A Critical Narrative Exploration of Undergraduate Black Men's Experiences with Gendered Racism and Interactions with Student Affairs Staff Members

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Douglas A. Haley & Andrea M. Copes.

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Many people have played a role in the completion of this dissertation and in my Ph.D. journey overall. Unfortunately, I'll never be able to name them all. However, I can express my gratitude to a few key individuals and organizations.

My Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

Much of the prior literature on Black men's persistence at predominately white institutions (PWIs) focuses on the various barriers (i.e., underrepresentation, anti-Black men discrimination) they encounter that negatively impact their degree completion efforts, as well as how these men use strategies, personal strengths, and resources to navigate these barriers (Allen, 2018; Brezinski et al., 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023; Burt et al., 2018b). Less attention has been given to the role that higher education institutions, through college student affairs staff, can play in supporting and hindering Black men's persistence toward degree completion. The studies that have explored Black men's relationships with staff members suggest that these interactions can have positive effects on Black men's persistence. However, these studies have largely examined these interactions indirectly by either examining Black men's interactions with staff, along with faculty and/or peers or by studying the experiences of Black men who participate in targeted college support programs (i.e., Black men initiative programs) often organized by staff members (Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Strayhorn, 2008; Brooms, 2016). Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to directly explore Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members to begin to get a clearer sense of if, and how, these interactions may support or hinder Black men's persistence.

This study was guided by critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). It was also informed by validation theory (Rendón, 1994), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Black misandry

(Smith et al., 2007). I specifically conducted semi-structured conventional and photo elicitation (Glaw et al., 2017) interviews with undergraduate Black men to answer the following questions:

1. How do Black men make meaning of their experiences with gendered racism?
2. How do Black men make meaning of their interactions with student affairs staff members as they navigate gendered racism?

Data sources included two interviews with students (one conventional and one photo-elicitation). Student data was enhanced by one conventional, informational interview with student affairs staff members recommended by students for the purpose of providing context. My analysis of student interviews highlights how Black men may not be receiving adequate support from student affairs staff to navigate gendered racism at PWIs. These findings also suggest that some staff members may be doing more harm than good towards Black men's navigation of gendered racism at these institutions. While a few students were able to identify validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and/or supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) staff members, the men largely perceived their interactions with staff to be invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012). Specifically, the men mostly described interactions with staff members who were dismissive towards them and their needs, unavailable for them when needed, and in some instances discriminatory. This study ends with implications for research, practice, and policy.

Chapter 1 Introduction

As a Black man who was also a first-generation, low-income college student, I experienced many obstacles during my time in college that had the potential to prevent me from finishing my degree such as poor grades and feeling isolated as the only man of color in my major. Nevertheless, despite these obstacles and with the help of college student affairs staff members (e.g., director of multicultural affairs, career center staff), I was able to ultimately complete my degree program, which resulted in many experiences that I believe would not have occurred otherwise. These experiences include financially supporting family and friends when needed, finding employment in a career field that I'm passionate about, and living in different states across the country.

These benefits of completing my degree should be unsurprising to most who engage in or follow higher education scholarship, as college completion has historically been associated with a multitude of positive economic and non-monetary benefits (Baum et al., 2010; Mayhew et al., 2016). For example, college graduates, on average, receive higher earnings and are less likely to be unemployed than non-college graduates (Baum et al., 2010). College completion is also associated with higher self-perceived well-being, life satisfaction, and good physical health (Mayhew et al., 2016). Moreover, the benefits of college completion are not limited to college graduates, as governments (federal, state, and local) "enjoy increased tax revenues from college graduates and spend less on income support programs for them" (Baum et al., 2010, p. 4).

Unfortunately, however, these benefits for individuals and society are unrealized when students are not able to complete their degree programs, and the prior literature has consistently

shown that Black men, in particular, are the least likely student group to finish college (de Brey et al., 2019; Shapiro et al., 2017). Despite massive gains in college access for Black men since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's (Bowen et al., 2005), their rates of college completion remain quite distressing. For instance, only 34% of Black men beginning college in the fall semester of 2010 at 4-year degree-granting institutions finished their degree programs within six years, which is the lowest six-year degree completion rate among all gender and racial/ethnic groups in this cohort (de Brey et al., 2019). Furthermore, many Black men leave college without finishing their degree programs at all (Shapiro et al., 2017). Consequently, given the benefits of college completion and the negative effects of failing to finish college such as high student loan default rates particularly for Black students (Akers & Chingos, 2016; Davis et al., 2020), scholars must develop a better understanding of the high drop-out rate among Black men to help higher education practitioners create effective strategies to support Black men's persistence.

Although scholars offer numerous explanations for these disparities (Harper, 2014) many attribute Black men's college completion struggles to their inability to develop a sense of belonging and their ongoing experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) or anti-Black men discrimination at their institutions, specifically at predominately White institutions (PWIs) (Brezinski et al., 2018; Burt et al., 2018a; Strayhorn, 2009). Both sense of belonging (i.e., Strayhorn, 2012) and experiences with discrimination are associated with persistence (Brezinski et al., 2018; Goplan & Brady, 2020). For example, in their quantitative study of racial microaggressions experienced by 53 Black students at the University of Toledo, Brezinski et al. (2018) found that students in the sample who experienced racial microaggressions that made them feel like they did not belong at the institution were more likely to consider not returning to the institution in the following semester.

Numerous scholars have also identified ways that Black men have relied on their personal strengths and resources to negotiate these barriers to their success (Allen, 2018; Burt et al., 2018b; Harper, 2009; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Tichavakunda, 2024). This scholarship was meant to counter deficit narratives regarding Black men informed by Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007) and spoke to how many institutions were not designed to serve these students (Harper, 2009). Samuelson and Litzler (2016), for instance, explored the types of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) used by 31 Black and Latinx engineering students at 11 institutions to persist in their programs. Although each student discussed using their resistant, aspirational, navigational, and familial capital to some degree, Samuelson and Litzler (2016) found that Black men specifically indicated relying more on their aspirational and resistant capital than the other students.

Nevertheless, while scholars are continuing to learn more about how Black men use their own resources and strengths to navigate barriers, less attention is being given to the role of higher education institutions and their responsibility to support Black men's persistence. Consequently, focusing exclusively on the resources and strengths Black men use to navigate barriers "removes the onus for improvement from the institution— or other structural impediments— and places it squarely on the student" (McNair et al., 2016, p. 15). Instead, scholars should also try to better understand how institutional practices are consistent or inconsistent with what McNair et al. (2016) call being "student-ready" (p. 13), which in part refers to an institution that "strategically and holistically advances student success" (p. 13). One potential, under-researched, area of the literature that could evidence an institution's student-readiness regarding supporting Black men, is the impact of Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members on their persistence.

There is some evidence, however, to suggest that these interactions can have a positive effect on Black men's persistence. For example, using validation theory (Rendón, 1994), Hurtado et al. (2015) examined the relationship between validating experiences with faculty and staff, students' sense of belonging, and experiences with discrimination. They found that the negative direct effect of discrimination on students' sense of belonging, including Black students, is "substantially reduced and mediated by" (p. 69) their validating experiences with faculty and staff. They also found that the direct relationship between frequent validating experiences with staff and faculty and sense of belonging was significant and positive. More specifically, Black men who have experienced supportive relationships with peers, faculty, and staff members report higher levels of satisfaction with the college experience and have directly identified these relationships as supporting their academic success and persistence (Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Strayhorn, 2008). Additionally, Black men who participate in targeted college support programs often organized by staff members (i.e., Black men initiative programs), as well as other campus functions managed by staff members such as student organizations, report a greater sense of belonging, sociocultural capital, and higher grades (Baker, 2008; Baker & Avery, 2012; Brooms, 2016; Brooms, 2018; Brooms, 2019).

Study Purpose

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore these interactions more directly by focusing exclusively on Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members (e.g., rather than indirectly studying them through college support programs). Focusing on Black men's direct interactions with student affairs staff members can help scholars and practitioners better understand if and how these interactions may support Black men's persistence. On the other hand, failing to better understand these interactions could potentially perpetuate the high drop-

out rate among Black men if, for instance, some staff members are engaging in practices that negatively impact Black men's persistence.

Additionally, there are gaps in the literature that this study seeks to address. For example, the lack of disaggregation of data in this literature (e.g., studies exploring students' experiences with staff members, peers, and faculty together rather than individually) makes it difficult to understand the particular benefits Black men derive from their interactions with staff members including the role of validation (Rendón, 1994) and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) in these interactions. Furthermore, too much emphasis on support program outcomes can obscure the nuanced nature of the individual interactions within the programs that lead to positive outcomes. Moreover, as scholars like Samuelson and Litzler (2016) have shown, Black men possess their own forms of capital that they use to navigate higher education. However, rather than highlighting how staff members can support (or fail to support) these forms of capital, the prior literature on Black men's interactions with staff members has often not explicitly acknowledged these forms of capital and instead focuses on how these men address their perceived deficits (e.g., how they acquire sociocultural capital from staff or staff-run programs).

Therefore, this study qualitatively investigates the role of college student affairs staff members in supporting and hindering Black men's persistence at PWIs using validation theory (Rendón, 1994), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) and Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007).

Specifically, using semi-structured conventional and photo elicitation (Glaw et al., 2017) interviews with undergraduate Black men this study will answer the following questions:

1. How do Black men make meaning of their experiences with gendered racism?

2. How do Black men make meaning of their interactions with student affairs staff members as they navigate gendered racism?

Study Significance

Some scholars have suggested, both directly and indirectly, that college student affairs staff interactions can influence the persistence of students of color towards completing their degrees (Brooms, 2018; Luedke, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020; Schreiner et al., 2011). However, we still know very little about the nature of students, including Black men's, interactions with staff members. The studies that have examined this phenomenon have not completely explained, for example, what happens during these interactions that can impact students' persistence. This study will enhance our understanding of these interactions, particularly as they relate to Black men's college completion, which is an issue that scholars, educators, and policy makers have yet to resolve (Harper, 2014),

While this study's frameworks have been effectively used to understand why students of color persist or fail to persist in college, their use (together) in the study of Black mens' persistence is limited. Furthermore, the validation theory literature has yet to fully explain how academically and interpersonally validating actions lead to students feeling validated. This study will contribute to the literature on validation theory, sense of belonging, and Community Cultural Wealth by assessing the effectiveness of these frameworks for understanding this phenomenon, while also attending to validation theory's theoretical limitation with the inclusion of Community Cultural Wealth.

Additionally, despite evidence showing how racism and different forms of oppression can negatively affect the experiences of students of color (and Black men in particular) in higher education (Smith et al., 2007), traditional frameworks, constructs, and concepts used to

understand students' interactions with student affairs staff (and their experiences in student affairs contexts in general) do not directly attend to this phenomenon. The current study further advances this scholarship using frameworks/concepts such as Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007) and Community Cultural Wealth that not only explain how oppression can affect students' experiences but also how it could be successfully navigated via an approach that focuses on Black men's assets rather than deficits.

Operational Definitions

Prior to discussing the organization of this dissertation, I will first define key terms that will be used. My use of the word *Black* is, for instance, inclusive of both students who identify as African American and those who are U.S.-born but do not identify as African American (Harris & Patton, 2017) such as Haitian or Jamaican Americans. However, it does not include international students given the distinct educational history of Black Americans in the U.S. and its roots in enslavement (Bowen et al., 2005). Additionally, unlike the majority of studies on Black men's persistence in higher education, either stated explicitly or inferred, (e.g., Burt et al., 2018a; Brooms, 2019; Harper, 2012: Strayhorn, 2008) the word *men* or *man* refers both to individuals who identify as cisgender, meaning that their "gender identity matches the sex observed at birth" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 175) and those who identify as transgender which means that "their gender identity is different from their observed sex at birth" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 175). *Student affairs staff members* include professional staff who work in any of the 39 functional areas identified by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) in its 2014 Vice President of Student Affairs Census Report including (but not limited to) career services, multicultural affairs, and disability support services (Wesaw & Sponsler, 2014).

Organization of Dissertation

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will include a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs and interactions with student affairs staff including the theoretical framework used to guide the current study, as well chapters on the current study's methods and findings. The final chapter will discuss the extent to which the findings relate to the prior literature and will end with a discussion of implications for future research, practice, and policy.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will summarize and critique the empirical and theoretical literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs and interactions with student affairs staff, as well as elucidate the theoretical framework used to guide the current study. I will begin with a discussion of the empirical and theoretical literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs, focusing on barriers to their persistence (i.e., gendered racism) and strategies Black men use to navigate barriers. In the next section, I will cover the empirical and theoretical literature on Black men's *direct interactions* with student affairs staff, which will include studies on their interactions with staff and faculty, and their interactions with staff only. In the following section, I will focus on Black men's experiences with staff-run offices, programs, and functional areas (or their *indirect interactions* with staff). Lastly, I will describe the current study's theoretical framework, including a discussion of the framework's strengths and limitations.

Black Men's Persistence at PWIs

Empirical Literature Review

Gendered Racism as a Barrier to Persistence

A large, but still growing, segment of the literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs focuses on both institutional and individual level practices that negatively affect their desire to complete college (Brezinski et al., 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023; Burt et al., 2018a; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper et al., 2011; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Johnson et al., 2019; Schwitzer et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2007). Both types of practices can be considered examples of gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) against Black men. At the institution level, Black men report that

their underrepresentation at PWIs results in poor overall experiences (Burt et al., 2018a; Schwitzer et al., 1999). For instance, using qualitative interviews to examine the experiences of 21 Black men who were engineering doctoral students at one PWI, Burt et al. (2018a) found that these men often experienced "challenges and barriers" (p. 12) based on their being very few Black men in their department and this partially resulted in them having a negative overall experience at the institution. The men's underrepresentation in their program was specifically the result of a state affirmative action ban (Burt et al., 2018a), which could be understood as a gendered racist policy given its negative impact on Black men's college access and ultimately their college persistence.

These studies also discuss individual level practices that impede Black men's persistence, including more direct examples of gendered racism or anti-Black men discrimination perpetrated primarily by white students, faculty, and staff at PWIs (Brezinski et al., 2018; Burt et al., 2018a; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Johnson et al., 2019; Schwitzer,et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2007). In their qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews with 9 undergraduate Black men who described their experiences with academic advising at a large urban PWI, for example, Johnson et al. (2019) found that the men identified instances in which advisors openly expressed low expectations in their ability to complete rigorous coursework and that each student "attributed such experiences to race as a possible explanatory factor for presumed low expectations" (p. 13). The combination of underrepresentation and direct experiences with discrimination can lead to Black men being unable to develop a sense of belonging at their institutions (Strayhorn, 2009), which is problematic given that both sense of belonging and experiences with discrimination are associated with persistence (Brezinski et al., 2018; Goplan & Brady, 2020).

Strategies for Navigating Gendered Racism. Many scholars on this topic have also explored the ways that Black men use strategies, personal strengths, and resources (e.g., community support, spirituality) to negotiate gendered racism (Allen, 2018; Burt et al., 2018b; Harper, 2009; Harper, 2012; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Tichavakunda, 2024). Allen (2018), for example, used Critical Race Theory (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and gender theory (e.g., Butler, 1988) via semi-structured and photovoice interview data from 13 Black men attending a predominantly White liberal arts college to explore "their agency in how they perform a range of masculinities in response to and in anticipation of college-based racism and racialized discourses" (p. 4). He found that the men described a campus environment that was hostile towards Black men, and consequently, resulted in their performance of three types of "subversive masculinities" (p. 9) to navigate the environment including "code switching, repositioning themselves against deficit views of Black males or by responding directly to the university's racial climate in deliberate ways" (p. 9). Similarly, Harper (2009) interviewed 143 high-achieving (e.g., academically successful, participation in campus leadership) Black men at 30 PWIs to understand their approaches for successfully navigating their institutions and to ultimately craft a Critical Race Counternarrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that goes against the traditional, deficit-based view of Black men in higher education as unsuccessful. He found that to navigate anti-Black men discrimination at their institutions, these men used numerous strategies including "engagement in student organizations, meaningful interactions with supportive same-race peers, and the strategic publicity of their educational achievements to White persons who possess deficit views of Black men" (p. 709).

Strengths and Limitations of Empirical Literature. These studies do an effective job of explicitly and implicitly using critical frameworks to understand the barriers that Black men

encounter at PWIs, and how they negotiate these barriers. Using critical frameworks to understand these experiences is important given their ability to counteract dominant narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) about marginalized groups in higher education and uncover the ways that power, privilege, and oppression manifest in different contexts and ultimately hinders the success of these groups. For example, part of the "dominant discourse" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32) in higher education regarding the persistence of Black men at PWIs focuses on the notion that Black men struggle to complete their degree programs, with the added assumption that their deficits (e.g., poor college preparation) are the primary reasons for their struggles (Strayhorn, 2010). In contrast, through the implicit and explicit use of critical frameworks, the scholarship on Black men's persistence at PWIs not only shows that their barriers to persistence are largely external (e.g., Burt et al., 2018a; Johnson et al., 2019), but also that many Black men are able to successfully use their resources and strategies to navigate PWIs despite the barriers (e.g., Allen, 2018; Harper, 2009).

One limitation of this scholarship is its overemphasis on the strategies and resources (e.g., community support, spirituality) Black men use themselves to navigate gendered racism. Too much focus on Black men's strategies and resources suggests that they are solely responsible for their own persistence at PWIs. This idea is contradictory to the commitment to support them that institutions, and their representatives including student affairs professionals, make to these students upon their admittance (Braxton et al., 2004; McNair et al., 2016). Additionally, this scholarship does an effective job of attending to the ways in which white folks (e.g., students, faculty) engage in gendered racism against Black men at PWIs. However, less attention has been given to how racially minoritized staff, students, and faculty at these institutions can also engage in gendered racism against Black men or make gendered racism more challenging to navigate.

This is problematic because it can lead to an assumption that Black men's interactions with other racially minoritized folks are always beneficial or at least not harmful, which may not be the case.

Theoretical Literature Review

Critical Race Theory

Many of the studies on Black men's persistence at PWIs are explicitly or implicitly informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was a perspective created by legal scholars of color that "seeks to expose the historical, ideological, psychological, and social contexts in which racism has been declared virtually eradicated" in the U.S. (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 10). Although there are a number of different concepts included within CRT, there are four specific concepts that can be particularly useful in the study of Black men's persistence at PWIs. These include color-blind racism, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, and counter-storytelling.

Bonilla-Silva (2015) argues that color-blind[1] racism or color-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017) is a "dominant racial ideology" (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1363) that is "based on the superficial extension of the principles of liberalism" (p. 1362) to racial issues and results in explanations for racial phenomena that are devoid of race. In other words, rather than directly addressing a racial issue as such, subscribers of this ideology will instead tactically change the focus of the issue from race to something that aligns with "principles of liberalism" (p. 1362) such as class. This approach allows these subscribers to ostensibly appear to not be racist based on their arguments, while still justifying racial inequality. Moreover, Bonilla-Silva (2015) notes

[1] I acknowledge the critiques of some scholars (e.g., Annamma et al., 2017) that using the term *color-blind* perpetuates ableism and thus, I'm only using it here because it is used by Bonilla-Silva (2015).

that subscribers accomplish their aims through the use of different frames (e.g., Abstract Liberalism), styles, and racial stories.

The permanence of racism posits that racism was integral to the founding of the U.S. and remains a natural facet of life in this country (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Additionally, according to DeCuir and Dixson (2004), this concept "suggests that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains" (p. 27). These "structures allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent Othering of people of color in all arenas, including education" (p. 27). Thus, not only is racism a permanent component of life in the U.S., but it also has deleterious effects on racially minoritized individuals in some of the most consequential societal areas. When thinking of education, for example, nationalistic and racist 19th and early 20th-century beliefs regarding what should be included in U.S. K-12 curriculum (e.g., the need to emphasize White American culture and history) are still held today by many who are responsible for funding K-12 education in this country (Oakes & Lipton, 1999). This has resulted in various discriminatory prohibitions on content focused on minoritized groups such as Florida's ban on an advanced placement course to study African American history (Pendharkar, 2023).

One of more complex CRT concepts, but also important to understand in the study of Black men's persistence at PWIs, is whiteness as property. According to Parker and Lynn (2002) this concept has been "recognized in the law as upholding the rights and legal narratives of White European Americans over persons of color" (p. 14) with respect to various forms of property. A PWI, for example, could be considered a material form of property that has rights associated with it that are enjoyed (primarily) by whites. One of those rights is the right to exclude others (e.g., Black men) from their property (e.g., making Black men feel unwelcome on campus). At the same time, the notion of property in this instance is not always material. For

instance, access to higher education in the U.S. can also be considered a form of property that white folks have historically possessed and have exercised their rights over such as the right to exclude (e.g., implementing affirmative action bans).

The last CRT concept I will address is counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling can be understood as a "tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32) and a method for "telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 32). Solórzano & Yosso (2002) argue that counter stories "can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (p. 32). As mentioned earlier, for instance, part of the dominant discourse regarding Black men's persistence at PWIs focuses on how they struggle to complete their degree programs (Strayhorn, 2010). Conversely, the counter-narrative or story in this literature highlights how Black men describe the strategies they use to successfully navigate these institutions (e.g., Allen, 2018; Harper, 2009).

Strengths and Limitations of Theoretical Literature. The key strength of CRT in the study of Black men's persistence at PWIs is its effectiveness in helping scholars design their studies and helping them and others understand their findings as it relates to the relevance of race. Allen (2018), for example, used the permanence of racism (Ladson-Billings, 1999) to make sense of the "college-based racism" (Allen, 2018, p. 4) experienced by the men in his study. Similarly, Harper (2009) used the counter-storytelling technique (Ladson-Billings, 1999) to understand the approaches used by the men in his study to successfully navigate anti-Black men discrimination at their institutions. Additionally, although not explicitly used, other CRT concepts like color-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017) could have also been relevant to these studies. A color-evasive environment (e.g., in which staff, faculty and students eschew racial

issues on campus), for example, could have contributed to the experiences with racism described by the men in these studies, as well as the experiences of the men in Burt et al.'s (2018a) Johnson et al.'s (2019) studies. Although, given its focus on race, the main limitation of CRT in the study of Black men's persistence at PWIs is its lack of attention to the particular form of marginalization these men experience based on the *combination* of social identities (i.e., Black race and man/man-ness gender identity).

Admittedly, the CRT construct of intersectionality (Crenshaw,1989, 1991) could possibly address this limitation, as it examines how interlocking systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism) impact the experiences of minoritized groups. However, most would not consider the man/man-ness gender identity to be a minoritized identity consistent with the goals of intersectionality. Moreover, the construct of intersectionality was initially developed to better understand the experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), although it has been used in studies not involving Black women (e.g., Brooms & Clark, 2020). Thus, since there are constructs, concepts, and/or theories that focus on the experiences of Black men (e.g., Black misandry) that I believe will help me better understand their experiences at PWIs, I have chosen not to directly use intersectionality specifically, or CRT in general, in the current study's theoretical framework.

Direct Interactions between Student Affairs Staff and Black Men

Empirical Literature Review

Interactions with Staff and Faculty. Scholars examining students' direct interactions with student affairs staff, including those focusing specifically on Black men and other students of color, have primarily explored these interactions combined with students' interactions with faculty and sometimes peers (rather than only exploring staff-student interactions). Studies on

these experiences often focus on the key characteristics and practices of the staff and faculty identified by students as being helpful in their efforts to navigate college (e.g., Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Allen, 2016; Museus & Neville, 2012; Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Schreiner et al., 2011). Other scholars have explored the relationship between students' interactions with staff and faculty, and persistence-related outcomes such as sense of belonging and college satisfaction (e.g., Hurtado et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2008).

Most of these studies conceptualize *interaction* in terms of the quality (e.g., positive, negative) and essence of students' relationships with staff and faculty (e.g., Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Allen, 2016; Museus & Neville, 2012; Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Schreiner et al., 2011). A smaller set of them focus on the frequency of students' interactions with staff and faculty (e.g., Hurtado et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2008). Hurtado et al. (2015), for example, focused on the relationship between frequent interactions with staff and faculty, students' experiences with discrimination, and sense of belonging. Regardless of how they conceptualize interaction, many of these studies are informed (explicitly or implicitly) by either validation theory (Rendón, 1994) or the institutional agents concept (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

The studies that focus on the quality and essence of these interactions often explore the key traits and practices of staff and faculty members that students find helpful, and in some cases, not as helpful as they attempt to navigate higher education. Palmer and Gasman (2008), for instance, explored how social capital manifests for Black men at a mid-size public Historically Black University (HBU) on the east coast of the U.S. Specifically, they conducted a qualitative case study which included in-depth interviews with 11 Black men undergraduates. Interview questions focused on the mens' "academic and social experiences at the university" (p. 57). One of the authors' key findings was that the men identified faculty and staff members at the

institution who “were accessible and displayed a willingness to form supportive relationships with students” (p. 58). They further noted that these “relationships encouraged persistence because the students realized that professors and administrators cared about them and their success at the university” (p. 58). Specifically, the men discussed how faculty members displayed empathy by caring for them both as students and as people. The men described staff/administrators as individuals who were “helpful, accessible, and demonstrated a caring attitude about student success” (p. 59).

Similarly, Museus and Neville (2012) were interested in the characteristics of institutional agents (i.e., academic advisors and faculty) who provided students of color with social capital. Specifically, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 60 students of color (35% identified as Black and 35% identified as men) attending 4 different PWIs in order to identify these institutional agents and their characteristics. Museus and Neville (2012) explicitly used phenomenology and the institutional agents concept to guide data collection and analysis. They found that students identified several key characteristics of these institutional agents who provided students with social capital during their time in college. They include individuals with whom students shared common backgrounds (e.g., race, education), individuals who provided students with holistic support, individuals who humanized the educational experience, and individuals who were both proactive in providing support and displayed a personal investment in students’ success.

Acevedo-Gil et al. (2015) focused on students’ experiences with validation from faculty and staff in their study of Latinx students in developmental education courses. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 Latinx students enrolled in developmental education courses at one community college in Los Angeles in order to examine the

"pedagogical and curricular experiences" (p. 105) of these students inside and outside of the classroom. The authors were also interested in how these experiences influenced the students' academic self-perceptions. The authors explicitly used validation theory (Rendón, 1994) to inform their data analysis and found that students described experiences of academic validation and invalidation both inside and outside of the classroom. Academic invalidation occurred primarily in the classroom and was perpetrated by students' instructors. Students, for instance, described how some instructors' "deficit and demeaning pedagogical practices" (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015, p. 110) negatively affected their academic self-perceptions. Academic validation, on the other hand, took place both inside and outside the classroom involving academic counselors and instructors. In reference to these instances, students highlighted the ways in which academic counselors and instructors "maintained high expectations of students, related to the student's social identities, and emphasized the improvement of the participants' academic skill sets" (p. 110), which positively impacted their academic self-perceptions.

Like Acevedo-Gil et al. (2015), Allen (2016) was also interested in Latinx students' experiences with validation and invalidation. Using phenomenology, Allen (2016) conducted interviews and observed the experiences of 8 Latinx students attending an HBU "in order to identify (in)validating individuals and to understand the incidents and behaviors that promoted or hindered their academic and interpersonal validation" (p. 463). Allen (2016) found that students had academically and interpersonally validating (and invalidating) experiences with faculty and staff (i.e., academic advisors). For instance, students shared how faculty were academically validating by being consistently accessible for course-related questions, while staff challenged students to have high academic expectations for themselves.

Schreiner et al. (2011) had similar findings to the aforementioned studies in their study of the "attitudes and behaviors" (p. 324) of staff and faculty that support the persistence of high-risk[2] college students. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 62 successful (i.e., students were three semesters into their programs and had a 2.5 gpa or higher) high-risk students (e.g., students designated by their institutions based on indicators like low admissions test scores and placement in remedial courses) representing 9 different institutions (i.e., community colleges, public and private institutions). About 34% of students in the authors' sample identified as students of color and 18% specifically identified as Black. During the interviews, students were asked to identify individuals on campus who influenced their decision to remain in college. They were also asked to discuss how these individuals supported their persistence and the words they would use to describe them. The authors also interviewed the faculty and staff members that were identified by the students, which totaled to 54 individuals. Of these individuals, 70% were faculty and 30% staff. The authors asked the faculty and staff to describe how they behaved in their interactions with students. Based on these interviews, Schreiner et al. (2011) identified several themes "related to the positive attitudes and behaviors of campus personnel" (p. 325) that influenced student persistence including the desire of faculty and staff to connect with students, make a difference in their lives, and students' perceptions of faculty and staff as genuine and authentic.

Other scholars, such as Hurtado et al. (2015), have examined the relationship between interactions with staff and faculty, and different outcomes. Specifically, Hurtado et al. (2015) were interested in the extent to which the validation (Rendón, 1994) students received from their

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[2] Schreiner et al. (2011) appear to openly embrace the use of the term *high-risk*. However, I find it very problematic. Therefore, my use of it to describe the students in this study is solely based on the authors' use of it and should not be considered an acceptance of its appropriateness.

interactions with staff and faculty could mitigate the effects of discrimination on their sense of belonging. The authors used data from the Diverse Learning Environments survey to create their sample. Their sample included 20,460 students representing 34 institutions (private 4-year, public 4-year, and community colleges). Their sample was also only 2.9% Black. Hurtado et al. (2015) used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the relationship between frequent validation from staff and faculty, discrimination, and sense of belonging since SEM allows “for the examination of both direct and indirect effects” (p. 68). They found that the negative direct effect of discrimination on students’ sense of belonging is “substantially reduced and mediated by” (p. 69) their experiences of validation from staff and faculty. Additionally, they found that the direct relationship between frequent validation experiences with staff and faculty and sense of belonging was significant and positive.

Like Hurtado et al. (2015), Strayhorn (2008) also explored the relationship between interactions with staff and faculty and student outcomes. However, Strayhorn (2008) focused exclusively on Black men. Specifically, Strayhorn (2008) explored the effects of supportive relationships with staff and faculty on Black mens’ grades and satisfaction with college. Data for this study came from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire and from this survey, Strayhorn (2008) drew a nationally representative sample of 8,000 students. He limited the study to the 231 Black men in the sample. The main independent variable measured the frequency of Black mens’ interactions with supportive staff and faculty. A sample survey item asked students to indicate how often they spoke “with a faculty member or staff member about personal concerns” (p. 32). Strayhorn (2008) used ordinary least squares regression to measure the relationship between frequent interactions with staff and faculty (i.e., supportive relationships), grades, and college satisfaction for Black men. He used hierarchical linear regression to see if

any relationships between these variables persisted when adding in controls (e.g., age, marital status). He found a significant positive relationship between supportive relationships with staff and faculty and Black men' college satisfaction, however, the relationship between supportive relationships and grades was not significant. He also found that the effects of supportive relationships on college satisfaction remained significant even when controlling for various variables.

Strengths and Limitations of Empirical Literature. The main strengths of these studies are their findings regarding their guiding theories, particularly validation theory (Rendón, 1994). Specifically, the quantitative findings from studies like Hurtado et al. (2015) show that validation from staff and faculty can (at least indirectly) support students' persistence since validation is associated with the persistence-related variable sense of belonging. At the same time, the qualitative findings from studies like Acevedo-Gil et al. (2015) and Allen (2016) are important because they reveal how validation occurs during students' interactions with staff and faculty.

Key limitations of these studies include the lack of data disaggregation in the quantitative studies, focus on academic staff in the qualitative studies, and their overall lack of adequate attention to Black men and anti-Black men discrimination. Regarding the quantitative studies (i.e., Hurtado et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2008), they fail to distinguish between students' interactions with staff and their faculty interactions, and instead aggregate them in their methods and findings. This makes it difficult to know which interactions (staff or faculty) are really beneficial to students. For example, although staff and faculty could be included in a survey item, students could be only referring to faculty in their response. The qualitative studies primarily focus on academic staff (i.e., academic advisors) in their examinations of staff and faculty interactions with students. This is problematic because while the literature shows that

students benefit from their experiences with numerous student affairs offices, programs, and functional areas (e.g., Barker & Avery, 2012; Brown et al., 2019; Soria et al., 2013), many of the individual staff members who operate within these spaces are not represented in these studies. Lastly, these studies fail to sufficiently attend to the experiences of Black men and their experiences with anti-Black men discrimination. In most of these studies, for example, Black men are either underrepresented or completely absent from the samples. Moreover, the studies that focus on Black men's interactions with faculty and staff (i.e., Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Strayhorn, 2008) do not address their experiences with anti-Black men discrimination. This is a problem given that Black men have reported having negative interactions with faculty, which they believe are based on their race and gender (Burt et al., 2018a; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

Interactions with Staff Only. A much smaller set of studies only explore students' (including Black mens') direct interactions with student affairs staff. Qualitative studies on these interactions focus on how students describe their relationships with staff members. They specifically highlight the ways that staff serve as mentors, support their personal and social growth, and how these relationships help students establish social and cultural capital (Haley, 2023; Luedke, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020). Quantitative studies examine the relationships between student-staff interactions and different student learning outcomes (Martin, 2013; Martin & Seifert, 2011).

Like the studies on students' interactions with staff and faculty, the qualitative studies on students' direct interactions with student affairs staff conceptualize interaction in terms of the quality and the nature of these relationships (Haley, 2023; Luedke, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020). However, where these studies differ is in their focus on one aspect of these relationships: the

mentoring roles that staff play during students' time in college. Likewise, the quantitative studies on this topic are also similar to the studies on students, staff and faculty, based on their focus on the frequency of students' interactions with staff (Martin, 2013; Martin & Seifert, 2011).

Regarding the qualitative studies, findings reveal that students describe the quality of their relationships with staff as generally positive. They also detail the ways in which social and cultural capital are developed through these relationships, based on staff members being mentors for students. Luedke (2017), for instance, examined the ways that 24 Black, Latinx and Biracial students attending two PWIs (one research-intensive and one public comprehensive) described their mentoring relationships with staff mentors. Most of these students (15) were Latinx. She was also interested in how social and cultural capital developed in these relationships. Luedke (2017) primarily collected data via semi-structured interviews with students, in which she asked students to describe influential relationships they had with staff and the types of support staff provided to them. She also includes a detailed reflexivity statement in which she describes her social identities and experiences with mentoring. Students reported that while their relationships with staff were positive overall, they believed that White staff members only wanted to establish more general, surface-level relationships by focusing exclusively on their grades during their interactions. These underwhelming relationships led students to seek out staff of color, and consequently, Luedke (2017) identified three themes that show how students made sense of their interactions with staff mentors of color. The first theme was the idea that staff of color were able to nurture the capital that students brought with them to college. With respect to this theme, students appreciated when staff would acknowledge their prior experiences, knowledge, and lives outside of academics. The next theme was the importance of complete honesty in their relationships. For this theme, students shared how they were able to trust staff more when they

were honest with them. The last theme Luedke discusses is the value students placed on the reliability and commitment of staff members. Students shared examples of staff who would often go out of their way to make themselves available to them and provide information about resources and opportunities (i.e., cultural capital) about which students would otherwise be unaware.

McCoy et al. (2020) had similar findings in their study of students of color in STEM disciplines. They were interested in the ways that students of color in STEM describe the roles of student affairs staff in their experiences with mentoring. Although McCoy et al. (2020) do not specifically discuss how they collected data, the reader can infer through their data analysis discussion that the authors conducted interviews with students (e.g., coding interview transcripts). Their sample included 31 Black, Latinx, and Biracial students who were STEM majors at two different institutions: one public flagship PWI and one public HBU. The authors analyzed data and looked for themes across institutions. McCoy et al. (2020) found that students described the "significant mentoring roles" (p. 33) that staff played at both the PWI and HBU. The authors begin by discussing the ways that staff mentoring practices identified by students relate to social and cultural capital. They note, for instance, staff providing students with employment opportunities during times of need as an example of cultural capital. Students also described differences between their experiences at the PWI and the HBU. At the PWI, for example, students had less access to faculty, which led to them relying mostly on staff for mentoring. At the HBU, although students had more access to faculty, they still identified staff as playing important mentoring roles. These students specifically noted how HBU staff provided holistic mentoring (i.e., concern for personal and social well-being).

The quantitative studies also highlight the positive benefits of students' interactions with staff. Martin and Seifert (2011), for example, explored the effects of frequent interactions with staff on different learning outcomes. They were particularly interested in the effects of these interactions on students' critical thinking, need for cognition (i.e., desire to participate in challenging cognitive activities), and academic motivation. They also wanted to know if these effects were mediated by students' participation in experiences that give them more exposure to staff (e.g., holding a leadership position). The authors used data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS) to construct their sample. Their sample included 3,999 first year students across 26 institutions. Only 10.7 % of students were Black and almost 80% (77.2%) were White. The independent variable was a five-item scale measuring the frequency of students' interactions with staff (e.g., How often have you discussed a personal problem with a staff member?). To explore the potential mediating effects of participation in certain activities, the authors included several mediating variables including community service involvement and holding a leadership position in a student organization. The authors used ordinary least squares regression to analyze their data and found that interactions with staff were positively associated with need for cognition and academic motivation. Interactions with staff were also negatively associated with critical thinking, however, the significance of this relationship was reduced to non-significance once the mediating variables were introduced.

Martin (2013) had similar findings in her follow-up study. This time she was interested in the effects of frequent interactions with staff on students' growth in socially responsible leadership (SRL) during the first year of college. Martin (2013) again used data from the WNS for her sample. In this study, her sample included 3,711 first year students. About 75% of students identified as White and it is unclear how many Black students were included. The same

independent variable used in Martin and Seifert's (2011) study was used in this study. In regard to the dependent variable, Martin (2013) defines a person demonstrating SRL as someone who "is self-aware, acts in congruence with personal values and beliefs, invests time and energy in activities" (p. 323) that coincide with those beliefs and values. To measure this, she uses the Socially Responsible Leadership Survey which includes eight scales grouped within five dimensions of SRL. As in the prior study, she uses ordinary least squares regression and finds that interactions with staff were positively associated with all five SRL dimensions.

Strengths and Limitations of Empirical Literature. The qualitative and quantitative studies on students' direct interactions with staff have different strengths and limitations. A key strength of the qualitative studies, for instance, is the trustworthiness of their data. Luedke (2017) does an effective job of supporting trustworthiness by including a detailed reflexivity statement in which she described the predispositions she brought to the research process. McCoy et al. (2020), on the other hand, ensured trustworthiness by conducting a cross-case analysis through which they compared themes across the PWI and HBU. Another strength of the qualitative studies is their focus on the success of racially minoritized students (i.e., Black and Latinx students). Focusing on these students' strengths and how they succeed in higher education is important given that part of the "dominant discourse" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32) in higher education regarding these students (and Black men in particular) focuses on their deficits and failures. The main strength of the quantitative studies is the evidence they provide for the positive effects of staff-student interactions on student learning outcomes, given that scholars in this area have not typically examined these types of outcomes.

The key limitation of the qualitative studies is that they tend to only focus on one aspect of students' relationships with staff: mentoring. Rather than letting other positive and possibly

negative aspects reveal themselves, the authors essentially predefine the nature of staff-student interactions (i.e., mentor-mentee) prior to collecting data. Thus, it is unclear if students can benefit from direct interactions with staff that do not involve a mentor-mentee relationship or if these interactions are always positive (or always result in positive outcomes). The main limitation of the quantitative studies is the fact that their student samples are disproportionately White (75-77%). This presents a problem given that some studies have found that outcomes based on students' experiences in student affairs contexts (e.g., residence life) can vary based on race (Brown et al., 2019; Garvey et al., 2018) and the same could potentially be true for students' direct interactions with staff. Brown et al. (2019), for instance, found that students who lived in corridor-style residence halls had higher first-semester grades than students living in apartment-style halls, and that interacting with students from similar backgrounds was also associated with higher grades. However, Brown et al. (2019) also found that living in a corridor-style residence hall and interacting with students similar to them had a larger effect on Black students' first-semester grades. In a comparable study, Garvey et al. (2018) found that White women living in residence halls had a significantly higher sense of belonging than racially minoritized students who lived in these spaces.

Additionally, like the studies on students' interactions with staff and faculty, the studies on students' direct interactions with staff do not explicitly address negative experiences that racially minoritized students can have with staff. Moreover, when it comes to Black men specifically, they do not attend to the ways in which anti-Black men discrimination can manifest during these interactions. This is problematic given that Black men have reported negative, racialized experiences in staff-run spaces such as residence life (e.g., Harper et al., 2011). For example, in their study of Black men who were resident assistants at predominantly white

institutions, Harper et al. (2011) found that these students were discriminated against by students and residence life staff, and that their overall experiences within their roles were negatively impacted as a result.

Lastly, perhaps the main limitation of these studies when considered together is the fact that there are simply far too few of them to establish a clear sense of the nature and benefits of these interactions. Specifically, there are significantly more studies on students' interactions with staff and faculty. This disparity becomes particularly problematic when trying to compare findings, since the foci of these staff-student interaction studies (e.g., critical thinking, mentoring) are different from the foci of the studies on student, staff and faculty interactions (e.g., sense of belonging, grades).

Review of Theories used in the Literature

Interactions with Staff and Faculty. Many studies on students' interactions with staff and faculty are informed by Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory. Rendón (1994) developed this theory while using Astin's (1984) Involvement Theory to study how students became involved in their academic communities and the role of students' interpersonal interactions in their learning and growth. She discovered that growth and learning, particularly for the nontraditional racially minoritized students in her study, was not solely based on their involvement in college (her original hypothesis), but instead resulted from the academic and interpersonal validation they received from proactive institutional and noninstitutional agents (e.g., college staff, family, faculty), eventually leading to students' increased self-efficacy in their persistence.

Specifically, validation refers to "the intentional, proactive affirmation of students by in- and out-of-class agents" (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011, p. 12) to support students' academic, personal and social growth. There are two types of validation: academic and interpersonal. Academic

validation occurs when in- or out-of-class individuals help students believe in their ability to be successful in college academically. When describing in-class academic validation, Rendón (1994) provides numerous examples of “faculty-initiated actions” (p. 40) in the classroom that would be considered academically validating. These examples include (but are not limited to) faculty structuring learning experiences that give students the opportunity “to experience themselves as capable of learning” (p. 40). Students can also receive academic validation outside of the classroom, and this type of validation does not have to come from faculty. A number of students from Rendón’s (1994) original study, for instance, discussed how family members and peers provided academic validation out of the classroom (e.g., encouragement from family members to continue pursuing education).

Students are considered to be interpersonally validated when they receive support from in- or out-of-class agents regarding their personal and social growth (Rendón, 1994). In Rendón’s (1994) original study, she notes that “[f]aculty, friends, parents and siblings played particularly important roles in interpersonal validation” (p. 42). Some examples of interpersonal validation include faculty recognizing that students have lives outside of the classroom and helping students build a supportive community amongst one another within their classrooms (e.g., encouraging the formation of study groups) (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). Additionally, peers supporting each other with personal problems outside of the classroom can be interpersonally validating (Rendón, 1994). Thus, in contrast to Astin’s (1984) Involvement Theory, which suggests that students must proactively engage with the academic environment to be successful, validation theory posits that it is truly incumbent on in-class and out-of-class agents to take the initiative in supporting student success (Rendón, 1994). Ultimately, Rendón and Muñoz (2011) argue that students’ perceptions of external validation (academic or

interpersonal) results in "increased confidence and agency" (p. 17), which subsequently supports their ability to persist in college.

Rendón (1994) also describes six elements of validation. The first element highlights the responsibility of on and off-campus agents to establish connections with students (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). According to Rendón and Muñoz (2011), the "second element speaks to the notion that when validation is present, students feel capable of learning and have a sense of self-worth" (p. 18). In other words, validating acts support the strengths and experiences that students bring with them to college and consequently gives students confidence that their efforts in pursuit of higher education will be efficacious. The third element suggests that validation is a precursor to student development (Rendón, 1994).

The last three elements focus on: where validation can occur, who can be involved in validating students, how validation should be understood, and the theory's temporal dimension. For instance, the fourth element specifically indicates the potential locations for validation (i.e., in or out of class) and the potential agents involved in both locations (e.g., faculty, peers, family, college staff). Given that validation is not "an end in itself" (Rendón, 1994, p. 44), the fifth element emphasizes that it should be understood as a developmental process. Lastly, in Rendón's sixth element, she argues that to be effective, students should receive validation early in the first year of college. Many scholars have used validation theory specifically to understand how to support persistence in college for low-income, first-generation students, and students of color (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011).

Other studies on students' interactions with staff and faculty are largely influenced by Stanton-Salazar's (2011) institutional agents concept. Within Stanton-Salazar's (2011) framework of social capital, which he defines as "as high-status institutional resources embedded

in social relationships and social structure” (p. 1068), he describes the key role of institutional agents in providing access to these resources. Specifically, Stanton-Salazar (2011) defines an institutional agent as “an individual who occupies one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status, either within a society or in an institution (or an organization)” (p. 1075). These individuals are often in positions of power within an institution and have access to valued resources. They also have experience using their status and access to resources to support “purposive action” (p. 1075). However, this definition only describes individuals with the potential to be considered an institutional agent. In order for this potential to manifest, individuals who meet this definition must “directly transmit, or negotiate the transmission of” (p. 1075) resources, opportunities and other things that are highly valued within a particular setting to someone else (i.e., college students). These individuals also possess the potential for what Stanton-Salazar (2011) calls “empowerment social capital” (p. 1087), which he defines as “the possibility that institutional agents can act, individually or collectively—within the larger hierarchical structure—in ways that redistribute resources” (p. 1087) to support individuals at the low end of a hierarchy.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) also describes two categories of resources that institutional agents have access to: positional and personal. As the name suggests, positional resources are resources connected to a high-status position within an institution (e.g., the dean of students having access to the president of a university). In contrast, personal resources are specific to the individual agent (e.g., knowledge about internship opportunities based on relationships with colleagues in the private sector). Similar to validation theory, many scholars have also used the concept of institutional agents to understand how to support persistence for students from historically marginalized groups in higher education (e.g., low income, students of color).

These studies also seem to be implicitly informed by Strayhorn's (2012) conceptualization of college students' sense of belonging. Strayhorn (2012) frames a sense of belonging as a "basic human need and motivation" (p. 17) that is relevant to all students. He specifically defines it as students' "perceived social support" (p. 17) at their institution. According to Strayhorn (2008), this perception is based on an evaluation consisting of "both cognitive and affective elements" (p. 505). Beginning with the cognitive element, students start out by assessing their standing within different groups on campus. Then, depending on how students assess their standing in these group(s) (i.e., determine whether they have a sense of belonging), this will lead to an affective response or behavior. For instance, students who decide that they are not valued by any groups on campus may respond by disengaging from the campus community (e.g., dropping out of college). Additionally, Strayhorn (2012) argues that "this process is conditioned by environmental or institutional conditions and ethos" (p. 17), which suggests that institutions play a significant role in students' sense of belonging.

Strayhorn (2012) also describes seven elements of sense of belonging. The first element posits that since sense of belonging is a human need similar to other basic needs (e.g., food), it thus "must be satisfied before any higher-order needs such as knowledge and self-actualization" (p. 18) can be met. In the second element, Strayhorn (2012) notes that a sense of belonging can "drive students' behaviors to or against academic achievement norms" (p. 19). The third element describes how the saliency of a sense of belonging can differ for students based on context.

The fourth element states that a sense of belonging results from mattering (i.e., the feeling that one is valued by others). In the fifth element, Strayhorn (2012) argues that multiple dimensions of students' identities (e.g., gender, class) can "converge and intersect in ways that simultaneously" (p. 22) affect their sense of belonging. The penultimate element, number six,

highlights literature (i.e., Hausmann et al., 2007) that suggests that sense of belonging has a positive relationship with a student's intent to persist in college. Lastly, the seventh element describes the malleability of sense of belonging depending on changing institutional circumstances, which requires that students' sense of belonging be continuously satisfied.

Strengths and Limitations of Theoretical Literature. A key strength of validation theory, sense of belonging, and the institutional agents concept is that they all have been used to understand student persistence. Additionally, they also recognize the important role that institutions play in supporting persistence. However, rather than focusing on institutions in general, they are particularly concerned with the individuals who operate within them. Consequently, this emphasis on individuals recognizes that they can provide unique forms of support to students that are separate from the benefits provided by institutions.

On the other hand, validation theory, institutional agents, and sense of belonging also possess limitations. Validation theory, for instance, lacks evidence for one of its claims. Specifically, in Rendón's (1994) discussion of the fifth element of validation, she identifies it as a developmental process. However, validation's efficacy in promoting development is unclear given that development is a process through which one's thinking becomes "increasingly complex" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 5), and the theory does not discuss how being academically or interpersonally validated engenders complex thinking. Moreover, validation theory assumes that individual support is enough to help marginalized students succeed and, as a result, eschews more systemic issues (e.g., systemic racism). In regard to institutional agents, this concept suggests that only individuals in "high-status" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1075) positions can provide students with access to valued resources, opportunities, etc. This is inconsistent with the

literature, as scholars have found that individuals (particularly staff) in lower status positions can also provide students' access to valuable resources (e.g., Luedke, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020).

Lastly, although sense of belonging acknowledges the role of institutions in facilitating and hindering its development, it does not explain how this occurs. Specifically, it does not explicitly address the ways that systemic oppression can prevent students from feeling that they belong on campus. By not explaining how different forms of oppression can impact a student's sense of belonging, it makes it difficult for scholars to completely understand disparate outcomes for marginalized groups in studies of sense of belonging. For instance, in Garvey et al.'s (2018) study of the sense of belonging of students living in residence halls at a PWI, they found that White women reported a significantly higher sense of belonging than racially minoritized students. Rather than explaining how racism could be preventing racially minoritized students from feeling a sense of belonging, Strayhorn's (2012) framework would only suggest that different "institutional conditions" (p. 17) have influenced these students' senses of belonging, which is woefully inadequate given its lack of specificity.

Interactions with Staff Only. The qualitative studies on student-staff interactions are primarily informed by social reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). According to Winkle-Wagner and Locks (2014), Pierre Bourdieu "initiated social reproduction theory in an attempt to better understand how social status and privilege were transferred from one generation to the next" (p. 11). He was specifically interested in the "lifestyles and the more implicit factors that might affect how people are rewarded or sanctioned in particular social settings such as schools or college campuses" (p. 12). This theory includes four main components: 1) cultural capital – the information or resources that are valued by a particular society (i.e., college or university campus), 2) social capital - relationships or

connections that can lead to certain benefits within a society, 3) field - refers to the actual setting in which these forms of capital are given value, 4) habitus - inclinations related to tastes or interests that can impact students' understanding of the types of opportunities that are available to them. Scholars using this theory to guide their studies of student-staff interactions have focused specifically on the ways in which social and cultural capital are developed through these relationships.

The quantitative studies are primarily guided by Astin's (1984) student involvement theory. As defined by Astin (1984), student involvement is "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518) and it has a direct impact on student learning and personal development during college. He argues that involvement entails both quantitative (i.e., time) and qualitative (i.e., effort) features. Examples of student involvement in academic experiences include participating in student organizations, devoting time to studying for courses, and spending time on campus. Although students themselves are key in these measures of involvement, Astin (1984) also highlights the significant role of faculty and student affairs staff in students' acquisition of the benefits of involvement. He argues, for instance, that student-faculty interactions are "more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic" (p. 525). Furthermore, he acknowledges that student affairs staff can also be effective at augmenting involvement (and the benefits of involvement) given the nature of their work with students (e.g., often in one-on-one settings).

Strengths and Limitations of Theoretical Literature. One of the major strengths of social reproduction theory is the sociological explanation that it provides to understand the benefits of students' interactions with student affairs staff. Specifically, it attends to the exchange

of information and other resources that can occur during these interactions and how students can benefit from this exchange. This is important because other types of explanations such as psychological explanations (e.g., validation theory) do not address this exchange. On the other hand, a benefit of Astin's (1984) involvement theory is the value it places on the role of institutions in student outcomes and how it highlights staff and faculty in particular.

The main limitation of social reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) is the way it's been used by some scholars to understand the perpetuation of inequity in education (Yosso, 2005). Specifically, when using social reproduction theory, some scholars view marginalized students through a deficit lens by focusing on the resources they lack in education (e.g., social and cultural capital) and how these deficiencies are redressed through different experiences (e.g., interactions with staff). However, this view disregards the forms of capital that marginalized students can bring with them to the educational experience and how institutions fail to recognize their value (Yosso, 2005). Consequently, scholars like Yosso (2005) have developed critical frameworks such as Community Cultural Wealth, which directly attend to this limitation by foregrounding the forms of capital these students possess and use to successfully navigate inequitable educational environments.

Regarding involvement theory, it fails to address the impacts of power, privilege, and oppression on students' experiences. Astin (1984), for example, does not discuss how students' experiences with different forms of marginalization (e.g., anti-Black men discrimination) can affect the extent to which they are involved, and/or receive the benefits of their involvement. For instance, although Astin (1984) highlights the benefits of faculty-student interactions as a form of involvement, many racially minoritized students report negative experiences with faculty which are largely attributed to racism (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003). However, it's unclear how

these experiences affect whether students receive the benefits of their involvement. In addition, Astin's (1984) theory relies on students proactively engaging with the academic environment to be successful, which removes responsibility for getting students involved from the institution and, as Rendón (1994) argued, is not necessarily the most effective way to support involvement for all students.

Indirect Interactions: Black Men's Experiences with Student Affairs Offices, Programs, Functional Areas

Empirical Literature Review

Another, more extensive, area of the literature indirectly explores Black mens' interactions with student affairs staff by studying their experiences, along with those of other racially minoritized students, with offices, programs and functional areas organized by staff members. These studies tend to focus specifically on students' exposure to residence life, student organizations, and programs designed to support Black men (e.g., Black men initiatives). They also typically examine the benefits students report from their experiences within these spaces (e.g., Barker & Avery, 2012; Guiffrida, 2003), in addition to the relationships between these experiences and different outcomes like grades and personal development (e.g., Baker, 2008; Flowers, 2004).

The qualitative studies on this topic specifically highlight the benefits (and some of the negative aspects) students report from their experiences within staff-run offices, programs, and functional areas. Barker and Avery (2012), for example, explored the role of a leadership program for Black men in promoting their persistence at a large southern PWI with high research activity. Using phenomenology, the authors collected interview data via two focus groups with eight undergraduate Black men who participated in the leadership program. Students were asked

to assess their experience at the institution overall and to describe how the leadership program "promoted greater campus engagement and personal development" (p. 77) for students who participated. The authors did not provide reflexivity statements. The authors found that students had positive experiences with the leadership program overall. Students also described specific aspects of the program that were the most useful. They, for instance, appreciated the academic support they received including time management skill development and advice for speaking with professors. Students also discussed how the program helped them establish relationships with Black peers, faculty, staff and alumni. They particularly highlighted the ways in which the program staff members acted as role models and they "often attributed personal gains to" (p. 80) the program staff.

Brooms (e.g., 2016, 2018, 2019; Brooms et al., 2015) has also written extensively about the benefits Black men report from their exposure to leadership and initiative programs designed to support their persistence and has identified similar findings to Baker and Avery (2012). For instance, primarily using one-on-one interviews with 40 undergraduate Black men participating in Black men initiative programs (BMI) at two medium-sized public PWIs, Brooms (2018) explored how these students described their experiences in the programs and how these experiences influenced their college experiences overall. Brooms also does not include a reflexivity statement. He finds that students discussed four main benefits of their involvement in the BMIs: 1) developing a sense of belonging on their college campuses, 2) gaining access to "sociocultural capital" (p. 146), 3) increased motivation to do well academically and 4) a "heightened sense of self, or feeling connected to a collective identity and consciousness among BMI staff and peer BMI members" (p. 146).

Other scholars, like Guiffrida (2003) and Harwood et al. (2012), have qualitatively explored the experiences of Black students and other racially minoritized students in student organizations and residence life. Specifically, through the use of grounded theory, Guiffrida (2003) collected interview data from 88 Black students attending a midsize PWI in order to understand the ways that these organizations facilitate students' "cultural connections and social integration" (p. 305) at their institution. In Guiffrida's (2003) sample, 45% of students identified as men, while 55% identified as women. Guiffrida (2003) does not provide a reflexivity statement. Guiffrida (2003) found that these students valued their participation in student organizations primarily because they offered them the opportunity to connect with faculty members outside of the classroom, support other Black students, and develop comfortability around Black students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, Black students from predominantly White communities appreciated the exposure to Black culture that they experienced in these organizations.

In contrast, the students of color in Harwood et al.'s (2012) study reported negative experiences with residence life. Specifically, the authors conducted 11 focus group interviews with 81 racially minoritized students (44% identified as Black) at one large PWI in order to explore their experiences with racial microaggressions while living in residence halls. The authors included a brief reflexivity statement. They found that students of color identified experiencing different types of racial microaggressions such as racial microassaults, microinvalidations, and environmental racial microaggressions perpetrated by other students and residence hall staff, resulting in "significant negative effects on their residential life and sense of belonging to the university" (p. 168).

Scholars such as Flowers (2004) and Baker (2008) have also quantitatively examined the experiences of Black students and other racially minoritized students with staff-run offices, programs and functional areas. Flowers (2004), for instance, studied the relationship between living in a residence hall and educational gains for Black students. He specifically used the College Student Experiences Questionnaire to assess gains "in understanding the arts and humanities, in personal and social development, in understanding science and technology, in intellectual and writing skills, and in vocational preparation" (p. 281) for a sample of 6,092 Black students (64% identified as women and 36% men) either living in or not living in residence halls at 212 institutions. He also assessed the relationship between specific residence hall experiences (e.g., engaging in a late-night conversation with other students) and reported educational gains. Using ordinary least squares regression, Flowers (2004) found that Black students who lived on campus reported higher gains in personal and social development than Black students who did not live on campus. Personal and social development was defined in the survey as "students' perceptions of how much they progressed in college in understanding themselves and others" (p. 281). In regard to specific experiences, Flowers (2004) found that students who reported offering to help other students with their schoolwork or those who asked others for assistance with their work were more likely to report gains in personal and social development.

Baker (2008), on the other hand, explored the relationship between participation in student organizations and student outcomes. Specifically, using the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, Baker (2008) examined the relationship between participation in various student organizations in the first year of college and sophomore year grades for 1,907 Black and Latinx students (over 60% of students in the sample identified as women) attending 27

institutions. She found that Black and Latinx students involved in political student organizations saw higher grades than students not involved in those organizations. She also found that participation in art-related student organizations was associated with higher grades for Black students.

Strengths and Limitations of Empirical Literature. One key strength of these studies is the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. This is important because, in addition to understanding the relationships between the experiences of students of color in these spaces and different outcomes, scholars are also developing an understanding of the mechanisms that allow these outcomes to occur. These studies also have several limitations. In the quantitative study samples, for instance, racially minoritized men (including Black men) are underrepresented (i.e., Baker, 2008; Flowers, 2004). Consequently, it's unclear how applicable their findings are to the racially minoritized men at the institutions represented in these studies, in addition to racially minoritized men at institutions not represented. Regarding the qualitative studies (i.e., Barker & Avery, 2012; Brooms, 2018; Guiffrida, 2003; Harwood et al., 2012), there is a general lack of triangulation and researcher reflexivity. For example, almost all the authors of the qualitative studies used student interviews as their only data collection method and source of data. Although using one method of data collection and having one source of data is not inherently problematic in qualitative research, the use of multiple methods and sources can enhance the trustworthiness of a researcher's data, along with the confirmability and credibility of a researcher's findings (McGregor, 2018). Additionally, apart from Harwood et al. (2012), the authors of the qualitative studies did not disclose any predispositions they possessed with respect to the research topic (i.e., researcher reflexivity), which would have supported the transferability of their findings (McGregor, 2018). Lastly, even though some of these studies focus on the experiences of Black

men, none of them explicitly attend to Black men's experiences with anti-Black men discrimination. Thus, although some Black men have reported negative, racialized experiences within these spaces (e.g., Harwood et al., 2012), these studies fail to identify these negative experiences as both racialized *and* gendered.

There are also a few general limitations of this literature. One limitation is the lack of attention to different staff-run offices, programs, and functional areas. With the exception of a few scholars (e.g., Barker & Avery, 2012; Brooms, 2018; Patton, 2006), most studies on this topic have paid little attention to the experiences of Black men and other students of color in spaces designed to support them and their various identities (e.g., LGBTQ+, disability services) during their time in college. Without more scholarship on their experiences in these spaces, practitioners and scholars will lack a more complete understanding of their efficacy, particularly in supporting persistence for Black men and others students of color. Lastly, few studies on this topic directly explore student year-to-year retention or overall persistence. For instance, among the studies that I presented in this section, only Barker and Avery (2012) and Brooms (2018) were interested in understanding how these spaces supported student persistence.

Theoretical Literature Review

Despite acknowledging some limitations, many studies exploring the experiences of Black men and other racially minoritized students with offices, programs and functional areas run by student affairs professionals use Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure as a guiding framework. In order to explain student departure by attending to the role of the student's institution in this phenomenon, Tinto (1993) uses the anthropological concept of the rite of passage to outline three stages of passage that students typically go through in order to persist in college. The first stage is the Separation from Communities of the Past and involves students

gradually separating themselves from their home communities. According to Tinto (1993), this is the beginning of the process "leading to the adoption of behaviors and norms appropriate to the life of the college…" (p. 96). At the second stage, Transition between High School and College, students are further along in the process of disassociating themselves from the home culture but have yet to fully adapt to the institutional culture. In the final stage, Incorporation into the Society of the College, students have completely separated themselves from the culture of their home communities and now must adapt to the dominant culture (or subcultures) of the institution in order to persist. Furthermore, whether they will be able to unreservedly adapt to the institutional culture will depend in large part on the institutional support they receive to become both intellectually and socially integrated.

Additionally, Tinto (1993) uses sociological and psychological theory relating to what leads individuals to commit suicide in order to articulate "dispositions which incline individuals toward departure rather than persistence within communities of the college" (p. 110). According to Tinto (1993), these dispositions involve expectations and motivations that can be "measured by intentions or goals and commitments" (p. 110). In Tinto's (1993) view, intentions/goals are both aspirational (i.e., a student's dreams for future success) and reflective of expectations (i.e., likelihood of success based on past experiences). Commitments, on the other hand, refer to personality traits that naturally lead an individual to complete a task or reach a goal. Thus, Tinto (1993) argues, a student with significant goals and strong commitments would possess dispositions associated with persistence, while the opposite would be true for a student with trivial goals and weak commitments.

After scholars critiqued his original work's applicability to racially minoritized students (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1996, 1997), Tinto (2006, 2012) updated his theory to attend to these

limitations. For example, his more recent work acknowledged that racially minoritized students do not need to completely separate from their home communities in order to persist in college (Tinto, 2006). Moreover, he recognized that for many of these students, remaining connected to their home communities "is essential to their persistence" (p. 4). His more recent work also acknowledged the role of "a broader array of forces, cultural, economic, social" (p. 3) in shaping student persistence, which was absent from his original work. Still, several of the aforementioned studies of Black men and other racially minoritized students' experiences with offices, programs and functional areas run by student affairs professionals are guided by Tinto's (1993) original description of his theory (although these studies do acknowledge the critiques of Tinto).

Another frequently used resource in this literature is Astin's (2012) I-E-O model, which posits that in order to effectively assess student outcomes, assessment projects must include data on student inputs and the environmental (i.e., institutional) contexts. Astin (2012) argues that although most assessment projects are concerned with the relationship between the environment and student outcomes, this relationship cannot be fully understood without also considering student inputs, which can directly affect both student outcomes and the environment. In this model, outcomes refer to "talents" (p. 19) that institutions hope to develop within students. For studies in this area using this model, these talents have been operationalized as grades and personal and social development (e.g., Flowers, 2004; Inkelas, 2004). Student inputs refer to characteristics that students bring with them to the institution (e.g., race, high school grades). The environment involves students' experiences during college, and specifically, experiences that educators control. Astin (2012) further notes that the environment "encompasses everything that happens to a student during the course of an educational program" (p. 87), and thus, not only does it include experiences inside the classroom, but also experiences within various student

affairs contexts (e.g., orientation, residence life). Astin (2012) also breaks down the environment into two distinct measures: institutional characteristics (e.g., size, selectivity) and the educational experiences that students have within the institution. He refers to institutional characteristics as "between-institution environmental variables" (p. 92), which involve both structural characteristics (e.g., student demographics) and the institutional climate. Students' experiences at the institution are considered "within-institution environmental variables" (p. 99) and they include experiences such as participation in student organizations.

Strengths and Limitations of Theoretical Literature. Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure and Astin's (2012) I-E-O model have similar strengths. They have both been used to understand and examine student success and persistence. They also value the role of institutions in student outcomes. For Tinto (1993), institutions are integral to supporting students' intellectual and social integration. In Astin's (2012) I-E-O model, institutions are part of the environment, and they (along with student inputs) can directly affect student outcomes. Moreover, they appreciate the impact of student inputs (e.g., traits, social identities) on outcomes. In Tinto's (1993) theory, student "dispositions" (p. 110) associated with persistence (i.e., strong goals and commitments) could be considered student inputs since these are objectives and traits that students bring with them to the college experience. Similarly, student inputs are a key component of Astin's (2012) model since they can directly influence student outcomes.

Given that Tinto (2006, 2012) addressed many of the critiques of his 1993 piece, one of the main limitations left unaddressed is its application in studies of Black men and other racially minoritized students' experiences with offices, programs and functional areas run by student affairs professionals. Specifically, a number of these studies were guided by the 1993 version of

his theory which, for instance, argued that students must completely separate themselves from their home communities in order to persist. However, as Tinto himself recognized and many scholars have found (e.g., Burt et al., 2018b; Palmer et al., 2011), racially minoritized students in particular have successfully relied on their families in their efforts to finish their degree programs. Consequently, although the aforementioned studies do acknowledge this limitation, they were still largely informed by an outdated version of the theory.

In regard to Astin's (2012) I-E-O model, it fails to consider the role that family and other outside resources play in student outcomes. Additionally, it does not address the impact of structural oppression on students' experiences and outcomes. Astin's (2012) I-E-O model, for instance, provides examples of between-institution measures for the structural characteristics of institutions such as student expenditures. However, these structural characteristics do not, for example, account for the discriminatory state funding practices that some institutions like historically Black colleges and universities have been found to experience (Sav, 2010). Furthermore, the institutional climate measures also fail to address structural discrimination because simply examining the "perceived degree of community" (Astin, 2012, p. 92) at an institution does not identify the structural mechanisms that contribute to a positive or negative community. Similarly, the model's within-institution measures are also inadequate in this regard since solely indicating that a student participated in a certain experience on campus does not address the nature of that experience (i.e., positive or negative) or the mechanisms that facilitated or hindered their participation. Consequently, without attending to structural discrimination, the I-E-O model fails to provide a complete explanation of the relationship between student inputs, the environment, and student outcomes.

Tinto's (1993, 2006, 2012) theory also fails to explicitly address the impact of oppression on student persistence. Admittedly, Tinto (1993, 2006, 2012) does discuss the role of institutions in helping students become intellectually and socially integrated. Nevertheless, the original theory and its updates do not acknowledge the ways in which students' experiences with racialized and gendered discrimination at an institution (e.g., Brezinski et al., 2018; Burt et al., 2018a) can affect their ability to persist. Moreover, Tinto (1993, 2006, 2012) does not address how experiences with discrimination such as anti-Black men discrimination can impact students' goals, and even their commitments (e.g., making them less confident) (Burt et al., 2018a). Therefore, through this lens, students' inability to persist as a result of discrimination would be the result of them failing to adapt to the institution, rather than their institution failing to support them.

Theoretical Framework

Some frameworks have been used effectively to examine the relationship between Black men's interactions with student affairs staff and their college persistence. Hurtado et al. (2015) found, for instance, that frequently receiving validation (Rendón, 1994) from staff and faculty is directly and positively related to students' sense of belonging (including Black men). This is a key finding given that sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) has been found to be directly associated with persistence (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Unfortunately, however, many of the frameworks that have been used to inform the empirical scholarship on Black men's interactions with staff and their persistence in college (including validation theory and sense of belonging) fail to explicitly address the impact of power, privilege, and oppression on the experiences of marginalized students in higher education. Moreover, other useful and more critical frameworks

(i.e., CRT) do not attend to the form of marginalization Black men experience based on the combination of social identities (i.e., Black race and man/man-ness gender identity).

This neglect is problematic for the study of Black men since scholarship has shown how different forms of oppression can negatively impact Black men's desire to persist in their degree programs (Burt et al., 2018a; Smith et al., 2007). Furthermore, some frameworks used to study this topic (e.g., social reproduction theory, institutional agents) are limited given that their use often has resulted in scholars viewing Black men and other minoritized students as lacking the resources needed to navigate higher education (i.e., deficit lens), rather than valuing the resources these students bring with them to the educational experience (Yosso, 2005). Thus, the following theoretical framework will incorporate validation theory and sense of belonging (which have been used effectively in studies on this topic), along with critical frameworks that explain how anti-Black men discrimination can affect the experiences of Black men specifically, and how it could be successfully navigated via an asset-based approach from staff members.

Black Misandry

Black misandry is "an exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies and practices" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 558). This aversion exists to justify and reinforce the subordination of Black men in society through gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007). Gendered racism refers to the ways that racism and sexism "narrowly intertwine and combine under certain conditions into one, hybrid phenomenon'' (Essed, 1991, p. 31) which, for Black men, results in race and gender-specific "stereotyping, subordination, repression, and oppression" (Burt et al., 2018a, p. 967). Black misandry could be a useful concept for understanding the specific psychological and sociological barriers that undergraduate Black men experience (and that staff help them navigate or possibly

engage in/support themselves) as they attempt to complete their degree programs. Specifically, Black misandry considers the combination of race/racism and gender identity/sexism and explains how the psychological (e.g., role strain) and sociological (e.g., anti-affirmative action policies) barriers to persistence created by racism are exacerbated by the intersection of race and the man/man-ness gender identity.

Smith et al. (2007) argue that focusing on this intersection is “more meaningful for understanding the true experiences of Black males” (p. 558) than just focusing on race, and indeed the few scholars who have used Black misandry to examine these experiences have found it beneficial (e.g., Brooms & Clark, 2020; Burt et al., 2018a; Smith et al., 2016). For instance, using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 36 Black men attending five different PWIs, Smith et al. (2016) used Black misandry to explore “how experiencing persistent Black racist misandric stereotypes can produce psychological symptoms of racial battle fatigue” (p. 1194). They found that “Black misandric stereotyping and marginality” (p. 1196) and “hypersurveillance and control” (p. 1196) emerged as themes from their analysis, highlighting the various forms of racial microaggressions experienced by the men in their study and the negative psychological impact of those experiences.

Similarly, Brooms and Clark (2020) used Black misandry to explore the “significance of race and the impact of race and gender on the lives of Black boys and men.” (p. 128) in the U.S. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 Black and White men and women ranging from 20-60 years of age and possessing various levels of education. The interviews focused on the participants’ feelings about race relations in the U.S., experiences with race/gender-based stereotyping and profiling, and thoughts regarding highly publicized killings of unarmed Black men in the U.S. The authors found in part that participants believed that U.S.

society generally frames Black boys and men as problematic individuals who should be feared, and consequently, this gendered racist framing is used to justify inequitable policies (e.g., stop-and-frisk) and practices (e.g., killing unarmed Black men) used against them.

Community Cultural Wealth

In direct response to Pierre Bourdieu's (1979/1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) theory of social reproduction, and the way its been used by education scholars to highlight the deficits of historically marginalized students, Yosso (2005) developed Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) in order to foreground the forms of capital these students possess and use to successfully navigate inequitable educational environments. According to Yosso (2005), CCW is "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist" (p. 77) various forms of oppression in society. Yosso (2005) specifically identifies six different types of "capital" (p. 77) that are included in CCW: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Aspirational capital is an individual's "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future" (p. 77) despite barriers. Linguistic capital refers to the skills individuals develop through experiences within communities in which multiple languages and/or communication styles are used. Familial capital involves the "cultural knowledges nurtured among" (p. 79) an individual's immediate and extended family which "carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (p. 79). Social capital refers to the "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79) that "can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79). Navigational capital is an individual's ability to negotiate "institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind" (p. 80) such as institutions of higher education. Lastly, resistant capital can be understood as "those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior

that challenges inequality" (p. 80). Yosso (2005) describes these types of capital as "not mutually exclusive or static, but rather…dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (p.77). To highlight this overlap, Yosso (2005) notes that aspirations (aspirational capital) within communities of color are typically developed socially (social capital) and within one's family (familial capital) through storytelling (linguistic capital) that provides advice for navigating (navigational capital) and resisting (resistant capital) oppression.

CCW could be a useful tool for understanding the benefits of Black mens' interactions with staff. In particular, from a sociological perspective, it could explain how staff help Black men overcome gendered racism by acknowledging and supporting the various types of capital they bring with them to college. Moreover, unlike other sociological frameworks that view Black men and other marginalized students through a deficit lens (e.g., social reproduction theory), CCW offers an asset-based explanation for why Black men persist in higher education. In fact, many scholars who have used CCW in their studies of the persistence of students of color in higher education have found this framework particularly useful for this reason (Espino, 2014; Pérez II, 2017; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). For instance, in his phenomenological study of 21 Latino men attending two selective institutions, Pérez II (2017) identified CCW as an asset-based framework that helped him understand "how Latino male achievers employed different forms of capital to exercise academic determination in college." (p. 126). He specifically found that although his participants' academic goals changed during their time in college, they all ultimately wanted to be "ideal college students" (p. 130) and relied on peers to help them achieve their goals. Similarly, in their study of the persistence of 31 Black and Latinx engineering students at 11 institutions, Samuelson and Litzler (2016) described CCW as a "good theoretical fit" (p. 98) for their study given that their goal was "to take an assets-based approach to

understanding the experiences of underrepresented students" (p. 98). Using semi-structured interviews, they found that these students used different types of capital (i.e., resistant, aspirational, navigational, and familial) in order to persist in their engineering programs (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016).

It's important to note, however, that my use of CCW for this theoretical framework is slightly different from the way it's been primarily used in the literature. Specifically, most scholars who use CCW to study the persistence of students of color in higher education focus solely on students' use of the different forms of capital they bring to college (e.g., how students use their navigational capital), and not on the ways that *student affairs staff and others support these forms of capital* (e.g., how staff members encourage students to use their navigational capital). Furthermore, the existence of any empirical work exploring the ways that staff support students' CCW is currently unclear. Nevertheless, scholars have identified examples of ways that staff can use the CCW framework to inform their work with students (Pérez II, 2017; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016), which suggests that an empirical investigation of these practices is warranted.

Validation Theory and Sense of Belonging

In addition to CCW, validation theory (Rendón, 1994) and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) will be used to understand the persistence-related benefits of Black mens' interactions with staff. As described previously, validation refers to "the intentional, proactive affirmation of students by in- and out- of-class agents" (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011, p. 12) to support students' academic, personal, and social growth. There are two types of validation: academic and interpersonal. Academic validation occurs when in- or out-of-class individuals help students believe in their ability to be successful in college academically. Interpersonal validation involves students receiving support from in- or out-of-class agents regarding their personal and social

growth. On the other hand, a sense of belonging refers to students' "perceived social support" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 17) at their institution. According to Strayhorn (2008), this perception is based on an evaluation consisting of "both cognitive and affective elements" (p. 505). Beginning with the cognitive element, students start out by assessing their standing within different groups on campus. Then, depending on how students assess their standing in these group(s) (i.e., determine whether they have a sense of belonging), this will lead to an affective response or behavior (e.g., deciding to drop out of college).

The literature suggests that receiving validation from staff is directly and positively related to students' sense of belonging (Hurtado et al., 2015), while a sense of belonging is directly associated with persistence (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Thus, part of students' cognitive assessment of their sense of belonging on campus could involve determining whether (and/or how much) they have been academically or interpersonally validated by staff, which could then lead to a decision to leave or remain in college. However, although validation theory and sense of belonging have been effectively used to examine the relationship between staff-student interactions and college persistence, their use (together) to study Black men's persistence is limited. Consequently, I'm including validation theory and sense of belonging in this theoretical framework given their potential to help explain how staff help Black men navigate gendered racism.

Black Misandry, CCW, Validation Theory, and Sense of Belonging

Used together, Black misandry, CCW, validation theory, and sense of belonging can offer more complete answers to my research questions. Validation theory and sense of belonging, for example, provide psychological explanations. One of the benefits of using psychological explanations in this instance is that they could most effectively explain how staff help or prevent

Black men from navigating barriers to persistence. Since the psychological barriers to persistence (understood via Black misandry and gendered racism) have been found to have negative psychological effects on Black men (Burt et al., 2018a; Smith et al., 2016), it would make sense that the ways that staff potentially help them navigate these barriers can also be explained psychologically (e.g., validating Black mens' experiences with microaggressions). However, the main drawback of only using a psychological explanation is that it would not capture the non-psychological aspects of this phenomenon. Specifically, it would not explain how staff may help Black men navigate sociological barriers to persistence also created by Black misandry and gendered racism (or how they prevent them from doing so), which would be limiting given that gendered racism is a social creation (HoSang et al., 2012). Said differently, a purely psychological explanation would not account for the ways that Black misandry, through gendered racism, is embedded in the social system of higher education (i.e., policies and practices), and the ways that Black men navigate or why they are unable to navigate this system based on their interactions with staff. Consequently, CCW as a sociological framework is also needed to address this limitation of psychological explanations.

Moreover, CCW could offer a clearer explanation for what validation actually entails. While Rendón (1994) and other scholars (e.g., Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015) provide examples of actions that could be considered academically and interpersonally validating, how these actions lead to students feeling validated is less clear. CCW, however, could potentially address this theoretical gap. Specifically, these academically and interpersonally validating actions could be supporting the various types of capital that students bring with them that are not typically valued in higher education (Yosso, 2005), which then supports their sense of belonging (Hurtado et al., 2015) and ultimately their persistence (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Thus, given its potential, I also

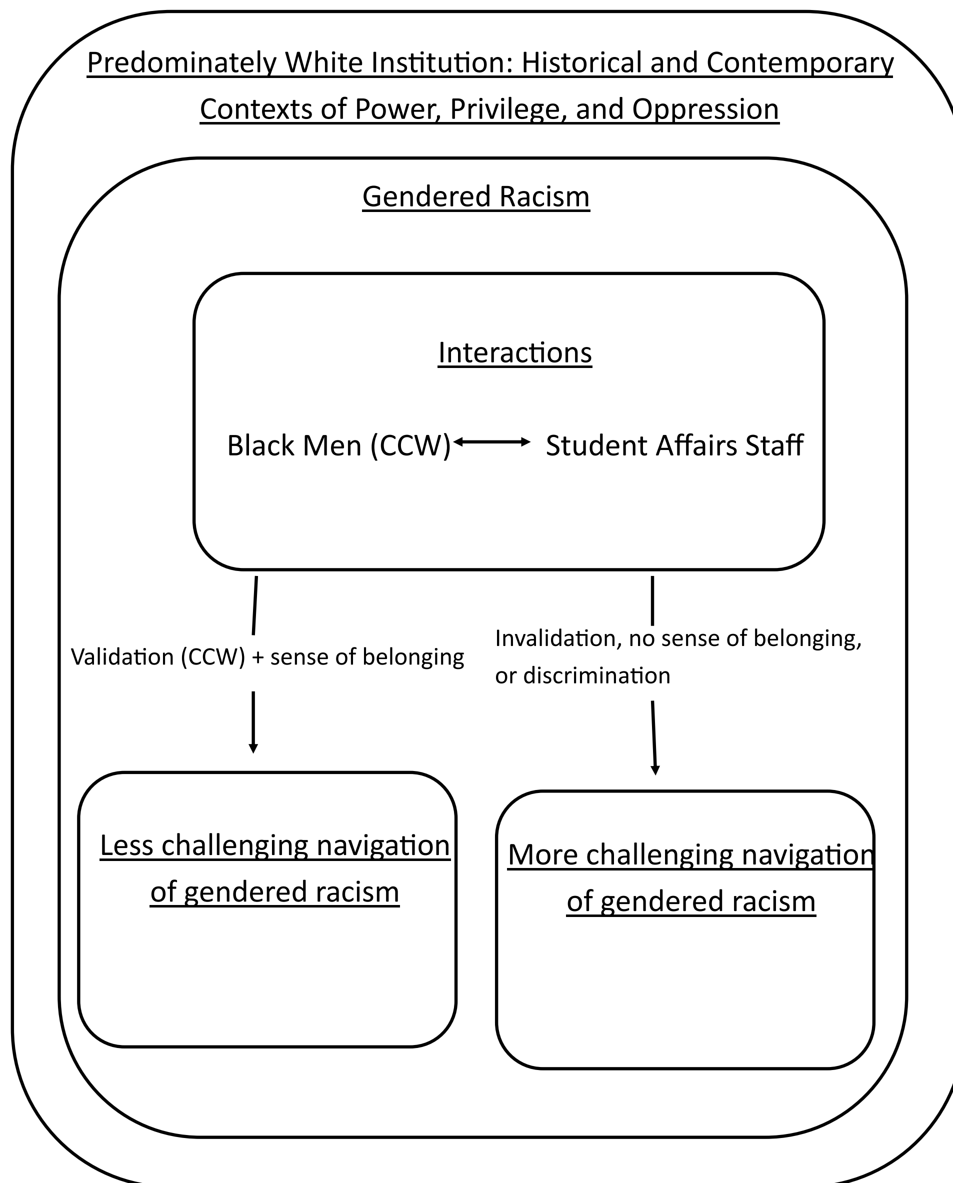
include CCW in my theoretical framework and combine it with Black misandry, validation theory, and sense of belonging.

To clarify my theoretical framework, I have included a figure (see Figure 1) representing how I think Black men make meaning of their interactions with student affairs staff in terms of navigating gendered racism. Specifically, I think their meaning-making occurs within and is informed by concentric contexts. The primary context within which their meaning-making takes place is the PWI with its historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression. Within the context of the PWI, is the contemporary context of gendered racism at the PWI. Then within that context, is the context of Black men and student affairs staff interactions. CCW is listed next to Black men to represent the strengths and resources these students bring with them to higher education that can be validated or invalidated by staff. This means that CCW is more in the background as an aspect of validation, while gendered racism, validation, and sense of belonging are in the foreground of the framework.

Based on these interactions, Black men may view their navigation of gendered racism at the PWI as less challenging or more challenging. If staff validate these men by supporting their CCW and if they help them feel a sense of belonging, then Black men may find gendered racism at the PWI less challenging to navigate. In contrast, if staff fail to validate these men, do not support their sense of belonging, and/or discriminate against them, Black men may find gendered racism at the PWI more challenging to navigate.

Figure 1

Theoretical model of how Black men make meaning of their interactions with student affairs staff as they navigate gendered racism.



This theoretical framework does, however, possess some limitations. First, the only barrier to persistence that is included is gendered racism. Thus, it does not attend to other potential barriers to persistence that could be based on other marginalized dimensions of identity such as homophobia, which has been found to negatively impact persistence for undergraduate

Black gay men (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Additionally, regarding navigating barriers, this framework only includes psychological and sociological explanations. Consequently, alternative explanations from other disciplines/fields (e.g., public health) are not considered.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the empirical and theoretical literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs, Black men's direct interactions with student affairs staff, and Black men's indirect interactions with staff (i.e., their experiences with staff-run offices, programs, and functional areas). I also discussed the theoretical framework guiding the current study. Through this discussion, I identified key strengths and limitations of this framework and these different areas of literature that inform the purpose and design of the current study. In the next chapter, I will elucidate the current study's proposed research design, as well as describe this study's philosophical and methodological underpinnings.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I will describe the philosophical and methodological foundations of this study. Then, based on these foundations, I will discuss the specific methods that were used in this study. I will begin by restating the purpose of this study and the study's research questions. I will then describe the study's philosophical and methodological foundations which include critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005), qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013), and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2008), and how they each are consistent with the study's purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework. I will end this chapter with a discussion of the study's research design, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to directly explore undergraduate Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members given the potential for these interactions to support or hinder Black men's navigation of gendered racism at PWIs. Focusing directly on these interactions is important since the extant literature has largely studied these interactions indirectly (e.g., participating in Black men initiative programs, living in a residence hall), and combined with interactions with faculty (e.g., Brooms, 2016; Harwood et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2008). Focusing too much on indirect interactions through support programs and other staff-run spaces is problematic since it can conceal the distinct aspects of the individual interactions within these spaces that can lead to positive or negative outcomes. Additionally, the dearth of data disaggregation in the studies on Black men's interactions with staff and faculty makes it difficult to understand the particular benefits Black men derive from their interactions

with staff members including the role of validation (Rendón, 1994), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007) in these interactions. Thus, based on the purpose of this study, I will answer the following questions:

- How do Black men make meaning of their experiences with gendered racism?
- How do Black men make meaning of their interactions with student affairs staff members as they navigate gendered racism?

Philosophical and Methodological Foundations

Critical Constructivism

This study is informed by the critical constructivist perspective (Kincheloe, 2005), which is an extension of the constructivist perspective (Jones et al., 2006; Kincheloe, 2005). I'll begin by describing constructivism and then transition to how its related to critical constructivism. Constructivism posits that reality and knowledge are human constructions (Jones et al., 2006; Kincheloe, 2005). In other words, Kincheloe (2005) argues, nothing "exists before consciousness shapes it into something we can perceive" (p. 8). Consequently, knowledge and reality are based on individuals' lived experiences and their interpretations of those experiences, which includes both researchers and research participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Jones et al., 2006; Kincheloe, 2005). Thus, regarding constructivist research, researchers and participants are co-constructing knowledge and reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Jones et al., 2006). Specifically, researchers are constructing knowledge and reality based on "stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 10).

Critical constructivists take this idea a step further and argue that researchers' and participants' constructions of knowledge and reality (through experience and interpretation of experience) are shaped and repressed by systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Kincheloe, 2005). These systems, which manifest throughout every facet of human social life including education, function to benefit groups with dominant social identities (e.g., White racial identity, wealthy, heterosexual) at the expense of groups with marginalized identities (e.g., racially minoritized groups, low income, LGB). To subvert these systems and "empower those who are presently powerless" (p. 15), critical constructivist researchers place empirical value in the "subjugated knowledges and the unique perspective of the oppressed" (p. 14).

Critical scholars who have discussed the need to foreground the perspectives of oppressed groups have specifically highlighted the research-related benefits of the liminal position these groups often occupy (Kincheloe, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000). According to Ladson-Billings (2000), the liminal position is "not unlike the view from the bottom that poor and working-class people have on the middle class" (p. 263). She notes further that the "poor and the working classes have a perspective on their own experiences while simultaneously grasping the fundamentals of the workings of the dominant class" (p. 263). As a result of possessing these multiple perspectives or what is also known as a "double consciousness" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 16), marginalized groups can expose the often-hidden ways that power, privilege, and oppression operate within ostensibly equitable environments.

A common critique of critical perspectives and traditional critical theory broadly understood is that they are effective at identifying problems but are often unable to move past problem-posing towards problem-solving (Noblit et al., 2004; Johnston, 2004). Critical constructivism can avoid this concern through its emphasis on meaning-making (i.e.,

constructions of knowledge and reality). Specifically, rather than just detecting the existence of inequitable systems, critical constructivist scholarship can potentially identify “strategies for overcoming such oppression” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 37) by focusing on how oppressed groups make meaning of their navigation of these systems (i.e., identifying the resources they are using). These strategies could then be used to inform support critical praxis (Marine & Gilbert, 2021) in higher education, and in student affairs specifically.

In terms of study alignment, critical constructivism shares a similar assumption with the purpose of my study. Again, I seek to understand how interactions with staff members potentially support or hinder Black men’s navigation of barriers to persistence. These barriers to persistence are understood via Black misandry, which is “an exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies and practices” (Smith et al., 2007, p. 558) through gendered racism. Thus, like critical constructivism, I assume that inequitable systems of oppression (i.e., Black misandry) influence individuals’ (i.e., Black men’s) experiences and, consequently, their constructions of knowledge and reality.

Moreover, critical constructivism is consistent with my research questions given its focus on the experiences of Black men. The prior literature has consistently shown how Black men have encountered gendered racist institutional and individual level practices while attending PWIs that negatively affect their desire to complete college (e.g., Brezinski et al., 2018; Burt et al., 2018a; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper et al., 2011; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Johnson et al., 2019). Therefore, Black men are one of many oppressed groups at PWIs and, as such, occupy a liminal position (Ladson-Billings, 2000) that critical constructivists consider valuable in research. Specifically, while Black men can comment on their own experiences at PWIs (e.g.,

experiences with discrimination), they simultaneously understand how students from non-minoritized backgrounds (i.e., White students) experience PWIs (e.g., not experiencing race/gender-based discrimination). This position gives them the ability to reveal the hidden, and speak to the overt, ways that gendered racism operates at PWIs, and how student affairs staff members help them navigate or hamper their navigation of this discrimination.

Critical Constructivism, Qualitative Research, and Narrative Inquiry

Based on the purpose of my study and my research questions, I have conducted a critical constructivist qualitative study employing narrative inquiry. First, I believe the goals of my research questions and the purpose of my study are consistent with the purposes of qualitative research. The primary goals of my research questions are to understand 1) what experiencing gendered racism at college means to Black men and 2) what receiving and not receiving support from staff means to Black men, regarding navigating gendered racism. These goals lend themselves to qualitative research given its emphasis on understanding "the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30). Qualitative research is also helpful for understanding the contexts that participants operate within (and that influence their actions), as well as "the process by which events and actions take place" (p. 30). These attributes of qualitative research are useful for attending to the purpose of my study given that the study is attempting to understand both context (i.e., gendered racism) and process (i.e., how staff help Black men navigate it or prevent them from navigating it).

Additionally, narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that is appropriate for answering my research questions and addressing the purpose of my study. Narrative inquiry can be broadly understood as "a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience"

(Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 541). Clandinin and Caine (2008) argue that it “aims at understanding and making meaning of experience” (p. 541) by having research participants “relate and live through stories that speak of and to their experiences of living” (p. 542). Through the lens of critical constructivism, researchers assume that 1) participants’ understanding of knowledge and reality are informed by experiences and stories of their experiences and 2) that these experiences and stories are shaped and constrained by systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Kincheloe, 2005).

As previously mentioned, the main goals of my research questions are to understand1) what experiencing gendered racism at college means to Black men and 2) how Black men make meaning of their experience receiving and not receiving support from staff to navigate gendered racism. Thus, the goals of these questions are aligned with the goals of narrative inquiry. Similarly, narrative inquiry is consistent with the study’s purpose given the study’s emphasis on understanding the lived experiences of Black men through their interactions with student affairs staff.

Qualitative research and narrative inquiry are also aligned with my use of critical constructivism. Specifically, critical constructivism, qualitative research, and narrative inquiry are each interested in individuals’ lived experiences and the meaning they make of these experiences. Moreover, they each suggest that these experiences offer significant contributions to research.

Alignment between Theoretical Framework, Research Questions, and Methodology

My research questions, theoretical framework, methodology and methods are all consistent with each other for several reasons. My theoretical framework follows from my research questions because it can explain both, the process of and the conditions under which,

Black men make meaning of their experiences with gendered racism and their interactions with staff as they navigate gendered racism. The process refers to how Black men make sense of their experiences with gendered racism at their PWI and ultimately how they view their navigation of gendered racism as less or more challenging based on their interactions with staff (e.g., do they feel validated by staff or discriminated against). On the other hand, the conditions under which their meaning making takes place are the concentric contexts[3], which includes the context of gendered racism at PWIs. Focusing on both process and conditions can more completely answer my research questions.

My research questions and theoretical framework are also consistent with my methodology and methods. My research questions are consistent with critical constructivism given critical constructivism's emphasis on how oppression informs individuals' experiences (Kincheloe, 2005), and since my questions focus on how Black men making of their experiences within a system of oppression (i.e., gendered racism). These questions are also consistent with narrative inquiry for similar reasons (i.e., its focus on lived experiences). Moreover, the concentric contexts within my theoretical framework make my framework consistent with critical constructivism given the recognition that Black men's experiences and meaning making are informed by the PWI's historical and contemporary contexts of oppression. Additionally, validation theory, CCW, and sense of belonging are consistent with critical constructivism given their ability to potentially explain how this oppression informing Black men's experiences can be viewed as less or more challenging to navigate. My framework is also consistent with my use of narrative inquiry. Specifically, Black men inevitably generate stories from their experiences with gendered racism which necessarily "speak of and to their

[3] See Figure 1 in Chapter 2.

experiences of living" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542). Similarly, their experiences receiving (and not receiving) validation and feeling a sense of belonging can also generate stories that serve the same purpose.

Statement of Positionality

I identify as a Black man and consider this combination of identities to be my most salient identity. I believe that my Black race and man/man-ness gender identity are more salient to me combined, rather than separate, given that my most blatant experiences with discrimination have been based on this intersection. I can recall different instances both inside and outside of higher education where I believe that I have been discriminated against based specifically on being a *Black man* rather than just being a Black person (e.g., witnessing Black women not receive similar treatment under similar conditions). For example, while taking a course outside of my department as a doctoral student, I had an interaction with a faculty member in which I felt that I was treated differently based on my race and gender. Specifically, I asked the faculty member, a white woman, to clarify some feedback she provided to me on an assignment that seemed contradictory to what she had advised students to do in a previous class session. In response to my calmly stated question, she became defensive, raised her voice, and insinuated that I was overly concerned with my grade in the course (which was not accurate at all). I was quite shocked by her reaction to my question and largely attributed it to gendered racism, in part, given that I had not seen her react in the same manner toward Black women in the course when similar clarifying questions were raised. Consequently, experiences like these have informed my appreciation for understanding the discrimination that other Black men experience as it occurs at the intersection of their race and gender identities.

Moreover, this identity shapes my understanding and interest in exploring the experiences of Black men in undergraduate contexts. In addition to being a Black man, I'm also a former college student affairs professional who has experience working in Black student affairs, career services and judicial affairs. Additionally, as an undergraduate student at a PWI, I interacted with staff members often through various on-campus employment experiences and staff-run events. Through these interactions, I experienced various instances of validation (Rendón, 1994), gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), and had my community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) acknowledged and supported by staff members. While working as a work study student assistant in my undergraduate university's career center, for example, the career counselors in the office would often share summer job opportunities with me before they were shared with other students at the university. Although I lacked self-efficacy in my ability to get hired, based on not having direct experience for these roles and prior poor job application/interview experiences (that I would sometimes attribute to gendered racism), the counselors would encourage me to apply. They would also explain to me how the strengths that I did possess and have used to access the university and navigate it successfully, despite negative experiences at the institution, would make me competitive for these roles. Experiences like this have shaped my understanding and interest in exploring undergraduate students' experiences with student affairs staff at PWIs, and the experiences of Black men in particular, using the aforementioned concepts and theories. Additionally, as a researcher, my scholarship is grounded in critical constructivism. This perspective informs my interest in studying Black men's experiences with gendered racism at PWIs, as well as my selection of guiding theories and concepts that are consistent with it.

I believe that my racial and gender identities, experiences, and epistemological perspective offered advantages to this study in terms of building rapport with participants,

understanding Black men's experiences at PWIs, and staff practices that promote and hinder student persistence. I also, however, acknowledge their potential limitations. For instance, while racial matching (i.e., sharing the same racial identity as one's study participants) offers numerous benefits, one of the drawbacks is the potential for participants to assume that I necessarily understand their experience based on our shared identities, which could result in less meaning making in response to interview questions. It's also important not to overstate the benefits of racial matching since "race is not the only relevant social signifier" (Twine, 2000, p. 9). In other words, race/gender may not be the most salient identities[4] for a particular individual within a particular context. Consequently, assuming that racial or gender identity is as salient to my participants as it is to me, could result in negative outcomes such as the loss of established rapport. Thus, to avoid these negative outcomes, I made sure that I was cognizant of the identities my participants viewed as most important.

Research Design

Initial Research Site Selection and Complications

I originally planned to conduct my study beginning in March 2022 (mid-Spring semester) at one regional public PWI in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. I selected this institution as a research site because regional public universities have a consistent record of successful retention and post-graduate (e.g., upward social mobility) outcomes for racially minoritized students (Klor de Alva, 2019) despite having fewer financial resources than large public and private institutions. Moreover, most racially minoritized students in higher education, and many Black students in particular, are enrolled at regional public universities and community colleges (Carnevale et al., 2018; Klor de Alva, 2019).

[4] Although some scholars, such as Wijeyesinghe (2019) question the notion of identity salience.

Unfortunately, however, after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study from the University of Michigan in March 2022, my primary contact at the regional public institution did not feel comfortable sharing my recruitment materials with students at the university until we spoke with their IRB, and I made requested changes to the materials. These changes to my materials were not approved until late April 2022, which was near the end of the Spring semester at the regional public institution. Consequently, my dissertation chair and I decided that it would be difficult to achieve a desired number of participants by only recruiting at the regional public institution at this point in the semester. Thus, I decided to begin recruitment over the summer of 2022 and broadened the study by recruiting participants from institutions across the country (still focusing on PWIs). As a result, rather than student narratives speaking to their experiences at one institution, their narratives shed light on their experiences at PWIs broadly understood, which was still consistent with the study's purpose and research questions.

Participant Recruitment

Student Participants. Recruitment of student participants began in the summer of 2022, and continued until March 2023. Student participants were recruited through a recruitment email (See Appendix A) and flier (See Appendix B). The recruitment email included the following recruitment criteria: 1) current undergraduate, U.S.-born Black men 2) who have experienced discrimination based on their race and gender at their institution. The email also generally described the study and indicated to students that they would be asked to share stories about their experiences with discrimination at their institution during two interviews (one conventional and one photovoice[5] interview). Students who expressed their interest in the study were directed to

[5] The eventual transition to photo elicitation interviews will be explained in the Data Collection section.

first complete a pre-survey Google form to be considered for selection. The pre-survey (See Appendix C) included demographic questions (e.g., institution they attend, class year, salient social identities) and questions about the types of interactions they had with staff members (e.g., frequency of interactions). Additionally, in the recruitment email I shared with students that if they were selected to participate, they would receive a $50 gift card for each interview. After completion of the pre-survey, and if students met the recruitment criteria, they were then sent the student informed consent form (See Appendix D) and invited to schedule the first interview.

The recruitment email and flier were initially shared with student affairs listservs (e.g., CSPTalk Digest) to which I had been subscribed at the time, and my personal social media accounts (e.g., LinkedIn). After this strategy failed to generate many participants, I consulted with Dr. Derrick Brooms, an expert on Black men and boys' pathways to and through college. Dr. Brooms suggested that I share my recruitment materials directly with students via undergraduate Black student organizations (e.g., Black student unions), as well as with Black men/men of color initiative programs (e.g., Project MALES). Based on this suggestion, I shared my recruitment email and flier with 221 undergraduate Black student organizations and Black men/men of color initiative programs at various PWIs across the U.S (See Appendix E for the full list of student organizations and initiative programs that were contacted). I identified the contact information (i.e., email addresses) for these student organizations and initiative programs through their dedicated page on their university's website, or (specifically for student organizations) via their Presence[6] page. In my outreach emails, I asked if their organization or program would be willing to share my recruitment email with undergraduate Black men at their

[6] Presence is an online platform that gives students access to pertinent information regarding every student organization at their institution (e.g., how to join, when/where are meetings held). It also helps facilitate the work of student organizations (e.g., event planning, membership management).

institution. I also included the language of my recruitment email in my outreach email so that they wouldn't have to wait until I received their response to share the email with students. This strategy proved to be significantly more effective and resulted in 30 responses to my pre-survey.

While several of the responses were from students who did not meet my selection criteria (e.g., they already graduated, they didn't attend PWIs), many of the responses were from students who met my selection criteria. Unfortunately, however, despite multiple attempts to contact them via the contact information they provided, I was not able to get in contact with everyone who met my selection criteria. Thus, the final sample included 12 students. Sample information, including student pseudonyms, can be found in Tables 1 and 2. There were 5 sophomores, 6 juniors, and 1 senior. Of the 12 students, 6 attended large, predominantly white, private universities, 4 attended large, predominantly white, public universities, and 2 attended mid-sized, predominantly white, regional public universities. Students were enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (n = 4), social science (n = 4), and business/business-related (e.g., marketing) (n = 4) majors. Ethnically, students identified as Haitian American (n = 1), Jamaican American (n = 2), Black American (n = 1), and African American (n = 8). Regarding sexual orientation[7], 2 students identified as gay, bisexual, and/or queer, while 10 identified as heterosexual or straight. Only 1 student identified as having a disability (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), while the other 11 indicated that they did not have a disability. Students' social class identities included low income (n = 5), working class (n = 1), and middle class (n = 6). Most students also identified as Christian (n = 9), while 3 identified as Agnostic[8].

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[7] In terms of gender identity, all the students identified as cis-gender men.
[8] *Class standing, major, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, social class, religious identity* all reflect the language used by students in response to open-ended demographic survey questions.

Table 1
Student Participants' Self-Reported Demographics and Exposure to Student Affairs Staff Members (n = 12)

Category	Response
Institution Type Attended	Large, Predominantly White, Private Universities: 6
	Large, Predominantly White, Public Universities: 4
	Mid-Sized, Predominantly White, Regional Public Universities: 2
Class Standing	Sophomore: 5
	Junior: 6
	Senior: 1
Major	Psychology: 2
	Neuroscience and Economics: 1
	Business or Business Management: 2
	Accounting: 1
	Marketing: 1
	Computer Science: 1
	Biotechnology: 1
	Physics: 1
	Social Work: 1
	Political Science: 1
Ethnicity	Haitian American: 1
	Jamaican American: 2
	Black American: 1
	African American: 8
Sexual Orientation[9]	Gay or Bisexual: 2
	Heterosexual or straight: 10
Disability Status	Disabled: 1
	Able-bodied: 11
Social Class	Low Income: 5
	Working Class: 1
	Middle Class: 6
Religious Identity	Agnostic: 3
	Christian: 9
Currently or previously worked in student affairs office.	Yes: 3
	No: 8
	Not sure: 1
Types of staff-run activities participated in while in college.	
	Events planned by student affairs staff members: 2
	Individual/group meetings with student affairs staff members: 10
Frequency of participation in staff-run activities	Weekly: 3
	Monthly: 6
	Yearly: 1
	Only a few times ever: 2

[9] In terms of gender identity, all the students identified as cis-gender men.

Table 2

Student Participants' Pseudonyms and Self-Reported Demographics (n = 12)

Pseudonym	**Institution Type Attended**	**Class Standing**	**Major**	**Ethnicity**	**Sexual Orientation**	**Disability Status**	**Social Class**	**Religious Identity**
Jerry	Large, Predominantly White, Private University	Junior	Psychology	Haitian American	Heterosexual	Disabled (ADHD)	Low Income	Agnostic
Amber	Large, Predominantly White, Private University	Sophomore	Neuroscience and Economics	African American	Heterosexual	Able-bodied	Working Class	Christian
Ben	Large, Predominantly White, Public University	Senior	Business Management	African American	Straight	Able-bodied	Low Income	Christian
Gregory	Large, Predominantly White, Private University	Sophomore	Accounting	African American	Heterosexual	Able-bodied	Low Income	Christian
Rubix	Large, Predominantly White, Public University	Junior	Psychology	Black American	Bisexual	Able-bodied	Middle Class	Christian
Roe	Large, Predominantly White, Private University	Sophomore	Computer Science	African American	Straight	Able-bodied	Low Income	Christian
Bob	Large, Predominantly White, Public University	Junior	Biotechnology	African American	Gay	Able-bodied	Middle Class	Christian
Vex	Large, Predominantly White, Public University	Junior	Marketing	African American	Heterosexual	Able-bodied	Low Income	Christian
Jax	Large, Predominantly White, Private University	Junior	Physics	African American	Straight	Able-bodied	Middle Class	Christian
Marquis	Mid-Sized, Predominantly White, Regional Public University	Sophomore	Business	African American	Straight	No disabilities	Middle Class	Christian
Trance	Mid-Sized, Predominantly White, Regional Public University	Sophomore	Social Work	Jamaican American	Straight	Able-bodied	Middle Class	Agnostic

Jay	Large, Predominantly White, Public University	Junior	Political Science	Jamaican American	Heterosexual	Able-bodied	Middle Class	Agnostic

Lastly, there was some variation in students' exposure to student affairs staff members. Out of the 12 students, 3 were currently or had previously worked in student affairs office, while 8 had done neither and 1 was not sure. In terms of staff-run activities students participated in, 10 students had attended individual and/or group meetings with student affairs staff members and the other 2 had attended events planned by student affairs staff members. Additionally, most students participated in staff-run activities either monthly (n = 6) or weekly (n = 3). The others only participated in these activities yearly (n = 1) or only a few times ever (n = 2).

Staff Participants: Setting the Context. Student affairs staff members, identified by the students in my sample, were also interviewed for this study. Rather than being interviewed for the purpose of directly answering my research questions, staff members instead were included to help me understand their PWI's historical and contemporary context of power, privilege, oppression, and support[10]. Staff members were recruited for the study between the summer of 2022 and April 2023. At the end of my final interviews with students, I asked them each to share the contact information for a staff member at their institution who they found particularly supportive so that I could interview them for the study as well. Once students identified a staff member and shared their office and contact information, I subsequently reached out to them through a recruitment email. In the recruitment email (See Appendix F), I generally described the study and shared that I had interviewed students at their university who identified them as

[10] Which is, based on my theoretical framework, the primary context within which Black men's meaning making takes place.

someone they found to be supportive. I then asked if they would be interested in speaking with me for (1) one-on-one, hour-long virtual interview, during which, I'd ask them to share stories regarding their experience working with students of color in general and Black men specifically. I also shared with them that they would receive a $100 Mastercard gift card for their participation. My only criterion for staff recruitment was that they were non-academic student affairs staff members (e.g., cultural center director, student activities assistant director), given that the literature on students' interactions with staff largely focuses on academic staff (e.g., Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Museus & Neville, 2012; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Each staff member identified by students met this criterion. Thus, once they expressed interest in participating in the study, they were then sent the staff informed consent form (See Appendix G) and invited to schedule the first interview.

Ultimately, students were able to identify three supportive staff members for me to contact. Some students could identify supportive staff but could not recall their names or titles. Others could not identify anyone at all. Additionally, I was only able to coordinate interviews with two out the three staff members since one of them did not respond to my numerous emails requesting an interview. The two staff members chose the pseudonyms Raymond and Desiree, respectively, and both shared demographic information during their interviews. Raymond and Desiree both work in multicultural affairs at different institutions. Raymond works as an assistant director at a large, predominantly white, public university in the Mid-Atlantic, while Desiree is a director at mid-sized, predominantly white, regional public university also in the Mid-Atlantic. Raymond has worked at his institution for five years and shared during the interview that he was from the town in which his university is located. Desiree, while having several years of experience in student affairs, had only been in her role as director for less than a year at the time

of the interview[11]. Prior to that, she was working in multicultural affairs at another institution. They both also shared that they interact with students daily and that their position responsibilities primarily consist of strategic planning, program coordination, mentoring students, and participating in their institutions' diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. They both also identified as people of color (Raymond identified as Black and Desiree identified as Latinx). This information can also be found in Table 3.

Table 3
Staff Participants' Pseudonyms and Self-Reported Demographics (n = 2)

Pseudonym	**Race**	**Institution Type**	**Student Affairs Functional Area**	**# of Years Worked at Institution**	**Position Responsibilities**
Raymond	Black	Large Public PWI	Multicultural affairs	5	strategic planning, program coordination, mentoring students, and participating in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives
Desiree	Latinx	Midsize Regional Public PWI	Multicultural affairs	Less than 1 year	strategic planning, program coordination, mentoring students, and participating in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

[11] April 2023

Approach to Participant Sampling. My initial plan was to interview 15 students and 5 student affairs staff members. Given that there is little consensus among scholars regarding how many participants researchers should interview in qualitative studies, many instead suggest myriad factors to consider when choosing an appropriate sample size including choice of methodology and the heterogeneity of the population from which the sample is drawn (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Some scholars, for instance, argue that methodologies such as narrative inquiry require a more intense analysis than other methodologies and that this warrants a smaller sample size (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Others argue that researchers should consider increasing their sample size when the population(s) of interest is expected to have sub-group variability with respect to experiences and world views (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Consequently, my desire to interview 15 students was the result of my attempt to balance the use of narrative inquiry, with my desire to capture at least some variability regarding student experiences and views based on their different social identities, exposure to staff members, etc. On the other hand, I did not believe that I would need as many people to explain institutional contexts and thus, I only wanted to interview 5 staff members. My final sample of 12 students and 2 staff members still attended to these considerations despite being somewhat smaller than intended. Moreover, I believe that the smaller sample size facilitated the establishment of greater rapport with participants and offered the opportunity for interviews to go more in depth when possible.

Data Collection

Student Data Collection Process. Student data were collected between the summer (i.e., June/July) of 2022 and April 2023. During this time, each student was interviewed twice. The first student interview was a conventional interview and the second student interview focused exclusively on student-provided photos or images. Interviews were scheduled based on student availability and preferences, which varied considerably. Thus, some students' second interviews took place a few days after the first interview, while others took place several weeks after the first interview. I chose to interview students twice based on the idea that more events that could potentially generate more images/photos and evoke more student storytelling could occur between the first and second interviews. Furthermore, even if no new story or photo-generating events occurred between the two interviews, I believed that the use of photos in the second interview could reveal more information about stories that were previously shared during the conventional interviews (and this did end up happening). Both conventional and image-based student interviews were one-on-one, semi-structured, and each interview was 30-60 minutes[12]. Additionally, since students were physically located in various states across the country, all student interviews took place virtually via Zoom video conferencing software. All interviews, including image-based interviews, were video and audio recorded with the permission of my participants.

Conventional Interviews with Students. Data were first collected through conventional interviews with students. Prior to these interviews, I sent students a short, jargon-free summary of my dissertation project given that some scholars have noted this as an effective practice for building rapport with participants in advance of interviews (McGrath et al., 2019). This summary gave them an idea of what topics would be covered during the interview and explained why it's

[12] Reasons for this variation in interview length are provided in the subsection on restorying student stories.

important for them to share their experiences about these topics (McGrath et al., 2019), and specifically, their experiences with gendered racism. Additionally, prior to this interview, I asked students to provide a pseudonym they would like to use for the interviews and bring a photo or image with them that exemplified how they felt after an experience with gendered racism at their institution. During the interview, we discussed this image before covering the primary interview topics to get them comfortable with sharing their experiences with gendered racism. This initial image exercise also primed them for the second interview, which was completely based on their images and photos.

After the conventional interviews, I reminded students that we would next be doing an image-based interview at a later date, and I attempted to schedule this interview with them during this time when possible. I then shared with students that I would send a follow-up email in which I would ask for their home address to mail them their gift cards at the completion of both interviews. Moreover, in recognition of the trauma students' experiences with gendered racism have caused, and continue to cause them, this follow-up email also included links to various audio, video, and written resources for navigating racial trauma.

Interview topics for the conventional interviews with students (see Appendix H) included: 1) An initial photo/image discussion 2) Stories, thoughts, and feelings about experiences with anti-Black men discrimination at their institution and 3) Stories, thoughts, and feelings about staff members who have helped them navigate discriminatory experiences and those who have prevented them from navigating these experiences. Interview questions for the first topic included questions such as: Please share the story related to this image. Interview questions for the second topic included questions such as: Please share a story about a negative experience you have had on campus that you believe was based on your race and gender.

Interview questions for the third topic included questions such as: Tell me about a time when a staff member encouraged or supported you academically.

The development of these interview topics and questions were informed by my conceptual framework and research questions. The first topic and questions, focusing on a photo/image students brought with them related to their experiences with gendered racism, align with the second level of concentric contexts in my conceptual framework (see Figure 1). The second level refers to the contemporary context of gendered racism at the student's PWI. Questions from topic #1 consistent with this level include questions such as: How does this photo relate to your experiences with race and gender-based discrimination at your university? This topic and questions are also consistent with my research questions given the focus on students' experiences gendered racism.

The second topic and subsequent questions, further exploring students' experiences with anti-Black men discrimination at their institution, are also aligned with the second level of concentric contexts in my conceptual framework. Questions from topic #2 consistent with this level include questions such as: What effect, if any, did these experiences with race and gender-based discrimination have on your desire to finish your degree? As with topic #1, topic #2 and its questions are also consistent with my research question for similar reasons.

Additionally, the third topic and set of questions are based on the third level of concentric contexts in the framework, which is the context of Black men and student affairs staff interactions. Questions from topic #3 consistent with this level include questions such as: Tell me about a time when you interacted with a supportive staff member that stands out to you and explain why it stands out? Topic #3 and its questions align with my second research question given the emphasis on students' meaning making related to their interactions with staff members.

Moreover, the theories I've used to understand these interactions including Validation (Rendón, 1994), Sense of Belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), and Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) are reflected specifically in the set of questions from topic #3 (e.g., Tell me about a time when a staff member encouraged or supported you academically, Did this staff member negatively impact your sense of social support on campus?, Tell me about a time when they encouraged or helped you use your personal resources to navigate discriminatory experiences) Lastly, my overall focus on students' sharing stories of their experiences, while understanding that their experiences are shaped and constrained by systems of power, privilege, and oppression, is consistent with my use of narrative inquiry and critical constructivism (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005).

Image-Based Interviews with Students. After conventional interviews with students were completed, data was then intended to be collected through photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999) interviews with students. Photovoice is a qualitative data collection technique that gives participants the opportunity to "identify, represent, and enhance their community" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Specifically, participants are tasked with sharing photographs with the researcher for the purpose of recording and reflecting "their community's strengths and concerns" (p. 370) and to "promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues" (p. 370) through the discussion of photographs.

During these interviews (see Appendix I), I asked students to share photos that exemplified: their experiences with gendered racism, the ways that staff members have helped them navigate gendered racism, and how staff have prevented them from navigating gendered racism. Students were asked to describe how these photos represent these phenomena using an adapted version of Wang's (1999) "SHOWeD" (p. 188) interview questions. According to Wang

(1999), participants can frame stories about their photographs "in terms of questions spelling the acronym SHOWeD" (p. 188). The questions focus on what participants see (S) in the photo, what they believe is actually happening (H) in the photo, how what is happening relates to our (i.e., their) lives (O), why (W) they believe this "situation, concern, or strength exists?" (p. 188), and what actions they can take or what they believe they can do (D) about it?

Over the course of conducting these interviews, however, I realized that rather than sharing photos they took themselves, which is more traditionally associated with photovoice (Glaw et al., 2017; Wang, 1999), everyone I interviewed chose to share stock images or film stills from the internet. I attribute this outcome primarily to my decision to give students the option to share *any* photos or images they could find that represented their experiences. Consequently, the interviews that followed were less consistent with photovoice, and more consistent with photo elicitation (Glaw et al., 2017). Photo elicitation is a similar qualitative data collection technique using participant-supplied (or researcher-supplied) images or photos to generate discussion with participants (Glaw et al., 2017). The main differences between photovoice and photo elicitation are that, with photo elicitation, participants are not necessarily taking their own photos and the shared images/photos do not have to represent participants' communities.

Yet, despite its differences with photovoice, photo elicitation provided similar benefits to the research process to those I intended to receive from using photovoice. Specifically, by being a visual method, like photovoice, photo elicitation offered detail that differed from what was acquired through conventional interviews (Glaw et al., 2017). Glaw et al. (2017) touches on this benefit by arguing that since the area of the brain in which visual information is processed has existed in humans longer than the area that processes verbal information, "visual images evoke

deeper parts of human consciousness than words do" (p. 3). Consequently, visual methods can elicit "more information and evokes a different kind of information during an interview" (p. 3) than conventional interviews. Moreover, although visual methods like photo elicitation and photovoice have been rarely used in studies of Black men in higher education (Allen, 2018), there are benefits to using these techniques to study this population. Visual methods have, for example, often been used to give researchers the opportunity to visibly see how the world is viewed by individuals from minoritized groups, including racially minoritized college students (Allen, 2018; Duran, 2019; Phelps-Ward, 2021; Wang & Burris, 1997). This is important because it privileges the "subjugated knowledges and the unique perspective of the oppressed" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 14), which is consistent with critical constructivism.

Staff Interviews. Each staff member was interviewed once via one conventional interview that took place at the conclusion of all student interviews, and these interviews were also scheduled based on staff availability and preferences. I decided to only interview staff members once given my belief that their understanding of their PWI's historical and contemporary context of power, privilege, and oppression could be shared in one interview. Moreover, I chose to do conventional, and not image-based, interviews with staff members because my primary purpose in using an image-based interviewing method was to generate a different type of data from students[13] and I did not have a similar goal in mind for staff. Staff interviews were also one-on-one, semi-structured, and each interview lasted around 50-60 minutes. Similarly, since the interviewed staff members were in the Mid-Atlantic, while I was

[13] See the description of image-based interviews with students for more information on this purpose.

located on the West Coast at the time of the interviews, each staff interview took place virtually via Zoom video conferencing software.

As with students, I also sent staff members a short, jargon-free summary of my dissertation project prior to the interview to begin building rapport (McGrath et al., 2019). Staff conventional interview topics (see Appendix J) focused on: 1) Historical examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color 2) Contemporary examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color. Interview questions for the first topic included questions such as: What had you heard about the experiences of Black people (students, staff, service works, faculty, visitors) at your university before you started working here? Interview questions for the second topic included questions such as: Tell me about a recent time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or Black man specifically, being supported by people at your university in a social, academic, or employment setting. The development of these interview topics and questions were also informed by my conceptual framework and methodology. Both interview topics were meant to examine the primary context in the framework within which Black men's meaning making takes place (i.e., the PWI's historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression), as well as how gendered racism occurs on campus specifically, which is also consistent with critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005). At the end of my staff interviews, I shared with them that I would send a follow-up email in which I would ask for their home addresses to mail them their gift cards.

Reciprocity

The use of a critical epistemological perspective such as critical constructivism also begets the need to consider how reciprocal I've made the research process (Hytten, 2004;

Kincheloe, 2005). Specifically, since the goal of critical scholarship is "to help participants develop more critical forms of understanding needed to change their lives[14]" (Hytten, 2004, p. 102), thoughtful attention must be given to how the research process supports participants towards this end. Therefore, I've used several different strategies to support reciprocity for my participants. First, for students, the interview questions I asked during both interviews gave them the opportunity to perhaps think more critically about their experiences with discrimination than they had previously, which in turn could lead them to identify discrimination more easily in their lives and the lives of those around them[15]. My decision to use visual methods aligned with this aim as well since it gave students a "respectful and meaningful" (Hytten, 2004, p. 104) role in the research process by having them bring in and talk about their own images, and again think about their experiences in a different way (Glaw et al., 2017).

During and after interviews with students, I would also sometimes share my own past and contemporary experiences with gendered racism to show my interest in connecting with them beyond their status as study participants. Furthermore, to support reciprocity, I compensated both students and staff by giving them $100 Mastercard gift cards for their participation. In addition, I systematically shared my research findings (i.e., as they were uncovered) with my participants (with all names redacted) so that they could develop more critical understandings of their experiences, and also determine how to use the findings to support practices and policies on their specific campus.

Analysis of Student and Staff Interviews

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[14] Critical scholars often refer to this as *participants' emancipation* (Hytten, 2004)
[15] One student shared with me after an interview that this had occurred for him.

All interviews were transcribed primarily using Otter.ai transcription software. I then edited the interview transcripts produced by Otter.ai when the artificial intelligence-generated transcripts included inaccuracies (i.e., missed or inaccurate words). This editing process required me to listen to the audio recording of the interviews multiple times and re-type what was stated word-for-word, which was particularly important for the restorying process described in the next section given that "the participants' words are central in the construction of the stories" (Rolón-Dow & Bailey, 2022, p. 6).

Restorying Student Stories. The first phase of analysis involved restorying (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) student stories shared from conventional and photo elicitation interviews. Restorying refers to "gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the story to place it within a chronological sequence" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 332). Stories provided during students' conventional and photo elicitation interviews were specifically restoried using Rolón-Dow's and Bailey's (2022) version of the three-dimensional space approach to restorying. According to Rolón-Dow and Bailey (2022), this approach requires researchers to give priority to "the description of individual experiences as they occur through social interactions and situations" (p. 6) for the purpose of communicating "why and how things happened in a holistic way that helps the readers understand the significance of an event from the perspective of the main character—in this case, the research participant" (p. 6). Consistent with Rolón-Dow and Bailey (2022), my restorying process involved three rounds of transcript editing. During the first round of editing, I focused on removing my interview questions from the transcripts and addressing minor clarity issues (e.g., adding words in brackets as needed). I then divided the transcripts into two parts consistent with the structure of the interview: (a) students' stories about experiences with

gendered racism and (b) stories about staff members who have helped and hindered their navigation of these experiences.

My goal for the second round of editing was to (re)present or "retell the story so that it could easily be understood by anyone unfamiliar with the interview" (p. 7). To accomplish this (see Table 4 for sample restoried story), I paid close attention to the following story elements: (1) the context of the story and characters involved, (2) story plot/interactions in the story, (3) any affective responses from the student, (4) post-experience events, and (5) the student's thoughts and feelings after reflecting on the experience. Students' stories were color-coded and reordered as needed to correspond with the order of these elements, and to "ensure that the reader could follow the order of the events in each story and that they understood the context, characters involved, and the ways the story was significant to the storyteller" (p. 7).

Table 4

Sample Restoried Story

Story: Career Services Networking Event Student: Marquis So, I will say one time that I felt discriminated [against] was we were…how do I explain this? So basically, there was…they [career center staff members] asked me to dress professional. I'm going to a [networking] event, and they said, dress professional in your own way. I'm being honest, being a young Black man, and being raised in a church with…a pastor, my suits were always either like, really sharp or loud in a way… I wouldn't mind wearing an orange suit paired with like black pants…stuff like that. My style spoke for me in a professional way. And I had gotten asked [by a career center graduate assistant] when I was at that event…I had gotten asked to leave and change because it did not represent the professionalism that they	Story Elements: Yellow = Context and Characters Blue = Interaction (what happened) Grey = Affective response (how participant felt in the moment) Green = Post-interaction (anything that happened afterwards related to experience) Orange = Reflection response (participant's thoughts and feelings when asked how they think about experience after retelling it).

wanted. And I'm looking around and everybody else has on suits, and everything. It took me a while to notice when I really looked around, I'm like, "okay, well, you don't like my outfit, because it's not your typical professionalism, like the other white men or women are wearing around me." And then when I did go to a person [a full-time staff member] higher up than him [the graduate assistant], they even said the same thing. Well…"we'll let you tone it down a little bit." So, it wasn't just a student, it literally went up. And I was like, "okay, I'll go home." And I didn't go back because it's like…at that point, I got judged for who I was, and…what I wear, you know? So definitely made me rethink, like, when I do things on this campus. Yes, do it my way, but at same time, there's almost like an invisible ceiling, that I cannot pass that I have to keep here. A lot of times, I've got judged for that…where sometimes when I go to certain events on campus, I have to always like think, "okay, well, I can't really do that, because I'll get called out for that." So, you feel so isolated but yet it's such a big room, you know? So, I will say that's one of my most memorable experiences.	

The third round of editing involved sharing drafts of restoried stories to students prior to moving to the next phase of analysis (Rolón-Dow & Bailey, 2022). I encouraged students to provide feedback regarding any edits they wanted to their stories, but no one offered any suggested edits. Students either didn't respond to my request for feedback or indicated that the stories accurately reflected their voices. Still, despite their lack of requested edits, the process of

soliciting feedback from students on their restoried stories was necessary for several reasons. One reason was its consistency with the critical constructivist perspective (Kincheloe, 2005) guiding this study. Specifically, this process allowed me to foreground the "subjugated knowledges and the unique perspective of" (p. 14) my participants by ensuring that they felt confident that their voices were accurately reflected in their restoried stories. Some of the other reasons related to voice and signature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) will be discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

It's important to note, however, that while many student stories attended to each of the story elements I sought to capture, this was not the case for every story. I attribute this inconsistency to my inability to consistently elicit detailed responses from students, in addition to students sometimes being unable to provide more detail than what was initially offered. Moreover, some students had more stories to share than others (e.g., which is why interview time length varied as discussed in the data collection section). Given that we were discussing what, for many were traumatic experiences, I felt it prudent to avoid insisting that they provide more stories and/or detail so that our established rapport could be preserved. Ultimately, the restorying process led to the creation of between 4-11 stories per student.

Throughout the restorying process, I made sure to factor in considerations of voice, signature, and audience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The challenge of negotiating voice in narrative inquiry can be understood through "the analogy of living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences..." (p. 147). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that this challenge is overcome by the researcher exercising good judgment while restorying and being open to criticism from both participants and the broader audience, regarding their

(re)presentations of participant stories. My practice of sharing both my restoried stories and findings with participants was also informed by this consideration. By encouraging students to suggest edits they wanted to their stories, I was necessarily inviting any criticisms they had for my (re)presentations of their stories.

Signature refers to the researcher's distinct voice that arises when (re)telling participants' stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the dilemma with developing one's signature is "the dilemma of how lively our signature should be: too vivid a signature runs the risk of obscuring the field and its participants" (p. 148). On the other hand, "too subtle a signature runs the risk of the deception that the research text speaks from the point of view of the participant" (p. 148). My signature is largely evident in the clarity-related edits I made to students' stories, including adding ellipsis to indicate missed or inaccurate words in the transcripts and adding words in brackets. These edits served the purpose of helping the reader better understand what students' intended to express, yet they were still my interpretations. Thus, having students provide feedback on my restoried stories was also a way to ensure that I was not "obscuring" (p. 148) their voices. Additionally, my decision to follow Rolón-Dow's and Bailey's (2022) restorying approach, and specifically, the process of editing stories so that different elements (e.g., the context of the story) were apparent, was based on my desire to make sure the reader or audience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) could understand the stories in general and what story elements "might be valuable for them" (p. 149).

Thematic Narrative Analysis of Student Stories. After the restroying process was completed, I engaged in thematic narrative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Riessman, 2008) of students' restoried stories. Thematic narrative analysis involves "identifying, analysing and reporting" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) themes across stories by focusing attention on the

entire story rather than its individual elements such as the context or affective responses (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, through my analysis, I sought to uncover types of stories (i.e., what is this story about) and overall themes across story types. In other words, the story types served as "codes" used to generate themes. To accomplish this, I used an adapted version of Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) reflexive thematic analysis, which is a "situated interpretative reflexive process" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 333-4) through which coding "is open and organic, with no use of any coding framework" (p. 334). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) outline a six-step process for reflexive thematic analysis. The first two steps involved familiarizing myself with the data and generating initial story types informed by my research questions and theoretical framework. An example of my story type generation process is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Example of Story Type Generation Process

Story: Unhelpful Academic Advisor	Story Types:
Student: Trance So, my transcript didn't transfer over until this semester. So, I was marked down as a freshman when I came here because only a few [credits] transferred over. But now I'm a…sophomore/junior, because I took a year off because of Corona [COVID-19 Pandemic] and other things I had going on. And she [his academic advisor] just…didn't tell me what to do, like, "what should I do?" Like actually, "what should I do?" And she just had no idea. She was like, "just take this, this, and this...and wait till your transcripts come over" and she just…really wasn't trying to...[understand] what I'm trying to do. I have…a major in Social Work and a minor in African Studies and Cannabis [Studies]. So I'm trying to see…where can I go about that…what	academic invalidation from staff; staff failing to support student's CCW; lack of perceived social support from staff; gendered racism from staff

classes should I take? And I really just have to do everything myself...look it up...ask other people, see what classes are about and…really…deep dive into the work. I feel like...all of my classes are like, all my…major social work classes...they're all white women. I don't think she [academic advisor] was expecting to have a Black man…to be...[an advisee for this major] because it's rare that there's men in my class. There's always women, especially white women. Yeah, my [academic] advisor was no help at all.	

These story types were inductively generated. Specifically, when reading a story, I made connections between different aspects of the story and my theoretical framework, and this led to the creation of a story type. In the example story provided in Table 5, four story types were generated that relate to validation (Rendón, 1994), sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007). For instance, given that the staff member Trance is interacting with in this story is failing to help him believe in his ability to be successful in college academically (Rendón, 1994), I determined that "academic invalidation from staff" would be one of the appropriate story types. Each story type also generally represents what the story is about, while also speaking to how Trance made meaning of his interaction with the staff member (i.e., one of my research questions). Moreover, through the identification of story types, rather than breaking down the story into its component parts, the story itself is maintained as it is (Riessman, 2008).

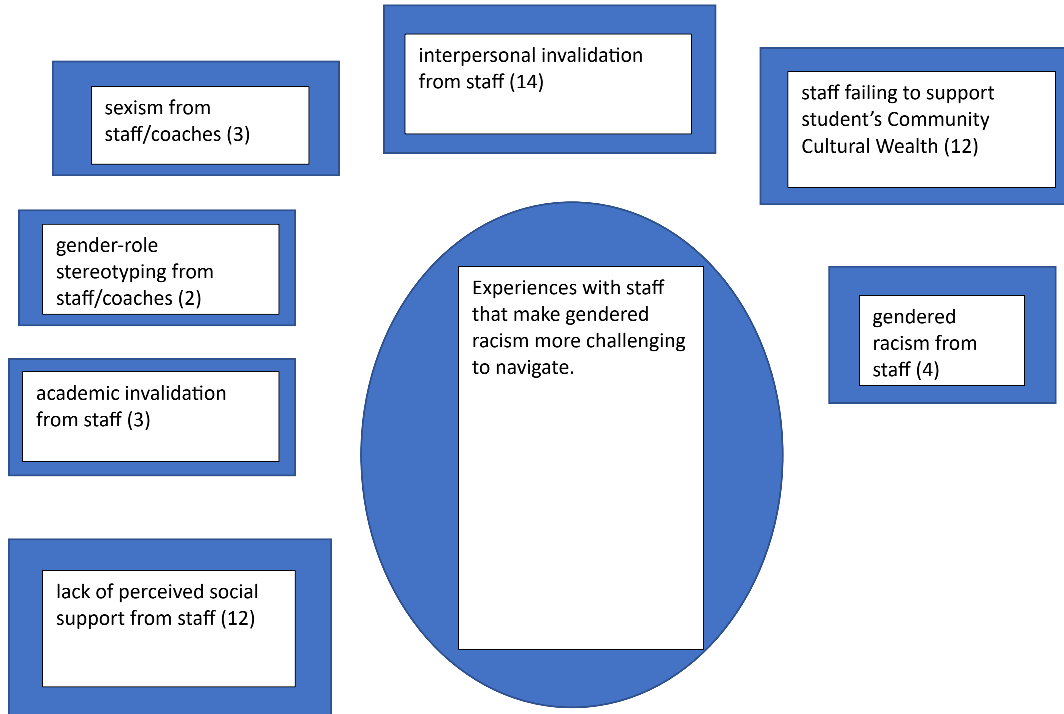
Next, I identified and developed themes from the story types (steps 3-5) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I first counted all story types and kept track of how many times an individual story type was identified. Specifically, there were 60 unique story types, and 41 story types were identified

more than once. Then, for the story types that were identified more than once, I grouped similar ones together and developed themes using thematic maps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A sample thematic map can be seen in Figure 2. Through this process, I generated 3 themes that address how Black men make meaning of their experiences with gendered racism and their interactions with staff members as they navigate gendered racism.

I attempted to avoid theme overlap by labeling my themes in ways that would necessarily preclude story types from falling into multiple themes. Specifically, I used two labeling strategies. The first strategy involved creating labels that were inconsistent with each other. For instance, while theme #2 included experiences with staff that make gendered racism more challenging to navigate, theme #3 was experiences with staff that make gendered racism less challenging to navigate (i.e., the opposite). The second strategy involved creating labels that specified the absence of staff experiences given that there were story types that were unrelated to my research questions. Consequently, there were themes that were not relevant to my research questions. For instance, one theme was labeled "General (non-staff related) experiences that make gendered racism more challenging to navigate." These included experiences with peers, and faculty, but staff experiences were not included (e.g., lack of perceived social support from peers). Additionally, the themes that answered my research questions were further refined to more clearly reflect how students made meaning of their interactions with staff (e.g., theme #2 became "Stories of Mostly Dismissive and Unavailable Staff Members"). The last step in the process involved selecting exemplary stories shared by students to discuss in the findings section (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Since the images were only used to generate more storytelling, they were not analyzed.

Figure 2

Sample Thematic Map



Oval = Theme

Rectangles = Story Types

Numbers = The Number of Times the Story Type was Identified

Constant Comparative Analysis of Staff Interviews. After student interview data were analyzed, I then began analyzing staff interviews. Prior to this, I shared interview transcripts with staff members to make sure they felt the transcripts were consistent with what was shared during our interviews. To reiterate, staff members were not interviewed to help me answer my research questions, but instead to help me understand their PWI's historical and contemporary context of power, privilege, oppression, and support. Thus, I did not use the aforementioned narrative methods (i.e., restorying and thematic narrative analysis) to analyze their interviews. Alternatively, I chose to use the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to compare each experience or story shared by staff members at every stage of the analysis to uncover concepts and generate categories that reveal themes. The question guiding my analysis of staff interviews was: How do staff members make meaning of their university's historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, oppression, and support?

I first engaged in open coding to break down staff interview responses through line-by-line analysis into concepts related to my guiding question (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Example concepts from open coding include "POC's[16] experiences with racism in academic and student affairs spaces," "Black men's experiences with gendered racism through racialized/gendered profiling," and "Supporting Black men at the university by establishing close relationships, providing resources, and modeling behavior." I then interrelated the concepts through axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which resulted in the emergence of two broader categories of concepts that respond to my guiding question. For instance, the concepts "POC's experiences with racism in academic and student affairs spaces" and "Black men's experiences with gendered racism through racialized/gendered profiling," were grouped under the broader

[16] People of color

category "Historical and contemporary oppressive and unsupportive contexts for Black men and other people of color at the university."

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. As mentioned in the data collection and restorying student stories sections, student interview time length tended to vary and thus some student interviews were shorter than others, with some being as low as 30 minutes[17]. Although scholars generally view 30 minutes as an appropriate time length for semi-structured interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Jamshed, 2014), this could still be viewed as a limitation given the potential for less data collection during shorter interviews. Other study limitations relate to the demographics of my student sample. Specifically, out of 12 students, 10 attended large private and public universities, and all students identified as cis-gender men. Thus, the perspectives of students attending smaller institutions are limited, while the perspectives of trans men are nonexistent in this sample. The students in this sample also had frequent exposure to staff members primarily through participation in staff-run activities (i.e., events planned by staff members, individual and/or group meetings with staff members). As a result, the experiences of students who have had limited (but potentially meaningful[18]) interactions with staff are underrepresented. Additionally, since (anecdotally) some college students are generally unaware of which campus employees are classified as student affairs staff members, some may have chosen not to participate in this study as a result. Moreover, even some of my study participants may have chosen not to share certain experiences that they deemed irrelevant to the interview based on this lack knowledge.

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[17] See the restorying student stories section for reasons for this variation.
[18] See Haley (2023) for examples of these types of staff-student interactions

Trustworthiness

I have used several strategies to enhance this study's trustworthiness in spite its limitations. I engaged in member checking with participants by sharing restoried stories with students before beginning thematic narrative analysis and sharing interview transcripts with staff members before analyzing them for the purpose of establishing credibility (McGregor, 2018; McKim, 2023). I have checked for discrepant evidence to support alternative claims and this data is included as part of its own theme. (Maxwell, 2013; McGregor, 2018). I have also included a positionality statement in which I describe how my identities as a Black man and former student affairs educator shape my understanding and interest in exploring this topic. Additionally, my discussion of study limitations in the previous section further supports trustworthiness (McGregor, 2018).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described this study's philosophical and methodological foundations and then covered the specific methods that were used. I began by discussing the study's philosophical and methodological foundations, including critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005), qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013), and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2008), and how they each are consistent with the study's purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework. I ended this chapter with a discussion of the study's research design, trustworthiness, and limitations. In the next chapters, I will describe the themes generated from staff and student interviews. These chapters will include exemplary stories shared by students and staff.

Chapter 4 Historical and Contemporary Contexts of Power, Privilege, Oppression, and Support at Participants' PWIs

The next two chapters (4 and 5) will include a discussion of insights and findings from interviews with student affairs staff members and students. In chapter 4 (the current chapter), I will discuss contextual insights from my interviews with student affairs staff members, while chapter 5 will focus on findings from student interviews. I chose to organize my presentation of findings in this manner given its consistency with my theoretical framework. As described in my theoretical framework (see Figure 1), I argue that Black men's meaning making occurs within and is informed by concentric contexts. The primary context within which their meaning-making takes place is the PWI with its historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression. To help me better understand this context, I interviewed two staff members (Desiree and Raymond) recommended by student participants. Admittedly, these staff members only represented two institutional types (Large Public PWI and Midsize Regional Public PWI), and thus, my understanding of PWI contexts more broadly understood is limited. Nevertheless, my analysis of staff interviews revealed two key themes regarding how staff members make meaning of their university's historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, oppression, and support. These themes include: 1) Racism, Underrepresentation, and the Absence of Community and Staff Support 2) Mostly Informal Guidance and Support and Some Institutionally Sponsored Resources. It's important to note that while the primary context of my theoretical framework are the PWIs' contexts of power, privilege, and oppression, it was also helpful for me to understand what *supportive* contexts look like (and have looked like overtime) at these institutions. Specifically, I believe exploring historical and contemporary supportive

contexts at these institutions through staff interviews helped me better understand how student participants made meaning of the presence and absence of support when interacting with staff members. This ultimately gave me a clearer sense of how students (overall) made meaning of their interactions with staff members as they navigated gendered racism (i.e., one of my research questions). Similarly, speaking with staff members about historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression also enhanced my understanding of how the men in this study made meaning of experiences with gendered racism by adding context to their interpretations.

Racism, Underrepresentation, and the Absence of Belonging and Staff Support

Normalized Racism and the Absence of Staff Support

Raymond (a Black man working in multicultural affairs) and Desiree (a Latinx woman working in multicultural affairs) offered numerous examples of historical and contemporary oppressive and unsupportive contexts at their universities for people of color, including Black men. Interestingly, they offered more of these types of examples than they did of supportive contexts. Historical contexts included Black men's experiences with gendered racism through racialized/gendered profiling, racially minoritized students' experiences with racism in academic and student affairs spaces, and racially minoritized staff feeling a lack of a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), and support at their universities.

Raymond first provided some insight on the oppression Black men have experienced at his institution over time. He shared that racial/gendered profiling from local police has historically been a common experience reported by students and staff who are Black men: "I think definitely…a lot of profiling is the biggest one I think that I hear the most of. Just in the community like…"oh, I got stopped [by the police]."" He went on to share an example from a weekly luncheon that he coordinates for men of color with other staff and faculty who are Black

men, showing how frequently this issue has come up in his conversations with Black men at the university since he began working there:

> We have a lunch every week where we get…a lot of men of color to sit out together and just kind of connect and talk. And…sometimes it's sports, sometimes it's…more serious things. But I feel like every year since I've been here, which is…going over five or six years now, there's always at least a couple of lunches where everyone's talking about their experience with…being profiled…being…overly questioned off campus and on campus. So, I think…with Black men specifically, I think that's probably the one that stands out the most, where people will almost...over question, like, "what are the intentions of this guy?" Or..."is he really a…good staffer?" Or "is he really just driving to go visit his friend… at the dorm, or the residence halls, whatever." So, I would say that's the biggest one that stands out.

Gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) against Black men in the form of racial/gendered profiling from law enforcement has, thus, been so recurrent at this institution that Raymond recalled Black men sharing this experience with him every year that he has been in his position (which reinforces the need for these types of lunches in the first place). This normalization of gendered racism also suggests that the institution may not acknowledge this as a structural issue that they have the ability to address, which would exacerbate the issue for Black men who instead have to rely on lunches such as these for support.

Raymond and Desiree then discussed how students of color in general have historically experienced racism in different spaces at their institutions. Raymond, for instance, broadly spoke to the types of discriminatory incidents students have shared with him over the years:

> From, the student perspective, there's definitely been situations of like…in the residence halls, where somebody puts up a [racist]…drawing under one of the whiteboards in the res halls, or maybe a professor says something that maybe might not necessarily be like a direct…statement, but just kind of reads a little bit like maybe…tone deaf or slight microaggression, things like that. Definitely have heard those types of things.

Desiree, on the other hand, shared a specific story about a student's negative classroom experience that occurred before she began working at her institution:

> Our students of color have absolutely shared with me, some horrific examples of...when they were tokenized in the classroom, or...there were microaggressions. One student, she shared, that she was working on a group project, and one of the white students was sharing an experience that she had, and she was repeating something, but she kept repeating the N-word. And...this female [student of color] was like, "I'm offended, and I'm not even Black. I can't imagine if you said this in front of a Black person." And the [white] student just had no regard...and the faculty had no regard. And it's just like, "why is this okay?"

She went on to explain why students have historically believed that it's not worthwhile to report such incidents to the university administration:

> And...someone [a student] said to me the other day..."I'm used to it; this is normal behavior. So, I'm used to it," I said, "no, it's not."... And even if you feel...this is something that students have said, "I feel that the university won't do anything. I feel like...it's just another complaint that's gonna go unaddressed."

Despite the prevalence of racist incidents, students of color seem to have historically deemed it unnecessary to report them, given the belief that the university will not do anything to address

the issue. Instead, these students feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with staff members of color like Desiree and Raymond who, as I'll describe later, often provide more informal forms of support. Accordingly, racist incidents at these institutions against students of color in general, like gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) against Black men specifically, become normalized ("this is normal behavior") over time, and oppression can consequently shape the experiences of students of color (Kincheloe, 2005).

Raymond and Desiree also described how staff of color have historically felt like they don't belong and that they are not well supported at their institutions. Prior to working at his university, Raymond, for example, shares that he would hear from others that there is a lack of community and resources for Black and other staff of color:

> So I think that when I finally had to work on the campus, or what I would hear sometimes, before I got on campus was…there was a lot that people didn't feel really welcomed that much, or maybe not necessarily welcomed, but it just felt like you're...on the outside looking in, because there's a community of people who are not...of color, not Black people, faculty [or] staff, there's not really a lot of...I guess…for lack of better terms, like cultural resources around the community.

He then explains what he meant by the term "cultural resources" and why the absence of these resources has been problematic for staff of color and the university:

> So, a lot of people will say that there's not a lot to do here, there's not a lot to do for people of color. There's no food, no…hairdressers, no…attractions, things like that. And I think that especially... from the faculty/staff, I think it tends to be a little bit harder, because it may just be…one person, maybe one person and their significant other, maybe a couple of kids. So, it's like, well, "where do I find my group?" And I think that's also played a role

> where...people [are] leaving the university a little bit earlier than people would like, because it's like, "well, I mean, it's great, it's fine. Like, I'm enjoying it, but at the same time...I can't find…something to do on the weekends, or my kids don't have a lot of friends that are from where we're from..."

The lack of culturally informed amenities, services, and attractions in the university's surrounding community for staff of color, therefore, negatively impacts their desire to continue working at the university. Moreover, this attrition of staff of color could also be detrimental to the experiences of students of color who will, consequently, have fewer staff members who look like them from whom they can receive support.

Desiree was also able to share what she heard about the experiences of staff of color at her university before she began her role. Like Raymond, she noted that some of her colleagues felt like there was a lack of community and that they didn't feel supported by the university, despite the effort they put into making students feel supported:

> So, I just think that, yes, we're there to serve the students, but before we can pour into them and, and help them be at their best, we have to find community for ourselves. And unfortunately, I feel like a lot of my colleagues are not there. Some become very jaded. And...it's harder to do the work when you don't feel connected to the institution, or when you feel like your priorities, your concerns, your needs are not being met. Sometimes it makes you...it has made people be a little negative when they're interacting with students. And that's always unfortunate. For me...it's one thing to experience these things. We're all going to have the politics and the red tape, and the challenges, but never should our students be fully aware of what those things are.

Not only have staff of color historically felt like there is a lack of “cultural resources” for them and that they have not been supported enough by their universities, but in some instances, this has resulted in some staff members essentially taking out their frustrations with the university on students. Thus, the oppression (i.e., the absence of resources and support for staff of color) staff of color have historically experienced at these institutions has contributed to some negative and possibly oppressive student experiences. It’s also worth noting that several of Desiree’s responses here and elsewhere focus on the experiences of staff and students of color more broadly, rather than the experiences of students and staff who are Black men or Black folks in general (despite primarily being asked about the experiences of Black men). This could be another example of how Black students’ and staff members’ experiences with gendered racism and/or anti-Blackness at her institution are normalized, given that even a supportive staff member of color is unable to identify many of these experiences. Moreover, it could also be the case that Desiree intentionally decentered the experiences of Black men/folks in her responses in favor of people of color more broadly, which would suggest that despite being identified as a supportive staff member of color, she may still be furthering anti-Blackness at her institution.

No Sense of Belonging

Lastly, Raymond and Desiree spoke about contemporary oppressive and unsupportive contexts at their universities for Black men and other people of color. They noted how the current concerns of people of color at their institutions, including Black men, centered around their lack of a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). They attributed this lack of a sense of belonging primarily to the underrepresentation of people of color at these universities, the absence of culturally relevant activities, and the presence of some uncaring staff members.

When discussing the current experiences of students who are Black men at his institution, for example, Raymond emphasized the general feeling of a lack of belonging based on there not being very many of them:

> I think it's interesting with Black men right now, especially. So...I think that…so most of the Black men…who come to this university are not from the area. And I think that…there is feelings of…not having…other people that look like them, and not having that opportunity to connect with people.

While some Black men are open about these feelings, Raymond notes that there are also some who experience a lack of belonging, but may be hesitant to admit it to others if they believe that they have an established friend group: "But I do think sometimes there is an underlying piece of...like, "oh, I got my guys, but don't ask me how I feel because I'm good. I got my brothers with me." And it's like, "are you sure?"". With these students, Raymond has found that they tend to be more open about their feelings when he speaks with them one-on-one:

> I think…for…myself, when I have conversations with some of them…I get the whole thing...when you're with your guys everybody's gonna kind of like...be good, but like, if I get them one on one it tends to…kind of get through the…"okay, I get it. I know, you're tough. Oh, yeah, I get it, you can do that...that's fine, that's fine." And then that's when they start to come out a little bit more…just [wanting] like that sense of belonging [on campus] and looking to be more comfortable and looking to have a little bit more resources.

Black men's feelings of not belonging at PWIs based on their underrepresentation have been well-documented by scholars (Brooms & Druery, 2023; Burt et al., 2018a; Schwitzer et al., 1999). Their underrepresentation (and subsequent feeling of not belonging) at these institutions

could be considered a result of systemic gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) in terms of policies (e.g., anti-affirmative action policies) and practices at PWIs that have led to fewer Black men being admitted. Interestingly, here Raymond did not identify Black men's underrepresentation as a systemically racist or gendered racist issue. This could be problematic given that if staff at the institution do not recognize the systemic nature of these issues, then they may also not recognize the need for systemic, anti-racist/gendered racist solutions.

In addition, Raymond brings up an issue at has institution that seems like it could potentially exacerbate Black men's feelings of not belonging. Specifically, Raymond described how, based on Black men's underrepresentation, white folks at the university seem to negotiate their interactions with Black men according to the "type" of Black man they think they're dealing with:

> But I think with Black men specifically, there's…a smaller number of Black men in higher education, whether they're students, faculty, or staff, in our institution, and…across the nation, I'm sure. But like, in our institution, there's just not that many Black men who are in those positions. So, there is a lot of this like… kind of tentatively walking and trying to understand, "okay…what type of Black man is this? Is this going to be the revolutionary Black man, is it just going to be the more like, safe...that type of Black man…is it somebody in the middle?

Then after they "assess" what "type" of Black man they're dealing with, they react accordingly:

> Like, let me figure out all of that information first and then now I'll proceed. As opposed to like, let me just let this Black guy come in and...I'll see what he is about, just kind of go from there.

According to Raymond, white folks at his university appear to be framing their interactions with Black men around whatever gendered racist (Smith et al., 2007), stereotypical image ("the revolutionary Black man") they've assigned to them, rather than trying to understand how these men view themselves. This pseudo assessment process can negatively impact Black men's feeling of belonging at their institution by serving as an additional example of how they are not seen for who they are at PWIs (Allen, 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023).

Desiree also commented on the lack of belonging experienced by Black men at her institution. She offered an example of a Black man in his senior year who she recently recruited for her own research study who expressed his displeasure with his experience at the university:

> And when I met him...I'm very bold, very visible. I will just go up to someone, "hey, do you follow...this page, or...tell me about yourself," I will put a student on the spot. And...this particular student, I met him a month ago, and [its] funny, I was recruiting for Black males to engage in a research study. And I was like, "hey, are you [part of the state college access program]? Are you this? Are you that?" He's like, "Yeah," and I was like, "alright, well, I have an opportunity for you." And it just so happened that he shared with me that...he's a senior, he's just ready to get out, get on with his life. He hasn't had the best experience...he doesn't feel like the university was for him. But...he made it work.

This seemed to be the first time Desiree interacted with this student, which is unfortunate given how poor of an experience he has had at the university, and the potential missed opportunity for her to support his sense of belonging by facilitating his engagement with multicultural affairs. Moreover, although Desiree did not make note of this, I wondered what gendered racist (Smith et al., 2007) experiences did this student possibly have at the university to result in him feeling like he didn't belong, and what prevented him from reaching out to Desiree sooner?

Like Raymond, Desiree also believes that the underrepresentation of Black folks at the university contributes to Black men's feeling of not belonging. Furthermore, she thinks some Black men can find it difficult to navigate certain spaces on campus based on their underrepresentation, such as campus career fairs:

> And even seeing like offices where it's still no representation, even in student staff. If you know that you are serving a diverse population, but you don't have not one Black person on your team, even if it's a student worker, like, what does that say? So, I find that it's very hard for Black males sometimes, to...feel confident going in these career fairs. I feel like there's this extra step of like, "okay, how's my hair? Could I afford to get a fresh haircut this week? Do my jeans fit properly? I don't have...khakis. Can I wear jeans?" So, I feel like a white male wouldn't really...they would go in and think that that's okay. whereas our are Black males...they're very cognizant of that. That's a double strike against them.

The challenge of negotiating different spaces at PWIs based on being underrepresented is another common experience shared by Black men in the literature (Allen, 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023). Additionally, the concern expressed by Desiree about Black men feeling a need to adhere to white norms of professionalism ("okay, how's my hair?") exemplifies how gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) can operate within these different spaces, and how it can have a negative impact on their experiences (e.g., make them feel less confident going to the career fair).

As with Black men, Desiree and Raymond believe that other people of color at their institutions similarly experience a lack of belonging, in large part based their

underrepresentation. Raymond offers an example of how this feeling is also expressed among non-Black international students of color at his institution:

> Just last week...there was an event that we had in our space, and we invited different grad students from different places, and there were two students from out of the country. And…I happen to know somebody [a staff member] who's from one of the countries that they're from, and when I was listening to them, I just asked them like, “hey…since you've been here…how have you…[been] connecting…[with others on campus]?” And they were like, “well, there's no one here…I can't find anybody and no one who knows…our customs or this or that,” so then I said, “well, is it okay, if I connect you with…someone on campus who's from that area?” And...they were...both super elated, like, “oh, my God…yes, please…we've been looking for this”... But I see that often...where students will come and say…”I don't know anyone…”

Likewise, Desiree identifies underrepresentation as a key concern among students of color at her institution: “Our students of color...they just need more representation”. She shared why she believes the underrepresentation of people of color at her institution, specifically among staff and faculty, is problematic:

> But hands down, it always has to do with representation. If a student doesn't see themselves reflected in important areas, like the classroom, like leadership...oftentimes, in my experience, a lot of the folks of color are in dining, they're in custodial. And there's nothing wrong with those positions. But it almost paints this narrative that that's...the ceiling for you. You can't go beyond that. And that's not fair for our students.

In other words, this system of privilege (i.e., more white faculty and staff being hired for these positions than people of color), can ultimately shape how students perceive the types of career

opportunities that are available to them (Kincheloe, 2005). Again, it's also important to highlight here that both Desiree and Raymond tended to speak about the experiences of non-Black people of color at their universities related to underrepresentation when they seemed to be unaware of the experiences of Black men or Black folks in general related to a particular question. As mentioned previously, this suggests that gendered racism and/or anti-Blackness, as expressed through Black folks' underrepresentation at their institutions, is normalized since even Desiree and Raymond had limited examples of how Black folks experience being underrepresented.

Along with underrepresentation, Desiree notes how students of color at her university have also highlighted a lack of culturally relevant activities, and concerns about uncaring staff and administrators, as additional contributing factors to their lack of a sense of belonging. Although Desiree is trying to offer culturally relevant programming and activities through her office, students have still shared with her that the lack of activities and programming at the university has caused them to regularly leave campus on weekends:

> A lot of them will say that there's nothing for us to do. There's no culturally relevant programming. There's nothing fun for us to do on the weekend. And so, a lot of our students of color will go home on the weekends, because they don't want to go to the only thing that's happening [on campus], which are...the white frat [fraternity] parties.

Furthermore, following up on our conversation about staff members taking out their frustrations with the university on students, students of color have also expressed their displeasure with certain staff and administrators at her institution: "And...a handful have shared that...in addition to there being nothing for them [to do on campus] as their perception, some don't feel that the administrators really care." For example, Desiree told a story that a student recently shared with

her of how a staff member expressed their frustrations with the university to the student, and diminished the student's accomplishment in the process:

> Um, so we have a scholarship gala [at the university] and the President asked one of our Latina students to accompany them. "As President, I would like to bring a student, you as a student, I want you to come." And the student was so excited, but...someone who the student works closely with, a staff member, said..."have fun being exploited...you were only chosen because you're a student of color, and it's going to look good for them." And...it bothered me that it now put a bad taste in the student's mouth...like, "wow...I thought I was selected because I'm an amazing student leader, and...I show promising potential," but now the student is just thinking that...it's the optics of it.

Thus, rather than praising the student for being selected to attend the gala, the staff member chose to downplay their achievement as a performative gesture from the university's President. Interactions like this can, understandably, make students feel like staff don't care about them, and coupled with the lack of culturally relevant activities, consequently, reduce their sense of belonging.

Accordingly, given the historical and contemporary racism and the lack of belonging that Black and other students/staff members of color at Raymond's and Desiree's institutions have had to navigate, it was important for me to also understand what types of support have historically been available to Black and other students/staff members of color, as well as what kind support is contemporarily being offered to them. As I'll describe in more detail in the following section, I found that the support offered to them, specifically Black men/Black folks, has been largely informal, which again highlights the normalization of gendered racism and anti-Blackness at these institutions.

Mostly Informal Guidance and Support and Some Institutionally Sponsored Resources

The "Head Nod"

When discussing supportive contexts for Black men and other people of color at their universities, Raymond and Desiree largely focused on contemporary examples of practices and strategies they and their universities were engaged in to help these students. However, Raymond was able to briefly touch on the types of strategies that had been used to support students who are Black men at his university prior to his arrival, and that he has continued to use. These strategies did not appear to be supported by any institutional programs or policies. Instead, he described how a collective of staff and faculty who identify as Black men, and had been at the university longer than he had, showed him how to informally establish connections with these students by first getting on friendly terms with them:

> So, we have a few…Black men who have been here for years, like they went to undergrad [and] grad [here], and have worked here for 20-30 plus years. And…one guy in particular I'm thinking of…he does an amazing job of…when he sees a Black man on campus, introducing himself, trying to connect with him. I actually take a lot of things from him in terms of like, if I see a Black man…even if it's...really small, just like, say "hello"…if we walk the same paths a lot...giving a head nod…saying "what's up, how you doing?" And then hopefully trying to...get to a point where...[he can say to the student], "hey, I see you a lot around here. What's your name? Okay, what do you do? Where are you from? Okay, here's my office…if you ever need anything stop by."

He goes on to explain why he thinks this strategy can be effective with Black men:

> I think it's a lot of…just…carrying on a personality of being kind or welcoming and opening to all people, but making sure not to leave out…Black men or like trying to [be]

> like, “oh, no, he's good,”…like…include them as well, too. Because I think that, at least from my perspective, a lot of times I'll see the Black men and I'll say “hello” ...then I see like, “oh, okay, they're [the students are] actually [thinking] like, I'm seeing them…” now they're leaving it to me [to initiate the greeting], even though...they might be cool the first time. Just kind of trying to break down that barrier. So, I would say that's the big thing.

In other words, regularly greeting Black men at his university via a simple “hello” or head nod, shows them that their existence is acknowledged at the university (i.e., they are “seen”). Although it may seem like a minor intervention, it could be quite meaningful to these students given that many Black men often report feeling like few people acknowledge their existence at PWIs (Allen, 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023). Moreover, Raymond believes that this strategy also gives him the chance to potentially get to know the student better and share information about the services his office offers.

When asked to give an example of a time when this strategy was successfully implemented before he started working at the university, Raymond shared a story about how a campus police officer he knew had used it with a student who had an incident with another officer in a residence hall:

> I remember one guy was telling me about, I think it was years ago, but there was a Black student in one of the residence halls, and he and another officer we're...just trying to, I don't know what...something happened...and the Black student…wouldn't engage with either one of them, or whatever the situation was. So, then the officer that I know, who is a Black man was…telling me about how he was like, “yeah, I would…every day, I would just…if I see him, I would just say hello to him.” Kind of like what I was mentioning before, I would just say “hi”. And...the student will just look at him and just walk away.

> And…it took like…two [to] three months of that and then finally by like, maybe...month two, he'd...give him a head nod back. And then by like, month three, he'd be like, “hey” and then...eventually, I think...they saw each [other] out about and they’d walked together, and the student now started to reach out to him and become closer to him...and talk to him about it [the incident in the residence hall]. And then another officer said [to the officer Raymond knows], “oh, this is only happening because you're Black,” as opposed to the four or five months of like, getting curved [ignored] and this and that, but like being persistent about that.

Raymond appears to believe that the officer was able to successfully connect with the student and get him to talk about the residence hall incident, given his repeated attempts to greet him (i.e., make the student feel seen) despite frequently “getting curved.” Based on Raymond’s prior comments about the history of racialized/gendered profiling of Black men by police at his institution, it’s not surprising that a Black officer, in particular, would go out of his way to try to build trust with a student who is a Black man in this way. Interestingly, however, Raymond seemed to think that the officer’s race may not have been as significant to his success as the greeting strategy was itself, which could be based on the time and effort (“being persistent about that”) the officer put towards the strategy (i.e., if racial matching were all that was needed then why did it take so long for the student to open up to the officer?). It’s also noteworthy that Raymond did not at any point identify any institutional programs or policies that have historically supported Black men at his university. This could be an example of an inequitable structure (i.e., the absence of a history of institutional support for Black men), which could ultimately shape the experiences of Black men at PWIs (Kincheloe, 2005). Nevertheless, despite

the apparent absence of historical institutional support, it looks like Black staff and faculty have still tried to informally support these students over the years.

More Informal Guidance and Support

As mentioned previously, Raymond and Desiree had more to say about the contemporary practices and strategies they and their universities use to support these students. As was the case historically, most of the examples they shared were of informal practices they and other staff members use to support Black men and other racially minoritized students at their universities. This support, in large part, includes being genuine in their interactions with students. Desiree, for example, mentions this is as a key component of her approach to working with students of color:

> So, in my approach with students, especially students of color, I'm always trying to...I call it ‘R and R’, I'm always trying to be raw and real, and help prepare them because as a student affairs professional, I have a responsibility to prepare you for life after college. If I don't, it's a disservice to them... you have to know how to play the game and understand politics and culture and what's happening around you. And if you don't, you're gonna be behind.

She then shares why she thinks it’s important to be “raw and real” when working with students of color:

> And as...people of color...we already come in, I don't want to say at a disadvantage, because I try not to have a victim mentality and seem so negative, but we already come in...behind the race. So, what can we do to understand that's where we are, but not allow it to defeat us or define us. But instead, let's use that to develop us, help us develop into the best version of ourselves.

In other words, given that many students of color arrive at PWIs "behind the race" or victims of systemic racism (Kincheloe, 2005), she believes it's important to not only help these students understand their circumstances, but also how to effectively navigate their experiences in college and beyond based on this understanding. Interestingly, however, Desiree did not directly name racism (or gendered racism) as the motivator for the use of the "raw and real" strategy, nor did she note how this strategy may need to be altered when working with different students (i.e. Black men). Being "raw and real" with Black men should look different from how this strategy is applied to Latino or Asian men, for example, given the particular forms of discrimination these men experience based on the combination of their race and gender (Smith et al., 2007).

When asked to elaborate on this practice, both Desiree and Raymond gave examples of honest conversations they and other staff members have had with students who are Black men, in particular, about how their actions may be negatively perceived by white folks on campus and why this was problematic. While not explicitly characterized as such by Desiree and Raymond, this practice could be viewed as one of the ways that staff members could be helping Black men navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at PWIs. For instance, Desiree shared a story of how another staff member of color had to be "raw and real" with a Black man who worked in her office when he started regularly missing work:

> Like...even when he was missing work, doing no call, no shows...he eventually got let go, but then got brought back as a learning opportunity. But there was more grace from a supervisor of color, who said, "look, let's have that real conversation...as a minority...you're feeding into these stereotypes. And I want to help you be successful, I want to provide you with opportunities that you may not get elsewhere."

Sharing why she thought it was beneficial for the student to have this experience, specifically with a staff member of color, she notes:

> So, this student, while he may not have been the most qualified at the time...when you have a supervisor who understands the barriers that exists for students of color, and makes those intentional efforts to recruit those students, and give them the space to...flourish and thrive, that matters. Whereas another supervisor may have been like, “okay, two strikes, not even three and you’re out.” But this supervisor shows grace, but also had that hard lesson of, “anywhere else, this isn’t flying. So...I'm gonna give you one more shot.”

The student’s firing and rehiring were, thus, intended as learning experiences rather than solely punitive, which Desiree attributes to the student having a staff member of color as his supervisor who understands how oppression can shape and constrain the experiences of students of color (Kincheloe, 2005). However, it was not exactly clear from Desiree’s description of this story if the staff member’s intent was communicated to the student and how the student ultimately perceived his firing and subsequent rehiring (i.e., as a punishment or learning experience).

Raymond shared a similar story of a conversation he had with a high-achieving Black man working in his office. This student was having trouble balancing his job, academics, and student leadership roles, and Raymond wanted him to understand why it was important for him to learn to better manage his time:

> I guess…just kind of talking to him about…people are gonna start to look at you [now that you’re involved in these different activities on campus]. And yes, they're gonna cheer you up. Pat, you on the back [and say] “oh, wow, it's amazing.” But they're also waiting for something to go left. And the minute that [happens]…they're gonna tap [criticize]

every single thing...you're doing. So, it's gonna be on you to make sure that you don't do that, and that you stay locked in.

It was important for the student to better manage his time because the failure to do so would result in swift criticism from those who were ostensibly supportive of him. Survey data supports this notion of Black people feeling as though they have little room for error, the more they achieve and progress in society (CoQUAL Formerly CTI, 2021). Still, like Desiree's example, Raymond appears to not have explained the presumed rationale behind his comments to the student (i.e., the existence of gendered racism at his institution). Thus, as with Desiree's example, the student may not have interpreted Raymond's comments as he intended.

Raymond also mentioned another way that he informally supports Black men at his university. Specifically, he shared that he attempts to change toxic perspectives related to Black masculinity by modeling healthy/positive Black masculinity: "I try to be the representation of what I'm talking about." He offers an example of how he talks about his relationship with his fiancée in front of students who are Black men:

> You know, even going to the side of like…my fiancée...I tried to be like [in front of students], "yeah...I love her and there's nothing wrong with that. And that's my girl. Yeah, we're gonna get married." It's just to try to...have them hear a Black man say it and not be like squeamish about it... kind of like shift some of the mentality around...having to always be tough.

By openly expressing his love for his fiancée in front of students, Raymond hopes to dispel notions of Black masculinity as necessarily entailing the absence of emotion and vulnerability. Although, again, it's not exactly clear how his actions are interpreted by students.

Some Institutionally Sponsored Resources

Lastly, some of these supportive practices and strategies discussed by Raymond and Desiree took the form of institutionally funded programs designed to help all minoritized students, that Black students have taken advantage of. Desiree, for instance, had high praise for the work her university and the student affairs division were doing to address students' basic needs:

> But again, our institution, and I'm not just saying this because I work here, but they do a great job. With our area's student affairs [division], the model is: students first. And I do see it...which leads me to believe that, in particular, in our area, that model was not just a model but it's something that we abide by. We have a lot of resources that we provide to students, whether it's providing dental cleanings, haircuts...it's beyond the books, it's helping students to succeed beyond the books. And a lot of those students that tap into those resources are our Black students. And that's unique, something I haven't seen [at] other institutions that I've worked at... this is helping to address those basic needs.

She then comments on why she thinks students benefit from these types of services:

> So, when we think about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and...those fundamentals that students need...I can't focus on this math test, if I'm homeless...if I don't have shelter, or if I'm hungry, and I'm a commuter so I don't have a meal plan. Like, we literally have services in place that help our students...give them and connect them to those resources.

Here Desiree is highlighting the relationship between students' basic needs and their academic performance, essentially arguing that students must have those needs satisfied to have the ability to concentrate on their studies.

Desiree also discussed the specific types of support her office offers students. One of the main ways she supports students through her office is by providing culturally relevant resources

and programming: “that's something I've been very intentional about since I started in my new role. Creating traditions and culturally relevant programming where our students can feel a sense of community among folks of color.” Programs and resources she offers include things such as identity-based game events and identity-affirming books: “I was very intentional on getting a lot of books that affirm the identities and experiences of our historically marginalized identities. Also just having games where they can reminisce about culture...shows that represented Black families.” She believes that offering culturally relevant resources and programming can support community-building among minoritized students, and that this can be particularly beneficial to the Black students at her university:

> Because our...for example, our Black student population on campus is a little less than 10% and the institution has a little less than 10,000 students. So, our...Black students are always like...there's not too many of us. So, when the Multicultural Center opened, I told them, my hope is that you start to see more and that they...use this space and come together. And at the end of the year, you feel like if you knew 50, now you know 200.

Given their underrepresentation at her university, Desiree thinks Black students can benefit from culturally relevant programming that brings them together and helps them meet more of each other. Notably, Desiree did not identify any institutionally supported programming or resources geared towards helping Black men navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) or Black students navigate anti-Black racism at the institution more broadly.

Raymond also described some of the current programs and practices his university and his office engage in to support Black men specifically. He mentions, for instance, the men of color initiative that he coordinates, and how he tries to tailor its programming to the needs of Black men:

> Yeah, we've established a…technically it's a men of color summit, but obviously…you have a lot of Black and brown students who attend. So that's one thing that we're trying…we'll do the second one this year. And…of course, we help any student who identifies as a student of color, but we try to get, Black professionals, Black facilitators…and not just only that, but when we can have a Black male facilitator be in the room, I guess, that's something that…we do hold closely.

He also described the current formalized efforts of the previously mentioned collective of staff and faculty who identify as Black men (that he's also part of as a staff member): "And like I said, there's a few, there's like a handful [of staff and faculty members]…who really, really make a conscious effort to...go over and meet them [students who are Black men]." He again highlights a weekly university-funded luncheon that the group organizes for Black and other men at the university:

> Like...we have the weekly lunch…so anytime that any one of us… members [of the collective] …who go to lunch, sees a new Black man on campus…this is more faculty/staff driven, they'll always send me an email, "Hey, can you add him to the weekly lunch?" So, I'll add them on the calendar invite. And sometimes we'll have students, some grad students will come through and things like that. So, we really try to basically, whenever we can find someone looking for that [type of support we're like], "Hey, come on, and...we'll figure this out. We'll work it out."

Therefore, while neither Raymond nor Desiree could speak to any institutional programs or policies that have historically supported Black men and/or Black students in general at their universities, their universities now appear to be providing some targeted support for these and other minoritized students.

Still, however, it must be noted that neither staff member identified any institutionally sponsored programming or resources designed to help Black men navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) or Black students navigate anti-Black racism. The institutional programing and resources mentioned by Raymond (i.e., men of color summit, weekly luncheon) and Desiree (i.e., basic needs and culturally relevant resources) appear to be more geared towards supporting students' belonging and well-being at their institutions. While important, this type of support does not explicitly attend to the aforementioned forms of oppression that can shape Black students' experiences at PWIs (Kincheloe, 2005), and suggests that Black students (and Black men in particular) may not be as well-supported institutionally as they should be. Moreover, informal forms of support like the "raw and real" strategy may not be as helpful to Black men/students as Desiree and Raymond believe they are, when they are applied broadly to students of color and not tailored to the needs and experiences of Black men/students, given the particular forms of discrimination they experience (Smith et al., 2007).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the contextual insights derived from my interviews with student affairs staff members Desiree and Raymond. Interviews revealed two key themes regarding how these staff members make meaning of their university's historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, oppression, and support. The first theme was: Racism, Underrepresentation, and the Absence of Community and Staff Support. Raymond and Desiree first shared historical examples of Black men's experiences with gendered racism through racialized/gendered profiling, racially minoritized students' experiences with racism in academic and student affairs spaces, and racially minoritized staff feeling a lack of a sense of belonging and support at their universities. They then focused on contemporary examples of

Black and other people of colors' lack of a sense of belonging at their institutions based on their underrepresentation, along with the lack of culturally relevant activities, and the presence of uncaring staff members. These examples highlight how gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) and oppression more broadly (Kincheloe, 2005), can shape and constrain the experiences Black men and other racially minoritized folks at these institutions. Surprisingly, however, neither Raymond nor Desiree directly identified racism or gendered racism as the cause of the issues they identified for Black men and other racially minoritized folks at their institutions.

The second theme was: Mostly Informal Guidance and Support and Some Institutionally Sponsored Resources. For this theme, Raymond and Desiree offered examples of historical support that included informal strategies to help Black men feel seen at PWIs. They also described contemporary support structures which centered on both informal guidance (i.e., being "raw and real") and institutionally supported resources for Black men and other racially minoritized students (e.g., weekly luncheon). Notably, neither staff member identified any institutionally sponsored programming or resources designed to help Black men navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) or Black students navigate anti-Black racism. Moreover, it was unclear if the presumed intent behind the staff members' informal guidance for Black men (e.g., to help them navigate gendered racism at their institution) was ever communicated to them.

Additionally, throughout our interviews, both Desiree's and Raymond's attention to the needs and experiences of Black men and Black folks varied, while they also often seemed to focus on the experiences of non-Black people of color at their universities, in terms of how they're supported, their discriminatory experiences, lack of belonging, etc., when they appeared to be unaware of the experiences of Black men or Black folks in general. Thus, not only does it seem that Black men/folks at their institutions may not be receiving adequate support to navigate

gendered racism/anti-Blackness, but also that some of their experiences with gendered racism/anti-Blackness may be so normalized at these institutions that even supportive, racially minoritized staff members cannot recognize or name them. In the next chapter, I will describe the main themes generated from student interviews.

Chapter 5 Students' Stories of Gendered Racism and (Mostly) Discriminatory, Dismissive, and Unavailable Staff Members

In my theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), I posit that Black men may find gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at PWIs less challenging to navigate if student affairs staff members validate (Rendón, 1994) these men by supporting their Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and if they help them feel a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) at their institutions. In contrast, I argue that if staff fail to validate these men, do not support their sense of belonging, and/or discriminate against them, Black men may find gendered racism at PWIs more challenging to navigate. Consistent with my interviews with staff members Desiree and Raymond in Chapter 4, my analysis of student interviews highlights how Black men may not be receiving adequate support from student affairs staff to navigate gendered racism at PWIs. These findings also suggest that some staff members may be doing more harm than good towards Black men's navigation of gendered racism at these institutions. While a few students were able to identify validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and/or supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) staff members, the men largely perceived their interactions with staff to be invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012). Specifically, the men mostly described interactions with staff members who were dismissive towards them and their needs, unavailable for them when needed, and discriminatory. Moreover, although each of the men indicated in the presurvey that they had experienced gendered racism at some point during their college experience, not every story they shared explicitly touched on those experiences. Instead, these

other stories shed light on how staff interactions can ultimately make the gendered racism students generally experience at their universities more or less challenging to navigate.

I begin my discussion of student findings by first describing how the men made meaning of their general (non-staff related) experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at their institutions, which is my first research question. As with Chapter 4, organizing my presentation of student findings in this way is also consistent with my theoretical framework (see Figure 1). After the PWIs historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression, the next contextual level within which Black men's meaning making takes place is the contemporary context of gendered racism at their PWIs. It was important for me to directly investigate this context so that I could more fully understand how staff are helping or preventing the men from navigating gendered racism (i.e., my second research question). Thus, to understand this context, I asked students to share stories of times when they felt discriminated against at their institution based on their race and gender. It's also important to note here that I'm unable to directly share the images provided by the men during our photo elicitation interviews due to the potential for copyright infringement (since they were all stock images or film stills from the internet[19]) and my inability to verify whether the images could be reproduced for free. Instead, I provided descriptions throughout this chapter of the images whenever referencing stories shared from these interviews.

Stories of Gendered Racism at PWIs

The men's stories of gendered racism at PWIs centered around discriminatory experiences in academic contexts and in peer interactions. Their stories also highlighted the different ways the men made meaning of these experiences based on their intersectional

[19] See Chapter 3 for my explanation for this.

identities (e.g. sexual orientation). As such, the following section will be organized based on these key subthemes.

Peer Interactions: Discriminatory White Students

Almost all the men shared stories of gendered racism perpetrated by white students. Specifically, 10 out of 12 students shared these types of stories. These stories largely focused on discriminatory experiences with white peers in social settings (e.g., off campus parties), and in different student affairs contexts such as campus residence halls, athletics, and student organizations (e.g., music clubs, Greek letter organizations). Most stories also involved the men feeling singled out by white peers because they were they only Black men in these settings, as well as having to navigate gendered racist stereotypes about Black men. Jerry, a junior, touched on this feeling when sharing a story of his experience with a student organization initiation activity:

> I joined this club my freshman year. And we had to do some...type of like, initiation type of thing where we had to do...a bunch of...silly tasks, like we had to...make a skit and stuff like that. And one of...the tasks was, you had to take two free throws, and if you missed a free throw, you had to...tell an embarrassing story. If you missed both you had to tell two. I don't play basketball so I'm not like naturally like good at that stuff. And most of the other people in that club weren't good. So like, if anyone hit [their shots]…most people did not hit both shots. If...so, if anyone hit both shots...there would be like a round of applause and...people would be like, "Oh my god, like, wow." But when I hit both my shots, no one reacted. It was like, very much so expected and like, whereas I was like, "Oh, wow, I can't believe I just did that," like everyone else is kind of like, you know, not surprised at all.

After reflecting on this experience, Jerry noted:

> Maybe I just come off as...being a baller but I, I've never, I don't know, I never expected anyone to play basketball or like sports in any regard. I kind of just, I don't know...I didn't get really any recognition for that. And that [experience] gave me some insight on how, like, truly impacted by stereotypes some people were in their perception of others at the school. [It]...really opened my eyes to how egregious it [race and gender-based stereotyping] could be.

Scholars have traditionally viewed involvement in student organizations as beneficial to Black men (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Patton et al., 2011). Unfortunately, Jerry did not identify any benefits from this student organization experience. In this example, Jerry believed that the white students in the club did not react to him making his shots because they assumed he would make them based on his race and gender. This was specifically a reference to a common gendered racist stereotype regarding Black men and their assumed high aptitude for sports, particularly basketball. He also articulated how this experience gave him insight into the ways in which gendered racist stereotypes inform how white students interact with him at his institution. Given that this incident occurred during his first year at the institution, it's quite possible that it shaped how he chose to approach his interactions and relationships with white students moving forward.

Gregory, a sophomore, also shared a story of his experience being discriminated against in a student organization. His experience occurred in a music club at his institution, and prior to telling this story, he shared an image of a woman sitting with her head down and embracing her knees as if to indicate that she's sad and/or lonely. Gregory noted that this image exemplified the pain he felt when he was rejected from joining the music club during one of their meetings:

> Okay, in my first year…I was trying to join a music club, because I play an instrument. I play the saxophone. So, I tried to join a music club and I never knew…and I still don't know the reason why I wasn't…encouraged to…[join the club]. I was a beginner. I just started playing then. And I was trying to join the music team and I explained myself [to the group], trying to let them understand "okay, I just started learning [the saxophone]." And…the…coordinator [the club president], then said…I don't know, probably because I'm Black…I don't know, probably because she's white…she was just like "okay, we don't need…a saxophonist." And I was like, "you have horns men, you have trumpeters...and me being a saxophonist doesn't deduct…it probably adds to the horns you have already." And then the next thing [she says] is "oh, okay, um, you know, you are still a beginner." I was like, "okay, I can learn [more] skills and all." And then when I see okay, it was really becoming obvious [that they didn't want him in the group]. So…the expressions on people's faces [in the music club] were [like], "who is this guy…where is he coming from?"…And then I felt, "okay, these people don't want me here, it's very obvious they don't want me here."

Despite being rejected from joining the club, Gregory shared that he decided to remain at the meeting so he could still hear the club members play:

> And you know I sat down, and I was smiling because I love music in general and that [won't] stop me from listening to music. So, I was just smiling and...if you were to just...you know, [see] the look on people's faces were, "oh, isn't this guy supposed to leave?" But at the same time...I was, like...I didn't let that get to me. I just sat down, and I was pained, really pained inside, but I just put on a smiley face…because of the music. And I just sat down...just listening to the music. And then at the end of the day...well, that

was my last time there [at the music club meetings], because at the end of the day, I just knew that I had to leave after the...[end of the meeting]. And I just went home, sat down and just questioned...because I was totally lost. I had no idea what happened. I had no idea what I did wrong.

Gregory felt discriminated against based on the club president failing to provide a legitimate explanation for why he was not allowed to join the club. For instance, many skill-based student organizations such as music clubs often encourage beginners to join. Thus, its unclear why a beginner would not be allowed to join in this instance, unless this decision was based on Gregory's race and gender. Gregory's response to this rejection is also noteworthy. Not only did he decide to stay at the meeting after being unfairly rejected, but his immediate reaction was to smile. Smiling seems to have been his way of showing the club president that her actions didn't dampen his passion for music. At the same time, however, this was also clearly a "painful" experience for Gregory based on him directly using that word to describe how he felt in the moment, as well as the image he used to represent his feelings. This pain he experienced more than likely had a negative effect on his mental health.

As previously mentioned, the men also shared stories of discriminatory experiences with white peers in social settings. Jay, a junior, for example, described how he felt singled out by white peers who wanted to discuss race issues with him at an off-campus party:

So, one example would be one time I was at a party, and I was talking to this [white] girl, and…a couple of people. And for whatever reason…race got brought up. And…so when I was talking to them, they just started talking about where they're from, and the town that they're from is…notoriously pretty racist, but…I'm like, "we're not there" and…it doesn't really matter for the conversation, but they started talking about it, and how…bad

> it is, and how unfortunate it is. And she's…really harping on…how racism is…terrible, and [what she's saying is]…all correct. But when I'm at a party, I don't really want to talk about that stuff. And I feel like that happens a lot where…the conversation won't necessarily be about it [race/racism], but because I'm Black, they [white people] feel like they have to talk about it to…kind of put their…opinions on it. And it's not like anything like that is brought up naturally in conversation. It's just…their decision to continue with that [topic of conversation]. So that…just kind of put a bad taste in my mouth.

Jay then noted how exhausting it is to have to consistently be expected to speak about race issues with white peers:

> I know I'm Black. And I know all the experiences that I go through because of it. So then for…non-Black people to…kind of just…continuously bring it up, bring it up, bring it up, it's like something that other groups of people wouldn't necessarily have to go through. And I just have to…keep talking about race and…well, even though…Blackness is…a big part of my identity. I don't want to have to always have these conversations in all these different situations.

In this instance, the white students at the party only seemed to be interested in speaking with Jay about race issues. He identified this as a trend he's noticed in his conversations with other white students. Essentially, he believed that white students assumed that, because he's a Black man, he must necessarily always want to talk about race and racism despite not bringing up these topics himself. This incident reminds me of how Raymond in Chapter 4 described the ways that white people at his institution frame their interactions with Black men based on gendered racist stereotypical images they've assigned them. Here, white students seem to have assigned to Jay the image of the very racially conscious Black man, and while he certainly embraces his

Blackness, this image is clearly inconsistent with how he views himself. Along with being generally dissatisfying ("that…just kind of put a bad taste in my mouth"), it was also evident that Jay found the expectation to constantly have these conversations with white students to be emotionally draining. This could have a negative impact on Jay's sense of belonging at his institution as well by being a consistent reminder that he is not seen for who he is (Allen, 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023).

Academic Contexts: Discriminatory White Faculty

Out of 12 students, 9 shared stories of their experiences with discrimination in academic contexts based on their race and gender. Most of these experiences took place within classroom settings and were perpetrated by white faculty members. Additionally, these experiences generally involved the men being overly criticized by their professors for not having the correct answers to their questions or other perceived mistakes made in class. Vex, a junior, offered an example of this when describing his experience being discriminated against by a professor in one his courses:

> I've been discriminated [against] when I had to answer a question in class, and it turned out I didn't really know the answer to the question. But the professor picked me to like say something, but I didn't know the answer. So, I just stood, and I was like, "sir I have no idea" and he was like, "why wouldn't you have any idea? After all, I guess you just..." he said something like, "after all, I guess this isn't really something for you." I guess...meaning that [since] I'm Black I can't make any significant breakthroughs in school. I guess that's what he meant. So, I felt pain so I just...I kept my cool.

He then shared more about why he I thought the professor responded to him in this way:

> Yeah, I guess he was targeting me because...he was trying to say that since I'm Black...he wasn't really expecting it from me. Since I'm Black...I'm not supposed to be...I'm not meant to be intelligent. I guess that's what he meant.

According to this faculty member, being a Black man made Vex inherently unintelligent and incapable of having success in the course. Many Black men in higher education have commented on how they've been forced to navigate this common gendered racist stereotype that positions them as naturally unintelligent (Harper, 2009; Smith et al., 2007). Moreover, the psychological violence committed by the professor was clearly harmful to Vex ("So, I felt pain"), and suggests that his mental health was negatively impacted by this experience.

Roe, a sophomore computer science major, shared a story of a similar incident in one of his computer science courses:

> I remember vividly when we were given an [in-class] assignment...I felt called out here. An assignment was given to me [in class] and I didn't do it correctly. Instead of the professor...correcting me...pointing out my mistakes, he started to embarrass me...talking as if I should have known it [how to do the assignment] before coming to school. I wish I would have known it...I wouldn't have gone to this school. I'm here to learn. I'll make mistakes and its fine for you [the professor] to correct me. That is your duty...your responsibility. But the approach by which he used to correct me was something that made me...I did not feel comfortable. Because all of the white students, they make mistakes...he corrects them very well...politely. But as it comes to me...you don't even want to listen...it's so annoying.

When asked to share what he thought about this experience after reflecting on it now, Roe noted the need for faculty to be more considerate of the fact that students may not possess the course content knowledge faculty might expect them to have prior to arriving on campus:

> In fact, you know, nobody is perfect. All of us, we are here to learn in school...if we...know everything, I don't think there'll be a need for us to be in school. So, as...the lecturer, you need to know that all of us are coming to learn...we are equals. But when it comes to the white students...you'll be paying [more] attention to them and correct...their mistakes.

While this faculty member appears to have been accommodating towards white students' lack of course content knowledge, he was much less accepting of Roe's lack of knowledge, essentially holding him to higher standard than his white peers. Accordingly, Roe believed that the professor reacted to him in this manner because of his race and gender (Smith et al., 2007). Black men's experiences with gendered racism, particularly in STEM classroom settings, has also been well-documented in the literature (Burt et al. 2018a; Fries-Britt et al., 2014).

Not only were the men verbally attacked by their professors for not providing correct answers to their assignments and questions, but at least one of the men was reprimanded by his professor for saying a word in class that some believe only Black people should be able to say. This student was Amber, a sophomore. To introduce this story, Amber shared an image of a set of 4 eggs (3 white and 1 brown). All the eggs have eyes and mouths, and all the white eggs are staring at the brown egg. According to Amber, this image represented how he felt unfairly singled out during his history class:

> I remember being in a class, it was a history class, we were reading this like autobiography, or maybe it was a biography of the life of Frederick Douglass. And…the

professor in that class was…kind of, giving us sections of it to read. He didn't really say…what we were allowed to say, or not…in the book in terms of…words like racial, or, like, considered racial slurs and things like that. And I was…really the only…Black person in the class. So…we start reading and then I'm reading, and I say one of the words that's [a racial slur and I'm like], "okay… I'm allowed to say that"…and…kind of, after that, the class was silent for a little bit. And I kept reading, and everyone was kind of staring at me like that's something crazy [that I just did].

Amber noted that the racial slur he read from the book was the n-word. He then shared how his professor responded to what he said after class:

> And then after class, the professor came up to me and was like, "you know, we don't really say stuff like that around here." Like, "you know, it could make certain members of the class feel uncomfortable." I'm like, "am I not the members [that would feel uncomfortable]?" "If anyone would be uncomfortable with it, wouldn't it be me?" "How am I the one that's getting in trouble for this right now?" So yeah, that was just kind of a crazy experience to me, but yeah…in that moment, I just felt kinda like I was a black sheep, you'd always be blamed for something that…didn't even really make sense.

As Amber rightly pointed out, being the only Black person in the class, if anyone should be offended by the n-word being used it should be him. However, it's clear that Amber's professor was not interested in whether he was offended or uncomfortable. Instead, his concern was for the feelings of the non-Black (presumably white) students in the class. Moreover, while some believe that no one should use the n-word, others believe that if it must be used then it should *only* be used by Black folks (Stewart, 2021). Thus, the professor's reaction to Amber in this

instance is even more absurd and was understandably interpreted by him as an example of gendered racism.

Complex Interpretations of Gendered Racism

Lastly, the men also interpreted some of their experiences with gendered racism in more complex ways. These intricate interpretations were based on the men's intersectional identities. Specifically, when asked to share stories of experiences with gendered racism, two students gave examples of times when another minoritized identity that they possessed played a significant role in the experience. Bob, a junior who identified as a gay, for instance, shared a story of his experience being discriminated against as a member of his university's basketball team based on his race/gender *and* sexual orientation. Bob first informed me that he was one of only a few Black men on his team, which is typically uncommon in U.S. college basketball (Harper, 2018). However, he didn't share the exact racial and sexual orientation demographics of his team. Then, before telling his story, he shared an image of three white students and 1 Middle Eastern woman wearing a hijab. The 3 white students are staring and pointing at the Middle Eastern woman, who is visibly upset. Bob indicated that this image reflected his feeling of isolation from his team after he came out as gay:

> I was on the basketball team [at his university] and…it was my passion, I felt...a lot of enjoyment going to do it. But due to my...skin color, to sexual orientation, I didn't have the chance to pursue it...[further]. You know, coming out as a person part of the LGBTQ community, sometimes is not as easy as we may think. And when I came out as gay, my coach was quite supportive...even though some of...our core players, they were not, you know, they were not willing to play with me or go with me to the gym to work out…

Bob went on to explain how his teammates' reaction to him coming out made him feel:

> You know, while you are on the...[court] you have to work as a team. So… the ball has to be shared among the players. So I just felt like I was left out from all the experiences...from the game, you know? Nobody was willing to give the ball to me, or...receive the ball from me. If I was to call out one of our players, you know, to watch out for me, as I dribbled here and there...no one was willing. So, I just felt like I was left out completely. And even though I raised the...[issue] to my coach who was really trying, you know, to encourage them to respect me...to work together with me as a team...it didn't seem to work out.

Bob's sexual orientation plays a much larger role than his race and gender in this story. He felt discriminated against by his teammates because they essentially refused to play with him after he came out as a gay. Bob didn't share what the racial This type of discrimination against LGBTQ students in sports is, unfortunately, quite prevalent in the U.S. and other countries (Denison et al., 2021). However, while not as prominently featured in the story, Bob also believed that being a Black man factored into this experience as well since he was one of only a few on the team. This experience exemplifies one the core assumptions about the nature of identity that come from the intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wijeyesinghe, 2019). Specifically, the idea that when considering how inequitable structures deny opportunities to minoritized groups, a person's experience with one minoritized identity is necessarily impacted by their experiences with their other minoritized identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991;Wijeyesinghe, 2019). Here, Bob believed that he had been denied the opportunity to fully participate in the basketball team by his teammates (and the inequitable structures that allow his teammates to discriminate against him) because he is a gay Black man, rather just because of his race/gender or sexual orientation in isolation. Furthermore, the coach's inability to stop the team's discriminatory

behavior against Bob added additional evidence to the structural nature of this issue (e.g., institutional structures that prevent the coach from effectively disciplining players for discriminatory behavior).

The other student who gave an example of a time when a minoritized identity other than race/gender played a significant role in his experience was Jerry, who identified as low income. He offered an example of a scenario he often found himself in as a low-income Black man at a wealthy, elite PWI. He represented this scenario with an image of a group of white stick figures holding hands in a circle, with one yellow stick figure on the outside of the circle looking in. Jerry noted that this image represented how he often felt unable to relate to his wealthy white peers:

> I can…give you a scenario that I've been in like a lot. Which is like, I guess this doesn't…I guess it's not exclusively a result of being like a Black man, but I think it kind of plays into it. A lot of the time, like, for example, like, winter break, most people are gone. And a lot of like, conversation [among students] is like, "Oh, what are your plans for winter break?" And people are doing…[what] to me [seems] like crazy stuff like going to…their house in like the Alps and like Switzerland and like, going on crazy, luxury vacations, stuff like that. It's like, people are like, "oh…I went there last year…with my…nanny." I don't know, it's just a lot of people kind of relate to themselves on experiences that I just have never lived. And yeah, again, it's…I don't, for that example, it's not that clear how being a Black man necessarily is the reason for that. But I just feel like it's…I think a lot of other Black men would be able to relate to my perspective on that. You know what I mean?

In this example, Jerry's social class is more salient than his race and gender. Specifically, as a low-income student, Jerry felt isolated from and marginalized by his wealthy white peers who openly flaunted their wealth when sharing their extravagant plans for winter break. Scholars have identified similar feelings of isolation among other low-income students when describing their experiences with wealthy peers at elite PWIs (Jack, 2019). Interestingly, despite appearing to feel unsure about offering this story as an example of gendered racism, Jerry still believed that his race and gender were relevant in this instance. Jerry's belief that other Black men would be able to relate to this situation is most likely a reference to the fact that Black folks in the U.S. have historically and continue to suffer from high poverty rates (Shrider & Creamer, 2023). Although he was asked to share a story about an experience with discrimination based on his race and gender, he possibly thought this class-based story would still be relevant since there are many impoverished Black men in this country. Jerry's story highlights how difficult it can be to make meaning of one's experiences of discrimination based on one minoritized identity, without attending to one's other minoritized identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wijeyesinghe, 2019).

In the next section, to introduce students' stories about interactions with student affairs staff members, I will focus on the stories of two students: Trance and Marquis. While not representative of all the men's experiences, Trance and Marquis offered the most examples and the richest examples of how Black men make meaning of their interactions with staff members as they navigate gendered racism (i.e., my second research question). My hope in sharing multiple stories from these two students is to also demonstrate a sort of narrative arc, showing how their experiences often progressed from initial experiences with gendered racism at their institutions, to seeking different types of support or resources from student affairs staff members, and ultimately, not receiving support from staff and in some instances being discriminated

against by them. After this section, I'll transition to a broader discussion of themes across the men's stories, highlighting the different ways the men perceived staff to be mostly dismissive, unavailable, and blatantly discriminatory.

Trance and Marquis: Engaging the Most with Staff and Being Harmed the Most by Staff

Trance's Story

Trance was a sophomore transfer student at a mid-size, regional public PWI during the time of our interviews, and his experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) in higher education began before he arrived at his new institution. For instance, he shared that he had been "jumped" (i.e., physically assaulted) by a group of white students at his previous PWI:

> Okay. Well, before I came to the university I'm at now, I was jumped, coming back from work by a group of white kids [at his prior university]. And I was also probably the only Black man on campus at the time...during Corona [COVID-19 Pandemic]. And I had the ability to fight back, but I cared more about my life than like...my mental health of like losing the fight or like, not being able to defend myself, because I wanted to live. I didn't think I was going to make it out that day.

When asked if this incident was the reason why he decided to transfer from that institution he shared:

> Yeah, I did decide to leave [his prior university because of this incident]. I never told the university because I thought it was like, "Well, [its just] another Black guy on campus...we don't really need him here." They're not going to believe me. And…at the time, I was too prideful to say that I got jumped or I couldn't do anything about it. So I've never even told the university or anything because...I was nowhere near home. There's nothing I can do. Nobody I can call. I was really alone on the campus at the time.

Trance's experience of being physically assaulted by these students warranted not only his prior university's involvement, but also the involvement of law enforcement. However, Trance did not feel the need to notify anyone since there was no one at the institution he felt comfortable sharing that information with, along with his belief that the incident would not be adequately addressed. Furthermore, his comments suggest that he felt unimportant at his prior institution ("Well, [its just] another Black guy on campus...we don't really need him here"), possibly based on previous poor experiences with staff and administrators, to the extent that he didn't think anyone would believe him even if he didn't tell them. He then shared how this incident made him feel about attending PWIs moving forward:

> And ever since then, I've been…scared to go to a PWI again, but I'm at one now. So I'm always [trying to be] safe and always…choose...to be around people who I know I can trust or…I'd rather be by myself.

Thus, even though he decided to transfer to another PWI, this incident shaped his perception of PWIs as places that are unsafe, unsupportive and, more than likely, influenced his relationships with students, faculty, and staff at his new institution.

Unfortunately, Trance's experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) continued at his new institution, essentially confirming his concerns about PWIs. He shared, for example, a story of how he felt tokenized by a predominately white fraternity at his new university when they expressed interest in him joining the group in his first semester:

> So, there's this white frat [fraternity] on campus that wanted me to join. I didn't click with any of the guys [in the fraternity], the guys were weird. And it was like, anytime they would do an event, I felt like I was singled out last, but…I would still get in [to their events] for some reason. And it was like, "okay, I don't want to put myself through

> this...just like, me pick myself up and stop trying to conform to them and let them mold me to who they want me to be. I'm going to be myself."

He eventually decided to reject their "bid" (i.e., invitation to join the fraternity) and when asked how the group reacted to his decision he noted:

> [After he denied the fraternity's bid]...they stopped all contact with me. When I denied their bid. They were like, "oh...yeah, you didn't give us what we needed. So why should we keep talking to you?" And I was like, I was fine with that. Because when I got a bid, I felt like there was no reason why I should have got a bid. I didn't click with any of you guys.

In the end, Trance believed the group only wanted him to join because he was a Black man:

> I felt like their motive was strictly race based…they wanted to expand the culture in their group. And it was just like, they just wanted to put on their paper that "oh, yeah, we have different races in our group." And it's like, I don't want to be a part of that.

Fraternities are historically meant to foster a sense of brotherhood among men with shared values, interests and/or identities, and Trance clearly did not feel that type of connection with this group and he instead felt tokenized, ultimately resulting in him rejecting their bid. Additionally, despite being perhaps less blatant than his discriminatory experience at his previous institution, Trance has also articulated another experience with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), this time at his new institution. In this example, while he felt as though he didn't belong in the fraternity, Trance believed that the fraternity members still wanted him to join the group so that he could serve as an ostensible representative of the group's diversity. Since he was not interested in being the group's token Black man, he decided to reject their offer to join, to which they responded by cutting off communication with him. This reaction from the group

supported Trance’s belief that their interest in him was based solely on performative, discriminatory reasons.

While Trance continued to experience gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), he simultaneously sought out support from student affairs staff members as he attempted to navigate his transition to his new institution. However, rather than providing the support he needed, and potentially assuaging his concerns about PWIs, Trance, who also identifies as middle class, shared that staff members at his institution were dismissive, unavailable, and discriminatory. These interactions further confirmed and exacerbated his concerns about PWIs. He offered a story of his experience trying to receive help from the financial aid office to pay his spring semester bill when he first arrived at his new university:

> I worked all summer to pay for…my first semester of college. And I didn't get a job here [at his new university] yet because...there aren’t many jobs here hiring, but I couldn't pay for my spring semester. So I was…asking around [the financial aid office], like, “what can I do?” “Are there scholarships?” They [financial aid staff] were like, “no...we can't help you. You just have to pay by this date.” I was going through a financial crisis and…they just kept pointing me to different people, and pointing me back to the same thing, and they just [were like] “I can't help you, I can't help you.” And didn’t go into detail about what I could do or what I couldn't do. Yeah...[for] me personally…my advisors [are] no help to me at all. Financial aid is no help.

While sharing how he felt about this experience with financial aid staff, he commented:

> They…just wanted their money. They didn't care at all what was going on with me or what I had to do. At the end of the day, they just wanted their money. They didn't care

about my education. They were like, “this is another body that we need their money.” Like, that's how I felt.

After experiencing physical violence at his prior PWI, Trance was reasonably skeptical of whether he would feel safe and would be able to trust anyone at his new university. Nevertheless, as educators recommend, he still reached out to staff members whose role is it to help ease students’ transition to their institution. In the end, however, he arguably experienced a more subtle type of violence through the dismissive actions of these unavailable financial aid staff members, which again supported his belief that he couldn’t trust anyone at this institution. In this example, the financial aid staff members failed to support Trance’s navigational capital (Yosso, 2005), and thus academically invalidated (Rendón, 1994) him. Rather than dismissively indicating that they couldn't help Trance, the staff members instead could have, for instance, helped him come up with strategies to pay his semester bill based on what they’ve seen other students in similar situations do, along with whatever resources he had at the time. This could have shown Trance that he already possessed the ability to navigate (Yosso, 2005) paying for his education, which could have also been academically validating (Rendón, 1994), since it would have made him more confident in his ability to negotiate his academic experience overall. Moreover, given the financial aid staff members’ perceived lack of concern regarding how he could pay for his education, Trance’s sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) at his institution was probably negatively impacted as well as this was clearly an unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012) interaction.

Trance’s poor interactions with staff members were not limited to financial aid. He also shared a story about his attempt to receive advising support from his academic advisor when he first arrived at his new institution:

> So, my transcript didn’t transfer over until this semester. So, I was marked down as a freshman when I came here [to his university] because only a few [credits] transferred over. But now I'm a…sophomore/junior, because I took a year off because of Corona [COVID-19 Pandemic] and other things I had going on. And she [his academic advisor] just…didn't tell me what to do, like, “what should I do?” Like actually, “what should I do?” And she just had no idea. She was like, “just take this, this, and this...and wait till your transcripts come over” and she just…really wasn't trying to...[understand] what I'm trying to do. I have…a major in social work and a minor in African studies and cannabis [studies]. So I'm trying to see…where can I go about that…what classes should I take? And I really just have to do everything myself...look it up...ask other people, see what classes are about and…really…deep dive into the work.

He then shared why he thought his academic advisor was not being helpful:

> I feel like...all of my classes are like, all my…major social work classes...they're all white women. I don't think she [academic advisor] was expecting to have a Black man…to be...[an advisee for this major] because it's rare that there's men in my class. There's always women, especially white women. Yeah, my [academic] advisor was no help at all.

Trance’s academic advisor failed to academically validate (Rendón, 1994) him or support his navigational capital (Yosso, 2005), and was perceived as unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012). She did not offer more personalized advising based on his transfer status and academic interests, which was academically invalidating because she failed to give him any confidence in his potential to be academically successful at his institution. This was also a missed opportunity to support Trance’s navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). His advisor could have worked with Trance to help him see that he not only had the ability to choose the courses he needed based on his major and interests, but also how he could best position himself for success throughout his time

at his institution. Ultimately, Trance attributed his advisor's inadequate advising to his race and gender (Smith et al., 2007).

Following up on this story during our photo elicitation interview, Trance shared an image of a group of people helping each other climb a mountain. Ironically, rather than exemplifying all the people who are supporting him at his institution, Trance instead indicated that this image represented all the ways he felt he needed to support himself during course planning: "I'm just like, I wish I had some help in that matter. Like, I didn't have to do that alone, because I had no idea what I was doing." Trance found this situation particularly concerning since it forced him to have to figure out on his own if his courses from his previous institution could be counted for credit at his new institution:

> I really had to go deep dive and…figure out and…read each transcript, read all of my stuff, or…read [about] each class and…how it can go to this class that I could be taking but I don't have to because I already took the class...

Moreover, despite multiple attempts to receive proper guidance from his advisor, Trance ended up not choosing some courses that he needed and, consequently, added a year to his degree completion timeline:

> So it was just like, I didn't do well enough [with course planning on his own], because I had no idea what I was doing. I asked for help. She [academic advisor] didn't really help me at all. She just kept sending me to different people and I gave up on her. And it was just like, let me do this myself. So, I'm stuck here...I'm stuck in school for another year, because I messed up my schedule.

His advisor's inadequate support, possibly motivated by gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), led to Trance not choosing the right courses, resulting in his time to degree being extended. The experience of receiving subpar academic advising resulting in negative academic outcomes (e.g.,

not taking needed courses) has also been reported by other Black men at PWIs (Johnson et al., 2019).

Marquis's Story

Marquis was a sophomore at a mid-size, regional public PWI during the time of our interviews. He was very involved on campus, having worked in different student affairs offices including Student Transitions (e.g., orientation) and Multicultural Affairs. He held leadership roles with different student organizations, and even helped coordinate a student leadership conference at his university. Nevertheless, despite his high level of involvement at his institution, Marquis, like Trance, experienced various instances of discrimination based on his race and gender (Smith et al., 2007). When asked to share a story of a time when he felt discriminated against early on at his institution based on his race and gender he described, for example, an instance when a white woman touched his hair in his first year:

> So, I like to dye my hair a lot. I like to change my [hair] colors a lot. Right now, it's black, but sometimes I'll have blue, green…red, however I'm feeling. I'm very expressive in my fashion and style, my personality. And one time…I had black hair...and the next day…it was red, and I had it cut in a different way than I did last time. And I'll never forget it. This girl, this white girl…that I actually knew…in college, walked up to me and said, "oh my god, I love your hair," and automatically started to touch it, see if it was real. And she said, "Oh my God, is this a toupée or is this a wig?" And...I didn't know how to react to it. So, I'm like, "well, please take your hands off of me." And then second [I said], "no, I just regularly dyed it just like y'all [white people] would have done if y'all change your hair color." And she was like, "Oh, I didn't know, y'all [Black people] could do stuff like that." So, at this point in the conversation, I just went like "have a wonderful day."

The expression of curiosity regarding Black people's hair is a classic racial microaggression (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015) that, when considered collectively amongst the other countless daily racial microaggressions Black folks often experience, serves the purpose of keeping "those at the racial margins in their place" (p. 302). When asked to share how he thinks about this experience now, Marquis suggested that an experience like this might not have happened if he chose to attend an historically Black college or university (HBCU):

> And just little things like that you have to notice like, well… for instance, at HBCUs…you're used to a lot of students, or people of color. You know, when we [people of color] dress up every day, we put on some type of style or fashion and when you go out for the day [at an HBCU]...you don't look at [what someone is wearing and say]…"why are they wearing that," and stuff like that. You just simply go out and like everything's there. But when you do that at a predominately white college, it's like, "where you going so fancy" or "why you dressed like that?"

Thus, Marquis appears to believe that there's a higher likelihood of him being judged for his appearance as a Black man at a PWI than if he attended an HBCU. In other words, he is suggesting that his appearance, and thus his Blackness, is more at the forefront of his interactions with people at PWIs. Additionally, he is also speaking to the idea that HBCU's allow for more expansive notions of Blackness which PWIs do not allow for, as evidenced through his interaction with the white woman. He then offered more evidence to support this suggestion, focusing specifically on his interactions with student affairs staff members.

Being as involved as he was on campus and how frequently he was exposed to staff members, the literature suggests that Marquis's interactions with staff members should have been mostly positive and beneficial (Martin & Seifert, 2011; Martin et al., 2020). For Marquis, however, this was not the case, as he primarily described interactions with dismissive,

unavailable, and blatantly discriminatory staff members. He first shared a story of a more recent experience occurring during his sophomore year involving career services staff members at a networking event:

> So, I will say one time that I felt discriminated [against] was we were…basically…they [career center staff members] asked me to dress professional. I'm going to a [networking] event, and they said, dress professional in your own way. I'm being honest, being a young Black man, and being raised in a church with…a pastor, my suits were always either like, really sharp or loud in a way… I wouldn't mind wearing an orange suit paired with…black pants…stuff like that. My style spoke for me in a professional way. And I had gotten asked [by a career center graduate assistant] when I was at that event…to leave and change because it did not represent the professionalism that they wanted. And I'm looking around and everybody else has on suits, and everything. It took me a while to notice when I really looked around, I'm like, "okay, well, you don't like my outfit, because it's not your typical professionalism, like the other white men or women are wearing around me." And then when I did go to a person [a full-time staff member] higher up than him [the graduate assistant], they even said the same thing. Well…"we'll let you tone it down a little bit." So, it wasn't just a student, it literally went up. And I was like, "okay, I'll go home." And I didn't go back [to the event] because it's like…at that point, I got judged for who I was, and…what I wear, you know?

Elaborating on how he felt after this experience, Marquis shared, "it definitely made me rethink…when I do things on this campus. Yes, do it my way, but at the same time, there's almost like an invisible ceiling that I cannot pass…". Marquis felt discriminated against based on his race and gender (Smith et al., 2007) by the career center staff members given how they reacted to his choice of attire for the networking event. This is consistent with the previous story

he shared of the white woman touching his hair, in that it also exemplifies how his expression of his Blackness, through his attire/appearance, is limited at this institution to white standards and expectations of how Black men should appear. This feeling of there being an "invisible ceiling" also again suggests that he feels limited in how he can express himself at his institution since he may be discriminated against, which is consistent with how other Black men have felt after experiencing gendered racism at their institutions (Allen, 2020; Burt et al., 2018a).

The prior literature also suggests that students of color in particular benefit from close relationships with staff members, especially staff members of color (Luedke, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020). For Marquis, however, even staff members of color and staff with whom he had close relationships could still be dismissive and unavailable. For instance, he shared a story of his recent poor experience participating in a men of color initiative program at his institution:

> We have an organization called Sankofa, which is actually an initiative to help people, men of color, get through college. But the whole Sankofa leadership is directors or people of color directors in [different student affairs] offices. And since they don't have time [to do the work needed for the initiative] they hire student leaders, and the student leaders don't want to do it because they don't feel like dealing with different people. So…they [Sankofa leadership] asked me to be a part of Sankofa as a member and I said, "of course." We had a special handshake for the whole group of men. We did like…it was literally…like a brotherhood, almost like a fraternity…and my university provided [programming for members but] they just didn't really care [in the end].

Marquis's description of the program, particularly his focus on the strong connections initially established among the men ("it was literally…like a brotherhood, almost like a fraternity") and how they expressed that connection ("We had a special handshake for the whole group of men"), suggested that there was high potential for this program to be validating (Rendón, 1994) and

supportive (Strayhorn, 2012), but unfortunately this didn't come to fruition. Marquis indicated that the program was eventually canceled by the director, and he then shared the response he received regarding why it was canceled:

> And then when I said "why did ya'll [Sankofa director] stop [the initiative]?" basically [they said], "because none of y'all really came out [for the events that were offered to members]." But we didn't come out because you kept doing things that people of color really wouldn't do. Like…no offense to white people…[but] we [people of color] definitely have our own cultures. A lot of things he [Sankofa director] wanted us to do…like, have you ever heard of a Black man going snowtubing? You know what I'm saying? No, you haven't. And these are Black men [staff members] who are running this initiative. These are the people who are running this initiative, and it's like, have you ever heard of us [Black men] going snowtubing? Have you ever heard of us [Black men] doing gaga ball pit? Like, that's not what we do. And on top of that, you don't make time for us. So, why would we make time for you, if when we tried to show our time, you did not give it back?

The Sankofa leadership, despite being Black men themselves, failed to consider the interests and needs of the men of color in the program when planning events, ultimately leading to poor event turnout and the subsequent cancelation of the program. This could evidence how whiteness and anti-Blackness/gendered racism are normalized and embedded within PWIs, such that even staff who are Black men can neglect the needs of students who are Black men. This example also shows the importance of staff member availability to students ("you don't make time for us"), and what the absence of that availability can mean to students in terms of whether they believe staff care about them ("why would we make time for you, if when we tried to show our time, you did not give it back?"). In the end, this lack of appreciation for student time and interests could

be considered interpersonally invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) because it did not support their personal and social growth. It also runs counter to the supposed purpose of programs like this, which is to help these men better navigate PWIs (i.e., how can these men feel better equipped to navigate the institution if their interests and needs are not being attended to in the program?).

Marquis then shared another example of how staff members of color at his institution can be dismissive, unavailable, and ultimately, display a lack of care and respect for him and his needs. He discussed, for example, the difficulties he recently experienced trying to schedule time to meet with a staff member of color who was his former work supervisor and current advisor to his student organization:

> And then…it's like, you can't make time for us. Dr. Sam [pseudonym for his student organization advisor] got promoted from the Student Transitions [Office] to the Assistant Vice President of Access, Transitions, and Retention, and so ever since she got that promotion, she's not really making time for students. And then when we did have a meeting…because she's the advisor for my [student] organization that I started…when I met with her to talk about our…organization, about IOC [a student leadership conference he coordinated]...when I had a meeting with her, she cut my meeting short ten minutes, because she forgot she had a meeting with her personal assistant. And it's like, yeah, [her]...excuses…"I'm so sorry…just reschedule with me." No. No offense, [but] I did take time to reschedule for you. At this point, you need to reschedule with me because…now you're taking advantage of my time and my skills. And now if I call [the Student Transitions Office] and say I'm missing a meeting…I'm going to hear from y'all, "oh, your communication is off, you must communicate with us, you need to do better." [But]...you just did the same thing [to me]. So, I would say sometimes they [staff

members] kind of add on to the stress load of trying to graduate or trying to get my degree.

Here Marquis articulates how Dr. Sam’s unavailability for meetings contributes to the stress he experiences as a student. As with his prior example, he finds her lack of respect for his time, along with her possibly contradictory scheduling expectations, most problematic. Dr. Sam’s unavailability could be another example of the absence of care from staff members, like what Trance experienced. Based on Marquis’s description, this experience is not only invalidating since it’s not supporting Marquis’s personal or social growth (Rendón, 1994), or any forms of capitol that he possesses (Yosso, 2005), but it also appears to have had a negative effect on Marquis’s sense of support (Strayhorn, 2012) among staff members. Furthermore, the overall stress Marquis experiences as a student undoubtedly includes and is exacerbated by race and gender-based discrimination (Kincheloe, 2005; Smith et al., 2007). Thus, Dr. Sam’s actions could be making gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) more challenging to navigate for Marquis.

Surprisingly, however, given his poor experiences with staff members, Marquis also offered an example of a staff member who was neither discriminatory nor dismissive towards him. According to Marquis, this staff member was a person of color, was the director of the multicultural center at his university and was someone with whom he developed a close relationship. Moreover, Marquis highlighted the informal support provided by the multicultural center director. He specifically described how the multicultural center director displayed a genuine appreciation for his opinions. For instance, he shared a story of how the multicultural center director demonstrated to him that she valued his opinion on changes she planned to make to the office:

> Dr. Emily [pseudonym for the multicultural center director], she is honestly amazing. So, I met her through Dr. Sam [pseudonym], who's in charge of those transition programs

> and everything. And she was a [religious] believer as well, she believed in the same thing [religion] I did. And…that's how we connected because we talked about…some of our favorite…worship and gospel artists like Maverick City and stuff like that. And after that, we just kept talking and seeing each other, I was telling her some ideas about the multicultural center, what we should do, and…she was actually…it's sad to say…it felt like she cared. Like, she really acted like she wanted to take our input and put it into the center to where…every single day, I'm gonna pass her office, and we're chatting about ideas or how to decorate it, or…should we do this…she's including us in her decision making.

When asked why he thought it was important to feel included in her decision-making process he shared:

> Because the multicultural center is for us. It's not for her name. That's the big difference. But a lot of higher ups, they build their programs or office to make sure it looks good on their name instead of making sure it's good for students. So, I feel like that has definitely been like…that's honestly been my saving grace. It's been like my safety net in a way that…damn, we have someone here that really wants to see us succeed, that wants to see us win, that wants to see us all together.

Marquis appreciated having a say in what changes were made to the multicultural center because the center exists to support students like him. The multicultural center director's actions enhanced Marquis's social capital (Yosso, 2005) by showing him that there are supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) staff members at his institution who want to help him succeed, as opposed to the dismissive, unavailable, and discriminatory staff members he previously described. Having this level of input also seems to have been interpersonally validating (Rendón, 1994) specifically, since he appears to feel secure knowing that someone on campus supports his

personal growth as much as the multicultural center director does. Moreover, the conditions needed for validation were present in this example. For instance, Rendón and Muñoz (2011) argued that for students to feel validated, they should feel a "sense of self-worth" (p. 18) when interacting with on and off campus agents. Here, Marquis appeared to feel a sense of self-worth given his belief that the multicultural center director was genuinely committed to his success.

Thoughts on Both Men's Narratives

Marquis's and Trance's experiences evidence a generally consistent trajectory. Both men described instances of gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) that they experienced at their institutions. They then discussed seeking out support and resources from student affairs staff members that could have possibly helped them better navigate these discriminatory experiences and their experiences at their PWIs overall (e.g., Sankofa program, advising). In the end, however, they both also primarily shared stories of interactions with dismissive, unavailable, and discriminatory staff members.

Given his experience with being physically assaulted by white students at a prior PWI, along with his concerns about these types of institutions not caring about him and his well-being based on his race and gender ("[its just] another Black guy on campus...we don't really need him here"), Trance was understandably hesitant to continue attending PWIs moving forward. Despite this, he still decided to transfer to a PWI, presumably with the hope that his experience would improve at this new institution. As evidence of this hopefulness, he sought out support from financial aid and academic advisors. These are the types of staff members that students are often strongly encouraged to meet with when they first arrive at their new college or university, as they can play an important role in shaping students' initial transition to the institution. There was also a strong potential for Trance to feel validated (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and supported (Strayhorn, 2012) in these interactions, particularly with the academic advisor based on his

frequent interactions with them (Martin & Seifert, 2011; Martin et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Trance's concerns about feeling disposable at PWIs were ultimately confirmed though his interactions with dismissive, unavailable, and discriminatory staff members. While these staff members may not have intended for their actions to be interpreted in this way, their actions could have a deleterious impact on Trance's well-being at his institution. Although not quite the same as the physical harm he experienced at his prior institution, the cumulative effect of these types of interactions with staff members could cause psychological harm, especially since he continues to believe that people at his institution do not care about him ("They didn't care at all what was going on with me or what I had to do").

Marquis, on the other hand, engaged in many of the co-curricular activities that scholars believe support students', particularly Black men's, success during their time in college including working on campus (Barnhardt et al., 2019), participating in student organizations (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007), and men of color initiative programs (Brooms, 2016; Brooms, 2018; Brooms, 2019). Moreover, like Trance, Marquis's experiences within these spaces, and his interactions with the staff members who coordinated them, had the potential to be validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and supportive (Strayhorn, 2012). For instance, when describing his initial involvement with the men of color program at his institution, he seemed to be in the process of developing close, meaningful relationships with his fellow participants ("We had a special handshake for the whole group of men. We did like…it was literally…like a brotherhood, almost like a fraternity"), which could have supported his personal and social growth (Rendón, 1994). Ultimately, however, the staff members leading the program (who were Black men) did not attend to the needs and interests of program participants ("Have you ever heard of us [Black men] doing gaga ball pit? Like, that's not what we do"), and were also unavailable to students when needed ("And on top of that, you don't make time for us").

Although Marquis did provide an example of a staff member who was validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and supportive (Strayhorn, 2012), this appeared to be more of an anomaly given that every other example he offered was of his interactions with dismissive, unavailable, and discriminatory staff. As with Trance, the cumulative effect of psychological violence through these types of interactions with staff on Marquis's mental health is also apparent ("So, I would say sometimes they [staff members] kind of add on to the stress load of trying to graduate or trying to get my degree"). This shows how these interactions can make gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) more challenging to navigate. In the sections to follow, I'll add further depth to these themes by focusing on the different ways the men in this study perceived staff to be mostly discriminatory, dismissive, and unavailable.

More Stories of Mostly Discriminatory, Dismissive, and Unavailable Staff Members

Like Trance and Marquis, the other men in this study also shared stories of interactions with mostly discriminatory, dismissive, and unavailable staff members. Most of the men's stories centered on interactions with white staff members they believed were blatantly and subtly discriminatory towards them. Another subset of the men's stories highlights interactions with staff members who, while not necessarily perceived to be discriminatory, were still considered dismissive, unavailable, and offered inadequate services. Additionally, as with Marquis, one other student shared a story of a supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) staff member who was not discriminatory or dismissive towards him. Thus, the remainder of this chapter will be organized according to the most frequently mentioned types of stories.

Discriminatory White Staff Members

Most of the men in this study perceived staff members to be discriminatory towards them. Specifically, 7 out of 12 students shared these types of stories. Discriminatory staff members represented different functional areas such as first year orientation, athletics, academic

advising, and study abroad. Discriminatory staff members were all white according to the men. These were also staff members with whom the men mostly did not have close relationships and with whom most did not interact frequently. Like the experiences with racism shared by Black men and other racially minoritized students at Desiree's and Raymond's institutions, the experiences shared by the men in this study also reflected both subtle and more blatant types of discrimination. For some men, staff members were identified as discriminatory when they were particularly dismissive or invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012). In these instances, the men largely believed that bias against Black men could explain the staff member's behavior towards them. During our photo elicitation interview, Jerry, for instance, shared an image of a white man condescendingly looking downward with his arms crossed, as if he's above (literally and figuratively) the person being looked down on. Jerry noted that this image reflected how he felt looked down upon during a conversation he had with a study abroad staff member at a summer opportunities fair:

> Well…it was like a summer opportunities fair. And there was just one station about…studying abroad in Paris and it was this white lady [staff member running the station]. And I was talking…she was like, "oh, how's your French?" I was like…"I lived abroad, in high school in France. So…I wouldn't say I speak native level, but I'm pretty decent. I have a certification that says I'm…[at a certain] level." And so, I was explaining that to her. And she was like, "well…" and starts talking kind of slow to me. She's like, "well, you need to…be above…this certain level…blah, blah, blah." And I was trying to tell her…I'm very confident that I'm above…it was…a certain class level at this school [his university] and I was trying to explain to her that I tested out of French for this school, technically. And she's…for some reason, unable to understand what I was saying. And in return [she] was talking to me like I was, I don't know…the more I would say to

her, the more she would talk to me like I was a human that was not capable [of understanding what she's saying]. I wasn't being spoken to like an adult, basically. And then I saw her talk to…another…white person. I can't remember if it was…a worker at the station or…another student maybe. But…I could tell that she was talking to me different.

Jerry's interaction with the study abroad staff member was thus academically invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012) given the staff member's disregard for Jerry's French language credentials and degrading behavior overall, which had a negative impact on his academic self-efficacy. He believes that gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) played a role in this interaction based on the way he saw the staff member interacting with a white person afterwards. The study abroad staff member's assumption that a Black man could not speak French at a high level is another classic example of the gendered racist stereotype regarding Black men and their intelligence, examples of which have been shared by countless Black men in higher education (Harper, 2009; Smith et al., 2007). This assumption is also surprising given the large number of French-speaking Black people throughout the world (e.g., French is the official language in many African countries). When asked how he felt about studying abroad after this incident Jerry shared:

Honestly, that really kind of turned me off to the idea. I mean, I still like it in theory, but I feel like that [incident] definitely pushed me towards other things. I think it would have been different if I was set on studying abroad. I don't know if that one interaction would have stopped me. But there, I was kind of…the reason I was at that summer opportunities fair, I was looking to be convinced by something, right? Checking all my options, seeing what's appealing to me. And in that one moment it was definitely not appealing to me.

Therefore, not only was this a discriminatory interaction, but it also resulted in Jerry not participating in an extracurricular activity that scholars have found offers numerous benefits to students (Ruth et al. 2019).

Jax, a junior, also believed that he was discriminated against by a staff member, specifically his soccer coach. Here he describes a time when his coach unfairly benched him for a tournament:

> Okay…I'm someone who likes sports. So, I play soccer...[and] I'm someone that is very skilled. So…we've trained a lot, and even all my peers…they were like, "oh…Jax, lead the line…you're gonna lead the line for our team." So, everyone actually expects me to be in the lineup…to play an important part of the match so we can actually win the game. But unfortunately...it came as a shock to me, when the lineup was out…for all the six matches we played in that competition…I just played twice and when I played…I came in as a substitute.

Jax indicated that when he asked his coach why he was not starting in these matches, the coach offered no explanation. Thus, Jax attributed his decision to his race and gender:

> So, I [thought]…because I'm Black…that's why my coach was not…[playing me more]. Even my white…I have some, like, very few white friends…some of them were like, "why did coach not use Jax…what's happened? What's wrong? We need him in this match. We need him to win, we need him so we can win all these matches in this competition." Eventually…we were beaten out of that competition, just because of the coach's decision.

Jax then shared how he felt about this experience after reflecting on it:

> My coach didn't…use me and…this is something that actually affects me emotionally…mentally because I'm someone who likes sports…I put in all my best…all

> my passion. So, this is something that actually affects me when I think about this situation, this moment, this time...

Jax's story offers another example of how poor interactions with staff members can negatively impact Black men's mental health. Admittedly, it's not exactly clear if the coach's decision not to start Jax for the tournament was truly informed by gendered racism (e.g., he could have just been bad at his job, Jax could have been performing poorly in his position). However, and more importantly, Jax interpreted his actions as discriminatory, and this appears to have a been an emotionally draining experience for him from which he has not fully recovered.

Interestingly, when sharing stories of interactions with discriminatory staff members, two students also noted instances in which they believe they experienced bias based solely on their gender. Amber, a sophomore, for example, noted this feeling when sharing a story of his experience attending a first-year orientation retreat:

> I think I was in some kind of…not even like a course, but kind of just like a group activity that was organized through our university. And we were out doing kind of like a hike, it was a little bit of a retreat. And so, I remember just…throughout that two- or three-day retreat, there were a lot of times we would get to things that…me and some of the other guys on the retreat…because it was organized by two older women, and they kind of just thought that some of these other guys would…were just supposed to be able to do certain things, like… maybe set up…the tents and stuff… if we had to carry packs and stuff like that…they kind of just put the responsibility on us. And, I didn't really mind…because most of the things I was able to do. And I didn't really see a problem with it, because in some ways, I was also kind of raised that way…to just…take up that role. But…some of the other guys weren't super comfortable with it. And...there were also some things that they [the orientation staff members] didn't really want us to do, or, like,

> we could do it, but…you could tell that they wanted more so the girls to do it. Like when we set up camp…somewhere in the Appalachians, we had to set up camp and we had gone fishing earlier in the day, which was something that us guys were mostly doing. And when it came time to basically…cook what we had caught, we had sort of gotten…little coolers with ice ready and they [the orientation staff members] kind of wanted the girls there…tending the [fire]…just making sure stuff didn't burn and stuff like that.

Amber then added why he thought the orientation staff members were making him and the other men in the group perform separate tasks from the women in the group:

> I was like…we're kind of being treated like this, because…we're guys, we're men, and…they have like this idea of…what we're supposed to be able to do and how we're supposed to be able to behave. And…maybe we're not necessarily matching up to that and it's like a problem for them.

Amber, thus, felt like he and the other men were being discriminated against based on their gender by the orientation staff members given how they had essentially assigned tasks for the retreat based on traditional gender roles.

Dismissive and Unavailable Staff Members, and Disappointing Staff Services

When asked to share stories of their interactions with helpful and unhelpful staff members, some of the men, also described instances in which they believe staff members were dismissive towards them and unavailable to them as they were dealing with different personal issues and navigating their overall experience at their institution. Other students shared stories of experiences with services offered by staff members that failed to meet their expectations. In total, 6 out of 12 students shared these types of stories. The dismissive and unavailable staff members discussed by students also represented various student affairs functional areas including student

conduct, counseling services, and career services. Some of the men had less formal and/or brief interactions (e.g., one meeting at their office, attending one event) with these staff members. Others had frequent interactions, and more formal and close relationships with these staff members (e.g., attending multiple staff-run meetings/events, supervisor/supervisee relationships). These staff members also included both white staff and staff members of color. Additionally, the men did not explicitly attribute their negative experiences with these staff members to gendered racism, but instead suggested that they were too busy or disinterested in helping them.

A few of the men, for instance, expressed their frustration with staff members at their institutions who were unavailable to meet with them when they needed assistance. Jay, a junior, touched on this in a story he shared of his poor experience attempting to schedule counseling services:

> I know for me…because on my campus, we have free counseling services. So, I've gone to two [counseling sessions] so far. And I was supposed to go to one, probably like a week ago but I couldn't go on the day that I had scheduled. So, I had to try and reschedule, but in order to reschedule, I had to shift it like two weeks later. So…and that's after…I can only do it [schedule a session] like once a month, because of how busy all the [counselors'] schedules are. So…if I was having any real problems [at the time], I would have one meeting and then have to wait six weeks until I can go to the next one because it's so backed up. And…I could call and…talk to someone over the phone, but I have a counselor that I already know and that…knows me. So it's difficult to actually be able to talk to him again, if I want to, then I really have to just wait on it.

Jay then noted why he found his counselor's lack of availability discouraging:

> It is discouraging [not being able to meet with his counselor], because…especially since I missed it [his appointment] for something that I really couldn't avoid. It…makes it so I

> have to pick and choose…either doing this thing that's really important or getting…counseling, which is also really important. And also…because I have to wait so long…the need for it [counseling] kind of goes down because I kind of just have to figure stuff out myself. So by the time I do end up going, the problems that I had to…I got six weeks' worth of…issues that I needed to talk about, now it's been such a long time and I can't really…get…the same kind of support I need.

The counselor's unavailability, which is more of a structural issue with regard to the counseling center possibly being understaffed, was discouraging to Jay because it made him feel the need to either choose to get help sooner and miss something else important to him or wait to receive counseling services until after he's resolved the issue himself (and/or has possibly lost interest in getting help). This lack of availability is also problematic because any personal or social growth (Rendón, 1994) for Jay that could have come from those missed counseling sessions, and possibly help him better navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at his university, is necessarily unrealized.

Additionally, a few of the men found specific services or programs offered by staff members to be unhelpful when they did not address their needs. For instance, Ben, a senior, talks about his attempt to file a discrimination report with a student conduct staff member against a student at his institution:

> On the first instance [of discrimination] I faced, I tried to report it to the student affairs unit…the code of conduct department. When I did that…I almost dropped out of school because what I was saying in the report wasn't even attended to [by the student conduct staff member]... [and the] things that were said against me [by the student who discriminated against him] were so difficult [to deal with].

This story was challenging for Ben to share, and he didn't feel comfortable elaborating on it when asked. Still, it's clear from this example that the student conduct staff member's (and their office's) lack of adequate attention to Ben's discrimination report made the gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) he's experienced at his institution more difficult to navigate, so much so that he considered withdrawing from his university as a result.

Jerry, a junior, expressed similar disappointment with staff services when he shared a story of his experience attending an educational workshop facilitated by career services staff members:

> I think one example I could think of is…we have…an office of career services. And…they had a workshop about…the recruiting process in the financial world as…a person of color. And those workshops are more like, these are things that can be done as an institution to help alleviate…racism, or… the effects of racism and implicit bias, and less so like [focused on]…you are someone who's impacted by this…[so] how do you [personally] deal with…microaggressions…what do you do when someone does this [to you]? Like less of the actual experience of being in that, and more so just like an overall kind of bird's eye view [of the experience]. This is why this happens and this is what can be done to…stop it. And…it'll give me examples of…microaggressions, like, why…this might happen, why this is wrong. But I don't feel like it does anything from your perspective as…a person of color besides pointing out what might happen to you.

In other words, Jerry was disappointed with the career services staff members' workshop because they did not offer him any specific strategies for navigating racial discrimination or gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) he experiences as a person of color in finance. Moreover, they also missed an opportunity to support Jerry's navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) by failing

to show him how he could use his own resources (e.g., work colleagues, friends, family) and strengths to better manage and negotiate these experiences, which could have also supported his personal and social growth (Rendón, 1994).

One Other Staff Member of Color Who Was Available When Needed

Other than Marquis, only one other student (Rubix, a junior) gave an example of a staff member who was not discriminatory or dismissive towards him and his needs. As with Marquis, the staff member Rubix described was also a staff member of color. Unlike Marquis, however, Rubix had only briefly interacted with this staff member. Additionally, in contrast to the discriminatory and dismissive staff members the men primarily interacted with, this staff member of color was available to Rubix at a time of great need. Rubix, for example, highlighted his appreciation for the serendipitous availability of this registrar's office staff member when sharing a story of his experience trying to pay his tuition bill for the semester after the payment deadline:

> When I went to actually pay my tuition fee, because I was out of funds, my parents couldn't afford...they could afford actually, but not that time. They had to sort some funds to pay my tuition fee. So, I went [to the bill payment office] very late....[and] when I went there, the person in charge says I am very late...[and] that they've closed the [payment] portal. And that was so frustrating. I told her I need to pay my school fees...that my parents are just middle class…we are struggling, you know, paying our fees. I said a lot of things, but she said no. So...[a registrar's office staff member] was there and said I should go and come back by 2pm. So, when I came back around 2pm, she had called the bursar himself, you know, she explained things to the bursar...that I was late, and she had to convince the bursar and the bursar gave the cashier an instruction to...open the [payment] portal for me to make payments on my institution fees.

Rubix indicated that he had not interacted with this registrar's office staff member prior to this incident, and when asked why he thought she was willing to help him despite this he notes: "She just wanted to do the right thing...and helped me at that point that I needed her the most." Rubix already possessed the ability to pay his tuition bill, but he was initially prevented from doing so by the bill payment office staff member. However, by speaking with the university bursar on Rubix's behalf and facilitating his payment of his tuition bill, the registrar's office staff member helped Rubix reclaim his agency and successfully navigate this experience. This action appeared to benefit Rubix's sense of social support (Strayhorn, 2012) by helping him see that registrar's office staff member could be relied on as a resource in this instance, and possibly in the future. However, it was not necessarily a validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) interaction, since it didn't appear to be an intentional act on the part of the registrar's office staff member to support Rubix's academic, personal, or social growth. This type of experience also seemed to be an anomaly for Rubix given that the only other stories he shared during our interview were of his experiences with discrimination at his institution. It should also be noted, that while the bill payment office staff member's negative reaction to Rubix's request to pay his bill could very well be examples of both an absence of care and gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), the fact that the institution has a policy that doesn't allow students to make payments past a certain point could itself be discriminatory, in terms of its impact on minoritized students (e.g., low income, racially minoritized students who might not be able to meet arbitrary bill payment deadlines).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings from my interviews with undergraduate Black men. Interviews first revealed the men's experiences with gendered racism in academic contexts and in peer interactions. These stories also touched on the different ways the men made meaning of these experiences based on their intersectional identities (e.g. sexual orientation). The men's

stories then highlighted how they mostly viewed student affairs staff members as discriminatory, dismissive, unavailable for them when needed, and offering inadequate services. By initially focusing on the narratives of two students in particular (Trance and Marquis), I attempted to show how their experiences progressed from early experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at their institutions, to seeking different types of support or resources from student affairs staff members, and ultimately, not receiving support from staff and in some instances experiencing discrimination from staff. While these men presumably expected or hoped their interactions and relationships with staff members would be trusting, respectful, and caring, their relationships and interactions generally ended up being disrespectful, uncaring, and discriminatory. This was a particularly disappointing finding since there was strong potential for their interactions with staff members to be academically and interpersonally validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and supportive (Strayhorn, 2012), given how frequently these men interacted with staff and the types of staff members they interacted with (e.g., academic advisors, men of color program directors). Unfortunately, the conditions needed for validation and support were not present in these interactions. One the six elements of validation, for example, refers to the responsibility of on and off-campus agents to establish connections with students (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). It was clear, however, that most of the staff members Trance and Marquis described were not interested in establishing connections with them. As a result, it would be virtually impossible for these men to feel better about themselves academically, feel like they are growing personally and socially, or that their capital was supported, based on the types of interactions they had with these staff members. Thus, their interactions were instead largely invalidating and unsupportive. In addition, Trance's and Marquis's narratives also spoke to how repeated experiences with psychological violence, through interactions with staff members, can

have a negative impact on Black men's mental health, and ultimately make gendered racism more challenging to navigate.

The additional stories offered by the other men in this study further corroborated Trance's and Marquis's narratives by touching on the different ways the men perceived staff to be mostly discriminatory, dismissive, and unavailable. The men described their interactions with staff members whom they mostly found discriminatory given how particularly dismissive or invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012) they were to them. The men then shared stories of interactions with staff members who were dismissive towards them and unavailable for them when needed, as they were dealing with different personal issues and navigating their overall experiences at their institution. The men also shared stories of experiences with services offered by staff members that failed to meet their expectations. While the men's experiences with discriminatory staff members more directly speak to how gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) manifests in these interactions, their invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012) experiences again highlight how staff interactions can make the gendered racism these men generally experience at their universities more challenging to navigate.

Lastly, Marquis was the only student who had a validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) experience with a staff member, and his circumstances were unique. He was a very involved student leader who developed a close relationship with a multicultural center director. When describing his relationship with the director, Marquis highlighted her genuine appreciation for his opinions about changes she planned to make to the multicultural center. Unlike his other interactions with staff, the conditions needed for validation and support were present, including the establishment of a connection and the "sense of self-worth" (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011, p. 18) that students should feel when validated ("damn, we have someone here that really wants to see

us succeed”). In contrast, the conditions needed for validation and support were not present in most of the men’s (including Marquis’s) interactions with staff. Most of the men were also not as involved on campus as Marquis and did not have as close relationships with staff members (nor should they have to). Additionally, while Rubix did share a story of a supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) experience with a staff member, it cannot be considered validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) since it didn’t seem like there was any intention on the part of the registrar’s office staff member to support Rubix’s academic, personal, or social growth. In the end, the registrar’s office staff member was simply acknowledging his humanity in response to a possibly discriminatory policy. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these findings related to the prior literature, while also identifying implications for future research.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusions

Much of the prior literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs focuses on the various barriers (i.e., underrepresentation, anti-Black men discrimination) they encounter that negatively impact their degree completion efforts, as well as how these men use strategies, personal strengths, and resources to navigate these barriers (Allen, 2018; Brezinski et al., 2018; Brooms & Druery, 2023; Burt et al., 2018b). Less attention has been given to the role that higher education institutions, through college student affairs staff, can play in supporting and hindering Black men's persistence towards degree completion. The studies that have explored Black men's relationships with staff members suggest that these interactions can have positive effects on Black men's persistence (Hurtado et al., 2015; Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Strayhorn, 2008). However, these studies have largely examined these interactions indirectly by either examining Black men's interactions with staff, along with faculty and/or peers, or by studying the experiences of Black men who participate in targeted college support programs (i.e., Black men initiative programs) often organized by staff members (Palmer & Gasman; 2008; Strayhorn, 2008; Brooms, 2016). Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members more directly to begin to get a clearer sense of if, and how, these interactions may support Black men's persistence.

To accomplish this goal, I interviewed students who identified as Black men. Student affairs staff members were also interviewed for the purpose of helping me understand the historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, oppression, and support at student participants' PWIs. During our interviews (see Chapter 4), staff members shared various

historical and contemporary examples of racism, and the absence of belonging for students and staff of color, including Black men. Staff member interviews also spoke to the largely informal support provided to Black men and other racially minoritized students, and the limited institutionally supported resources for these students. Findings from student interviews (see Chapter 5) were generally consistent with contextual insights from staff. In response to my first research question, students shared stories of experiences with gendered racism in academic contexts and in peer interactions at their PWIs. Their stories also shed light on the different ways some of the men made meaning of these experiences based on their intersectional identities (e.g. social class). Students then described their interactions with student affairs staff members. Unfortunately, not only did student interviews highlight how Black men are not receiving adequate support from student affairs staff, but also the ways in which some staff members may be doing more harm than good towards Black men's navigation of gendered racism at PWIs. Students specifically described interactions with staff members who were mostly discriminatory, dismissive towards them and their needs, and unavailable for them when needed. Consequently, the men perceived their interactions with staff to be mainly invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012).

For the remainder of this chapter, I will analyze contextual insights and findings from Chapters 4 and 5. I'll begin with a synthesis of contextual insights and findings across staff and student interviews. I'll then focus on the contributions these insights and findings make to the broader literature. I'll end the chapter by discussing implications for future research, practice, and policy.

Synthesis of Staff and Student Interviews

The students' general (non-staff) experiences with gendered racism in academic contexts and in peer interactions at their PWIs, were consistent with stories shared by staff members Raymond and Desiree about the experiences of racially minoritized students (including Black men) at their institutions. The men in this study, for instance, shared stories of discriminatory white faculty who were overly critical of them during class sessions. Staff members also discussed perceptions among their racially minoritized students of discriminatory professors at their institutions, based on their experiences with microaggressions committed by them. The men's stories of gendered racism perpetrated by peers in different student affairs contexts (e.g., student organizations, residence halls) were also consistent with stories shared during staff interviews. Staff member Raymond, for example, described the discriminatory residence hall incidents his racially minoritized students have experienced (e.g., racist whiteboard drawings). Staff member interviews, however, did not speak to the more complex ways some of the men in this study made meaning of their experiences with gendered racism based on their intersectional identities. This insight wasn't too surprising, given that there were multiple instances throughout my interviews with staff members in which they seemed to be unaware of the experiences of Black men or Black folks in general at their institutions. Thus, these staff members were possibly unaware that Black men at their institutions may interpret their experiences with discrimination differently. This, again, highlights how these students may not be receiving sufficient support for navigating these experiences (i.e., support that attends to their intersectional identities).

Similarly, the most frequently mentioned type of interaction with staff members described by the men in this study were interactions in which the student perceived a white staff member to be discriminatory towards them based on their race and gender. Marquis, for instance, spoke about the ways that white staff expected him to adhere to white norms and standards of

professionalism in terms of how he appeared. This notion of feeling a need to follow white norms of professionalism was also mentioned in my interviews with staff members, when describing the experiences of Black men at their institutions. Other students, like Trance, discussed how they had to deal with white staff members' gendered racist expectations or stereotypes about where they thought Black men should be on campus including in their academic departments. Likewise, my interviews with staff members also revealed the ways that white folks at PWIs, including staff members, can assign gendered racist stereotypes to Black men that then inform how they interact with them. Again, however, I must reiterate that there were several instances throughout my interviews with staff members when they appeared to be unaware of the experiences of Black men or Black folks in general at their institutions. This indicates that many of the discriminatory experiences with white staff members shared by the students in this study go unnoticed, even by racially minoritized staff members, which evidences a normalization of gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at these institutions. Additionally, neither the students or staff members in this study directly commented on any institutional structures (i.e., policies and practices) at their institutions that they found discriminatory. This was concerning because it suggests that gendered racism and/or anti-Black racism can be addressed simply by educating or removing individual perpetrators, rather than attending to structures that facilitate individual behavior (e.g., policies that don't allow students to make bill payments past a certain point).

The other most mentioned type of interaction with staff members described by the men in this study were interactions in which the student perceived the staff member to be dismissive towards them and unavailable to them when needed. The men, for instance, shared numerous examples of instances in which they believed staff members did not care about them and their

needs. This absence of care among staff discussed by students was also reflected in my interviews with staff members, when describing how students at their institutions felt about staff and administrators. As a result of feeling like staff don't care about them, some men also described their apprehension for reporting incidents of discrimination they experienced or deciding not to report these incidents in the future based on prior poor reporting experiences. Similarly, staff members touched on how their students also felt like it was unnecessary to report incidents of discrimination at their institutions given their belief that staff and administrators didn't care about them. When considering why staff members may be displaying a lack of care for students, examining staff members' experiences at their institutions can offer some insight.

Specifically, my interviews with staff members revealed how Black and other staff of color have historically felt like there is a lack of community at their institutions, and that they have not been adequately supported in their roles. This absence of community and institutional support, which are both structural issues (e.g., underrepresentation of staff of color), understandably makes their jobs more challenging. On one hand, by not having enough institutional support in their roles, staff may not have enough time and energy to adequately support all student needs, which could be perceived by students as staff being uncaring or dismissive. On the other hand, the absence of community and institutional support for staff has also resulted in some staff members taking out their frustrations with their institutions on students. Now let me be clear that staff members are certainly responsible for their own actions towards students (whether intended or unintended) and some staff may very well not care about students, particularly Black men given the nature of Black misandry (Smith et al., 2007). However, assuming that most staff members are not Black misandrists, I also think one can reasonable argue that students' interactions with uncaring staff members could, in part, be a

result of staff having to navigate these structural inequities in their roles (e.g., not having enough employees to support the operations of their offices).

It should also be noted here that two of the men in this study (Marquis and Rubix) offered examples of positive interactions with staff members (e.g., staff who were available, not dismissive). In both instances, the men described the informal support provided by the staff members, such as displaying a genuine appreciation for their opinions. This type of informal support offered by staff members at the men's institutions is consistent with the types of informal support for Black men provided by the staff members I interviewed, including making sure Black men feel seen at their institution. Unfortunately, more formal programming and resources available to support Black men, particularly programming designed to help Black men navigate gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007), seemed at best limited and at worst nonexistent at these institutions based on my interviews with both students and staff.

Contributions to the Broader Literature

The fact that the men in this study largely perceived staff members to be discriminatory, dismissive, and unavailable to them represents a significant departure from what scholars to date have generally found when studying staff-student interactions. Admittedly, our current understanding of the nature of students' relationships with staff members is quite limited (Bensimon, 2007). However, the studies that do exist on students' (including Black men's) interactions with staff members have focused on the types of beneficial interactions and relationships students can have with staff (Haley, 2023; Luedke, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2023). The Black men in the current study instead, however, detailed the ways in which their interactions with staff members have been mostly harmful. The men, specifically, shared stories of interactions with discriminatory staff members who were

dismissive towards them and their needs, and unavailable for them when needed, as they were dealing with different personal issues and navigating their overall experiences at their institution. The men also shared stories of experiences with services offered by staff members that failed to meet their expectations.

Prior studies have found that staff members with whom students, especially racially minoritized students, interact frequently or work closely can positively impact their learning outcomes and help them navigate different issues related to their college experiences (Luedke, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2020). However, even Black men in this study who frequently interacted with staff or worked closely with staff members noted how they could still be dismissive and unavailable. Moreover, while research shows that racially minoritized students can benefit from interactions with staff members of color (Luedke, 2017), some of the Black men in this study also found staff of color dismissive and unavailable. These contradictory findings suggest that there are instances in which racially minoritized students, especially Black men, do not benefit from their interactions with staff. Discussions of any potential limits to the benefits of students' interactions with staff have been largely absent from the literature. It may be the case, for example, that staff of color can experience compassion fatigue and burn out (Anderson, 2021; Perez & Bettencourt, 2024) when they are not being supported in their roles and they lack community at their institutions (as reported by staff in Chapter 4). Consequently, these feelings among staff of color can result in poor experiences with Black men.

These poor experiences, as argued in my theoretical framework, ultimately contributed to making gendered racism more challenging for the men in this study to navigate (Kincheloe, 2005; Smith et al., 2007). The narratives of Trance and Marquis (see Chapter 5) are illustrative in this regard, as they highlight the cumulative effect of psychological violence, consistently

experienced through these types of interactions with staff, on the men's mental health. Conversely, only two of the men in this study explicitly identified staff of color who were not discriminatory, dismissive, or unavailable. The two men valued the ways these staff members showed their appreciation for their opinions and were available for them when they were desperately in need of support. This particular finding, while limited to just these two men in the study, is consistent with what other students of color who have benefited from staff interactions have reported in prior studies (Haley, 2023; Luedke, 2017). However, the fact that only two men could identify staff members who were not discriminatory, dismissive, or unavailable is inconsistent with the espoused goals of those within the student affairs profession who claim to center student success, equity, inclusion, and social justice ("NASPA 2019-2026 Strategic Goals," 2024). Instead, this finding suggests that there may be a disconnect between the expressed goals of the field and how those goals are enacted.

These findings also contribute to the literature on validation (Rendón, 1994), CCW (Yosso, 2005), and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). First, while recent scholarship has attended to more expansive definitions of staff members (Hallet et al., 2024), studies using validation theory and sense of belonging to examine staff-student interactions have historically either focused on academic staff (i.e., academic advisors), or have failed to distinguish between students' interactions with staff and their faculty interactions when studying them together (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Allen, 2016; Hurtado et al., 2015). In contrast, staff members in this study have been clearly identified by students and they represented various student affairs functional areas including career services, financial aid, and multicultural affairs. My use of CCW as way to better understand how students feel validated (or in this case how they can feel invalidated) was also an approach that had not been widely adopted by scholars to this point.

Specifically, the men's interactions with mostly dismissive and unavailable staff members can be understood as invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) since these experiences did not support their academic self-efficacy, personal/social growth (Rendón, 1994), or any forms of capitol that they possessed (Yosso, 2005). The men discussed, for example, how staff members failed to validate (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) them as they managed different personal issues such as navigating financial aid (e.g., not having their navigational capital supported and thus being academically invalidated). Consequently, my theoretical framework contributes to this literature by showing how these theories can be used in combination to understand the ways in which staff members can make gendered racism more challenging for Black men to navigate.

I also posited in Chapter 2 that part of students' cognitive assessment of their sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) on campus could involve determining whether (and/or how much) they have been academically or interpersonally validated (Rendón, 1994) by staff, which could then influence their decision to leave or remain in college. The initial part of this relationship between validation and sense of belonging was apparent in this study's findings, as students who felt invalidated by staff clearly also felt a lack of social support among them as well (see Marquis's story in Chapter 5 for a strong example of this). However, while one student (Ben) indicated that he considered withdrawing from his university based on his poor experience with staff members, the extent to which all the men made similar decisions based on their experiences with staff was not as clear.

Lastly, another key contribution of these findings is that they bring together what were, up to this point, two largely disparate areas of the literature. Prior to the current study, there had been very little explicit overlap between the literature on Black men's persistence at PWIs and the literature on students' interactions with student affairs staff members. Studies on Black men's

persistence at PWIs that included staff (i.e., academic advisors) often do not frame their work as falling with the staff-student interactions literature (e.g., Johnson et al., 2019). On the other hand, I've yet to come across a study on students' interactions with student affairs staff members that focuses on Black men's persistence at PWIs. Bringing these two areas of the literature together is important because it highlights the negative and positive roles that student affairs staff members can play in Black men's persistence at PWIs, when previously, these roles may have been underappreciated in the literature. Moreover, it also shows scholars how much more there still is to discover about the nature of these interactions and their impact on Black men's persistence.

Implications for Future Research

This study's conceptual framework (i.e., methodology, theoretical framework, and methods) has implications for future research. I believe qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013) was an appropriate approach for answering my first research question, as I was ultimately able to understand the overall context of gendered racism that Black men navigate at PWIs and how they make sense of their experiences with gendered racism. The use of qualitative research also helped me understand the process through which staff members largely hinder Black men's navigation of gendered racism (i.e., my second research question). My use of critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2008) in this study was also efficacious. Interviews with students and staff members shed light on the ways in which their experiences and stories of experiences were shaped and constrained by systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005). For example, students' stories of gendered racism and their intersectional identities showed how interlocking systems of oppression (e.g., gendered racism and classism) can shape students' meaning making. Thus,

future research interested in context and process related to Black men's experiences at PWIs and interactions with staff would potentially benefit from using these approaches.

My theoretical model (see Figure 1) also has implications for future research. The notion that Black men's meaning making occurs within and is informed by concentric contexts was directly and indirectly supported in some instances in this study and less supported in others. I first suggested that the primary context within which their meaning-making takes place was the PWI with its historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege, and oppression. Interviews with staff members showed how historical oppressive contexts can influence contemporary contexts and experiences. Staff interviews, for example, revealed how the oppression (i.e., the absence of resources and support) staff of color have historically experienced at these institutions could contribute to oppressive student experiences. However, the extent to which Black men's meaning-making directly occurred within or was influenced by this historical and contemporary context was perhaps not as clear from my interviews with students and staff members. I then argued that within this context of the PWI, was the contemporary context of gendered racism at the PWI that Black men navigate. Here, my interviews with students directly demonstrated the different ways in which Black men's meaning making occurred within and was informed by this contemporary context (e.g., discriminatory peer interactions). Jerry, for instance, described how he made meaning of his experience navigating gendered racist stereotypes expressed by peers in his student organization ("And that [experience] gave me some insight on how, like, truly impacted by stereotypes some people were in their perception of others at the school").

The last context within the model was the context of Black men and student affairs staff interactions. Based on these interactions, I posited that Black men may view their navigation of

gendered racism at the PWI as less challenging or more challenging. Specifically, I argued that if staff validated (Rendón, 1994) these men by supporting their CCW (Yosso, 2005), and if they helped them feel a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), then Black men would find gendered racism at the PWI less challenging to navigate. In contrast, if staff failed to validate these men, do not support their sense of belonging, and/or discriminate against them, Black men would find gendered racism at the PWI more challenging to navigate. Unfortunately, this study's findings offered more, admittedly indirect, evidence to support the latter half of this argument than the former. The men shared numerous stories detailing how staff discriminated against them, failed to validate and support them by being dismissive and unavailable, and how they made meaning of these experiences in ways that could make gendered racism ultimately more challenging to navigate. Marquis, for instance, shared how he made meaning of his student organization advisor's unavailability for meetings ("So, I would say sometimes they [staff members] kind of add on to the stress load of trying to graduate or trying to get my degree"). While this comment doesn't directly speak to gendered racism, the "stress load" that he's referring to can reasonably be understood to include stress deriving from experiences with gendered racism. Thus, this poor interaction with a staff member "adds on" to the stress he already has from gendered racism, which could make it more challenging to navigate.

On the other hand, only two students (Rubix and Marquis) shared stories of supportive staff members, and only one of them was validating. Moreover, the extent to which these experiences were interpreted by the men as helping them better navigate gendered racism was unclear. As a result, I'm currently unable to determine if validation (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and support (Strayhorn, 2012) from staff can make gendered racism at PWIs less challenging to navigate for Black men. However, the fact that there was one student for whom this could have

been true suggests that there could be more. Thus, future scholarship should pursue this particular line of inquiry. Future studies could explore, for instance, how Black men make meaning of validating and supportive interactions with staff members as they navigate gendered racism.

There are also a few ways that I would alter my theoretical model based on these findings, which future scholars interested in this work should consider. First, given the lack of direct evidence regarding how Black men's meaning-making occurred within or was influenced by historical and contemporary contexts of power, privilege and oppression, I would position this contextual level on the outside of the other two levels as a potential influence rather than how its currently positioned as a direct influence on Black men's meaning-making. Similarly, there was a lack of direct evidence regarding Black men viewing their validating and supportive interactions with staff members as helping them better navigate gendered racism. I would, therefore, also position this part of the model on the outside as a potential way that Black men make meaning of their interactions with staff members. Lastly, since there was more indirect evidence supporting the notion that discriminatory, unsupportive and invalidating interactions with staff make gendered racism more challenging to navigate for Black men, I would also position this part of the model on the outside of the concentric circles as a potential way that Black men make meaning of their interactions with staff members as they navigate gendered racism. Thus, the updated model would have the contemporary context of gendered racism at the PWI as the primary contextual level, while the secondary contextual level would be the context of Black men and student affairs staff interactions.

It's also worth noting that few if any prior studies have used validation (Rendón, 1994) and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) as a means of better understanding the nature of Black

men's experiences with gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) at PWIs. The men in this study identified white staff as discriminatory when they believed these staff members were particularly dismissive or invalidating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and unsupportive (Strayhorn, 2012), which they ultimately attributed to gendered racism. This combination of theoretical perspectives adds depth to the study of Black men's experiences with gendered racism at PWIs, and potentially offers a new avenue for future scholarship to pursue. Future research could explore, for example, the relationship between Black men's invalidating and unsupportive interactions with staff at PWIs and their experiences with gendered racism. Also, since the current study did not include interviews with white staff members, future qualitative scholarship could investigate how white staff members approach their work with Black men. This research could possibly uncover a disconnect between the intent of white staff members' actions and how they are ultimately perceived by Black men (e.g., invalidating, discriminatory).

Another potential theoretical implication could be the benefits of future studies on this topic explicitly using Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Parker & Lynn, 2002) as a guiding theoretical framework and to inform methodological decisions. Gendered racism (Smith et al., 2007) as a concept does an effective job of revealing how Black men make meaning of their discriminatory experiences, which was a key goal of this study. Future studies, however, should also investigate the historical, institutional reasons why Black men continue to have these experiences, which I could only speculate on in the current study given that it was not designed to answer these questions. CRT, on the other hand, was created to answer these types of questions (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and it could also potentially offer historical, institutional explanations for why the men in this study had mostly poor interactions with staff. For example, a future CRT study examining the permanence of racism at PWIs could reveal how discriminatory, historical,

institutional policies and practices at these institutions result in present-day circumstances leading to Black men's experiences with gendered racism and poor interactions with staff.

The design of the current study has implications for future research as well. First, while I initially viewed my research site selection and recruitment complications (see Chapter 3) as a setback, I believe broadening the study ultimately contributed to the richness of my data. If the study had been limited to one regional public PWI as intended, then I never would have, for example, heard Jerry's story highlighting the relationship between social class and gendered racism at his elite large private PWI. Future scholarship should, thus, continue to explore the experiences of Black men at PWIs broadly understood. At the same time, however, I also still believe that future scholarship should give more attention to the experiences of Black men at regional public PWIs given their record of positive post-college outcomes for racially minoritized students (Klor de Alva, 2019). Consequently, to avoid the issues I encountered with site selection and recruitment, I suggest future scholars send recruitment materials directly to students at regional public PWIs (e.g., Black student unions) since I eventually had some success with this strategy. I also recommend that scholars use photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) in future studies on Black men's experiences at PWIs and be as explicit as possible with their instructions to participants regarding this method. I intended to conduct photovoice interviews with students, but since I was not explicit about students needing to take their own photos, our interviews ending up being inconsistent with photovoice. While the image-based (i.e., photo elicitation) interviews we had provided similar benefits, I believe photovoice interviews would have distinctly enhanced the richness of my data given its emphasis on how participants can support their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997).

In addition, potential study participants, along with the men who did participate in my study, may have been unaware of the many campus employees classified as student affairs staff members. On the other hand, some may have thought that faculty are considered staff. These considerations have implications for the design of future studies on this topic. In my Student Presurvey (see Appendix C), for instance, when asking students about the nature and extent of their interactions with student affairs staff members, I did not provide a definition for student affairs professionals. While I did provide several examples of different types of staff members and offices they could have been exposed to (e.g., New Student Programs, LGBTQ+ Center, career center staff, residence life staff), these examples may not have been as representative of the various student affairs functional areas (Wesaw & Sponsler, 2014) as I had originally thought. Future studies on this topic should thus be more specific when discussing student affairs staff and offices with potential study participants. This should include clearly defining what student affairs is early on (e.g., in recruitment materials) and providing a list of all student affairs functional areas, staff members, and offices to potential participants (e.g., in survey instruments) that is as comprehensive as possible. I also specifically recommend future quantitative studies on this topic to avoid aggregating staff and faculty in their methods and findings given that some students may think that faculty *are* staff. Instead, these studies should ask students separate sets of survey questions, and present separate findings from their analyses, regarding their interactions with staff (using the aforementioned recommendations) and interactions with faculty.

Lastly, to possibly provide more direct evidence identifying the role of student affairs staff members in Black men’s navigation of gendered racism, I recommend that future studies make more direct inquiries about this role early on. For example, in my Student Presurvey, I only

asked students one question about their experiences with gendered racism (i.e., “Have you experienced race and/or gender-based discrimination while at your college/university?”). On the other hand, I asked many questions about the nature and extent of their interactions with staff members. Moving forward, it may be more fruitful to ask students more presurvey questions about their experiences with gendered racism in relation to their interactions with staff. After students confirm that they’ve experienced gendered racism scholars could, for instance, ask them if anyone helped them work through these experiences and what role (if any) did staff members play. Asking these types of questions at this stage in the process could help scholars more effectively identify students whose experiences might offer more direct evidence of staff members’ role in Black men’s navigation of gendered racism.

Next, regarding the current study’s findings (and my first research question), the men’s stories of discriminatory experiences in academic contexts and in peer interactions are largely consistent with what scholars have historically found when studying the experiences of Black men at PWIs (Brezinski et al., 2018; Burt et al., 2018a; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Johnson et al., 2019; Schwitzer, et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2007). In Burt et al.’s (2018a) study of Black men in an engineering graduate program at one PWI, they found that “prejudiced attitudes among non-Black peers often led to discriminatory practices of exclusion, which many of the Black males noted, particularly in the context of academic interactions such as study groups” (p. 988). However, there are also a few key areas of distinction in these findings from previous scholarship on this topic. First, the more complex interpretations of gendered racism shared by 2 of the men in this study based on their intersectional identities (i.e. sexual orientation, social class), evidence a slight deviation from the prior literature. Scholars have, for instance, examined the role of Black men’s intersectional identities such as sexual orientation in their navigation of

their spirituality (Means, 2017) and overall college persistence (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011). Yet, less attention has been given to the role of their intersectional identities in how they make meaning of gendered racism. Given the relationship between experiences with gendered racism and persistence (Brezinski et al., 2018), its incumbent upon scholars to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how Black men interpret these experiences. Future scholarship could examine, for example, how Black men make meaning of experiences with gendered racism in relation to their social class or sexual orientation.

Next, the normalization of gendered racism against Black men at PWIs among staff members has also not received much attention from the prior literature. As this study's findings suggest, even supportive racially minoritized staff members can be unaware of Black men's experiences with gendered racism. Thus, not only are these experiences going unnoticed by these staff members, but they may also in some ways be perpetuating these experiences without realizing it (see Chapter 4 for a possible example of this with staff member Desiree). Future research must explore this phenomenon more directly. Studies on this topic could investigate, for example, the ways in which staff members (including racially minoritized staff members) normalize and unknowingly engage in gendered racist practices against Black men at PWIs.

Students' experiences with anti-Black men discrimination perpetrated specifically by white staff are also consistent with what other Black men have generally shared about their experiences at PWIs (Brooms & Druery, 2023; Harper et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2019). Still, while noting that they were discriminated against by white staff members specifically, the men in this study also indicated that the discrimination they experienced only came from staff members with whom they did not have close relationships. This suggests that, while they may not be validated (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) or supported (Strayhorn, 2012), Black men may at least

be less likely to experience discriminatory interactions with staff they're close with. This idea makes sense intuitively but warrants further investigation from future scholarship to confirm. For instance, future studies could explore the extent to which Black men's frequent and close relationships with white staff members reduces their likelihood of feeling discriminated against by them.

In addition to discriminatory experiences based on their race and gender combined, some of the men (like Amber) also shared stories of discriminatory interactions with staff members based solely on their gender, which has not been widely discussed in the prior literature. While an examination of discrimination Black men face from staff members based exclusively on their gender was outside of the scope of this study, future research should explore these experiences more thoroughly as well. This work is particularly important given the general lack of attention to gender in studies of Black and other men of color in higher education (Cabrera et al., 2022). Future scholarship on this topic could explore, for instance, how Black men make meaning of gender-based discrimination from staff members at PWIs.

These findings also have implications for future scholarship on Black men's interactions with student affairs staff members more broadly. As mentioned previously, much of the literature on staff-student interactions only highlight the benefits of these interactions and relationships for students (Haley, 2023; Luedke, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2023). However, given that the Black men in the current study mostly did not benefit from their interactions with staff members, more scholarship is needed to better understand the circumstances under which these students benefit from these interactions. Several of the men in this study, for instance, had ample exposure to staff members through participation in staff-run activities, meetings, and/or working in a staff-run office, while others interacted with staff

members of color. The literature suggests that these conditions should lead to positive benefits for students, including Black men (Luedke, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2020). Still, despite the presence of these conditions, the men in the current study experienced interactions with staff who were mostly dismissive and unavailable. Future research should continue exploring the experiences of Black men who have had frequent interactions with staff members generally, and staff members of color specifically. Part of this work could examine the potential inequitable institutional conditions referenced by staff in Chapter 4 (i.e., underrepresentation of staff of color, lack of institutional support for staff of color) that may be contributing to poor frequent interactions between staff of color and Black men. This scholarship would potentially offer clearer explanations for why the men in this study found staff to be largely dismissive and unavailable. Moreover, future scholarship could also explore the extent to which continuous interactions with dismissive and unavailable staff members negatively affects Black men's mental health (as evidenced through the experiences of Trance and Marquis), and how this impacts their desire to remain in college. Scholars could, for instance, longitudinally study (e.g., through annual interviews) the experiences of Black men who repeatedly interact with dismissive and unavailable staff members. This work could possibly show how Black men's mental health, and ultimately their desire to remain in college, worsens over time based on these interactions.

Another direction for future scholarship could be to explore the experiences of Black men who have had limited, but still meaningful, interactions with staff members. Rubix's experience with the registrar's office staff member who was not discriminatory, dismissive, or unavailable for him provides a strong example of the potential benefits of these types of interactions, particularly for Black men who have mostly experienced interactions with dismissive and unavailable staff and others at their institutions. Although the staff member in this instance may

have simply just been acknowledging Rubix's humanity in response to a possibly discriminatory policy, the gesture was more meaningfully interpreted by Rubix. Thus, while his brief interaction with this staff member whom he did not know beforehand was not necessarily validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005), Rubix certainly considered it supportive (Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, the prior literature suggests that only frequent interactions and close relationships with staff members can be beneficial to students (e.g., Luedke, 2017; Martin et al., 2020), so the fact he was able to benefit from his brief interaction indicates a need for more scholarship on these types of interactions with staff members.

Similarly, scholars should also study the unique circumstances that allowed for Marquis to have a validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) experience with a staff member. Marquis's experiences were particularly interesting given that, while the conditions scholars suggest are needed for students to benefit from staff interactions (i.e., frequency and closeness) were present in the aforementioned validating experience, they were *also present* in some of his interactions with dismissive and unavailable staff members. This suggest that more nuance in future scholarship is needed to better understand the nature of beneficial interactions between staff and Black men. Simply focusing on the frequency of interaction or closeness of the relationship is insufficient, since clearly not all frequent interactions or close relationships with staff members are beneficial to Black men. Instead, more attention could be given to what these students say they derive from beneficial interactions, whether frequent or brief, and how these benefits support their college outcomes including persistence.

Implications for Practice

These findings suggest a few key implications for practice in student affairs and higher education regarding Black men's experiences with gendered racism. First, the presence of

gendered racist staff members at PWIs (or any type of institution) must never be tolerated. For the less extreme cases (i.e., those staff members with implicit biases), increased mandatory implicit biases is certainly needed. This training should also ideally be of higher quality than the types of implicit bias training that staff are typically offered (i.e., not just identifying the biases that staff have, but also showing them how to better navigate their interactions with others in response). Additionally, institutions must completely root out the extreme cases and reevaluate hiring practices that facilitate the recruitment of discriminatory staff members. For instance, while staff members who apply for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related roles (e.g., multicultural affairs) at most institutions are often directly asked during job interviews about their experience with supporting minoritized students, staff applying for student-facing roles that are not directly related to DEI (e.g., registrar's office staff) may be able to avoid these types of questions at certain institutions. This should no longer be the case. Instead, all applicants for student-facing student affairs positions should be directly asked about their experience with supporting minoritized students. If they lack this experience, their chances of being hired should be reduced accordingly. Student affairs graduate preparation programs could support these efforts by altering their internship/practicum requirements so that their students are required to work in positions supporting minoritized students.

Black men also need more support for navigating gendered racism at PWIs, including gendered racism perpetrated by staff members. My interviews with staff members suggest that the institutional support Black men currently receive at these colleges and universities for navigating gendered racism is virtually nonexistent. Moreover, the informal support they receive from staff members (e.g., being "raw and real") also appeared to be inadequate, as it was often unclear if the presumed intent behind the staff members' informal guidance (e.g., to help them

navigate gendered racism at their institution) was ever explicitly communicated to the men. Thus, although these efforts from staff are still commendable, the need for more targeted institutional support for Black men is evident. A strong example of the need for more targeted institutional support can be found in the stories shared by the two men who described their intersectional interpretations of gendered racism. For instance, it's unclear how being "raw and real" would have helped Bob manage his experience with gendered racism and homophobia on his basketball team, given that the way this strategy was described by staff suggests that it was equally applied to all racially minoritized students.

A potentially more effective strategy institutions could implement could be to develop more comprehensive Black men/men of color initiative programs. Black men have reported benefiting in various ways from participating in these programs including developing a sense of belonging at their institutions and becoming more academically motivated (Brooms, 2018). However, as noted in Chapter 4, these types of benefits alone will not necessarily translate to Black men being better able to navigate gendered racism at PWIs. Additionally, these programs tend to be poorly funded (Huerta & Dizon, 2021). Therefore, while these programs should be better funded and continue offering the services they've traditionally provided, Black men initiatives must also start attending to the forms of oppression that can shape Black men's experiences at PWIs (Kincheloe, 2005; Smith et al., 2007). One way they could meet this aim would be to better facilitate Black men's engagement in Black placemaking (Tichavakunda, 2024). Black placemaking refers to the ways that "Black people turn spaces into places" (p. 101) and how they "shape their otherwise oppressive environments into sites of celebration, politics, and play" (p. 101). The places they create can be considered counter spaces, which are "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive climate can be

established and maintained" (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 70). In other words, by being in these spaces that not only acknowledges their intersectional oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wijeyesinghe, 2019), but also affirm and celebrate them, Black men can potentially better navigate gendered racism (and the various ways they interpret it). Additionally, Black placemaking acknowledges Black students' agency in their ability to create such places for themselves on college campuses (Tichavakunda, 2024), and thus, it recognizes the strengths and resources these students bring with them to their institutions (Yosso, 2005). Staff members in Black men initiative programs helping Black men engage in Black placemaking could, therefore, be considered validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005), which may also help Black men better navigate gendered racism. Staff in these programs could, for instance, offer funding and guidance to Black men for developing their own student organizations and community-building events that attend to their intersectional experiences with gendered racism. Moreover, given the increasingly hostile environment in certain U.S. states regarding the use of state resources to support targeted services for minoritized groups (Lu et al., 2023), program staff in affected states could instead support this work through donations from program alumni wishing to give back to a program from which they've benefited.

These findings also have implications for practice in student affairs and higher education more broadly. First, as revealed in Chapter 4, one can understand how staff members of color being forced to navigate structural inequities in their roles (i.e., underrepresentation of staff of color, lack of institutional support) can inevitably lead to poor student experiences with staff members. While this is not a defense for their negative interactions with students, it is a natural reaction for individuals to seek an outlet upon which to take out their frustrations with a situation when they feel as though they are unable to address the root causes. Thus, if higher level

administrators and staff supervisors truly care about staff and student success, they must attend to these structural issues by hiring more staff of color and providing more resources and support for these staff members. Staff of color, for instance, often report feeling burned out in their roles given the extra responsibilities they tend take on in support of racially minoritized students (Anderson, 2021). Administrators could reduce this burden by increasing funding and staffing for staff of color engaged in this usually uncompensated additional work. At the same time, however, staff of color must not be let off the hook for their actions towards students, particularly Black men. While being forced to navigate inequitable institutional structures is understandably difficult, that does not in turn justify being dismissive or unavailable for Black men (or any other students). Staff of color dealing with these institutional issues must, therefore, learn to better manage their negative emotions towards their institutions so that these feelings do not influence their work with Black men and other students. They could, for instance, join or participate more frequently in identity-based affinity groups for staff and faculty at their institutions, where they can commiserate with each other about the inequities they're navigating and possibly advocate for solutions.

On the other hand, this study's findings also suggest that, at a minimum, some staff members (both white staff and staff of color) may be inadequately prepared to work with Black men. Consequently, staff training must be improved. This includes how prospective staff members are taught to support undergraduate Black men during their graduate training, and how staff are then subsequently trained to interact with them in their roles. The two validating (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and/or supportive (Strayhorn, 2012) staff members identified by Marquis and Rubix can offer some guidance in how future staff should be trained to support Black men. Courses in higher education and student affairs graduate preparation programs

focused on student affairs practice, helping skills, or supporting diverse students could, for instance, teach prospective staff members about the benefits of showing their appreciation for Black men's opinions and being available for them when needed. They could also teach them how being dismissive or unavailable for Black men negatively effects their college experience and overall well-being. The importance of these strategies would then need to be reiterated by staff supervisors once these prospective staff members enter their roles. Additionally, although the validating and/or supportive staff members identified by Marquis and Rubix were people of color, some such as Haley (2023) have suggested that students of color can also benefit from their interactions with white staff members. Thus, all staff members have the potential to better support Black men by incorporating these and other strategies into their practice.

Implications for Policy

While many high-level administrators at PWIs would probably agree that staff of color need more support in their roles, they may also argue in defense that they, particularly those working at public institutions, need more financial resources from outside the institution to support their staff. Thus, a recommendation for policy would be for state governments to increase higher education funding and specifically earmark funds for increased support for staff members of color (i.e., funds to be used to hire more staff of color and to increase their office budgets). This increased funding could lead to fewer poor interactions between staff of color and Black men, since the funds will go towards addressing those structural inequities identified by staff of color in this study, and they will presumably feel better supported in their roles. Moreover, increased state funding could also be set aside for improving the training staff members receive to work with Black men. It's important to also acknowledge again, however, that several state governments across the country have banned DEI initiatives and/or funding for

such initiatives at public institutions, or are seeking to do so (Lu et al., 2023). Given that directly increasing state support for staff of color would more than likely fall under this ban, public institutions in these states will need to be more creative in how they advocate for this type of support from their state governments. Institutions could, for instance, request increased funding specifically for student support services broadly understood, which would necessarily include the various functional areas housing staff of color.

The institutional support available to Black men for navigating gendered racism at PWIs must also increase. That means that institutions, particularly public institutions, will need more external funding to support such initiatives. Consequently, state governments must also increase higher education funding specifically for initiatives designed to help Black men navigate intersectional experiences with gendered racism. Unfortunately, however, institutions located in the aforementioned states with DEI bans (Lu et al., 2023) will undoubtedly encounter issues advocating for this type of support as well. Thus, there must be more attention directed towards this issue at the federal level, as there once was in the past with programs like former President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* initiative. The U.S. Department of Education could, for instance, develop a competitive grant program to directly fund and support institutional initiatives designed to help Black men navigate gendered racism at PWIs, which could be modeled after similar grants they offer for basic needs programs and programs for students with intellectual disabilities ("OPE Funding Opportunities", 2023). Additionally, institutions should seek external funding from private donors and foundations dedicated to supporting the success of minoritized students such as the ECMC Foundation.

Lastly, although institutions certainly need more funding to support staff and Black men, there are also internal policy changes they can make that should not necessarily require

additional financial resources. Institutions could, for instance, reduce the standard workweek for staff from 40 hours (and more often over 40 hours) to 32, without a reduction in pay. This policy is currently being proposed for all Americans in the U.S. Senate (Kim, 2024). For staff members experiencing burnout and compassion fatigue (Anderson, 2021; Perez & Bettencourt, 2024), particularly staff of color, spending less time at work could lead to them feeling better about the circumstances of their positions, and ultimately, result in more positive interactions with Black men. Moreover, institutions could change ostensibly race/gender-neutral policies that they've identified as having a disparate impact on Black men. At Rubix's institution, for instance, the policy that doesn't allow students to make bill payments past a certain point may, on its face, seem identity-neutral but clearly had a negative impact on him. Thus, one possible policy change would be to eliminate bill payment deadlines or extend these deadlines to more reasonable dates/time periods. Approaching internal policy change in this way could help institutions avoid any potential issues with anti-DEI legislation, while still attending to gendered racism, since they would be making changes to a policy that does not explicitly focus on a minoritized group.

Conclusion

Undergraduate Black men continue to face college completion difficulties at PWIs, in part attributed to their underrepresentation and their experiences with gendered racism at these institutions (Brooms & Druery, 2023; Lumina Foundation-Gallup, 2023). Not much is known about the role of institutions in their navigation of these barriers, and thus this study sought to understand this role, particularly as it relates to student affairs staff members. Findings show that some student affairs staff, and consequently some institutions, may be contributing to Black men's persistence struggles by being discriminatory, dismissive, and unavailable. Much of the literature on students' interactions with student affairs staff members focuses on the benefits of

these interactions for all students, while discussions of any potential limitations to the benefits of students' interactions with staff have been largely absent from the literature. If, as is suggested in this study, staff members' feelings of compassion fatigue and burnout are contributing to poor experiences with Black men, then it is incumbent upon researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to understand how to better support staff so that they can have more positive interactions with Black men. Moreover, Black men need more formal support and resources from institutions for navigating intersectional experiences with gendered racism at PWIs. As argued in this study, the informal guidance these men often receive from staff is inadequate. Instead, institutions must recognize that when they admit Black men, they necessarily accept the responsibility to ensure their degree completion to the best of their ability. Given that experiences with gendered racism at PWIs reduce Black men's desire to finish their degrees (Brezinski et al., 2018), these students thus require more and/or better institutional support and resources for managing and negotiating these experiences that they almost inevitably encounter at these institutions

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Student Recruitment Email

Greetings!

Are you a student who identifies as a Black man born in the United States? Have you experienced discrimination at your college/university based on your race and gender?

If your answer is yes to these questions, then you may be eligible to participate in a research study and receive Mastercard gift cards worth up to $100. My name is Jarett Haley and I'm a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan currently recruiting participants for my dissertation study. My study will broadly explore undergraduate Black men's experiences with race and gender-based discrimination at a predominately White institution, and their supportive and unsupportive interactions with student affairs professionals.

If you are selected to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete (2) one-on-one, hour-long interviews in which you will be sharing stories of race and gender-based discrimination you've experienced at your college/university. During both interviews you will be asked to share photos that represent your experiences. For your participation, you will receive a $50 Mastercard gift card for each interview.

If you are interested in participating, please click this link to complete a pre-survey to determine your eligibility.

If you have any questions, please contact me at jaretth@umich.edu or my advisor Dr. Rosemary Perez at perezrj@umich.edu.

This study is exempt from ongoing IRB oversight at the University of Michigan through HUM00213893.

APPENDIX B: Student Recruitment Flier

Figure 3

Student Recruitment Flyer

APPENDIX C: Student Presurvey Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your major?
4. Have you experienced race and/or gender-based discrimination while at your college/university?
5. What made you interested in this study?
6. What is your ethnicity (e.g. African American, Jamaican American, Haitian American)?
7. What is your gender identity (e.g., cisgender man, trans man)?
8. What is your sexual orientation?
9. What is your ability identity (e.g., disabled, able-bodied)?
10. What is your social class identity (e.g., low income/working class, middle class)?
11. What is your faith identity (e.g., agnostic, atheist, spiritual, religious/Muslim, religious/Christian)?
12. Do you currently work or have you ever worked in a student affairs office on campus (e.g., New Student Programs, LGBTQ+ Center, Multicultural Center, Residence Life, Campus Recreation)?
    a. If you answered "yes", which office do you/did you work in, how long have you/did you work there, and what are/were your responsibilities? (if you answered "no" or "not sure" say "N/A")
    b. If you answered "not sure", please describe the type of office you work/worked in. (if you answered "yes" or "no" say "N/A")
13. Please select the types of activities you have participated in during your time at your college/university
    a. Individual/group meetings with student affairs staff members (e.g., career center staff, residence life staff, Academic Success Program staff, multicultural center staff, financial aid staff, student conduct staff)
    b. Events planned by student affairs staff members (e.g., career center workshops, residence life programming, multicultural center programs)
    c. None
    d. Other
        i. If you answered "other", please describe the types of activities you have participated in.
14. If you have participated in either individual/group meetings with student affairs staff members or events planned by staff members, please provide a rough estimate of how many times you participated in these activities during your time at your college/university.
    a. Only a few times ever (e.g., once, twice)
    b. Daily (e.g., once a day, twice a day)
    c. Weekly (e.g., once a week, twice a week)
    d. Monthly (e.g., once a month, twice a month)
    e. Yearly (e.g., once per year, twice per year)

15. Please describe any other types of experiences you have had with student affairs staff members during your time at your college/university? (if you have not had any other types of experiences say "N/A"

APPENDIX D: List of Contacted Student Organizations and Initiative Programs

1. Project MALES at UT - Austin
2. West Chester COMPASS Program (Black Male Initiative)
3. CUNY Black Male Initiative
4. SUNY Empire State College Black Male Initiative
5. University of Louisville Black Male Initiative
6. University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative
7. University of Virginia Office of African American Affairs
8. Bell National Resource on the African American Male at Ohio State University
9. Multicultural Student Affairs at University of South Carolina
10. Appalachian State University Black Male Excellence Initiative
11. University of Akron Office of Multicultural Development
12. Why Knot Us Black Male Initiative at Western Kentucky
13. Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at SUNY Cortland
14. Kennesaw State African American Male Initiative
15. The Mizzou Black Men's Initiative
16. GT-PRIME at Georgia Tech
17. AAIM program at Coastal Carolina
18. Harvard Black Men's Forum
19. West Chester Black Student Union
20. Millersville University BSU
21. SUNY Cortland BSU
22. Binghamton University BSU
23. SUNY Oswego BSU
24. SUNY Fredonia BSU
25. SUNY Geneseo BSU
26. SUNY New Paltz BSU
27. SUNY Oneonta BSU
28. Stony Brook University BSU
29. Eastern Mich BSU
30. Western Mich BSU
31. University of Minnesota BSU
32. Black Student Alliance at MSU
33. United Black Council at Rutgers
34. Afrikan American Student Advisory Council at NC State
35. Rice University Black Student Association
36. Afro-American Student Organization at The University of Southern Mississippi
37. Florida State U BSU

38. Columbia U BSU
39. Kent State Black United Students
40. Coalition of Black Organizations at U of Arizona
41. Association of Black Collegians Tulsa University
42. Brothers of Nubian Descent at U of South Carolina
43. Columbia's Men of Color Alliance
44. Princeton Black Men's Association
45. Northwest Missouri Minority Men's Organization
46. Mansfield University Men for Progress
47. Association of Black Students at SMU
48. Yale Black Men's Union
49. U of Idaho BSU
50. Washington State BSU
51. Black Male Alliance at U of Oregon
52. BOND at U of Miami
53. Black Student Action Association at Miami Ohio
54. University of Kentucky BSU
55. For Members Only (FMO) at Northwestern
56. University Of Tampa BSU
57. Men of Color Alliance at UW, Green Bay
58. Black Men Unified at Rider University
59. Brothers Breaking B.R.E.A.D. at Southern Cal
60. Black Student Association at Ball State
61. Student African American Society at Syracuse
62. Wright State BSU
63. Fairfield U BSU
64. Siena College BSU
65. LSU BSU
66. Northern Arizona U BSU
67. Black United Body at Bentley
68. Umoja at Alfred University
69. NYU BSU
70. Troy U BSU
71. AAM at ASU
72. U of Maryland BSU
73. Ramapo College BSU
74. Lewis & Clark BSU
75. Northern Michigan BSU
76. Utah State BSU
77. University of Michigan A2 BSU
78. Vassar BSU

79. Alabama BSU
80. University of Delaware BSU
81. GW BSU
82. Umoja at Boston U
83. Johns Hopkins BSU
84. Emory BSU
85. Ole Miss BSU
86. Clemson BSU
87. Vanderbilt U BSU
88. SWAG at Cornell
89. Cornell BSU
90. Temple BSU
91. Drexel BSU
92. Black Student League at Penn
93. Penn State BSU
94. Organization of Black Students at UChicago
95. Lehigh BSU
96. Colorado Boulder BSU
97. Legion of Black Collegians at Mizzou
98. Brown BSU
99. U of New Hampshire BSU
100. Black Student Movement at UNC
101. Duke Black Student Alliance
102. Wisconsin Black Student Union
103. U of Iowa BSU
104. U of Utah BSU
105. Tennessee BSU
106. Texas A&M BSA
107. Tulane BSU
108. Colorado State BSU
109. West Virginia BSU
110. Appalachian state BSU
111. Notre Dame BSA
112. University of Pittsburgh Black Action Society
113. Black Student Alliance at UVA
114. Black Student Alliance at Virginia Tech
115. Black Student Alliance at Wake Forest
116. United Black Student Association at U of Cincinnati
117. Black Students Union at East Carolina U
118. Villanova BSU
119. UConn BSU

120. Oxy College BSA
121. Bowdoin AA Society
122. Middlebury BSU
123. Carleton BSA
124. Wesleyan U BSU
125. Davidson BSC
126. Colgate BSU
127. Student Association for Black Unity at W&L U
128. Bates BSU
129. Oberlin at Oberlin
130. Sarah Lawrence BSU
131. Black and Latinx Student Union at Hamilton
132. UMass BSU
133. Bucknell BSU
134. University of Richmond BSA
135. Black Liberation Affairs Committee at Macalester
136. F&M BSU
137. William and Mary BSU
138. Western Washington BSU
139. Portland State BSU
140. Southern Utah BSU
141. U of Kansas BSU
142. George Mason BSU
143. U of Vermont BSU
144. Wayne State BSU
145. Black Affairs Council at Southern Illinois
146. The College of New Jersey BSU
147. Montana State BSU
148. Bowling Green BSU
149. Grand Valley State BSU
150. Mississippi State BSU
151. South Dakota State BSA
152. Rhode Island U BSU
153. U of South Dakota BSU
154. Towson BSU
155. Catholic University BSU
156. Cal Poly SLO BSU
157. Central Connecticut State University BSU
158. Eastern Connecticut State BSU
159. U of Florida BSU
160. Illinois State U BSU

161. Emporia State University BSU
162. Wichita State BSU
163. Purdue BSU
164. Murray State University BSC
165. Black Student Union at Louisiana Tech
166. Nicholls State University BSU
167. UL Lafayette BSU
168. U of New Orleans PBSU
169. Worcester State BSU
170. UM-Dearborn BSU
171. UM-Flint BSU
172. Bemidji State BSU
173. Minnesota State BSU
174. St. Cloud State CAAS
175. Delta State African American Student Council
176. Southeast Missouri State BSU
177. Truman state ABC
178. Nebraska BSU
179. Stockton Unified Black Student Society
180. University of Buffalo BSU
181. Albany State BSA
182. Dickinson College BSU
183. University of Toledo BSU
184. Youngstown State BSU
185. Northeastern BSA
186. Oklahoma State BSA
187. U of Oklahoma BSA
188. U of Oregon BSU
189. Oregon State BSU
190. Edinboro BSUA
191. AAAS at South Carolina
192. Middle Tennessee State BSU
193. Sam Houston State BSA
194. Utah Tech BSU
195. UVU BSU
196. Weber State University BSU
197. Castleton NAACP Student Chapter
198. Christopher Newport University BSU
199. BSA at James Madison University
200. Longwood BSA
201. University of Mary Washington's Black Student Association

202. Radford BSA
203. Virginia Commonwealth University BSU
204. Gonzaga BSU
205. Seattle U BSU
206. WashU of STL Association of Black Students
207. Knox College A.B.L.E.
208. North Dakota State University BSA
209. U of Wisconsin - Stout BSU
210. UW- River Falls BSU
211. UW-Platteville BSU
212. UW-La Crosse BSU
213. Ohio University BSU
214. Winona State BSU
215. Elizabethtown College NAACP
216. UW- Oshkosh BSU
217. Hamline University BSC
218. UM - Duluth bsu
219. Clark University BSU
220. Bellarmine University BSU
221. Eastern Kentucky University BSU

APPENDIX E: Staff Member Recruitment Email

Hi [staff member's name],

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Jarett Haley and I'm a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan.

I'm currently working on my *dissertation study that focuses on undergraduate Black men's experiences with race and gender-based discrimination at predominately White institutions, and their supportive and unsupportive interactions with university staff members.

I have interviewed students at your university who have identified you as someone they have found to be supportive and I was wondering if you would be interested in speaking with me for (1) one-on-one, hour-long virtual interview? During the interview, I'll ask you to share stories and insights regarding your experience working with students of color in general and Black men in particular. For your participation, you will receive a $100 Mastercard gift card.

If you are interested in participating, I will first send you an informed consent form for you to review, sign, and send back to me. Afterward, we can schedule a time for our interview which would ideally take place sometime between now and the end of April.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you for your consideration.

*This study is exempt from ongoing IRB oversight at the University of Michigan through HUM00213893.

APPENDIX F: Student Conventional Interview Protocol

Interview Topics

- Initial Photo Discussion
- Stories, thoughts, and feelings about experiences with anti-Black men discrimination at college
- Stories, thoughts, and feelings about staff members who have helped them navigate discriminatory experiences and those who have prevented them from navigating these experiences

Ask student for pseudonym

- ***"So, first off thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study.***
- ***In my email I asked you to give me a name you would like to be called during the interview to protect your privacy.***
- ***Did you get a chance to pick a name?***
- ***If not, no worries. I'll just call you student (x) for now and then I'll give you a name later or you can give me one later if you think of one***

Tell student that I will record the interview through Zoom

- ***"Ok, so now I'm going to start recording the interview. Is that ok?"***

Remind student that taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time

- ***"Ok, , thanks again for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. And before we begin, I just want to remind you that taking part in this study is voluntary…meaning that you do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Ok?"***
- ***"Also, given that we are discussing your experiences with race and gender-based discrimination, after the interview I'm going to share some resources for navigating racial trauma"***

Lines of Inquiry

- Initial Photo Discussion
  - Before we get into our main interview topics, I want to talk about the photo I asked you to bring today
    - Did you get a chance to find a photo to talk about?

- Please share the story related to this photo[20]
  - Describe what you see here.
  - What's happening exactly?
  - What is your role here?
- How does this photo exemplify how you felt after an experience with gendered racism at your university?

- Stories, thoughts, and feelings about experiences with anti-Black men discrimination at college
  - Ok, thank you for sharing that. I'm sorry that you experienced that.
  - Building off that photo example, if you can, please share another story about negative experiences you have had on campus that you believe were based on your race and gender.
    - Where on campus did these experiences occur (e.g., classroom, residence halls)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
    - Why do you believe these experiences were based on your race and gender?
    - Which of these experiences stands out the most? Why?
    - In your opinion, were these isolated incidents or reflective of structural issues at your university? Why?
  - What effect, if any, did these experiences have on your desire to finish your degree?
    - Did you consider withdrawing from your program at any time because of these experiences, even briefly?
      - If so, what made you decide to stay at your university?
      - If not, why do you think these experiences did not have that effect on you?

[20] Questions adapted from Wang's (1999) "SHOWeD" (p. 188) interview questions

- Stories, thoughts, and feelings about staff members who have helped them navigate discriminatory experiences and those who have prevented them from navigating these experiences
    - Have you interacted with any student affairs staff members that have supported you as you dealt with these experiences?
        - If so:
            - Please describe these staff members and your relationship with them:
                - Position/office in which they work?
                - How did you meet them?
                - What kinds of interactions do you have/have you had with them (e.g., individual meetings, attending their events, casual interactions)?
                - Tell me about a time when you interacted with them that stands out to you?
                    - Why does this experience stand out?
                - How do you think these staff members feel about students at your university and why?
                - What about how they feel about students who are Black men?
            - Please share a story about how these staff members have supported you as you dealt with negative, race and gender-based experiences
                - Tell me about a time when a staff member encouraged or supported you academically?
                - How have staff supported your personal development?
                - How have they supported your social adjustment and growth?
                - How have they supported your sense of social support on campus?
                - Tell me about a time when you used some advice or guidance provided by these staff members that stands out to you?

                ■ Why does this experience stand out?
            ○ Tell me about a time when they encouraged or helped you use your personal resources (e.g., family knowledge, community connections) to navigate these experiences?

- ○ Have you interacted with any student affairs staff members that have been unsupportive, particularly in dealing with negative race and gender-based experiences?
    - ■ If so
        - ● Please describe these staff members and your relationship with them:
            - ○ Position/office in which they work?
            - ○ How did you meet them?
            - ○ What kinds of interactions do you have/have you had with them (e.g., individual meetings, attending their events, casual interactions)?
            - ○ Please share a story about an interaction(s) you had recently with them that stands out to you?
                - ■ Why does this experience stand out?
            - ○ How do you think these staff members feel about students at your university and why?
            - ○ What about how they feel about students who are Black men?
        - ● Please share a story about how these staff members have been unsupportive of you while attempting to navigate negative race and gender-based experiences?
            - ○ Did they discriminate against you directly or indirectly? If so, how?
            - ○ Did they discourage you or were unsupportive of you academically? If so, how?
            - ○ Did they negatively impact your personal development? If so, how?

- Have they been unsupportive of your social adjustment and growth?
- Did they negatively impact your sense of social support on campus?
- Please share a story about when they said or did something negative that stands out the most?
  - Why does this experience stand out?
- Tell me about a time when they discouraged you from using your personal resources (e.g., family knowledge, community connections) to navigate these experiences?

***Remember to**

- ***Schedule follow up interview***
  - ***"I'll send email shortly to set up our next interview"***
    - ***"For our last interview I will ask you to share more photos that represent your experiences"***
    - ***"Specifically, photos or just one photo that represents how staff members have helped you and been unsupportive of you while attempting to navigate race and gender-based discrimination"***
- ***Ask for his mailing address in email and explain compensation plan***
  - ***"In the email I'll also ask for your mailing address so that I can send you your gift cards after our last interview."***
- ***Ask student to suggest staff to interview for context***
  - ***"Additionally, I'd like to speak with [helpful staff members mentioned by student] to see if they can provide some context regarding your institution's historical and contemporary context of power, privilege, and oppression. Would you mind if I reached out to them about this? I won't mention you by name at all and will only mention general information about the study."***
- ***Remember to share resources for racial trauma***

APPENDIX G: Student Photo Elicitation Interview Protocol

***Tell student that I will record the interview through Zoom**

- ***"Ok, so now I'm going to start recording the interview. Is that ok?"***
- ***Use QuickTime as backup recorder***

***Remind student that taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time**

- ***"Ok, thanks again for agreeing to be interviewed for a 2nd time for this study. And before we begin, I just want to remind you that taking part in this study is still voluntary…meaning that you do not have to participate and you can stop at any time. Ok?"***

"So, as I noted at the end of our 1st interview, and mentioned in my last email, for today's interview, I'm asking that you share more photos that represent your experiences with discrimination at your university."

- ***"Were you able to find more photos?"***

Lines of Inquiry

- Please share the story related to this photo(s)
    - Describe what you see here.
    - What's happening exactly?
    - What is your role here?
    - What role are staff members playing here?
- How does this photo relate to your experiences with race and gender-based discrimination at your university?
    - Tell me how this photo shows staff helping you navigate negative race and gender-based experiences?
        - Why do you think this was successful?
        - Tell me how this photo shows staff members encouraging or supporting you academically?

        - How does it show staff supporting your personal development?
        - How does it show staff supporting your social adjustment and growth?
        - How does it show staff supporting your sense of social support on campus?
        - How does it show you using some advice or guidance provided by these staff members?
        - How does it show staff encouraging or helping you use your personal resources (e.g., family knowledge, community connections) to navigate these experiences?
    - Tell me how this photo shows how staff have been unsupportive of you while attempting to navigate negative race and gender-based experiences?
        - Why do you think this was problematic?
        - How does it show staff discriminating against you directly or indirectly?
        - How does it show staff discouraging you or being unsupportive of you academically?
        - How does it show staff negatively impacting your personal development?
        - How does it show staff being unsupportive of your social adjustment and growth?
        - How does it show staff negatively impacting your sense of social support on campus?
        - How does it show staff discouraging you from using your personal resources (e.g., family knowledge, community connections) to navigate these experiences?
    - What effect, if any, did the experience in this photo have on your desire to finish your degree?
        - Did you consider withdrawing from your program at any time because of this experience, even briefly?
            - If so, what made you decide to stay at your university?
            - If not, why do you think this experience did not have that effect on you?

"Ok, we are now at the end"

- ***Stop recording***
- ***"Ok, so I want to thank you again for taking the time to meet with me and share your experiences over the course of two interviews"***
- ***"I really appreciate the openness and vulnerability you've shown, and I think your contributions will significantly enhance the quality of this study"***

"And now for some more logistical stuff"

- ***"I'll be sending your $100 mastercard gift card to you soon through the mail. I'm not sure how long the University's process will be but I will let you know if there are any issues.."***
- ***"I'll also be getting back in touch with you in the next month or so, after I have had a chance to review and analyze our interviews…in order to get your feedback on the accuracy of my interpretations of your comments"***
- ***I'm also still interviewing students for this study so if you could share the study information with other Black male students at your university who might be interested that would help a lot***
- ***"Additionally, I'd like to speak with some other folks, life staff members, at your University to see if they can provide some context regarding students' experiences with discrimination. Would you mind if I reached out to them about this? I won't mention you by name at all and will only mention general information about the study."***
    - ***Also, do you have any folks like this in mind that I should reach out to?***
- ***"Any last questions?"***

APPENDIX H: Staff Member Conventional Interview Protocol

Interview Topics

- Historical examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color
- Contemporary examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color

***Ask staff for pseudonym if not provided yet**

- ***"So, first off thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study.***
- ***In my email I asked you to give me a name you would like to be called during the interview to protect your privacy.***
- ***Did you get a chance to pick a name?***
- ***If not, no worries. I'll just call you staff member 2 for now and then I'll give you a name later or you can give me one later if you think of one***

***Tell staff member that I will record the interview through Zoom**

- ***"Ok, so now I'm going to start recording the interview. Is that ok?"***

***Remind staff member that taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time**

- ***"Ok, thanks again for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. And before we begin, I just want to remind you that taking part in this study is voluntary…meaning that you do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Ok?"***

Lines of Inquiry

- <u>Historical examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color</u>
  - What had you heard about the experiences of Black people (students, staff, service works, faculty, visitors) at your university before you started working here? People of color?
    - What stories had you heard about Black folks' social experiences?
      - What about their interactions with students, staff, or co-workers?
        - What about their experiences making friends with students or co-workers on campus?

- For students, what about their experiences living in campus housing?
- For students, what about their experiences seeking on-campus support (e.g., mental health, financial aid, food insecurity)?
- What about their experiences in your university's city/town?
  - Shopping? Going to bars/restaurants? Living in town?
- What about their interactions with law enforcement?

▪ For students, what stories had you heard about their academic experiences?

- What about their interactions with faculty and academic staff?
- What about their interactions with classmates?
- What about their experiences navigating different institutional and/or academic department requirements?
  - Receiving academic support when needed?

▪ What stories had you heard about Black folk's employment experiences?

- What about their experiences finding employment on campus?
- What about their interactions with supervisors?

o What about the experiences of Black men specifically?

▪ *Same questions*

o Tell me about a time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or a Black man specifically, being supported by people at your university in a social, academic, or employment setting when you first started working here.

- Where on campus did this incident occur (e.g., classroom, residence halls, off-campus bar)?
- What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
- Why do you believe this was an example of someone being supportive?

        - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit his job)?

- Tell me about a time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or a Black man specifically, successfully navigating social, academic, and/or employment-related issues at your university when you first started working here.
    - Where on campus did this issue occur (e.g., classroom, dining hall, administrative office)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
    - Why do you think the Black person was able to successfully navigate this issue?
    - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit their job)?
- Tell me about a time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or a Black man specifically being discriminated against at your university in social, academic, and/or employment settings when you first started working here.
    - Where on campus did this incident occur (e.g., classroom, residence halls, off-campus bar)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
    - Why do you believe this was an example of discrimination?
    - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit their job)?
- Tell me about a time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or a Black man specifically, having a difficult time navigating social, academic, and/or employment-related issues at your university when you first started working here.
    - Where on campus did this issue occur (e.g., classroom, dining hall, administrative office)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?

- Why do you think the Black person had a difficult time navigating this issue?
    - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit his job)?
  - In your opinion, were the examples of negative experiences isolated incidents or reflective of structural issues at your university? Why?
  - Are these examples consistent or inconsistent with what you had heard about Black folks' treatment at your university before you started working here? Why?
- Contemporary examples of discrimination and support for Black men and other people of color
  - Please provide recent examples of how Black folks are treated at your university.
    - Tell me about a recent time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or Black man specifically, being supported by people at your university in a social, academic, or employment setting.
      - Where on campus did this incident occur (e.g., classroom, residence halls, off-campus bar)?
      - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
      - Why do you believe this was an example of someone being supportive?
      - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit their job)?
    - Tell me about a recent time when you witnessed or heard about a Black person or Black man specifically, successfully navigating social, academic, and/or employment-related issues at your university.
      - Where on campus did this issue occur (e.g., classroom, dining hall, administrative office)?
      - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?

    - Why do you think the Black man was able to successfully navigate this issue?
    - What ended up happening to the Black man involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit his job)?
- Tell me about a recent time when you have witnessed or heard about a Black person or Black man specifically. being discriminated against at your university in social, academic, and/or employment settings
    - Where on campus did this incident occur (e.g., classroom, residence halls, off-campus bar)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
    - Why do you believe this was an example of discrimination?
    - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit their job)?
- Tell me about a recent time when you have witnessed or heard about a Black person or Black man specifically, having a difficult time navigating social, academic, and/or employment-related issues at your university.
    - Where on campus did this issue occur (e.g., classroom, dining hall, administrative office)?
    - What types of individuals were involved (e.g., students, faculty, staff)?
    - Why do you think the Black person had a difficult time navigating this issue?
    - What ended up happening to the Black person involved (e.g., graduated, dropped out, quit their job)?
- In your opinion, do you believe (or still believe) these examples of negative experiences are isolated incidents or reflective of structural issues at your university? Why?

- If they represent structural issues, why do you think they have not been addressed by the institution?
  - Are these examples consistent or inconsistent with what you had heard about Black men's treatment at your university before you started working here? Why?
    - Are they consistent or inconsistent with what you witnessed and heard about when you first started working here?
- Have you noticed any change over time in the experiences of Black folks at your university?
- What are some ways that you support Black men in your role at the university?
  - Can you share a story of a time when you supported a Black male student that stands out to you?
- What are some challenges staff at your university face when supporting Black men?
  - Can you share a story of a time when you or another staff member encountered challenges when trying to support a Black male student?

"Ok, we are now at the end"

- ***Stop recording***
- ***"Ok, so I want to thank you again for taking the time to meet with me"***
- ***"I really appreciate the openness and vulnerability you've shown, and I think your contributions will significantly enhance the quality of this study"***

"And now for some more logistical stuff"

- ***"I'll be sending your $100 gift card to you soon through the mail. I'm not sure how long the University's process will be but I will let you know if there are any issues.."***
- ***"I'll also be getting back in touch with you in the next month or so, after I have had a chance to review and analyze our interviews…in order to get your feedback on the accuracy of my interpretations of your comments"***

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