

BLACK MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

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An Afrocentric
Analysis of the
Modern Epidemic of
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Being at
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Abstract

The study of the mental well-being of Black students at predominantly white colleges addresses issues of core theoretical and empirical concern to the discipline. This review summarizes current knowledge about Black mental health and identifies theoretical and procedural problems that continue to confront research in this field. Although a number of studies have focused on racial identity and the mental health Black students involved in the education system, few have investigated in depth the discriminatory experiences of Black students in conjunction with their mental well-being being upset, and providing the solution of an Afrocentric psychological healing remedy. To examine and study the relationship between Black students at PWI's, their encounters with racism and discrimination, and their mental well-being, 66 Black students from a predominantly white college were sampled, as well as interviews with four Black students from a predominantly white college. Preliminary analysis indicates that there is a correlation between Black students who attend predominantly white colleges and negative effects on their mental health. The findings confirm that analysis and suggest that the reasoning is due to numerous discriminatory encounters with university professors, students, police, school administrators, and staff.

Keywords:

Black Studies, Afrocentric, Discrimination, Social Health, Mental Health, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Mental Well-being, Mental Health Counselor

Black Mental Health Matters: An Afrocentric Analysis of the Modern Epidemic of Black Students' Well-Being at Predominantly White Institutions.

As long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others.

—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Introduction

In the August of 2018, Chennel “Jazzy” Rowe was in the middle of sharing the excitement and validation of starting college, and beginning her transition into adulthood. That moment was supposed to be monumental and full of joy. And perhaps at that time it was for her. The expectations of new experiences would emotionally overcome any young college freshman. However, Rowe wasn’t just a college freshman, she was a Black college freshman. That comes with an abundance of bigoted social forces, out of one’s control, which create a bilateral reality for a Black college student: the stress of school itself, and the added stress of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination. In fact, racial bias and prejudice are not strong enough terms to describe the authentic fears Black students face on predominantly white campuses. In the case of Rowe, every Black student’s fears came true. Rowe’s excitement was exchanged with angst and life threatening conditions.

A couple months after starting college, Rowe, a Black University of Hartford student, was quietly terrorized by her white roommate, Brianna Brochu. Secretly, Brochu was contaminating Rowe’s personal items such as her toothbrush, skin care products, and her backpack. Brochu even poisoned Rowe’s food. Brochu posted on her Instagram in a deleted post, “Finally did it yo girl got rid of her roommate!! After 1 ½ month of spitting in her coconut oil, putting moldy clam dip in her lotions, rubbing used tampons on her back pack, putting her toothbrush in places where the

sun doesn't shine, and so much more I can finally say goodbye Jamaican Barbie." Furthermore, one month before Brochu's post, Rowe became suspiciously ill, but what also needs to be taken into account is the actions of the university administration.

In regards to Rowe's claims, the university was slow to take action. Two weeks went by before there was any police action, and this only came into fruition because Rowe took her case to social media, which created exposure and outrage. Nevertheless, Brochu eventually had her scholarship revoked, was expelled from the University of Hartford, and arrested. Brochu was charged with breach of peace and criminal mischief. Noticeably, no hate crime charges were filed. Despite Brochu committing heinous acts of violence against her Black roommate and calling her Jamaican Barbie, the States Attorney for the Judicial District of Hartford, Gail P. Hardy stated that there was no evidence gathered by West Hartford police or the University of Hartford public safety officers to support a hate crime charge against Brochu.¹ On Monday March 12, 2018, Brochu was sentenced to probation and ordered by the judge to enter an Accelerated Rehabilitation. The terms dictated that if after 2 years, and Brochu completed 200 hours of community service, her record will be wiped clean. Nevertheless, Brochu avoided jail time for a crime that severely affected Rowe physically, as well as mentally.

Mental health as defined by the World Health Organization is, "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."² To many Black students, the story of Chennel "Jazzy" Rowe sparks and evokes an abundance of

¹ David Owens. "Prosecutor: No Hate Charges For Brianna Brochu, Ex-UHart Student Charged With Harassing Roommate." Courant.com. December 06, 2018.

² World Health Organization. Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report) Geneva: World Health Organization; 2004.

emotions such as fear, shock, sadness, anger, but it's all a part of the Black college experience of Black students on predominantly white university campuses. If anything, her story affects the mental, social, and emotional well-being of Black students on predominantly white campuses more so now because Black students have witnessed in imminent threat go inadequately punished. Black students have witnessed a Black woman, whom was a student, have her life threatened. They watched the university cover it up, and watched the perpetrator walk away unscathed. That message can be interpreted that it's open season on Black bodies; that sparks anxiety and an uneasy mental well-being in anybody with Black skin. That social unrest is why the mental health conversation regarding Black students at predominantly white students needs to gain steam.

What could a Clinical Mental Health Counselor tell a Black student who has emotional trauma because he does not feel wanted at the university? What could they tell the Black student who breaks into tears because there is such opposition to changing the name a certain school buildings from being named after slave owner? The mental health industry, which is predominantly white, may have Clinical Mental Health Counselors who do their best, but they cannot truly help a Black student who lives a completely different reality from them. Black Clinical Mental Health Counselors with an Afrocentric political identity should hold the weight of the Black mental health epidemic because Black students need to seek proper help from Black mental health professionals who understand all facets of the Black college experience.

Specifically to Rowe, her health is forever changed. In an exclusive interview with *Blavity*, Rowe was asked if she could share her medical prognosis and asked how the incident affected her mental health. Rowe answered:

“I had to have a lot of testing done. I had to go to doctor appointments a lot. I was missing a lot of school. I was hospitalized. I had CT scans to track the bacteria. The bacteria

affected my nasal and sinus passages to the point my face swells badly. I was on a really strong antibiotic to get rid of it and that also has a lot of side effects. I have to be treated with this strength of antibiotic, for now on, for the slightest sickness I may feel. I'm able to take on a job now. I have to take medication. I lost a lot of weight and we're working on that getting it back. This has affected my mental health to the point I'm not sleeping at night. I see a psychologist once a week and take long-term meds for that, too.”³

A white Clinical Mental Health Counselor may be able to deal with patients who experience trauma from numerous factors, but it is a different case when the center of the patient's pain and trauma is the attack on their Black skin, especially from someone who looks like the person proclaiming to help them. That's an uncomfortable truth.

Notwithstanding, Rowe's experience is of a current Black college student. That is not taking into account the experiences of discrimination and prejudice that Black college students endure before college, growing up Black in America.

The Historical Psychological Effects of Slavery and Oppression

Twenty-five years ago, Joy DeGruy, Ph.D., developed a new term to enlighten individuals about the harsh psychological repercussions that African descendants face in America. The term DeGruy coined was PTSS or Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. The term put the light on both the historical, sociological, and psychosomatic truths of how multigenerational oppression and intergenerational trauma, from centuries of chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and

³ Ida Harris. "Exclusive: Jazzy Rowe, Student Who Was Tormented By Her White Roommate, Speaks Out On Sentencing." The Community for Black Creativity and News.

institutionalized racism and mass incarceration, naturally alter the behaviors of Black people. The outcome becomes the adaptation of survival based manners and conducts.

Educators and researchers in the fields of Africana Studies, History, Sociology, and Psychology, have all been equally interested in the questions of how intergenerational trauma affects Black people today, the same as how researchers of other disciplines have been interested in how trauma can be passed through generations and transmitted through DNA in regards to groups such as Native-Americans or Jewish people. Native-Americans, Jews, and Black people share in common a history that involves trauma and suffering. In the case of Black people, the same theory that is applied to other historically oppressed groups can be applied to the effects chattel slavery had on Black people in America.

Despite PTSS being similar to PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the terms are slightly different. According to the American Psychiatric Association, PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.⁴ PTSD is a disorder of which results from a single trauma. Historically speaking, Black people didn't/don't face one single trauma. There's a history of trauma throughout generations. Being Black is a different level of stress.

The intergenerational trauma is only one aspect of the problem. In totality, there is also the facet of not getting the adequate help needed to heal from those traumas, from generations after. That raises several question. How did Black people cope with the trauma of slavery? What adaptive behaviors have Black people created? What happens when stressed Black people don't get the treatment they desperately need? How have we adapted to a toxic environment?

⁴ American Psychiatric Association. "What Is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?" What Is PTSD?, American Psychiatric Association, www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd.

In the movie *Precious*, directed by Lee Daniels, we see the relationship between a Black mother (played by Mo’Nique) and daughter (Played by Gabourey Sidibe). “The film *Precious* (Based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire) is a hard story to watch with its excruciating depictions of sexual, physical and emotional abuse of a 16-year-old Harlem girl.”⁵ In one particular scene in the film (One of many) we see the mother give an onslaught of insults to her daughter. She calls her ugly and fat. She even physically swings her fist at her. To many, this can be seen as simply an abusive Black mom. However, PTSS doesn’t look at it as simplistic as others would. With the knowledge of PTSS, the mother may be undergoing some psychological trauma and channeling her enslaved foremother; the same enslaved woman who would minimize their child, all so her child wouldn’t be sold by a slave owner or be forced to breed with another slave. Perhaps what the mother did in *Precious* was prepare and protect her from a hostile environment, one that would body shame her daughters weight, receive sexist remarks because of her gender, and encounter overt and covert discriminatory attacks. The mother may have subconsciously believed that denigrating her Black child was the right parenting method to force her daughter to adapt to the hostile environment. This isn’t to say that the mother’s behavior is right, but it can be explained as an unlearned survival tactic stemming from chattel slavery.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is a multifaceted subject matter. One aspect deals with the intergenerational trauma stemming from chattel slavery, and then another one deals with the more contemporary institutions. This can be segregation, micro-aggressions, over and covert racism, discrimination in the workplace, mass incarceration, et cetera. However, there are some academics who feel the term isn’t suitable enough for the history of traumatic oppression Black people have endured.

⁵ Janet Kinosian. “'Precious' Is Latest Film to Show the Ugly Side of Life.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 13 Jan. 2010.

Dr. Kevin Washington is a Professor at Howard University in the Africana Studies Department, and also a licensed Clinical Psychologist. Dr. Washington was one of the guest on an episode of *Cannons Class*. *Cannons Class* is a web-show created and hosted by Nick Cannon on the Howard University campus. In an episode titled, “What does mental health actually mean to us?”, Dr. Washington was one of the guest, along with the Chairman of the Department of Africana Studies at Howard University, Dr. Greg Carr. One of the topics of the discussion consisted of the term PTSS. Dr. Washington stated,

“Post means that you are out of it, and post trauma means you are beyond the trauma. I challenge that term, even when sister Joy was coming up with it. When she came up with it we were talking about it and I said it’s not possible. So, my offering has been, and still is that it’s PEST. It’s Persistent Enslavement Systemic Trauma. That it’s an ongoing process predicated on the ideology of enslavement, and it’s systemic, it’s through everything that we do.”⁶

Dr. Washington has a valid argument. The trauma that Black people have historically experienced doesn’t have an end date. It’s constant, and that consistency is what brings fear and anxiety.

Black people have always been spiritual beings, and the church has been somewhat as a safe haven for the Black community. Black churches kept the social fabric of Black communities together, were common meeting grounds for Civil Rights organizing, and kept hope alive. However, in Charleston, the mass assassination of nine Black churchgoing people by Dylan Roof challenged that belief. What created such anxiousness is the fact that the Black church has always historically been a safe space for the majority of Black people. However, the tragedy of Charleston

⁶ Nick Cannon, et al. “What Does Mental Health Actually Mean to Us?” *YouTube*, YouTube, 5 Dec. 2018.

showed that that wasn't the case anymore. This led Black people to believe that no place is safe for them, which would create uneasiness in the mental health of anybody, knowing there was no place they could turn, to be safe.

Intergenerational trauma is real and historically proven, but so is the trauma that Black people face from current acts of discrimination and hate crimes. Undergoing so much pain without getting suitable mental health care is generationally dangerous. The conversation must be ongoing in order to help the Black population in general, but specifically young Black students on college campuses.

Black Mental Health throughout the Educational System in America

The multifaceted reality that Black students face in America is an absolute hindrance on their development of progression into emotionally and socially healthy individuals. It occurs throughout their life in both traumatic and stressful instances, and it starts young. As a child, Black children begin to become racially aware, and that proves necessary for them.

“Racial awareness refers to knowledge of the differences in racial categories. Children possess racial awareness when they can recognize, identify, and make distinctions among racial categories. In the preschool years, children describe themselves in terms of membership in certain groups as defined by physical characteristics: “I have brown skin” (Burns, 1979; Harter, 1983); possessions: “I have a fire truck” (Damon & Hart, 1982); and gender: “I am a boy” (Damon & Hart, 1988). Emphasis is placed on material (concrete) and salient qualities rather than symbolic or affective qualities. Children become aware of their skin color before they come to learn that skin color ultimately determines racial and ethnic membership (Semaj, 1985; Spencer, 1988). For instance, a young child’s statement

that she has “brown skin” is not linked with the fact that she will be socially labeled in our society as African American (Spencer, 1988).⁷

Children see race at a young age, but more importantly, they see how they are treated because of it. There are myriad stories proving so.

On April 29, 2017, a 15-year-old Black child was shot to death in Balch Springs, Texas. The young unarmed child, Jordan Edwards, was shot in the back of his head, while sitting in the front passenger’s seat of a car that received an onslaught of bullets from white Police Officer Roy Oliver. The encounter started when police officers were responding to a 911 call at around 11:00 PM. The report stated that several underage kids, at a party of about 100, were drunk and walking around. “According to the Morning News, Merritt said Edwards and his friends had not been drinking and were not the teens police had been called about.”⁸

From there, the officers arrived and allegedly heard gunshots, an uproar ensued due to the frightening nature of hearing gunshots ring and many party goers started to anxiously run for their lives. In the middle of the madness, Officer Roy fired three rounds from his Modern Carbine MC5 rifle into a vehicle occupied by Edwards, his 16-year old brother who was driving the vehicle, as well as another brother and two friends. Those bullets would be the bullets that pierced Edwards in the back of his head, subsequently taking his life. Originally, the Balch Springs Police Department stated that at the center of the crime was an unknown vehicle, backing down the street

⁷ Harriette Pipes McAdoo. *Black Children: Social, Educational, and Parental Environments*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002.

⁸ Aaron Morrison. “Jordan Edwards, 15-Year-Old Honor Roll Student, Killed in Shooting by Texas Police.” *Mic*, Mic Network Inc., 1 May 2017.

charging officers in a life threatening fashion. However, that story was false and was proved so after body cam footage was released and exposed that narrative for its misrepresentation.

Subsequently, a Texas jury found Officer Roy guilty of murder, after 12 hours of deliberation. Oliver was sentenced to 15 years in prison, though, prosecutors argued for 60 years prison time. “There have been several high-profile cases of black men —often unarmed— dying at the hands of U.S. police in recent years...But police are rarely convicted over shootings that happen while they are on duty.”⁹ This is a daily occurrence for young black teens. It’s the reality they live through on a daily basis, and it has strong psychological effects. And this is just one of many stressors that young Black students have to face.

In the scope of looking at the mental health of Black students in higher education, it is necessary to look at the entire spectrum of the educational system, and the affects it has on Black students. Of the research that has been conducted on the affects the educational system has on Black students, we must examine the research done by Dr. William B. Harvey. Harvey is a distinguished researcher, much of which studies the cultural and social factors that impact Black students in the educational setting. Harvey has a considerable amount of research on Black students and the educational system, nonetheless, his journal article *The Educational System and Black Mental Health*, surveys and examines the link between social and cultural factors that affect Black students and how it affects the mental health of Black students throughout the educational system.

In the introduction to *The Educational System and Black Mental Health*, Harvey immediately associated the culture of racism in America, how its entrenched in America’s social

⁹ “Roy Oliver: Ex-Police Officer Jailed for Jordan Edwards Shooting.” BBC News, BBC, 30 Aug. 2018.

institutions, and that undoubtedly the most influential social institution would be the educational system.

“In America, racism is an entrenched part of the normative culture, and as a consequence, it is transmitted and perpetuated through the various social institutions, including the schools. The enrollment of Black children in the schools is both a legal requirement and a cultural expectation, and except for unusual situations such as geographical isolation, religious stricture or physical infirmity, participation almost always occurs. As a result, it seems unlikely that any other social institution impacts on the mental health of so many Black people in such a direct and significant way as does the educational system.”¹⁰

Jordan Edwards was a Black child who seemed to do everything “right”. He was an honor roll student, did not get into any trouble, and displayed nothing but model behavior. However, not of that mattered because his blackness was still attached to him, and Officer Roy Oliver only saw that blackness and nothing else. What type of effect does a story like that have on Black students? It has a great impact. “Only one-in-three African Americans who need mental health care receives it.”¹¹ So, imagine all the young black students who read, not only one story like Jordan Edwards, but at least one a day, and who have to face these realities in their physical life. It's damaging, and the Black youth doesn't have the tools we need to cope and heal these woes adequately. One would suggest therapy but how helpful is receiving therapy from a non-Black person who can't understand the validity of the Black experience? “In 2015, 86 percent of psychologists in the U.S.

¹⁰ William B Harvey. "The Educational System and Black Mental Health." *The Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 4 (1984): 444. doi:10.2307/2295124.

¹¹ M Dalencour, et al. “The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Depression Care of African Americans and Hispanics in Los Angeles.” *Psychiatric Services*. 2017. 68(4):368-374.

workforce were white, 5 percent were Asian, 5 percent were Hispanic, 4 percent were Black/African-American and 1 percent were multiracial or from other racial/ethnic groups.”¹² Black Clinical Mental Health Counselors are heavily needed in the aid of combating Black mental health woes in Black students, but there are few, so what do we do?

The argument begins to formulate that the mental health of Black students is a health emergency, primarily because of the power that discriminative social institutions, such as the educational system, have over Black students. Harvey establishes that this problem needs more attention given to it, needs to be seriously addressed, and that its needs to be seen as a solvable problem.

Specifically, to mental health in higher education, as Harvey suggested, the problem begins at the youth of the black child. To adequately address the issue, we need to start there. When young, the child is susceptible to everything he examines in society. The Black child begins to become educated and becomes a vacuum for knowledge and information. However, that knowledge that the Black child will receive, starts to affect him, especial once he starts to become “schooled.” Harvey stated, “Thus, students are quite literally "schooled" by educational institutions into accepting prevailing structures and standards in order to achieve a sense of belonging to the group and acceptance by the authority figures and the larger society...The nature and the structure of the American social system and its inherently racist orientation makes schooling potentially a far more psychologically hazardous situation for Black students than for their white counterparts.”¹³

¹² Luona Lin. “How Diverse Is the Psychology Workforce? News from APA's Center for Workforce Studies.” American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, Feb. 2018, www.apa.org/monitor/2018/02/datapoint.

¹³ William B Harvey. "The Educational System and Black Mental Health." *The Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 4 (1984): 445. doi:10.2307/2295124.

Through schooling, young Black children have begun to learn that white ideals, standards, and concepts are normative, and that any other sort of idea isn't right. For example, let's look at an incident involving a Black sixth-grade student, Jabari Talbot, at Lawton Chiles Middle Academy in Lakeland, Florida. On February 4, 2019, the student refused to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. He maintained that the flag and national anthem are racist against Black people, but his teacher refused to respect grievances and right to subscribe to his own independent ideals. The substitute teacher, Ana Alvarez, then asked the boy that "if America is so bad, why not live somewhere else?" The student responded saying, "they brought me here." Allegedly, the situation escalated and shouting began to ensue as the administrative dean and a school resource officer with the Lakeland Police Department came to the classroom.¹⁴ Situations such as these teach young Black children early on that white standards are to be respected and will be enforced by white authoritative figures. This situation could prove to be traumatizing, especially to a young child. The child's mother stated, "I'm upset, I'm angry. I'm hurt, more so for my son. My son has never been through anything like this...I feel like this should've been handled differently. If any disciplinary action should've been taken, it should've been with the school. He shouldn't have been arrested."¹⁵ Young Black students aren't afforded that luxury, and that sort of situation is dangerous to the psychology of the Black child.

As Harvey argued, "The worst of circumstances transpires when the school is openly oppressive and intolerant toward Black students, treating them contemptuously and denying their humanity and dignity."¹⁶ Jabari Talbot isn't an anomaly. Situations such as his happen too often

¹⁴ Kristine Phillips. "Florida Sixth-grader Arrested after Dispute with Teacher over Pledge of Allegiance." *The Washington Post*. February 18, 2019.

¹⁵ Kristine Phillips. "Florida Sixth-grader Arrested after Dispute with Teacher over Pledge of Allegiance." *The Washington Post*. February 18, 2019.

¹⁶ William B Harvey. "The Educational System and Black Mental Health." *The Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 4 (1984): 446

to count, and that experience stays with that Black student forever, especially to those Black students pursuing a higher degree of learning at predominantly white institutions/colleges, leaving a negative mark on their mental health.

Despite the fact that the experiences of racism and prejudice Black students have dealt with occurred in the past, the link to Black mental health in higher education remains present. The difference, however, is what's at stake. Harvey discussed how there's the view that advanced education is the gateway to higher status, in regards to American society, and the fact that Black students are being admitted into prestigious PWI's, there is now a recognition of the potential of Black students. But, Harvey stated that that's not the truth when it comes to Black students and higher education.

“There is a great distinction between gaining admission and gaining acceptance or inclusion into the mainstream of the institution. Black students in white colleges and universities are generally in a position of being peripheral persons. By definition, they are inside the institution; in practice, they usually find themselves relegated to its outermost fringes. Three factors have been pinpointed as impacting on the isolation of Black students who are enrolled in white colleges: (1) the traditionally white university embodies and reflects a history of American racism and ethnocentrism. Such institutional racism has affected the individual behavior of whites who function in the university; (2) the traditionally white university is an isolated, intricate and rigid bureaucracy which makes it impersonal and resistant to change; and (3) the university has contributed little, if anything, to its adjacent Black urban towns and communities.”¹⁷

¹⁷ William B Harvey. "The Educational System and Black Mental Health." *The Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 4 (1984): 450.

What Harvey pointed out is factually accurate. For example, to examine Harvey's three factors, let's examine them in comparison to SUNY New Paltz. Harvey's first factor deals with white universities reflecting a history of racism. At SUNY New Paltz there was much debate going on about the naming of certain buildings and residence halls. The debate was if the university should change the building names from being named after slave owners. "The buildings in question include five dormitories — Bevier Hall, Crispell Hall, Deyo Hall, DuBois Hall and LeFevre Hall — and the Hasbrouck Dining Hall, all of which were named for Huguenot families that settled New Paltz and owned slaves."¹⁸ The building names created a lot of discomfort among Black students who attended the university because of the disrespect there was in the symbolism of a Black student having to sleep and eat in buildings honoring slave owners. Harvey's second factor dealt with predominantly white universities being an isolated bureaucracy. At SUNY New Paltz, for Black students, this is present when looking at the landscape of the college. Many department are respected and put in JFT faculty building or given sufficient space for there departments in other buildings. Yet, the Black Studies department are relegated to conducting themselves in a trailer. What kind of message does that send? Lastly, Harvey's third fact of the university contributing little to Black communities, in the case of SUNY New Paltz, that is also true. The college doesn't do anything to contribute to the surrounding Black communities.

This goes to show that Harvey's argument that despite predominantly white universities admitting more Black students, the attitudes and how the universities conduct themselves have not changed much, if at all. Therefore, PWI's don't positively contribute to the mental health of Black students, they're a detriment. Black students should be focused on schoolwork and not have to

¹⁸ Mid-Hudson News, Mid-Hudson News. "SUNY New Paltz Council Votes to Drop Names of Slave-owning Families from Six Buildings." Daily Freeman. February 21, 2019.

continually battle with the college administration for the right to not have to live in a building named after someone whom, if this were 1822, would see them as property and a commodity. Black students should not have to go meet with their professors in trailer (let alone if they could even find it). But what do Black students eventually do? In the face of their difficulties about the legitimacy of their education and the quality of the instruction that they have received, Black students swallow their pride and ultimately succumb to conducting themselves in the way recommended by the PWI, no matter their legitimate grievances, in order that they might receive their degrees.¹⁹ Black students swallow the disrespect, racism, macroaggressions, all so they can get a degree and attempt to produce a suitable living for themselves.

Harvey concluded his research stating that there are two key solutions to solving the problem, representation and collective action from the Black community. Harvey saw a mass discrepancy of Black teachers at all levels, harshly calling it “an outright disgrace” and asserted that representation was a step in the right direction into seriously addressing the problem of Black mental health in higher education. Also, Harvey concluded that Black students need to be protected due to being more vulnerable, and Black adults need to direct more of their attention to them to “ensure the wellbeing of the young.”

Harvey’s sentiment is a lot more lenient than someone such as Dr. Claude Anderson, who stated,

“School integration has failed and should be stopped. Even though halting school integration would surely be celebrated by social conservatives, Black America has little choice. The pain of school integration is borne almost completely by Black Americans.

¹⁹ William B Harvey. "The Educational System and Black Mental Health." *The Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 4 (1984): 452.

The majority White society has not been required to give Blacks anything they did not already have. They profited while Blacks bore the pain.”²⁰

Here we see two different approaches. Harvey who wants to fix the system given the constraints that have already been created, and Anderson who wants to essential hit the reset button on Black America and focus on exclusively Black individuals through a more private method. The two differing ideologies still conflict with each other through academia.

Black Students Seeking Emotional Help from Historically Oppressive Groups

Kwame Turé was a Pan-Africanist who stated, "Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks."²¹ One can interpret those words to mean that in order to be a strong group of people, one must focus on certain aspects and issues within their own community, which may make some individuals feel uncomfortable. Society acknowledges the importance of education but for Black students the road to an education is not on the same level as those of others. Black students have a plethora of stressors and outside forces that greatly damage their social and emotional well-being, whilst striving and aspiring to receive a simple education.

Of the field of Black students and education, one of the most prominent academics would be Dr. Beverly D. Tatum. Tatum has researched and written various works examining the affect racism has on young Black students such as, *Can We Talk about Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* and most notably, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*.

²⁰ Claud Anderson. *PowerNomics: The National Plan to Empower Black America*. Bethesda, MD: PowerNomics of America, 2001.

²¹ Stokely Carmichael. *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. 1967.

In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, Beverly Daniel Tatum stated, “Early in my teaching career, a white student I knew asked me what I would be teaching the following semester. I mentioned that I would be teaching a course on racism. She replied, with some surprise in her voice, “Oh, is there still racism?””²² The student that Tatum mentioned is a college student, and the statement/question of, “Oh, is there still racism,” is frightening. And also telling to a larger issue. Race matters are viewed by white people as problems that aren’t attached to them, in spite of history. And ironically, 55% of white Americans believe that discrimination against whites exists in America today, yet relatively few say that they have been personally discriminated against because they are white.²³ Their relationship with race matters are confused to say the least. This can also be referred to as white privilege. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, white privilege is the fact that people with white skin have advantages in society that other people do not have. The white student that Tatum talked too was exercising such privilege because racism was an afterthought in her mind.

Every Black student should have at least one person they could talk to about their troubles, feelings, and whatever occupies their mind. However, that sadly isn’t the case. Generally, there is a stigma about mental health in the Black community, and they are just now heading towards the steps of a substantial breakthrough, due to college youth openly talking about their mental health and creating and maintaining the dialogue. It is important to mention that once the conversation begins to be taken seriously and the issue is being addressed, the question will arise of, “should we keep this in house?” Meaning, should Black people solve the problems of mental health with

²² Beverly Daniel Tatum. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": and Other Conversations about Race. Basic Books, 2017. 80

²³ “Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of White Americans.” Harvard School of Public Health, Nov. 2017, pp. 1–62., www.npr.org/documents/2017/oct/discrimination-whites-final.pdf.

Black students at predominantly white colleges amongst themselves and only themselves, or should they be inclusive and accept counsel from non-Black people?

From a historical viewpoint, the issue should stay in house, and the Black community should mobilize every Black Clinical Mental Health Counselor, health care professional, teacher, mentor, et cetera to achieve the agenda of creating a more nuanced view of mental health in the Black community. Therefore, providing suitable therapeutic help to every Black student who wants it, and ending the stigma.

For the sake of debate, one might ask what's the trouble with incorporating a more diverse group in the healing of the mental health of Black students? First, a Black agenda has to be Black-centered and Afro-centered, hence stay Black, or else Black people run the risk of, again, being placed on the back burner of a movement they started. Second, non-Black people, especially white people, still are problematic in the ways in which they see race, including the Hispanic teacher who called the cops on the Black child who did not want to stand for the pledge because he felt it was racist. Black people being discriminated against is not an issue that surrounds their daily life, therefore it is not a constant issue. It's a problem for the "others" to deal with.

Tatum was correct when she stated, "The impact of racism begins early,"²⁴ but she also raised an important point when she stated,

"Early in my teaching career, a White male student in my Psychology of Racism course wrote in his journal at the end of the semester that he had learned a lot about racism and now understood in a way he never had before just how advantaged he was. He also commented that he didn't think he would do anything to try to change the situation. After

²⁴ Beverly Daniel Tatum. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": and Other Conversations about Race. Basic Books, 2017. 81

all, the system was working in his favor. Fortunately, his response was not typical. Most of my students left my course with the desire (and an action plan) to interrupt the cycle of racism. However, this young man's response did raise an important question. Why should Whites who are advantaged by racism want to end that system of advantage? What are the costs of that system to them?"²⁵

It is unfathomable that a white individual can benefit from racism for the entirety of their life while a Black person suffers from it, and still believe that that same white person could understand the Black struggle, the reality of Black American, and give Black students the appropriate care they need, especially when it makes no sense for a white person to willingly give up their power and benefits. Perhaps they could fight for equality, but mental health is a different subject. What makes sense is a collective mobilization of Black people, with an Afrocentric mindset, those who share the same struggles and know the effects of racism, with the agenda of addressing the serious issue of mental health affecting Black students, especially those who attend predominantly white universities.

In the 1940's, Kenneth Bancroft Clark and his wife Mamie Clark, who were both psychologists, ran a series of experiments involving Barbie Dolls. Their research purpose was to study the effects of segregation on young Black children. The research experiment included dolls that were identical in everything except color. They then used a group of children ranging in ages from 3-7, and asked them their preference (i.e. which one was nice vs bad and pretty vs ugly). Most of the kids attributed all the positive characteristics to the white dolls, and the negative characteristics to the black dolls. The Clarks would eventually be called as expert witnesses, and cite

²⁵ Beverly Daniel Tatum. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": and Other Conversations about Race. Basic Books, 2017. 89

their research for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and provided ample basis for *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

This study is most significant because European beauty standards are one of the factors that contribute to mental health woes, and can lead to serious physical health dangerous such as eating disorders for example. However, at the root cause of this is white supremacy and racism, and most Black Americans are aware of that. Therefore, due to that common awareness, a Black therapist, psychiatrist, et cetera would be more astute, and it would be more beneficial to the Black patient, for example, who may have anxiety of police, to talk to someone who understands and can help. Or to the Black woman who struggles with her body image, to see a Black Clinical Mental Health Counselor, perhaps a woman too, who knows the history of the attacks on the beauty of Black women.

To illustrate, Tatum wrote,

“Consider this conversation between two White students following a discussion about the cultural transmission of racism: “Yeah, I just found out that Cleopatra was actually a Black woman.” “What?” The first student went on to explain the source of her newly learned information. The second student exclaimed in disbelief, “That can’t be true. Cleopatra was beautiful!” While scholars still argue the question of Cleopatra’s ancestry, what is conjured up images of Hollywood icon Elizabeth Taylor when she thought of Cleopatra? The new information her classmate had shared and her own deeply ingrained assumptions about who is beautiful and who is not were too incongruous to allow her to assimilate the information at that moment.”²⁶

²⁶ Beverly Daniel Tatum. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": and Other Conversations about Race. Basic Books, 2017. 81-82

A Black woman knows specifically of the European beauty standards placed upon them by white society and white supremacy. Moreover, what better coping mechanism for a Black woman dealing with this, than to talk with another Black woman who is clinically certified. What better coping mechanism for a Black woman dealing with those societal woes at a predominantly white university, than to have healthy conversation with a Black Mental Health Counselor? There is always complaints that society is becoming too paramount on identity, but the voices of the people who say that are usually white. The same white people who refuse to see their privilege because it might point out their own shortcomings in life, and the same white people who are always represented in society in terms of pop culture, the private sector, and government. They feel their ideal, and that it has nothing to do with their whiteness. Black people don't have that luxury and that's why it's perfectly fine for us to recognize and be proud of our identity, because it will always be the first thing others see no matter how far into the future we go, because history doesn't die. This is why it is crucial for Black students to have healthy conversation with Black Mental Health Counselors who are proud of their identity, and can instill that in Black students, despite the racism and prejudice they deal with on PWI's.

There may be a future where there could be some sort of unity and general acceptance of the various emotional well-being of individuals, regardless of race, but right now, a specific focus needs to be Black students, who are the next coming generation, to both address the problem, and speak up about it. Only then, can the Black community begin the healing process, and tear down the society of oppression that causes so much pain.

The Afrocentric Political Identity and the Psychologist

The main assertion that only Black Clinical Mental Health Counselors can beneficially help Black students who suffer social and emotional trauma at predominantly white institutions is a bold claim. Therefore it needs a suitable and proper defense. The claim that Black Clinical Mental Health Counselors know how to help Black students because those same professionals, more than likely, went through the same experience and understand it better than anyone, is quite a claim, but one needs to pay close attention. Just because a Black Mental Health Counselor might share the same skin color of a Black student doesn't mean they necessarily understand the Black experience. "All skin-folk ain't kinfolk," as Zora Neale Hurston would say. An emphasis must be placed on the Black Mental Health Counselor with an Afrocentric political identity. Specific attention to the terms Afrocentric political identity solve the problem of Black Mental Health Counselors who do not know the typical Black experience.

Nevertheless, Afrocentric and Afrocentricity are the key terms and need to be thoroughly defined. Molefi Kete Asante is a Professor of Africana Studies at Temple University. Asante has published many works dealing with the topic of Afrocentricity such as *Afrocentricity, the theory of social change* and *An Afrocentric Manifesto*. In an interview for the New York Times with philosopher George Yancy, Kete cogently defined what Afrocentricity is and the place it holds in regards to Black history.

"Afrocentricity as an intellectual idea takes no authority to prescribe anything; it is neither a religion nor a belief system. It is a paradigm that suggests all discourse about African people should be grounded in the centrality of Africans in their own narratives."²⁷

Afrocentricity is crucial to the healing of Black students, and there's also other ways of looking at Black centered healing.

²⁷ George Yancy, and Molefi Kete Asante. "Molefi Kete Asante: Why Afrocentricity?" The New York Times. May 07, 2015.

In *Black Studies and Political Ideology as Predictors of Self-Esteem: A call for a New Direction*, authors Jonathan Livingston, Harriette Pipes McAdoo and Catherine J. Mills found that there is a link between the enrollment in Black studies courses, political ideology, and self-esteem, in regards to Black college students. "From a review of the history of Black studies and the empirical studies conducted to investigate the relationship between enrollment in or exposure to Black studies courses and self-esteem, the literature suggests that the exposure to Black images and classes celebrating Black culture and heritage may offer positive images of self and instill a sense of pride and self-worth in African American students."²⁸ The results of their study indicated that the enrollment in Black Studies courses was related to the self-esteem among Black students (Primarily for upper classmen).

The study revealed that there were positive psychological outcomes for students exposed to Afrocentric courses (predominantly for K-12). Furthermore, Black Nationalism predicted higher self-esteem.

"Results of the study indicate that enrollment in Black studies courses is related to self-esteem among African American college students but only for upper classmen. Pearson product moment correlations were calculated to examine the bivariate relationships between the variables and key demographic variables. Preliminary analysis revealed that enrollment in Black studies courses was significantly related to possessing a Black Nationalist ideology and self-esteem. Thus, students who had taken more Black studies courses reported higher levels of Black Nationalism ($r = .21, p < .01$) and higher levels of self-esteem ($r = .17, p < .05$). Black Nationalism was significantly related to self-

²⁸ Jonathan Livingston, Harriette Pipes McAdoo, and Catherine J. Mills. "Black Studies and Political Ideology as Predictors of Self-Esteem: A Call for a New Direction." *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 4 (2010): 729. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40648538>.

esteem such that African American college students with higher nationalism scores reported higher levels of self-esteem ($r = .19, p < .01$). Given that duration in college influences the number of classes students are exposed to and the significance of maturation in much of racial attitude and psychological health, Pearson product moment correlations were run for classification or year in school.”²⁹

In context with Afrocentric Mental Health Counselors, the study showed that the key to the social, emotion, mental healing of Black students is through an Afrocentric approach. In this case, a Black Afrocentric Mental Health Counselor.

The Contrast of Mental Health, Social Health, and the Social Determinants of Health

In authenticity, the research presented isn't a study of the mental health of Black students on a predominantly white campus, in regards to mental diagnosis. More so, the research is to show the link between social determinants of health, and how that is exemplified through the experiences of Black students in higher education. There are five key social determinants of health: economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment.³⁰ The central social determinant of health the study focuses on would be education, more specifically higher education. However, that doesn't exclude the other four social determinants of health. Their relationship in the study is intrinsically attached to education.

Furthermore, an appropriate definition needs to be given to social health. According to the Student Health and Counseling Services at the University of California, Davis' "social wellness

²⁹ Jonathan Livingston, Harriette Pipes McAdoo, and Catherine J. Mills. "Black Studies and Political Ideology as Predictors of Self-Esteem: A Call for a New Direction." *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 4 (2010): 737. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40648538>.

³⁰ "Social Determinants of Health." *Social Determinants of Health | Healthy People 2020*. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>.

refers to the relationships we have and how we interact with others.”³¹ Nonetheless, this study looks at the social wellness by in which the very social interactions Black students face and societal actions they have to encounter affects them personally, particularly on white college campuses.

Methodology

To conduct the research, two methods were implemented, both a quantitative study and a qualitative study. The two research methods were applied to assess the relationship between discrimination Black students encounter at predominantly white universities, and whether it affected the mental well-being of those students. Quantitative research was gathered to obtain the facts of the social experience and reality of Black students at predominantly white institutions. Qualitative research was utilized to gather understanding from the perspective of Black students. Both methods collected empirical evidence, of which will be provided in the studies.

Quantitative Study

Participants

The data in the study was collected from a sample of 66 diverse students enrolled in Black Studies courses at The State University of New York at New Paltz, also known as SUNY New Paltz, a public university in New Paltz, NY. The majority of the students in the study were between the ages of 18 and 27. Of the participants, 9% were freshman, 24.2% were sophomores, 39.3% were juniors, and 27.2% were seniors. All participants were currently enrolled in Black studies courses. As a basis for the study, all participants indicated that mental health was an important

³¹ University of California, Davis. "Social Wellness." Social Wellness | Student Health and Counseling Services.

issue. When asked about participation in student groups and/or organizations, 43.9% indicated that they were involved in organizations.

Procedure

Participants in the study were sampled from undergraduate Black Studies courses. To collect the data for the study, a 23-question survey was constructed and professors were contacted on which classes were available, and what time to take the questionnaire. After the permission to solicit data was secured, students were given the questionnaire during the class period. Students were told the purpose of the study, which the information given would be confidential, after the data was collected the questionnaires would be destroyed, and that their participation was voluntary. Once students completed the questionnaire, they were placed in an envelope and sealed.

Measures

Demographic. Demographic information collected from the participants assessed and evaluated racial and ethnic background, age, university level, enrollment in Black Studies courses, and campus and community involvement. Due to Black students being the primary target of the study, students were surveyed from diverse Black Studies courses.

Discriminatory experiences. Discriminatory experiences were examined using a 23 question questionnaire. Of discriminatory experiences, eight questions were prominent: have you had a negative experience on campus due to discrimination, how many experiences of discrimination did you encounter on campus, who caused that negative experience, who did you tell about that negative experience, do you feel safe from discrimination on campus, do you feel safe from discrimination in New Paltz, do you feel safe from police brutality on campus, and do

you feel safe from police brutality in New Paltz? Higher selections confirming the negative experiences on campus due to discrimination revealed higher levels of discriminatory encounters for Black students.

Discrimination effects on mental well-being. Discrimination effects on mental well-being was measured by two most essential yes or no questions: do you feel that your negative experience or experiences of being discriminated against impacted your mental well-being, and do you think the university provides adequate mental health services for students of color? The two direct questions would measure a high belief that discrimination on campus has an impact on the mental well-being of Black students in campus, with a higher percentage of students who selected yes.

Results

Results of the study indicate that there is a direct correlation between the negative encounters with racism that Black students endure and the influence it has on their mental well-being. Not only is it evident, it unveils a disproportionate amount of negative encounters on campus, due to discrimination, of Black students, versus other racial and ethnic groups. Preliminary analysis revealed that Black students on predominantly white college campuses have discomfort and uneasiness on campus, but the study revealed that those discomforts were not isolated incidents and were inklings of a substantial issue, of which the study showed to be irrefutably true. Thus, Black students who have reported that they have been discriminated against on campus also reported that it has affected their mental well-being. Mental well-being was significantly related to experiences on campus, predominantly for Black students. However, there was no scale implemented to show the magnitude of which Black student's mental well-being was affected.

Discriminatory Experiences and Encounters of Black Students at Predominantly White Universities

Figure 1

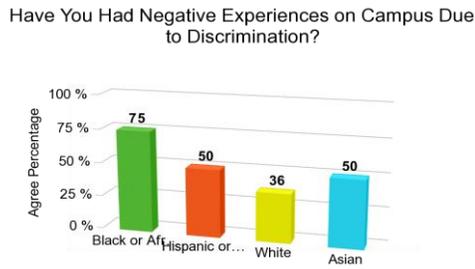
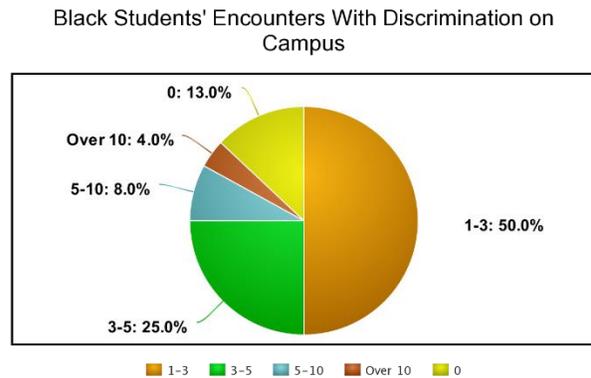


Figure 1

meta-chart.com

Figure 2



1-3 3-5 5-10 Over 10 0

meta-chart.com

On the discriminatory experiences of Black students at predominantly white universities, Black students overwhelmingly have encountered discrimination on campus. 75% of Black students have had negative experiences on campus due to discrimination. This is in contrast to 50% of Hispanic or Latino students have had negative experiences on campus due to discrimination, 36% of white students, and 50% of Asian students (see Figure 1). In analysis of the number of encounters, the study found that 50% of Black students have encountered discrimination on campus 1-3 times, 25% of Black students have encountered discrimination on campus 3-5 times, 8% of Black students have encountered discrimination on campus 5-10 times, 4% of Black students have encountered discrimination on campus more than 10 times, and 13% of Black students have encountered discrimination on campus 0 times (see Figure 2). Analysis indicates that Black students' discriminatory encounters are an issue on campus.

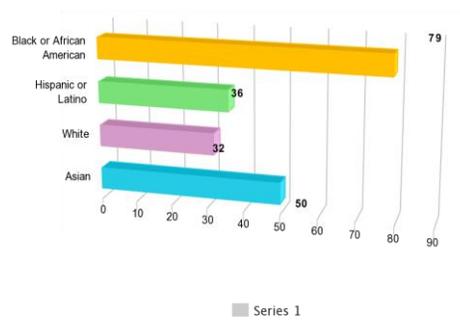
In terms of microaggressions and subtle acts of discrimination, 88% of Black students have come across racist and/or Eurocentric material in class. However, the study also shows there is a

pattern of Black students feeling unsafe from racism and discrimination, not only on the predominantly white campus, but also in the predominantly white town the campus is located. The study showed 88% of Black students do not feel safe from discrimination on campus and 88% of Black students do not feel safe from discrimination in New Paltz. In regards to physical violence, 67% of Black students do not feel safe from police brutality on campus and 96% of Black students do not feel safe from police brutality in New Paltz. Results showed a genuine terror of the possibility of violence towards Black students, not only on campus, but also in the surrounding town.

Discrimination Effects on Black Students' Mental Well-being

Figure 3

Negative Experiences of Being Discriminated Against Impacting Mental-Well Being



To examine the effects of discrimination on the well-being of Black students, the study found that 79% of Black students feel that their negative experience or experiences of being discriminated against impacted their mental well-being. This is a large disparity because among of the ethnic and racial groups, 36% of Hispanic Students feel that their negative experience or experiences of being discriminated against impacted their mental well-being, 32% of white students feel that their negative experience or experiences of being discriminated against impacted

their mental well-being, and 50% of Asian students feel that their negative experience or experiences of being discriminated against impacted their mental well-being. Analysis of the results shows that there is a cycle of uncomfortability with Black students on predominantly white campuses.

In regards to the resources Black students have to health their mental well-being, Black students feel limited in their options on campus. 67% of Black students do not think the university provides adequate mental health services for students of color, 92% of Black students think that the administration does not hold professors and students accountable for acts of discrimination, and 75% of Black students do not know of a place to report acts of discrimination on campus. Data shows that Black students feel they do not have the effective resources needed to adequately address mental well-being issues, both in terms of the health center on campus and the administration.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between experiences of discrimination Black students have, the amount, the type, and whether it is associated with their mental well-being. The study concludes that there is a link and that the substantial majority of Black students feel that their mental well-being is affected by the discrimination they encounter on predominantly white campuses, however, the information does not support to what affect. Further research will examine the impact of discrimination at predominantly white campuses on Black students, and will examine the effectiveness of Black mental health counselors with Afrocentric political identities.

Qualitative Study

Participants

The data was collected from a sample of four Black students attending The State University of New York at New Paltz, also known as SUNY New Paltz, a public university in New Paltz, NY. Of the participants in the study, the ages ranged from 20 to 27. One participant was a sophomore, one participant was a junior, and two participants were seniors. Half the participants were female, and the other half male. Three students were currently enrolled in Black Studies courses, one was not. Two students indicated that they were involved in organizations.

Procedure

Participants in the study were sampled from Black undergraduate students. To collect the data for the study, a list of questions was constructed; after the permission to solicit data was secured, individual interviews were scheduled with Black students at SUNY New Paltz. Before the interviews, the students were told the purpose of the interview and study, that the information given would be confidential with the alias they provided, and that their participation was voluntary. Permission was asked to record them and once the students completed the interviews, they were transcribed and the audio recordings were deleted.

Measures

Demographic. Demographic information consisted of Black students enrolled at SUNY New Paltz. Information collected from the participants assessed and evaluated racial and ethnic background, age, university level, enrollment in Black Studies courses, campus and community

involvement, experiences with discrimination, encounters with discrimination, and effects of the encounters on mental well-being.

Discriminatory experiences. Discriminatory experiences were examined using specific questions targeting their negative experiences on campus. Answers confirming the negative experiences on campus due to discrimination gave insight into the validity of claims of the discriminatory encounters for Black students.

Discrimination effects on mental well-being. Discrimination effects on mental well-being was measured by questioning how negative experiences on campus made them feel and who they talked to about it. Those questions would give authenticity to the argument that discrimination on campus has an impact on the mental well-being of Black students on campus.

Results

Lashay Johnson

Lashay Johnson (alias), was the first student interviewed. Johnson is 24 years old, female, identifies as African, and is a junior, majoring in Communications. She grew up in Queens, NY and does not participate in any student activities on campus. A common theme among her interview was her feeling that there needed to be some sort of exclusivity of Black people from the education system and mental health system, in regards to health and solving the issues Black students face. Johnson's opinions provide context as to why there is an uneasiness within Black people who attend predominantly white institutions.

When asked what led her to her decision to attend a PWI:

“Well...One reason was because I tried to go to an HBCU (Historically Black College/University), initially I wanted to but it was too far away and there was no dorm space and this one just seemed like the closer option. There was no HBCU in this area...An HBCU I feel I'll be a lot more comfortable being myself and wouldn't have to deal with discrimination from teachers or other students. I could just be around people who look like me for once since I went to school in a predominantly white area and there weren't that many Black students.”

When asked if she feels like she can experience Black comfortability at SUNY New Paltz:

“I feel like the Black students for the most part are like an afterthought. We don't have as many programs or the ones we do have people don't take seriously. Also, the name changes of the buildings. That was a big debate. And it was almost as if they didn't want to change the names in the first place. They rather keep it the slave master names. And how they treat the teachers, it feels like the teachers are an afterthought, especially with them not having, the Black Studies department not having a building.

Continued:

“I had an incident where I was expressing my culture wearing my African headscarf, and my teacher accused me of cheating and kicked me out of a final because of it. And, just the way we talk and communicate, white teachers, a lot of the times don't understand that or think you're being hostile or punish you more harshly.”

When asked about how that experience made her feel:

“Angry, and I was mad at myself cause I felt shocked but I shouldn't be shocked. I guess you see things happen to other people but you don't imagine stuff happening to you, or you being in certain situations. But you really shouldn't be shocked at this point.”

When asked how she coped with that negative experience:

“I went to the human resources department and I reported her, and I still wore my headscarf, even cause I had to retake the final. I still wore my headscarf anyways. She wasn’t gonna convince me to take it off.

When asked if she would consider visiting the Mental Health Services Center:

“If there was a Black person I could talk to then yes...cause they just understand, I don’t have to explain myself or try to over explain, they’ll just get it, where I’m coming from. And I’d feel more comfortable around them, discussing, especially racial issues with somebody of the same race.”

Continued:

“It’s kind of weird trying to explain being discriminated against by the same group of people who’s the mental health counselor, who’s also a part of that group of people. It’d be awkward.”

When asked what she finds most challenging about being a Black student at a PWI:

“In regards to history, you have to learn their history (white history). There are Black history courses but I feel like it’s not seen as important. They’ll think Greek is classical and you’ll have to learn that, but Black history is an afterthought. I just don’t like that.”

When asked what would she tell a Black student who is thinking of attending a PWI:

“I’d tell them to try and go to an HBCU...I feel like they’ll have a better experience there and they don’t have to deal with any hate that may come their way. They’ll be around more people that look like them and build a community around that. And also network with other Black students and that’s what we really need right now, for the community to come

together, economically and as a people. I feel like that could be a start. And you're supporting a Black college, so they don't close down."

When asked why an emphasis on just Black:

"Because every people networks within themselves and works so that their people or nation could improve or be better. And I think we need to do that more, especially supporting each other more. Spending our money with each other more and being around ourselves and healing. And I feel like we can't get healing if we're surrounded by the people who harmed us. I think we need to heal around each other..." Just from past traumas that get past down from slavery and Jim Crow and everything that's happening now. We never really got a time to heal in between that and I think we need our own space to do that."

When asked what has surprised her most about PWI's:

"I feel like they think they're so progressive but it's really not. I feel like it's just a show. They'll parade that they're for all people, but actions are louder than words. And a lot of students feel that way, from my experience. But that's the image the school wants to portray.

When asked if her views of the school changed, and if she still felt "validated," as she stated before:

"No. I think my views changed cause I'm wishing I did go to some HBCU, even though that one didn't work out, maybe another one. And I don't seek validation anymore from them. Cause I know I'm smart and just cause a PWI accepts you, some people may think that's worth more than if an HBCU accepted you. But I'd be way more proud now if I went to an HBCU or if they accepted me. I'd feel way more happy."

General outcomes of the discussion with Johnson specified that she had negative experiences at a predominantly white university and it formed her new perspective, which is that there needs to be a change in which Black individuals look at the education system and mental health counseling. Johnson beliefs were in the lane of a Pan-Africanist train of thought.

Malcolm Jackson

Malcolm Jackson (alias) was the second student interviewed. Jackson is 23 years old, male, identifies as Black or African, and is a senior, majoring in History and Sociology. Jackson grew up in Harlem, NY. He participates in a student activity on campus: Alpha Kappa Delta, the Sociology Honors Society. A common theme among his interview was a discontent with the college, but also there being a severe disconnect with his relation to other Black students on campus. Similar to Johnson, Jackson showed some sentiments of exclusivity of Black people from the education system and mental health system, but his issues were multifaceted.

When asked what led him to his decision to attend a PWI:

“I had just finished community college and didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life. I did some non-profit work and felt that if I wanted to further my education, then I needed to go back to school. SUNY New Paltz was close and cheaper but I wanted to go to either Howard, Clark-Atlanta, or St. John’s”

When asked why those colleges specifically:

“I felt that if I were to go to an HBCU then I would have a better experience because I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and was tired of all the micro-aggressions and white liberals who act like they care about Black people, but really don’t.”

When asked how he would describe his experiences at a PWI?

“My experience has been decent. I had some good professors and really developed into a good student but it’s the same old same old.”

When asked to expound:

“Just white people who act nice and stuff but then say racist things in class not knowing how racist it is, and I have to keep my mouth shut, or I become that Black person who’s always complaining about racism.”

When asked about a positive experience that he had on campus:

“A positive experience would be Black Solidarity Day and Pre-BSD. It was positive because I was surrounded by my people and felt the Black love [chuckles].”

When asked about a negative experience:

“Well, for Pre-BSD, when we were marching there were several white students (as we were peacefully “assembling”), who told us to “shut the fuck up” or played rap music as we were speaking. It was annoying but I wasn’t too shocked.”

When asked how did he cope with that negative experience?

“I didn’t really cope with it, it was just something that as Black people we just experience, and then move on with our life. I talk to another Black person about it but that was it.”

When asked about the reaction of the other Black students:

“They felt the same. We kinda just endure it then move on. We don’t really have time to cope for all the racism we face because then we’d never have time to finish school.”

When asked if he visited the Mental Health Services Center:

“No because I didn’t know we had one.”

When asked if he had an experience dealing with sexism, racism, et cetera, outside of college:

“Well, when I was younger I’d always get followed in stores and one time when I picked up something that I was gonna buy this Asian lady who worked this snatch it away from me and gave me a nasty look. Another time when I played on a sports team, a white player of mine called me a nigger.”

When asked how that made him feel?

“I was younger so it made me sad but now racist stuff doesn’t really affect me all too much. I’m kind of numb to it. Though, I still get anxious whenever a cop gets behind me when I’m driving or if I see one.”

Continued:

“I get flashes of all the Black people who lost their lives at the hands of them like Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, and so on”

When asked if he had an experience dealing with discrimination on campus:

“Honestly, I became so numb to it that I wouldn’t even notice all too much. I mean we did have white supremacist on campus, people with MAGA hats, and people who write racist stuff in bathrooms but that’s typical. I know New Paltz is supposed to be progressive and all but, I don’t know, having an ideology that I agree with doesn’t really excuse someone from racism.”

When asked what he finds most challenging about being a Black student at a PWI:

“This may be a bit controversial, but though the white people here are typical white people typical people who are privileged and feel entitled, I find most challenging some of the Black students.”

Continued:

“Because I feel like there’s so much stuff going against us, going against Black people and, I don’t know, when I see the BSU (Black Student Union), I don’t really feel like they’re representing me. I see the e-bored and see people who aren’t Black, I see light skinned people and even an Asian. I get maybe he is “embracing” his African roots, but to the common eye he’s Asian, well Chinese cause he said that, but imagine how a continental African feels about that knowing the colonization taking place in Africa right now, or the racism Black people face in China. Try and tell them that he’s African. And maybe, I don’t know, I’m being exclusive but I feel like they’re more concerned with pleasing every other group of people and not really supporting Black people on campus... And when I went to some of the stuff and programs they put together I didn’t necessarily feel wanted, and a lot of the political stuff they were saying I didn’t agree but I could feel that if I spoke up then I’d get pounced on. I don’t know, I feel like maybe if I went to an HBCU then I’d have a better experience because there’s no racist white people, and the Black people there are more diverse, rather than...rather than the ones here who talk a lot about diversity but basically say the same things.”

When asked how that affects them:

“I don’t know. I feel that it affects my well-being cause I already have to deal with so much racism on and off campus, and I think that I thought I could have a safe space here but that isn’t the case. I feel alien to both white and Black students on campus.”

When asked what he would tell a Black person who is thinking of attending a PWI:

“I would say if you want to keep your sanity than don’t do it, but all Black people think different so maybe he or she would love the school. I guess it depends on the student and what they want to pursue.”

When asked what has surprised him most about PWI’s:

“Honestly, white people don’t really surprise me but the Black people here do. I don’t want to lump them all in one group cause that’s wrong and I’m friends with a few people but... I don’t wanna say all of them cause I’m just referring as to my experience with the BSU, but a lot of them say basically the same things white students say.”

Continued:

“Because a lot of them are just apologist for white people, believe in allies and stuff and I just want us to do stuff for ourselves for just once but we always have to include other people, and if we don’t then we’re the racist. Other cultures preach loyalty among their people but Black people are held to a different standard and I feel they buy into that. And honestly, it just gets me so down sometimes cause I love my people but then I contemplate why do I even care to uplift my community if they care about white people more. Like in one class I’m in they talk so mean about the Black professor in the group chat and even wanted to get her in trouble with the college and I was just thinking to myself, they would never do this to a white professor. I feel like at HBCU’s stuff like that doesn’t happen.”

Results from the interview with Jackson revealed that Jackson has had a unique experience at a PWI. In regards to that unique experience, Jackson has had negative experiences with discrimination on campus, but he has also had a tainted experience with his fellow Black students.

Jackson seems to face a multitude of challenges and it is affecting his overall experience in college. Jackson was definitely the “loneliest” of the four students interviewed, perhaps ideologically as well, yet he argues that PWI’s divide Black students, as well as cause harm to them through racism on campus.

Sojourner X

Sojourner X (alias), is 27 years old, female, identifies as Black, and is a senior. Her major is Public Relations and her minor is Black Studies. She grew up in Brooklyn, NY and participates in two student activities on campus: Toastmasters (Speaking Club) and American Marketing Club. A common theme among her interview was her feeling that Black students face different pressures to perform well or they are labeled as unworthy. In addition, if a Black student does perform well there is a shock on how such a thing could happen. Altogether, X combined that with her experiences with racism on campus to show that there is a dissimilar experience when being a Black student, compared to that of white students. X’s feelings provide a background to why there is a discomfort within Black students, whom attend predominantly white institutions.

When asked what led to her decision to attend a PWI:

“First it was funding. New Paltz was one of the main schools that offered me money to come here, offered me money for my tuition to come here. So first it was money. And when I went to look at the HBCUs they were overly expensive, and then when I did go on some tours with some HBCUs, I just didn’t get a good vibe from the campus. I’m not saying the campus was bad, but I just didn’t get that brotherly sisterly love kinda vibe, besides Howard. But everywhere else I went, it just felt like a regular school to me.”

When asked about someone who has influenced her decision to attend college:

“I would say I had three main people. One was a teacher. Her name was Miss Ali. I had her in high school and she was the first person I had come into contact with that was Muslim and kept their religion and she was pro Black... and she would do college tours and her class was built around teaching us about Black people. She had went to an HBCU so she always bragged about that and bragged about her being in a sorority, so that was my first. And then my older cousin went to school and she was the success of the family you know. And I liked how everybody treated her and addressed her. And then it was my sister. My sister was like listen, you're going to be something, you're not gonna be runnin these streets...”

When asked how she would describe her experiences at a PWI:

“I would say anytime there's Black and white people together there's always gonna be tension. And on this campus, you know, you do get some students and class that's like, if you see them in the streets you wouldn't be surprised if they had the confederate flag on their car flyin high. For the most part I did have some run ins with a couple of professors that I felt like might have been a little racist or couldn't really understand where I was coming from. But for the most part, I feel like white people are more scared of us then we are of them. They try to avoid us more than anything. I had not had anything really personal hiccups with anybody.”

When asked about a positive experience she had on campus:

“I'm part of the communications department and they always bring in certain speakers. So, they brought in Ann Simmons and she was a journalist who did cross country journalism and her warm welcome and her embrace, she gave me her email and said, listen

after you graduate I'll help you get a job if that's what you're looking for in this field, so I feel like that was positive, that was solid... It felt like sisterhood, sisterhood of the traveling yaya pants, like we're in this together, like yes, a Black woman who's winning and she's helping other Black women. That was awesome.”

When asked about a negative experience on campus:

“I would say my first semester. My first semester, I took an English class. And the professor was giving me bad grades on my writing. I'm not saying my writing is the best but I'm positive, confident in my writing, and she was giving me bad grades. It don't matter what I'd do, she would give me bad grades. So, I told a student that I would write their paper and see what she'd say, and I wrote the paper and she gave the paper an A. She loved the paper to the point she stood in class and was reading sections of it and I'm like, this motherfucker, like this motherfucker, she never knew I wrote the paper but it was just like I see what this is. I don't care, at that point it was an awakening to me, she's just biased about everything, it don't matter. I didn't get a bad grade, I got like a B-, but I should have gotten an A from the way that she praised that paper...It kinds shook my confidence a little in the beginning, before I wrote the paper. I had to go bad to my old school and ask teachers, were you passing me along or did you really see something in my writing. And I had to have people continuously reiterate to me like nah, your writing is dope. But it just kinda made me keep an eye open for the rest of the professors that I took throughout my college career, like, maybe they racist too.”

When asked how she coped with that negative experience:

“I just learned heavy on my support system, on people that I had went to school with previously, old professors, I just had everybody just keep telling me that your gonna do good, your writing is good, you’ll be okay.”

When asked if she has ever visited the Mental Health Services Center:

“No. I don’t even know where that place is at. From what I heard, I heard about it in my first semester, and the girl who was telling me about it, she had some really intense mental issues, not issues, but things she was going through in life that she needed them to help her through. Their response to her was like, we’re pretty much just school problems, you should go see a professional outside of the university and I just never heard about it ever again.”

When asked what she finds most challenging about being a Black student at a PWI:

“Being a Black student on campus, the most challenging thing I feel like, is when I do go to these classes I feel like I’m under pressure to perform. Like, I feel like everybody around me is looking for me to fail or to not be...they don’t expect much from me, I can see it even when we get papers back or exams back and they look over like, “you got this,” what the hell do you mean? Yeah I got this, this is not even a high grade. I feel like I have to over perform.”

When asked what would she tell a Black person who is thinking of attending a PWI:

“I feel like college teaches people about themselves. I feel like it all really depends on your upbringing like if you’re gonna go, if you’re gonna be Black and go to an all predominantly white school, if that’s the upbringing you’ve had before then that’ll be okay, but if it’s not then it’s definitely an eye opener. I came from an all-Black high school; we didn’t even have white kids. When I got to a PWI I was like, “these white people weird.” I

was like oh my god, they doin this, they sitting on the ground, they eating food with their dogs, and you like uh that's weird. It's definitely an eye opener. I would say you should be able to try, you never know what you liked until you tried it. If they can afford an HBCU, I say do it because those schools need us as much as we need them, but I do believe wholeheartedly that all skin folk are not kinfolk. You can be around your people but if all of them have Negropean mindsets so you just as much in the PWI just with Black people then you are, around white people. I believe that, I will always tell them to go Black first, and then venture out."

When asked what has surprised her most about PWI's:

"The amount of resources. Coming from a Black high school and going to a PWI you're going to see the differences in resources, in programs that they have available, funding that you can get. It's still a huge disproportion between the Black clubs and the white clubs, but there's some funding. That was a huge eye opener."

When asked what she wishes other people knew about PWI's:

"I wish people understood that predominantly white colleges don't automatically mean that these students are smarter than any other student that's in class. We get this idea that white is right and that these students are doing their thing, and these students are just as dumb as anybody else. They do their dirt here just as much as any other Black school. We've been programmed to believe that...Just as many white students selling weed on campus as Black students on campus, or getting drunk, getting high, it's the same thing. So don't put more importance on one and not on the other."

General results from X's interview indicates that Black students face different pressures to perform well, absent of discrimination. However, when discrimination is added to the equation, there is sentiment of unworthiness, such as the mental manipulation of a professor of hers, in regards to grading. Furthermore, the discussion examines how her experiences with racism on campus show the contradictory experience of being a Black student, compared to being a white student. The outcomes of the interview illustrate why there is a discomfort within the community of Black students, whom attend PWI's.

Brandon Anderson

Brandon Anderson (alias) is 20 years old, male, identifies as Black, and is a sophomore. Anderson is majoring in Philosophy. He grew up in Kingston, NY, and does not participate in any student activities on campus. Throughout Anderson's interview, a common theme was the absence of healing time for Black people due to the constant activism and social awareness Black people need to have, especially Black students. Anderson's interview was the most relaxed out of the four, but had similar grievances to each student that was interviewed, such as racist faculty and students, and essentially feeling like a guest at PWIs.

When asked what led him to his decision to attend a PWI:

“I always knew I wanted to go to college because I want to be an educator. So, it was always in my plans. To be a professor requires so much work, school, and I've planned it out. I want to take the knowledge I learn, and use it to help my people, teach them, and contribute to my community.”

When asked about someone who has influenced his decision attend college:

“Probably my parents. They have always wanted me to get an education, so that always stayed with me.”

When asked how he would describe his experiences at a PWI:

“The experience is what you make of it I guess. I mean the food here is nasty, there’s not much to do, and I don’t really hang out with a lot of students here. My head is kind of buried in books and watching YouTube videos.”

When asked about a positive experience that he had on campus:

“A positive experience I had would be being a part of the group of students who...influenced change and got the slave master names removed from the buildings.”

When asked about a negative experience he had on campus:

“How difficult it was to get that done. There was a lot of pushback and delaying, and I remember one of the board people, the board members who would decide, he defended them. He defended the slave owners and I was like, really? This guy is on a SUNY New Paltz campus doing this. It was annoying and gave me headaches cause, I know this may just seem like history to them, but to me, to us, its spitting in our faces, basically. They say we’re too sensitive and trying to “change” history, but it's funny how the ones being triggered are them. I bet most people supported the name charge and that says a lot and it has calmed my mind a bit.”

When asked how he coped with that negative experience:

“I didn’t cope with it, I pushed forward cause that's what we as Black people have to constantly do. We don’t have to luxury of taking time to cope cause there's so much going against us. I don’t know, white people don’t really have to deal with this stuff. They

can take time to talk about their feeling, but Black people can't. And even the few that do, they get stigmatized by our own community. It's a lot to this."

When asked if he visited the Mental Health Services Center:

"No. I don't know. It's just weird. I feel, if I would talk to them. Cause I think they aren't really tailored to me...like they deal with students who are probably stressed and anxious over school work, but that's not all I have on my plate. Maybe they work better with lesser issues."

When asked if he had an experience dealing discrimination at a PWI:

"Yeah, I've been stopped by campus police a couple of times, not doing anything wrong, but it really got to me. The first time I was just walking to class... well on my way to class. The second time I was leaving class, walking to town and they stopped me. They went through the usual, asked for my ID and didn't tell me why they stopped me. I didn't ask though, I didn't want to escalate or make the situation even worse."

When asked what he finds most challenging about being a Black student at a PWI:

"What I find most challenging is living up to the high standards. Like, I can't be an average student or struggle cause if I do then I feel like people look at me and question how I got here, like is he an affirmative action student or something. I'm scared of just not being good at a subject cause of that."

When asked what would he tell a Black person who is thinking of attending a PWI:

"That's a good question. I guess I would ask them if they like experiencing racism. Cause they're going to be a lot more of that at PWI's. Try to go to a school that has a good Black student population or an HBCU. I used to want to go to an Ivy league school but I

feel like it would probably be worse there cause the students are probably ten times smarter than the ones here, so I'd be getting even more looks."

When asked what has surprised him most about PWI's:

"I don't know. Nothing I guess. Actually, probably how much everything cost. I mean, the food is expensive, the drinks, tuition, and everything cost money. To print stuff cost money. To breathe cost money. It's mad annoying. It's supposed to be an institution of learning but they suck what little money we have right out of us. And then I get stressed out cause I have no money for food, go to class hungry and can't think straight."

Overall results from Anderson's interview indicate that a faction of Black students believe that healing is essential and that ample time for it was not given. In addition, the multitude of social injustices on campus and in society prevent Black students from being able to shift attention to maintaining a healthy well-being.

Discussion

The motive behind this study was to survey Black students on their experiences at PWI's and gather more information from personal accounts, rather than statistical data. The research showed that the issue is multi-layered and has many intrinsic truths to the matter. The study revealed that there are three key findings. First, though they experience discrimination, they all deal with it in their own way, and interpret it different. Second, the student had not taken the time to think about how discrimination on campus affected their well-being until they were asked. Lastly, they all felt that their college experience would have been better if they attended an HBCU, rather than a PWI. Although the results were significant, more studies need to be conducted, due

to the fact that minimal research has been conducted, specifically, to the experience of Black students at PWI's and its effects on their mental well-being.

Analysis

In analyzing both quantitative and qualitative studies, it has been determined that there is a major problem of discrimination against Black students, however, that is not the only problem. The second factor is that it affects their mental well-being. The studies clearly show that, and the results overwhelmingly show that there is a disproportionality. The facts are as follows: Black students encounter more discrimination than any other group on campus; Black students feel that those experiences of being discriminated against negatively affected their mental well-being; Black students do not feel safe from police brutality or discrimination in the town the college campus is located in, nor on the college; Black students overwhelmingly have come across Eurocentric material in class; And Black students do not feel the campus holds faculty accountable for acts of discrimination, nor provide adequate mental health services. The results are undeniable. This is an issue.

In addition, much of the results of the quantitative study were exclaimed in the qualitative study by the Black students who were interviewed. Each student interviewed had experienced discrimination on campus, and had multiple stories (too many to document). The research question heading into this study was, "does racism and discrimination on campus at predominantly white universities socially and psychologically affect the mental well-being of Black students?" The studies showed that discrimination does affect the mental well-being of Black students. However, to which extent discrimination has affected their mental health has not been determined, nor was it the primary objective of the study. The subject is complex and due to its importance, needs more

research. These studies identify the problem, to which a solution was provided for. But, how big the problem is can only be researched more, and would prove to be beneficial to the mental well-being of Black college students.

Conclusion

The stories of Jazzy Rowe, Jordan Edwards, Jabari Talbot, may seem like isolated incidents, but they show the implications of discrimination in an educational system, to the point in which it affects the mental health and social well-being of Black students throughout its spectrum. The study was targeted to Black students in college, yet it can expose the totality of the issue. The primary goal of this study was to determine a multitude of facts. One, if Black students experienced discrimination on campus and to what extent. Two, does it affect their mental well-being. And three, in doing so, what measure should be taken if the study shows it to be true. In order to examine these questions both quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted and determined that Black students do face discrimination on campus at disproportionate rates; it does affect their mental well-being.

With the establishment of the problem comes the solution. As stated before, academics such as William B. Harvey suggest more inclusion and diversity as the key. Someone such as Claude Anderson suggest a more Black oriented, isolationist solution. However, Harvey's solution is more geared towards the mental health aspect, while Anderson's is geared towards the educating aspect. Regardless, in respects to the mental health of Black students, Afrocentric Black Clinical Mental Health Counselors are necessary and essential to the healing of the mental health challenges of Black students because Black students need to seek proper help from Mental Health Counselors who understand and have lived the Black college experience.

Future studies in this area should focus on the depth of the affects discrimination of Black students at PWI has on their mental health. That analysis might be a gateway into looking at the issue from the standpoint of actual psychological diagnosis, which may prove beneficial to Black students.

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