Professor August 2021 – December 2021

- Discussion leader for 40 high achieving Hudson and Holland Scholarship Program students and help socialize them into Indiana University
- Equip students with opportunities to interrogate sociopolitical issues while also understanding their position and interests as first year students at Indiana University
- Strategically connect students' majors and career interests to developing research projects that could be used for future endeavors

Educ-U212 Admissions and Success in Graduate School (Bloomington, IN)
Spring 2020, 2021
Lead Instructor

- Collaboratively created, designed, and taught an 8-week course with my colleague Christen Priddie
- Engaged students asynchronous online while using Canvas and Zoom to create meaningful interactions and support
- Inspired and supported students' endeavors to attend graduate school in the future
- Scaffolded graduate school application materials into a course portfolio for students to prepare for their future applications
- Provided socialization advice and financial resources that will help students thrive upon beginning their program
- Individually facilitating the course for Spring 2021

Educ-U546 Diverse Students on a College Campus (Bloomington, IN)
Spring 2018
Teaching Assistant

- Collaborated with lead faculty Dr. Lucy LePeau and Co-TA to facilitate learning for Master's students in the HESA program
- Designed, organized, and facilitated lectures to aid and assist learning efforts and dialogue for students
- Used past experiences, research, and involvement related to diversity and inclusion to engage with students throughout the semester

SERVICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Recruitment Emissary (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2018 – Spring 2021
University Graduate School Diversity Outreach

- Serve as diversity recruit and increase diversity representation for the University Graduate School
- Mentor and engage potential graduate students in admission and retention at IU
- Assist in planning and implementing the Getting You to IU Program to eventually increase yield for minoritized graduate students

Commissioner (City of Bloomington) Spring 2020 – Spring 2021
Commission on the Status of Black Males

- Served as a catalyst to promote positive public and private remedies to the multi-faceted problems confronting Black males in our community and the resulting effects on the entire community
- Organized and convened community forums and neighborhood-based focus groups to discuss the status of Black males
- Planned annual Black Male Summit for middle and high school leaders.

Commissioner (City of Bloomington) Spring 2019 – Spring 2020
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Anniversary Committee

- Promoted and celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and promote the acceptance of diversity in the community.
- Planned and facilitated programs on racial justice and equity that will lead to policy changes
- Reviewed applications and allocated funding for equity-based service projects to the Bloomington community
- Initiated and secured Dr. Melina Abdullah as keynote for the annual speaker series

Advisory Board (University of Southern California) Fall 2017 – Spring 2019 *USC Rossier School of Education*

- Advised learning, curriculum, and structure of the Educational Counseling Master's program at USC
- Mentored and connected with Master's Students completing Theses or interested in doctoral programs

Education Representative (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2017 – Spring 2018
Graduate and Professional Student Government

- Liaison between the school of education and larger graduate student body on current issues and policies
- Diversity committee member focusing on improving equity and inclusion for underrepresented groups at IU

Director of External Affairs (University of Southern California) Fall 2016 – Spring 2017
Graduate Student Government

- Advocated on behalf of over 20,000 graduate students in the areas of policy and service
- Managed a budget of $10,000 a year for programming particular to educating students on policy issues impacting graduate students
- Served as a graduate student representative on the USC Honorary Degree Committee awarding degrees to humanitarians and advocates advancing agendas across the nation

Student Advocate (University of Southern California) Spring 2016 – Fall 2016
Rossier Diversity Task Force

- Crafted a formal 5-year equity, diversity, opportunity, and access plan in Rossier to improve practice, policies, and student, staff, and faculty experiences
- Collected and distributed data to constituents about the work
- Generated a report agreed upon by the Dean and submitted to the provost for action that is now used as the model for the entire university

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP

President (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2019 – Spring 2021
School of Education Graduate Student Association

- Represent and advocate for the collective interests of graduate students in the school of education
- Read, reviewed, and appointed student representatives to SOE governance committees and serve on the Long-Range Planning Committee

- Reinvigorating the graduate student culture in the SOE through programming, marketing, and paraphernalia
- Collaborate with the Graduate Studies Office to better engage graduate students aligned with the Dean's strategic plan
- Student Member on the Policy Council for faculty governance

Vice-President (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
Black Graduate Student Association (*BGSA*)
- Served the interests of Black graduate and professional students on campus
- Collaborated with Black faculty and staff to support curricular and cocurricular learning for Black students
- Created a graduate mentoring program with Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center staff to equip Black undergraduates with full support applying and knowledge of the graduate school application process

Treasurer (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
Higher Education Doctoral Student Association
- Advocated on behalf of students in the IU HESA Doctoral Program
- Contributed knowledge and background in leadership to help establish the inaugural organization
- Demanded action from the program's faculty to better support doctoral students' curricular and cocurricular experiences

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated Spring 2013 – Present
- Initiated at the University of California, Los Angeles in Spring 2013
- Assisted in the chartering and implementation of the Sigma Kappa Lambda Chapter in Bloomington, IN
- Provide programming, events, and socioemotional support for the Bloomington and IU community

Vice-President (Indiana University Bloomington) Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
Graduate and Professional Student Government
- Advocated on behalf of over 20,000 graduate students in the areas of policy and service
- Read, reviewed, and interviewed applicants for the IU Student Trustee position and sent 10 names to the Governor's office to appoint the finalist
- Detailed and passed a campus resolution to end add/drop fee policies at inadequate times in the semester
- Representative on the campus-wide Patten Foundation Lecture Series and established new criteria allowing for students to participate in nominating faculty for the series, resulting in the 2019/20 lecturers nominated by students

Chair, Afrikan Graduation (University of California, Los Angeles) Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
Afrikan Student Union
- Planned, designed, and coordinated the All Afrikan People's Graduation celebration at UCLA
- Solicited over $5000 in funding for the event through grant and donation writing
- Recruited and advised a 10-person committee to fully execute the event

Usher (Ontario, CA) Fall 2010 – Present

Ontario Christian Center

- Serve on the Usher board arranging seating and control for church services in Ontario, CA

CERTIFICATES, HONORS & AWARDS

Building Bridges Award—Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. Indiana University. 2022.

Student Leader Hall of Fame—Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. Indiana University. 2022.

The American Association of Colleges for Teaching Education—Inaugural Holmes Scholar. Indiana University. 2021.

Doctoral Student of the Year—BGSA. Indiana University. 2019.

Ann Eberle Scholarship Recipient. Indiana University. 2018.

Fierce First Year Award—BGSA. Indiana University. 2018.

Distinguished Citizen Award. University of Southern California. 2017.

Trojan Service Award. University of Southern California. 2017.

Order of Areté Award. University of Southern California. 2017.

Rossier School of Education Deans Scholar. University of Southern California. 2015, 2016, & 2017.

Social Justice in Education Award. University of California, Los Angeles. 2015.

Chancellor's Service Award. University of California, Los Angeles. 2015.

Chancellor's Student Honors Reception. University of California, Los Angeles. 2014 & 2015.

Public Policy and International Affairs Certificate. University of California, Berkeley. 2014

SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Speaker, Indiana Black Expo. Indianapolis, Indiana. 2022.

- Cultivating Black students' Oppositional Consciousness and Success, July 13, 2022.

Speaker, IU Education Conference. Bloomington, Indiana (virtual). 2022.

- FDT: Black students' Oppositional Consciousness Against Sociopolitical Issues, January 13, 2022.

Keynote Speaker, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, Tau Chapter. Bloomington, Indiana. 2021

- ReKlaiming Our Time, March 9, 2021.

Speaker, School of Education Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Bloomington, Indiana. 2020

- How to be a Student Activists, November 20, 2020.

Speaker, Rialto High School Roundtable Series. Rialto, California. 2020

- Civic Engagement and College Success, November 19, 2020.

Presenter, Indiana Association of Blacks in Higher Education Conference. Bloomington, Indiana. 2020

- Everybody Eats: Strategies for Black Precollege Recruitment, with Lauren Mixon, November 12, 2020.

Speaker, This Is Bruin Life. Los Angeles, CA. 2020

- Donté Miller, September 24, 2020.

Speaker, UCLA Freshman Summer Program. Los Angeles, California. 2020

- Cultivating Community, Voice and Engagement—The Black Bruins, with Sy Stokes, September 1, 2020..

Panelist, Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center and IU Bicentennial Foundation. Bloomington, Indiana. 2020

- Changemaking through Student Activism, February 19, 2020.

Speaker, Explore IU. Bloomington, Indiana. 2019

- Grindin' All My Life, October 18, 2019

Speaker, Bloomington Black Male Summit. Bloomington, Indiana. 2019

- The Road to Self-Discovery, January 25, 2019

Presenter, Association for the Study of Higher Education. Tampa, Florida. 2018.

- Wake up, institutions! Understanding the social and political causes of student activists with BrckaLorenz, A**.**, Palmer, D., Kirnbauer, T., Miller, D., & Wright, A., November 11, 2018

Presenter, American Educational Research Association. New York, New York. 2018

- The Highly Involved Black student and their academic success, April 5, 2018

Participant, The Counternarrative (Part 2). 2018.

- Stokes, S.J. [Sy Stokes]. (2018, January 8). *The Counternarrative (Part 2)*

Presenter, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Western Region. Honolulu, Hawaii. 2017.

- The Highly Involved Black student and their academic success, November 5, 2017

Presenter, Association for the Study of Higher Education. Houston, Texas. 2017.

- The Highly Involved Black student and their academic success, November 12, 2017

Keynote Speaker, IAm/SummerTIME Pullias Center. University of California, Los Angeles. 2017

- Mask On…, IAM/SummerTIME Day Conference at USC, June 22, 2017.

Panelist, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans Summit. University of California, Los Angeles. 2015

- Stabilizing Public Schools to Advance Student Achievement and Ensure College and Career Readiness, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans Summit at UCLA, June 16, 2016.

Interviewee, UCLA Black Male Institute. University of California, Los Angeles. 2015

- Black Male Institute. (2015, July 16). *UCLA Black Male Institute*.

Interviewee, The Color of Change. 2014.

- Silva, Chantal. (2014, May 14). *The Color of Change*.

Participant, UCLA Black Bruins Video. University of California, Los Angeles. 2013.

- Stokes, S.J. [Sy Stokes]. (2013, November 4). *The Black Bruins [Spoken Word]*.