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White, Male, and “Minority”: Racial Consciousness Among White Male Undergraduates Attending a Historically Black University

Enrollments of non-Black students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have recently increased (Drummond, 2000; T. Scott, 2004) to the point that 11% of all undergraduate students enrolled in HBCUs in 2001 were White (U. S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004). HBCUs with the highest White enrollments tend to be public institutions (Brown, 2002), and court cases such as *Adams v. Richardson* (1972) and *United States v. Fordice* (1992) have compelled affected HBCUs to diversify their student bodies. Accelerated transdemographic enrollment patterns (Brown) at a number of public HBCUs have resulted as HBCUs grapple with simultaneous pressures to increase student enrollments (including enrollments of non-Black students), strengthen or maintain institutional quality, and clarify the contemporary functions of the HBCU (Hall & Clossen, 2005).

At the same time, White males in the U.S. represent the race and gender group that is most privileged economically and socially; yet White males are arguably more disadvantaged with respect to developing as racial and gendered beings due to the socialization, entitlement, and privilege bestowed upon them within society (D. A. Scott & Robinson, 2001). Very little research examines the racial consciousness aspects of identity development of White students attending HBCUs where issues of race, gender, privilege, and power can intersect for students in ways that have not been systematically explored.

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The purpose of this study was to explore the White racial consciousness (WRC) among full-time, White male undergraduates attending a public, predominantly Black HBCU. Specifically, this study sought to understand how these students, as "temporary minority" students (Hall & Clossen, 2005), made meaning of their collegiate experiences in terms of WRC.

Related Literature

HBCUs were established to provide education for Black students at a time when segregation prevented their enrollment at many colleges and universities (Sissoko & Shiau, 2005). Although the 105 diverse public and private HBCUs enroll 2% of all college and university students in the U.S., they account for 13% of Black postsecondary enrollment (U. S. Department of Education NCES, 2004). In 2000–01, HBCUs conferred 22% of the baccalaureate degrees, 17% of first professional degrees, 11% of master's degrees, and 10% of doctoral degrees earned by Black individuals (National Center for Education Statistics). Allen (as cited in Brown & Davis, 2001) noted common mission-related characteristics of HBCUs including: provision of social, economic, and leadership opportunities for Blacks and the Black community; maintenance of Black historical and cultural traditions; and education of graduates who are uniquely qualified to articulate and interpret issues between minority and majority population groups (Brown & Davis).

In recent years, court rulings (including *Adams v. Richardson*, 1973 and *United States v. Fordice*, 1992) that have impacted state systems of higher education focused on remedying lingering racial discrimination and oppression in the forms of segregated enrollments and disparate institutional funding patterns. *Adams v. Richardson* exempted public HBCUs from Title VI enforcement of racial desegregation because HBCUs were deemed to play a unique and important role in the education of African Americans (Hobson's College View, n.d.), but the more recent *United States v. Fordice* did not similarly exempt these institutions. As a result, public universities including HBCUs have subsequently undertaken desegregation initiatives aimed at achieving transdemographic goals, or shifts in the racial composition of enrolled students that mark an institution as desegregated (Brown, 2002). Brown discussed relevant implications for HBCUs, noting that transdemography "offers HBCUs the opportunity to both enrich the student campus context and encourage intercultural communication within the academic environment. However, transdemography simultaneously has the capability of eradicating the rich campus culture for which HBCUs have been lauded" (p. 264).

Even though most HBCUs throughout their histories have incorporated levels of White participation, particularly but not only in the form of White faculty and staff members (Foster, Guydon, & Miller, as cited in Brown, 2002), supporters of HBCUs question how the current set of desegregation policies may impact the unique historical and cultural traditions of HBCUs that count among their strengths as distinctive institutions. The primary aim of current desegregation initiatives is attracting White students to HBCUs. The growing presence of non-Black students on HBCU campuses raises subsequent questions about the ways White students experience these environments and how their experiences influence types of growth associated largely, but not exclusively, with college, such as the development of WRC (Brown).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Two principal models informed the design of this study: White racial consciousness (WRC; Rowe, Behrens & Leach, 1995) and White male privilege as described in the Key model (D. A. Scott & Robinson, 2001).

The WRC model (Rowe et al., 1995), based on “characteristic attitudes held by a person regarding the significance of being White, particularly in terms of what that implies in relation to those who do not share White group membership” (p. 225), helped frame this study. Seven clusters or types of WRC are fostered by exploration and commitment processes based on Phinney’s (1990) work. Three “unachieved” statuses—Avoidant, Dependent, and Dissonant—are characterized by the absence of either exploration or commitment. Avoidant status is marked by ignoring, minimizing, or denying consideration of racial/ethnic issues including one’s own race or ethnicity. Dependent individuals tend to hold superficial racial attitudes or adopt the opinions of significant others. Dissonance is characterized by persistent uncertainties due to unresolved discrepancies between beliefs and recent experiences; dissonance can also mark transitions between sets of racial attitudes.

Four “achieved” statuses—in which both exploration and commitment have been accomplished—are Conflictive, Dominative, Integrative, and Reactive. The Conflictive status mirrors the tensions between values of equality and individualism as obvious racial/ethnic discrimination is opposed while programs or policies to reduce the effects of discrimination are also opposed. Dominative attitudes are based in beliefs of an inherent superiority and correctness of members of the majority; non-majority members are evaluated on the degree to which they approach that standard. Integrative attitudes reflect pragmatic acceptance of one’s White heritage along with regard for issues faced by racial/ethnic

minority group members, preferring goodwill, rational thought, and democratic processes as strategies to combat racism. Reactive attitudes include identifying with minority group members, but may also be characterized by White guilt, romanticizing the plight of minorities, or paternalistic behaviors.

The Key model addresses the convergence of race and gender beliefs that White men may exhibit as a result of attitudes regarding appropriate displays of manhood (D. A. Scott & Robinson, 2001). Although the model is circular in design with five types or phases, its "lower" phases involve minimal self-interrogation while the "higher" phases are characterized by greater self-knowledge regarding, among other things, prior assumptions of superiority or privilege. The Noncontact type is characterized by low awareness of race or discrimination, endorsement of traditional gender roles, and an ethnocentric belief in the superiority of White males to women and people of color. The Claustrophobic type identifies women and people of color, who have received unmerited advantages at his expense, as the reasons for his failure to fully achieve his goals. The Conscious Identity type has similar dissonance between beliefs and experiences that leads to re-evaluation of his cultural beliefs, and this process can lead to movement towards either the Claustrophobic or Empirical type. The Empirical type is fully cognizant of racism and sexism as well as his own unearned privilege that has more easily allowed him to negotiate life. The Optimal type possesses a holistic understanding of the struggles of all people, and his increased knowledge of oppression underpins efforts to promote equity and equality.

In addition to the above frameworks focusing on racial beliefs and attitudes, recent sociological studies of Whiteness (Hartigan, 1999; Lewis, 2003, 2004) and social constructions of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Hartigan; Lewis, 2004) were useful interpretive frameworks. These works emphasize the racialized nature of Whiteness (Lewis, 2004) as well as the fluidity of race and the social structures through which race and racism operate (Hartigan; Lewis, 2004). These studies reject essentialized racial categories and the notion of essentialized experiences of race for all members of a group. These studies also stress the importance of local surroundings and the intersections of other factors—particularly social class—in constructions and expressions of racial beliefs. For example, Hartigan described Whites as "local" minorities in terms of their demographic representation in some particularly blighted neighborhoods in Detroit, and also described multiple sets of racial beliefs among White respondents that were informed by social status or wealth. The current study focused on identifying and analyzing ranges of collegiate experiences that informed beliefs and

racial consciousness among a group of White men who were “temporary” minorities by virtue of their status as full-time undergraduate students at an HBCU.

In terms of research framework, phenomenology was the primary theoretical perspective that guided this qualitative, interpretive study focusing on human development, racial consciousness, and educational environments. With respect to phenomenology, Crotty (1998) noted, “The *mélange* of cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provides us with meanings” (p. 79) and “the particular set of meanings [a culture] imposes has come into being to serve particular interests and will harbor its own forms of oppression, manipulation and other forms of injustice” (p. 81). In many ways, heightened WRC includes the capacities and will to reflect upon one’s cultural inheritances and reassess beliefs and attitudes, one of which could be White male privilege as outlined in the Key model (D. A. Scott & Robinson, 2001). Additionally, HBCUs are potentially powerful environments in which White male students can explore their own beliefs and attitudes regarding race, racism, and society.

Site, Design, Methods, and Data Analyses

East Coast University (ECU, a pseudonym), a public, land grant HBCU in the Southeastern U.S. with an enrollment of 3,300 students served as the site for this study. White students constituted 9% (4% males, 5% females) of the student body. ECU is located in a small college town approximately 15 miles from predominantly White Bayside University (BU, also a pseudonym), located in the city of Bayside. An ECU campus contact person provided initial referrals to potential respondents, and through subsequent referrals and contacts, seven respondents agreed to participate in the study.

Interviewing served as the principal data collection method in this study. A semi-structured interview series following Seidman’s (2006) in-depth interview approach was created and piloted with two White male undergraduates who were enrolled at a different HBCU. Six of seven respondents in the study were interviewed three times; the third interview was conducted via phone with one respondent. The seventh respondent was available for only two interviews despite repeated attempts to schedule a third interview. Two campus visits totaling three weeks on-site provided the primary interview occasions. In addition, supplemental data were gathered on the general campus environment through observations conducted in the campus union, dining hall, academic buildings, and the main parts of campus.

All interview tapes and field notes were fully transcribed. Following Creswell's (2003) recommendations, data were organized, coded, and grouped into initial descriptions or categories before the final thematic findings were selected and further developed. To maximize the quality and trustworthiness of the findings, member checks, peer debriefing, data triangulation, rich description, and the development of an audit trail were employed to strengthen credibility, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of rich description additionally allows for transferability judgments to be made regarding the findings.

Respondents

The seven respondents—two sophomores (David, Walter), one junior (Patrick), and four seniors (Cal, John, Matt, Ty) ranging in age from 19–23 years old—were each full-time undergraduate students at ECU. John, Ty, and Walter majored in Arts and Professions areas¹; David and Matt, Health Professions; Cal, Agricultural and Natural Sciences; and Patrick, Human Ecology. Ty was married, and Walter self-identified as gay. David lived on campus and Cal, Ty, and Walter lived with family members and commuted to campus. John, Matt, and Patrick lived in off-campus housing either by themselves or with roommates. Cal, Ty, and Walter worked off-campus in part-time jobs. David, Matt, and Ty were scholarship student athletes on ECU's baseball team, and Cal was a club sport athlete. Cal and Patrick participated in undergraduate research programs related to their majors, and Cal was also a volunteer firefighter in the community. Ty volunteered locally as a youth athletics coach, John worked with two community radio stations, and Walter was involved in drama, debate, and band at ECU and was part of the community theater as well. Table 1 summarizes characteristics of each respondent.

All seven respondents grew up in locations within two hours of ECU's campus, some in very racially and culturally diverse or majority Black neighborhoods (David, Patrick, and John), and others in more majority White (Matt and Walter) and/or rural areas (Cal and Ty). John, Matt, Ty, and Walter cited principally financial reasons for attending ECU (e.g., availability of athletic scholarships, lower tuition and/or living expenses), and David and Cal indicated that they were first-generation college students. David and John (called “Italian John” by some ECU students) were of Italian heritage, and Cal described his heritage as Irish and German. Matt's background included Mexican and French ancestry, Patrick discussed the Portuguese and Irish sides of his family, Walter's

TABLE 1 Respondents							
Pseudonym	Age	Cultural Background	Class Standing	College	Campus Activities	Community Activities	Employment
Cal	21	Irish/German	Senior	Agricultural & Natural Sciences	Club athletics, Research	Volunteer firefighter	Yes (part-time)
David	20	Italian	Sophomore	Health Professions	Baseball team	N/A	No
John	22	Italian	Senior	Arts & Professions	Athletics, Radio	N/A	No
Matt	a	Mexican/French	Senior	Health Professions	Baseball team, Internship	N/A	No
Patrick	21	Portuguese/Irish	Junior	Human Ecology	Undergrad research program	N/A	No
Ty	23	a	Senior	Arts & Professions	Baseball team	Coaching	Yes (part-time)
Walter	19	Romanian/German	Sophomore	Arts & Professions	Drama, Debate, Band	Community theater, Service	Yes (part-time)

^adata not provided.

background was Romanian and German, and Ty did not provide information on his cultural or ethnic background. However, all seven respondents self-identified as White.

John and Patrick in particular were raised to have great pride in their cultural and ethnic heritages and grew up in more diverse neighborhoods than did the other respondents. Many participants discussed the clear messages about race they received from parents, particularly in the realm of intimate relationships. For example, David’s father cautioned him against becoming involved romantically with young Black women in their neighborhood, and Cal discussed his parents’ belief that Blacks and Whites should not intermarry.

Findings

Respondents discussed relative influences of family and home neighborhoods on their racial awareness and beliefs, and this information is incorporated within the thematic findings below where applicable. The findings more central to this paper are respondents’ collegiate experiences and the types of WRC illustrated by respondents’ meaning-making of those experiences. Consequently, the three primary groups of findings discussed below are classroom environments, social environments, and greater awareness of race and privilege. The final theme (greater awareness of race and privilege) is further disaggregated into three subthemes: experiences with discrimination and bias, perceptions of racial privilege, and personal growth.

Classroom Environments

College students are expected or required to attend class meetings, although levels of active participation in classes may vary. The classroom environment required each respondent to be present at a specific location for a specific amount of time in a setting where he might be the only White student or one of a few in the classroom. Despite this experience, respondents agreed that their ECU classes were generally comfortable environments. According to Walter:

I’d say as far as, you know, sitting in the classroom and you just feel like an average student. I guess I’d say, you know, you look different but that’s about it . . . working in groups, um no problem. I can’t say it’s any different than when I went to high school and it was predominantly White.

However, participants also acknowledged that some classroom experiences had been challenging and uncomfortable, and that their discomfort had generally been associated with more controversial subject mat-

ter and fewer numbers of White students in the class. Participants characterized their discomfort in terms of hypervisibility and/or White spokespersonship.

Several participants, including Walter, discussed their hypervisibility as White students: "In the classroom the funniest thing is you're always the student that the professor knows their name of first because you're the one that sticks out so they always remember, 'That's Walter,' you know, got that name down." John described an experience of hypervisibility in which, paradoxically, other students were pointedly looking away from him, leading to John ascribing feelings of concern and discomfort to his classmates as a way to make sense of their behaviors:

It's a little weird sometimes when maybe you're in history class and you're talking about slavery and you're the only White kid in the class. You know people are kind of like trying not to look at you but they're probably like, "Damn what's going on in his mind, like is he nervous or anything?" I mean I'll just sit there and answer questions. It doesn't really bother me but you still know in the back of your mind people are probably like, "Damn I know he's blown [speechless or shocked] just sitting there looking like he's the only White kid and they know everyone is probably looking at him." . . . Not being mean but just like, "God, I know he's singled out right now."

John went on to explain the pros and cons, in his estimation, to classroom hypervisibility:

Since I'm usually the only White male, every teacher I've ever had has always remembered my name. So it's good because they develop a more better [sic] relationship with you because they remember your name. I've had plenty of teachers who can't remember anybody's name, but they always remember me, so I can understand why. But then on the other hand it's bad because if you don't come to class they know that you weren't there. But they'll be like, "Well so-and-so wasn't here—I can't remember his name though," so they get away with it. But me, it's like—"Oh, John's not here" . . . it's quick . . . so it does screw me sometimes being the only White male in the class, but I like standing out, so that's good.

John described often his enjoyment at being well known and popular on campus in part because he is White and different, so for John the hypervisibility was decidedly positive. The minority White ECU environment also complemented John's extroverted, sociable personality because he could be readily noticed with little effort on his part.

As they discussed their classroom experiences, several participants reported feeling that they were regarded as the local representative of the White or majority point of view. Walter described this experience and the accompanying discomfort:

Lots of times they [people in class] usually look to the White students first to talk about discrimination because we’re typically the ones that they think don’t think it exists anymore, so they usually look to us first and ask our opinions first, which feels a little awkward at times.

Ty related that he felt compelled to provide his opinion or perspective when called on, but added that it is critical for him to be not only honest, but firm:

As long as you’re the type of person where, you know, you’re straightforward and you let everybody know this is how I feel about it but at the same time you have nothing to hide anyway. . . . It’s not very hard for me because I’m the type of person where I’ve never had any problems talking my way out of things and you know just being able to discuss things or win discussions, you know, so it doesn’t bother me at all.

Although some participants described reaching levels of comfort within classroom settings and actively participating in challenging topical discussions, several participants self-censored during class discussions in situations if they felt their opinions might be unpopular or not well received. For example, David observed:

They [professors and classmates] actually bring up a lot of race issues, so basically I just kind of stayed out of the conversation. I don’t want to say nothing that would offend anybody because it feels like if I say something everybody’s going to be on my back. . . . It’s not really that they bring up a lot of race issues, it’s just issues that I feel I can’t speak upon because I’m White. . . . After one of the issues, we [David and another White classmate] talked about it, [and] he’s like, “I wanted to say something but I was afraid I was going to get beat up.” So, stuff like that . . . so he’s on the same page as me. I’m not afraid of getting beat up, it’s just I don’t want to go through conflict.

Students of color have reported similar experiences with being called on in class to articulate the minority viewpoint (Davis et al., 2004), although White students, and particularly White male students, are often regarded as more intelligent or authoritative sources (Rowe et al., 1995). However, authority can be undermined when White students’ opinions are discussed or challenged in classes. As David, for example, tried not to offend, his reticence also appeared to shield him from challenges to his otherwise authoritative position. For Ty, his focus on “win[ning] discussions” may also have minimized opportunities for self-interrogation of his own perspectives and opinions. Overall, although the classroom environment was regarded as a comfortable space for participants, strategies such as self-censorship in the face of hypervisibility and assumptions of White spokespersonship served to foster preservation of privilege and minimize challenges or self-interrogations.

Social Environments

Participants described a variety of complex social environments involving various people and activities. For example, Ty, who at 23 is married and voiced strong religious convictions, did not participate in campus social events or parties; he spent time with his family instead. Ty described the influence of his religious beliefs on his decisions regarding social life:

I mean even my friends here, I don't spend much time with them because like, I don't want to say I'm the only one on the team who's Christian because I don't know that or not but you know uh, I live my life a certain way and . . . a lot of my friends they like to uh, you know they like to do things that they enjoy doing. It just so happens that some of the things that they enjoy doing I don't and you know, and they respect that and I respect and understand what they enjoy as a good time.

Ty mentioned the ECU baseball team as a social environment, as did Matt and David, who are also members and scholarship athletes. All three respondents acknowledged that they would not be at ECU were it not for their scholarships, and Ty transferred from BU to ECU when a scholarship became available. Respondents noted that many White ECU students—themselves included—often socialized at BU and in the city of Bayside because of its bar scene and the presence of more White students. According to Matt:

There really is not a scene set up for ECU. That is why they [White ECU students] go to Bayside [U] to hang out. . . . Two of my best friends go to Bayside, so that is kind of why it is a lot easier for me. But I mean like that's a well-rounded school . . . they actually have football, they've got their athletics, they've got extra-curricular activities, they've got the bar scene, like all the things that the college kids would want to do. You just don't see that here. It's nonexistent compared to Bayside.

Matt continued:

Bayside is an actual legitimate . . . they're a legitimate college. Their kids . . . they come from New Jersey and all over but they want to stay there on weekends, they want to hang out. They've got that scene like—remember I said nobody wants a school here, there's really no scene set up for ECU? It's for Bayside. That's why you go to Bayside because they're hanging out . . . I mean they're partying at that bar or whatever. They [the city of Bayside] want them [BU students] there.

Matt considers a “real” college to be one in a college town that caters at least in part to residential students who participate in campus activities and attend athletic events. His description highlights ECU's deficiencies or “illegitimacy” as a college, thus normalizing and privileging his own

beliefs and judgments (Lewis, 2004). In contrast, John acknowledged the social draw of Bayside when he discussed the challenges of being a White student at ECU, but quickly added:

A lot of people don't take the time on this campus really to get to know you. If you're White on the campus you do kind of get stereotyped, but I mean in a way, a lot of times it's your fault because you don't go out there and try to meet a lot of people. White kids don't usually live on campus. And if they do, they only really hang out with each other. So like, I really don't know a lot of White kids because they don't live on campus, they stray away, and like, go live in Bayside, you know, go to BU to party.

Several participants portrayed ECU as a suitcase college that made little effort to expand or enrich extracurricular offerings, in effect sending ECU students home, or to Bayside, or elsewhere for social or recreational opportunities. John noted that he "asked a lot of other White kids, [and] they're just like, 'I hate this school. . . . It's so boring.'" Matt noted, "Most [ECU students] are from Richardson [pseudonym for a fairly affluent and predominantly Black suburb of a major city], about two hours away. It's not that bad to drive. I'd say 80% of those kids drive home [for the weekends]." For most respondents, the ECU campus and their fellow ECU students were less prominent than Bayside and their home communities with respect to social lives and socializing.

Rather, respondents tended to portray their sets of friendships as compartmentalized and not necessarily centered on ECU. Respondents' circles of friendships included, for example, baseball teammates, friends in their home neighborhoods, friends at Bayside, and ECU friends. Walter provided perhaps the clearest description of this compartmentalization:

The people I hang out with here are not the people I hang out with, let's say, when I'm at home and I'm talking the types of people as far as, you know, the color of their skin. Then I'm here at ECU, you know, I find myself going out with a lot of people who are African American, you know, we do certain things but when I go home and I'm with students that look like me, we do different activities, we do, like um—here it's a lot of on campus . . . in your room, watching TV, just kicking back kind of thing . . . don't really go out much. But when I'm at home we go out to the movies, we go out shopping, we go to the mall and stuff like that so here it's more of a stay in and chill and when I'm back home it's more of a go out and chill kind of thing.

One influential distinction relevant to respondents' social environments was the way respondents described "parties." Walter, who described parties as "getting together at somebody who has an apartment or has a house, you know, loud music, order pizza, . . . late nights," went on to say that although he didn't "fit in in certain social scenes," he felt

comfortable at parties, adding, “last week I was the only White student at a party and I didn’t notice until I left.” In a related set of distinctions, John described striving to combine components of what both White students and Black students would consider a “party.”

All they [Black students] want to do is like, dance . . . they want to have the music playing. I have that, but I bring the kegs, like the common—what you’d call White [parties]. . . . All my friends are Black, but they’re not seeing it as White parties, they’re seeing it as college . . . having fun. And I’ve tried to show people at this school, like, it’s not being White going to parties. This is the real college life. You can bring the reggae music, you can have the people playing beer pong, keg stands, people just wilding out, you know, just wrestling each other, just random, crazy stuff, and I think they really, like, bond, and . . . guys that walk around you think are thugs would be in there playing the games that everyone calls White and they’ll like it.

Although respondents reported complex social lives that included varieties of friends, their descriptions also conveyed rather clear compartmentalizations, with ECU friendships mostly associated with weeknight or private socializing at house parties while other sets of friends figured more prominently in going out to public places for socializing. In terms of parties and socializing at ECU, the few respondents who attended student parties described a comfortable yet different experience. For example, while John (above) intends to share with his friends the kind of socializing that he enjoys and is pleased when they enjoy it as well, his statement also reinforces his notion of “real” college life that he normalizes by White traditions and experiences, similar to Matt’s description above of “legitimate” colleges and college towns.

Greater Awareness of Race and Privilege

Participants described ways in which their perspectives and opinions have changed or been questioned since being in college, and some of the pivotal experiences they related had to do with being a White student at ECU. Several respondents described facing issues and ideas that challenged their longstanding ideas and beliefs, and a variety of outcomes emerged. This thematic finding about awareness is discussed via three subthemes: experiences with discrimination and bias, perceptions of privilege, and personal growth.

Experiences with discrimination and bias. Several participants discussed experiences both on and off campus that made them feel they were being judged because of their color or their ECU affiliation, and often this judgment served a discriminatory purpose. For many respondents, these events allowed them to experience briefly the effects of being in the minority and feeling powerless or stereotyped. For example,

although Matt described Bayside as a comfortable place to visit and hang out, he also noted that ECU students were discriminated against in Bayside. He related:

I've also come to realize that the people in [ECU's] town really don't want [ECU] here, because that explains why there's no bars around here. When you go to Bayside they make ECU [students] pay more [bar cover charges], because they [ECU students] always get into fights, stuff like that.

Matt continued, "One time we went to this [bar] in Bayside . . . it was five bucks to get in for Bayside [students] and, like, \$20 [for] ECU [students]. I was like, 'You're kidding me, right?' That's how they did it one time . . . and I was like, 'You guys [bar owner] know that's illegal. That can't be legal.'" Matt also reported that another popular Bayside bar was expected to follow suit, requiring a higher cover charge of ECU students because of fears regarding safety. While Matt objected to having to pay a higher cover charge, he did not challenge the fundamental assumption that he believed to be at the base of the differential charges—that ECU students, or Black students, "always get into fights, stuff like that." Ty noted that he avoided many social events at ECU because of personal safety concerns, and John expressed his frustrations with ECU students who "act stupid, fight people" at parties. John said that he and his home friends "like to have fun. It's not about fighting all the time. Of course when we get drunk we end up almost having to fight people all the time but we just want to have fun and make our college experience." John makes the distinction that he and his friends will fight if they are provoked, but that in his judgment fighting is a routine or anticipated part of what socializing entails for some ECU students. In many ways, respondents reinforced violent stereotypes of Blacks and some respondents used stereotypes as justifications for extra safety precautions or preemptive, protective measures that included, for example, selectively higher cover charges for the entire group. However, John's sense of identification with these same stereotypes is also high, as he eagerly provided the principal researcher a paper written for an ECU class in which he discussed historical stereotypes shared by Italian Americans and African Americans (e.g., crime, gangsterism).

Participants described instances of stereotyping that they had experienced as well. For example, Patrick told of an incident on campus in which an older Black man asked him in veiled terms about attending an upcoming KKK event, which initially just made Patrick uncomfortable, but later led to feelings of anger and powerlessness. Walter spoke about how prejudices against gays had further limited his campus involvements:

I don't know if you can tell from my mannerisms but I am gay so that has kept me out from a lot of other groups um, example fraternities on this campus um, they're all, you know, the Divine Nine [the nine historically Black fraternities and sororities] so they're all not restricted to Black students but if you're not Black you don't feel like you can join one of those fraternities. There's only one fraternity on this campus that would accept me for being White and it's a Christian-based fraternity and because I'm gay I don't feel welcome there either so it's, you know that plays into it, so for me I haven't really focused on a lot of the race and that kind of aspect as much as my sexuality has kept me from it.

Respondents described a range of experiences regarding stereotyping, bias, or discrimination that they had personally or vicariously experienced. However, their conclusions regarding these experiences often were judgments centered on situational unfairness and less on challenges to fundamental stereotypes (for example, the stereotype of violence-prone Black men) that were at the core of the discriminatory or biased practices that respondents had described or experienced.

Perceptions of privilege. Participants expressed a range of conclusions regarding privilege related to gender and race, as well as varying levels of acknowledgement of privilege in their own lives. For example, Cal discussed a particular set of employment-related privileges that he believed accrue to White men, including him:

I feel like, okay like if I go for a job interview or something like that, I don't feel like I am going to be judged very harshly because I am a White male. I feel like, no offense, but if someone that was Black or Mexican or something like that went to apply for a position that I was applying for, they would be judged a lot harder. So I do . . . again it is a subconscious thing that I don't think about it, but I have a lot of advantages. I don't have to be scared that I am not going to get a job or something like that. I know I will have a chance. A lot of people go into a job thinking, "Well there is a good chance that I am not going to get it." And I also feel that being a White male, I feel like I am not judged as hard as a lot of other people especially, White women or women in general. But I sometimes feel like I get away with a lot more stuff because I am a White male.

In contrast, David asserted, "Everything is the same for everybody . . . for me anyway. I don't go out looking for privileges though . . . I just live my life you know what I mean? I don't go out looking for stuff to happen to me. If it happens it happens and I probably won't even realize that it's happening." Patrick said, "I don't really think of myself as a White male . . . I just think of myself as male."

David and Patrick have not necessarily reached different conclusions than Cal regarding the nature of society, but David's and Patrick's perspectives did not entail acknowledgement of unearned privilege due to

their race and/or gender and instead reflected their attempts to assert color-blindness (Lewis, 2004). Both David's and Patrick's perspectives are grounded in their presumed authority to disavow responsibility for personal benefits that may accrue to them because of social inequalities, since David does not actively seek favors and Patrick does not consider being White a relevant feature of his being (and by extension, neither should other people). Both respondents thus denied the salience of their own race and gender within a society that was, as Cal acknowledged, characterized by privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) that systematically accrues to men and White individuals regardless of whether or not the individuals actively seek advantages (Lewis).

Personal growth. Participants described various outcomes of attending ECU including personal enrichment, more confidence in their abilities to persist and survive, and a stronger sense of self. Patrick, who has lived in many areas of the United States and encountered many diverse populations, described the impact of his experience in the following way:

I have learned a lot more about Black culture since I've been here . . . which I'm not saying in any way is a bad thing or a really good thing anyway, but you kind of . . . it's good to learn about something you didn't really know about before. I think I got a little bit more in touch with the race part, like when you start growing up and getting past it and you're like, all right, everybody is racist, it's just a normal thing, but then you become more aware of that. And it's almost like embracing the fact that I am White in a Black campus.

Matt spoke less about growth or new learning in dealing with racial/ethnic issues, but instead characterized his time at ECU as evidence of his survival and resilience:

I can now say there's a lot of things in life that can happen to me and I'll be like, "Well, you know what, I've gone through a lot of stuff," and I honestly feel, I can say this has made me stronger. And I think that's really good. I feel like you can be put down so much . . . but like I'm about to graduate, I'm still here, you know, I'm still going through it, so I've got to be positive. I really think that I've gone through a lot at this school, and it's a good thing to be able to say I went through it. It's a good thing I survived, you know. I didn't quit. I made it through it so I know I am not a quitter. I try my hardest and I am about to graduate so it's got to be a good thing.

John, one of the participants who has a diverse group of friends and is most actively engaged in ECU's social life, expressed his overall sense of belonging at ECU:

I've learned a lot and it taught me like this is where I honestly belong like as weird as it sounds I need to go to a college like this because I just interact better . . . this is probably where I should have ended up. This is more where I make sense.

John's conclusions were not broadly shared among the respondent group, and neither was John's enjoyment of public attention and being identified as different without great efforts on his part to attract notice. He went on to add that he would be less comfortable at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) where he would have been "just another" White student. In terms of respondents' personal growth, Patrick's learning about Black culture would be less likely to happen at a PWI without seeking out targeted opportunities for awareness or education. Matt emphasized his survival and endurance at a college that he regarded as deficient to a "legitimate" (i.e., White) college, while John reveled in standing out and being different as ways of fitting in and belonging at ECU.

Limitations

Some limitations provide context for the findings of this study. In terms of data collection, one respondent did not respond to requests for a final interview, and full transcripts were unavailable for two interviews due to recording equipment malfunctions. These problems were addressed through careful elaboration of handwritten notes from these interviews and requests for review and clarification from respondents whose data were affected. A potential limitation of this study was its location at one institution with a small number of participants, potentially limiting the breadth of the findings regarding White male students' experiences at HBCUs. However, this study provides insight into the experiences of one segment of this understudied population. The extended three interview approach (Seidman, 2006) also helped foster deeper understandings of the participants and their college experiences.

Another potential limitation of this study involves the cross-racial nature of the interviews, in which the interviewer (in this study, Black) and interviewees (in this study, White) are of different racial backgrounds (Twine, 2000). The extent to which cross-racial interviewing may have impacted the data cannot be ascertained, although participants were asked in the final interviews how they felt about being interviewed by a Black man, somewhat older than they, asking questions about such sensitive topics. The six respondents participating in third interviews indicated a relatively high level of comfort with being candid and honest with a Black researcher, but subtle effects related to racism, bias, and discrimination cannot be completely discounted. For example, a version of the self-censorship that some respondents reported as a classroom strategy could have been present in the interviews, serving to leave privilege unquestioned and intact.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study examined the academic and social experiences as well as racial beliefs of White male undergraduate students at a public historically Black university. The findings above illustrate how the participants' various environments interacted, converged, or remained isolated, and ultimately helped inform their perspectives and opinions about race—reinforcing Hartigan's (1999) emphasis on the salience of local settings to race and racial beliefs. The findings of this study are congruent with limited literature on the experiences of White students at HBCUs in several ways. For example, the majority of the participants commuted to campus, several living with family members (Levinson, 2000) as "day students" (author reference—removed for blinding purposes, 2005) at ECU. In addition, three of the participants attended ECU as scholarship athletes, which has emerged as one common desegregation strategy among HBCUs (Drummond, 2000), suggesting that social class may have played a role in these respondents' college decision-making processes, and potentially also in informing their racial beliefs (Hartigan; Lewis, 2004).

A number of the thematic findings of this study also echo aspects of Black students' experiences at PWIs. For example, respondents in this study described similar classroom experiences as Black students at PWIs—experiences characterized by hypervisibility (e.g., Davis et al., 2004; Feagin, 1992; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Phillips, 2005; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003), self-censorship or demurral (Davis et al.; Feagin, Vera, & Imani; Johnson, 2005), or race spokesperson roles (Davis et al.; Feagin). However, respondents in this study did not report a need to prove themselves worthy of attending ECU—a critical discrepancy between this study's findings and prior studies of Black students at PWIs (e.g., Davis et al.; Feagin). Indeed, many respondents in this study instead characterized ECU principally as their most affordable and/or local option for a college education. No respondent questioned whether he legitimately belonged at ECU or was worthy of attending. This distinction could be reflective of ECU's status as a less selective university than the campuses represented in studies of Black students at PWIs, and it could also be indicative of less general esteem for HBCUs than for PWIs. A number of prior studies have asserted that, despite initial concern or uneasiness, White students attending HBCUs found value in opportunities to engage in new experiences that contributed to their personal growth and development (Drummond, 2000; Hall & Closson, 2005; Thomas, 2002; Thomas-Lester, 2004). The respondents in this study also gener-

ally articulated these advantages. In addition to these congruences with previous studies, this study contributed new information regarding WRC such as the salience of students' various environments and more detailed information of the experiences of being a temporary minority at an HBCU. Specifically, the findings from respondents in this study revealed a number of insights into WRC that are discussed at length below.

The data and findings highlighted the disconnections and compartmentalizations that characterized respondents' academic and social environments as ECU students. Although respondents were physically present for class sessions and reported participating in classes, they described situations in which they were hypervisible as White students. They also engaged in self-censoring and at times avoided joining class discussions for fear of negative reactions to their opinions. While negative reactions could further exacerbate their visibility, their strategy of self-censorship also served to leave their privileged status intact. Self-censoring in the classroom can be illustrative of the dependent WRC type, characterized by commitment to one's views without consideration of alternatives (Rowe, et al., 1995), since self-censoring as a protective strategy can impede exploration processes that are precursors to mature, considered commitments regarding WRC.

The majority of participants described disconnections with the campus social environment. Many participants, as well as their Black and White ECU peers, often left campus on weekends, concluding there was nothing to do. Participants also chose to spend time socially in the neighboring city of Bayside or at BU. With only a few exceptions, participants' social environments were complex yet highly segmented, involving different circles of friends depending on the setting and the types of activities at hand. Hanging out on campus or going to house parties involved students from different races, while going out in public socially as a group rarely did. Given that most respondents' primary social environments were independent of the ECU campus, this may reflect at least partial elements of both avoidant and dominative attitudes. On the one hand, students could avoid having to deal with adjusting to social settings at ECU and working towards actively engaging in the campus social environment because Bayside provided a reliable and ready alternative. The dominant attitude involves a belief in an inherent superiority and a lack of desire to establish close personal relationships with people of color (Rowe, et al., 1995). Although several participants reported connecting with some ECU peers socially, the majority of the participants looked outside the ECU campus community for their primary social connections.

With respect to personal-level perspectives on discrimination or privilege, Cal acknowledged that privilege contributed to his confidence and his likelihood of being successful in a job interview situation, yet he did not question the fundamental inequalities of this privilege or describe what could be done to dismantle inequities and share opportunities more broadly. In these senses, Cal represented the conflictive WRC type that does not endorse discrimination but may oppose efforts to combat or remediate its effects. In similar discussions, David reported not actively seeking favors based on his Whiteness, and Patrick considered himself male (not White) for self-identification purposes. Although neither of these respondents described consciously taking advantage of his privileged status as a White male, these perspectives also do not reflect subtleties or complexities of racial and gender privileges. The tacit nature of privilege does not require endorsement or active participation by privileged persons in order to benefit from one's privileged status (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Crowfoot & Chesler, 2003; Lewis, 2004; D. A. Scott & Robinson, 2001). In addition, several participants asserted the rightness or appropriateness of their own standards and opinions (e.g., a real college, a real party) to the detriment of others' standards or opinions (Hays & Chang, 2003; Lewis, 2004). Acknowledging yet attempting to disavow one's privilege generally illustrated the conflictive (described above) and dominant types of WRC where ethnocentric perspectives are applied as standards to assess adequacies and point out deficiencies.

One of the related findings of this study was how various participants approached being a temporary minority on ECU's campus, and further, how those approaches were consistent with the prevailing dependent, dominative, and conflictive WRC types found among respondents. Classroom strategies such as self-censoring illustrate that the respondents acknowledged their "minority" status at least to the degree that they were aware they may hold or express "minority" opinions or proceed from different backgrounds or assumptions. Socially, like many of their White peers at ECU, respondents maintained primary social networks at neighboring BU. The majority of participants also engaged in regular contacts with family and friends from their home communities, and the "suitcase" reputation of ECU fostered their routine absences from campus. Respondents reported a lack of social engagement opportunities at ECU, and this also permitted respondents to spend more time in environments where they could maintain their majority status and less time exploring or engaging in ECU's social environment. Both academically and socially, participants could easily alleviate discomfort related to ECU by removing themselves via silence or by going home to their families and friends, home to their apartments off campus, or to Bayside

to socialize with White friends. It is important to note that a similar package of privileges may not similarly accrue to Black students attending a PWI in a majority White location.

John appeared to be an exception to these characterizations and provided insight into how being a temporary minority can be experienced differently with respect to WRC and yield different outcomes. John grew up in a very diverse neighborhood and was used to being one of a few White students in school. He reveled in his status of being different at ECU, yet he was quick to draw similarities in terms of Italian and Black stereotypes and directly expressed his cultural pride of being Italian (e.g., colorful jacket, “Italian John” nickname). John had been used to identifying as a minority in a number of his prior settings, and his ECU experiences gave him the opportunity to continue to stand out as a temporary minority. John—and to somewhat lesser extents Walter and David—emphasized his experiences as a “minority” and emphasized much more what he had learned about others and their cultures; he focused much less on (and perhaps may be less cognizant of) the “temporary” nature of his minority status in society at large. John’s perspectives more closely approximate the WRC types of conflictive, integrative, and at times, reactive—all of which are statuses characterized by both exploration and commitment and somewhat more personal investments in meaning-making.

Matt, like John, was an ECU senior at the time of data collection, but by contrast, Matt (and to lesser extents Ty and Cal) emphasized most heavily the “temporary” aspect of his minority status. Matt characterized his time at ECU as survival to be rewarded by graduation. While he readily pointed out elements of his greater sensitivity to cultural differences, he also quickly devalued aspects of his college experience and ECU because they did not match White or idealized norms of college. Although Matt personally experienced discrimination based on, for example, the higher cover charges at Bayside clubs for ECU students, he challenged this situational unfairness without necessarily identifying with what people of color experience much more routinely. In Matt’s case, he emphasized the “temporary” part of his temporary minority status, and he was relieved to have that status come to an end with his upcoming graduation. These perspectives are much more indicative of WRC types of dependent, dissonant, dominative, conflictive—statuses that are associated with transitional WRC that are characterized by openness as well as continued privilege of White perspectives.

When the “temporary” was emphasized in “temporary minority,” White perspectives and privilege tended not to be challenged—as when respondents noted the realities of discrimination and bias without

acknowledging their own benefits from systems of unearned privilege. They did not acknowledge that they could not refuse the advantages accorded to them in such a system. When “minority” was instead the emphasis in “temporary minority” status, evidence of more reactive attitudes in WRC development were apparent, such as sympathetic understanding of minority status/experiences, bordering on identification and/or romanticizing similarities or differences such as John’s comparisons of Italian Americans and African Americans in society. However, this WRC status can provide a precursor towards developing balanced racial consciousness in which privilege and one’s own participation—either unwitting or complicit—in systems of privilege is acknowledged and becomes subject to greater critique.

Implications and Recommendations

This study suggests that White male college students’ experiences at an HBCU—and perhaps more importantly, students’ attitudes towards their experiences—may influence their racial beliefs and understandings. Although many public HBCUs continue to pursue combinations of historical and contemporary missions that are themselves the focus of intense debate, greater enrollment of White students may provide HBCUs opportunities to expand social justice features of their traditional missions with respect to White racial consciousness among enrolled White male students. In terms of environments, fostering greater engagement by White male students in campus life and the local community may lead to more opportunities to view themselves as students and situated members of the campus community rather than as temporary visitors to the campus. This study suggested that the nature of students’ dispositions toward their collegiate experiences may align with racial consciousness statuses that can include questioning White norms and aspects of White male privilege. In this study, most participants reported learning valuable information about themselves and others that helped them question negative stereotypes. However, in many cases stereotypes were reinforced, and only in rare instances did respondents systematically question the benefits accruing to them because of larger systems of inequities. No respondents voiced a commitment toward working to change such systems, but adopting such considered commitments may be premature to expect among most undergraduate students.

Similar studies at other sites can help ascertain the potential transferability of these results. Future studies can be expanded by including White women students or focusing on the particular experiences of White women students at HBCUs. In terms of multiple intersecting

identities and their influences on racial consciousness, future research should also explore the particular experiences and perspectives of gay, lesbian, and transgender students at HBCUs. Although Walter was included as a respondent in this study because he is a White man, and like a number of White men, Walter identifies as gay, we were unable to explore comprehensively the ways that his sexual orientation may have contributed to his racial beliefs and racial consciousness. One subgroup of respondents in this study was scholarship athletes, and a study limited to athletes may reveal targeted findings more applicable to this group of students. Although the students in this study voiced a rather narrow range of reasons (most centered on affordability) for attending ECU, a more systematic study on rationales for enrollment at an HBCU would help researchers and campus officials better understand the entering characteristics and dispositions of White students that could potentially impact racial consciousness and racial beliefs.

It is unclear from this study what role if any White students' increased presence at HBCUs like ECU may play in the growth or developmental aspects of their Black peers, and researchers may wish to focus on the relative educational values and costs associated with transdemographic desegregation strategies at HBCUs. Finally, a follow-up study of White males who completed their undergraduate degrees at HBCUs could explore any long-term outcomes related to individuals' subsequent meaning-making surrounding racial beliefs and racial consciousness.

Endnote

¹Academic major designators have been aggregated for purposes of respondent anonymity.

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