BEING BLACK IN A SEA OF COLOR:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXPLORING BLACK STUDENTS' RACIAL EXPERIENCES AT AN AANAPISI AND EMERGING HSI

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This phenomenological study used semi-structured interviews with 13 Black college students attending a university that is both an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) to explore their racial experiences using symbolic interaction theory. Findings demonstrate that despite attending a minority-serving institution, Black students felt a cultural mismatch with their Asian and Latinx peers and the values of their campus. Being a minority within a minority-serving institution, they also experienced being invisible and hypervisible simultaneously.

Research in higher education has long investigated the role of colleges and universities in supporting college students' identity development and identity formation. Ample scholarship (e.g., Brown, Mangram, Sun, Cross, & Raab, 2017; Cross, 1971, 1995; Harper & Newman, 2016; Mobley, 2017) has specifically explored racial identity development and experiences of Black students. Sedlacek (1987, 1999), for example, offered a comprehensive synthesis of 20 years of research on African American students, in which he elaborated on the racism, isolation, sociocultural challenges, and academic obstacles that many of these students face at predominantly White institutions (PWIs).

In addition to literature on the lived experiences of Black students at PWIs, higher education scholarship has also investigated Black identity development at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Brown et al., 2017; Harper & Newman, 2016;

Mobley, 2017). Despite ample literature investigating Black identity development at PWIs and HBCUs, very few have studied this within the context of other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) such as Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) or Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Considering that AANAPISIs and HSIs are growing in number (Mobley, 2017), more research should explore students' lived experiences at these types of institutions. This study, therefore, was grounded in (BY) two research questions:

1. How do Black students make sense of their own racial identity and lived experiences at an AANAPISI and an HSI?

2. How do Black students make sense of their Asian and Latinx peers' cultures and values at an AANAPISI and an HSI?

Review of the Literature

Scholars have explored Black students' identity development and identity formation for the past four decades (Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Sedlacek, 1987, 1999; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Sedlacek's (1999) overview of the literature explored eight noncognitive variables that were critical in the lives of Black students, including positive self-concept or confidence, realistic self-appraisal, understanding and dealing with racism, demonstrating community service, preferring long-range goals, availability of strong support person, successful leadership experience, and knowledge acquired in a field. The majority of the literature as focused on an area in which Black students have had to "deal directly with a system largely run by Whites for Whites" (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976, p. 4). This literature review will explore empirical research on Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWI), Black students at Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and Black identity development to clarify what still needs to be learned about Black students at other types of institutions, such as an AANAPISI and HSI.

Black Students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)

Most literature examining the experiences of Black students attending PWIs has demonstrated that their lived experiences are full of microaggressions (Devine, 1989; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Kanter et al., 2017), racism (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), and stereotypes (Domingue, 2015; Harper, 2015). Claude Steele's (1997) seminal work also found that Black students attending PWIs are more likely to experience stereotype threat, which is when negative stereotypes raise inhibiting doubts, and can threaten how students evaluate themselves and alter their academic identity and intellectual performance. Steele and Aronson's (1995) study, for example, found that Black students significantly scored worse than White students when told that a test diagnosed intellectual ability, potentially elicited by the stereotype that Blacks are less intelligent than Whites. However, when the researchers told students that the test was a problem-solving task, there were no difference in scores between Black and White students. Due to the largely negative experiences they have encountered, Black students have historically held perceptions that American colleges and universities maintain racially hostile campus climates (Karkouti, 2016).

Scholars have also found that perceptions of campus climates vary among racial groups. Harper and Hurtado (2007), for example, examined the racial campus climate among minority and White students and found White students to be more satisfied with the racial climate in comparison to students of color. Similarly, Fischer (2007) found

that White students perceive predominantly White campuses as less racially hostile in comparison to Students of Color. However, Fischer (2007) disaggregated the data drawn from minoritized racial groups and found that Black students held the "highest average perceptions of a negative campus racial environment" (p. 132). Asian and Latinx[1] students also had similar perceptions of a negative racial climate on campus; however, even though they perceived their PWI to be racially hostile, their perceptions of racial hostility were not as strong as those of Black students (Fisher, 2007).

Black Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

For the most part, findings have found that Black student satisfaction and success may be more prevalent at HBCUs versus PWIs. One line of research suggests that Black students who attend PWIs are less satisfied with their academic environments and find more challenges fitting into their institutions (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984) which adversely affect their academic performance. Other research has demonstrated that HBCUs provide more culturally congruent spaces for Black students that foster learning and ultimately support academic success. Reeder and Schmitt's (2013) paper examined motivation among Black students at both HBCUs and PWIs and found that HBCU students were more motivated than their PWI peers, despite having slightly lower GPAs. Finally, Guiffrida and Douthit's (2010) study concluded that Black students attending PWIs have attrition rates that are more than one and a half times greater than those of their White counterparts.

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[1] The term Latinx is used as a gender-neutral label for Latino/a and Latin@ used to disrupt traditional notions of inclusivity and shape institutional understandings of intersectionality (Salinas & Lozano, 2019).

Nevertheless, not all studies have concluded that Black students are more satisfied and successful at HBCUs compared to PWIs. Using a longitudinal national dataset, Kim (2002) found no statistically significant differences in self-reported measures of overall academic achievement, math ability, and writing ability between Black students who attended HBCUs versus PWIs. Similarly, Flores and Park's (2013) study concluded that there were no significant differences between bachelor's degree completion rates of Latinx and Black students who enroll in an MSI and those who do not. Despite mixed findings in the literature, college racial composition and the way in which students engage their respective college context seems to be important to understanding academic outcomes among Black students.

Black Identity Development

Black racial identity development is critical to the ways in which Black individuals understand themselves, their social world, and how they are perceived by others within their social spheres. The development of *nigrescence*, or the "process of becoming Black" (Cross, 1995, p. 120) became a pressing issue during the early to the mid-20th century when Black individuals, including W.E.B DuBois, sought to make sense of their racial identities and refute societal messages that Black individuals were inferior. The political and societal context of this era informed the development of nigrescence theory and its associated Cross Racial Identity Scale (Cross, 1995, 1971; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). The theoretical tenets of nigrescence theory focus on Blacks developing a more conscious perspective on their Black identity and developing higher self-esteem with a psychologically healthy perspective on their Black identity (Cross, 1971, 1978).

There are five stages of nigrescence that situate Black individuals' attitudes, lived experiences, and relationship with Blackness: 1) Pre-Encounter; 2) Encounter; 3) Immersion-Emersion; 4) Internalization; and, 5) Internalization-Commitment (Cross, 1971). The Pre-Encounter stage examines the racial identity development of Black individuals who adopt a pro-White ideological stance and anti-Black perspectives. Individuals then experience repeated encounters within society that lead to a questioning of race relations within America. Hence, stage two, Encounter, consists of Black Americans evaluating their Blackness in relationship to the disparate treatment they experience, which becomes increasingly questioned as more salient negative racially induced encounters transpire. Stage three, Immersion-Emersion, builds upon the questioning of race relations found in stage two and leads Black individuals to be immersed within their new pro-Black racial identity. This immersion in a new racial identity can be understood as a metamorphosis, or a process of social awakening. Individuals within this stage may experience intense anxiety and frustration as resentment about not being more socially aware and connected to their Black identity can cause Black individuals to develop perceptions of inadequacy. Stage four, Internalization, consists of Blacks emotionally and mentally embracing Blackness. Race becomes a primary aspect of one's identity. During this stage of racial identity development, Black individuals have developed an intellectual understanding of American race relations and their own racial identity. Lastly, the Internalization-Commitment stage involves communicating Black self-acceptance through activist efforts, with a focus on uplifting one's racial community and seeking social equity.

Black racial identity operates on a continuum, and when racial identity development occurs depends upon an individual's experience. Hence, utilizing nigrescence (Cross, 1971) as the theoretical framework for this study informs our understanding of how Black students make sense of their racialized experiences disparately within the racial contexts of an AANAPISI and an HSI. Nigresence illuminates the reality that Black students have diverse perspectives, attitudes, and experiences within higher education domains primarily comprised of API and Latinx students.

Theoretical Framework

Hebert Blumer (1969) developed the theoretical and methodological framework of symbolic interactionism. This theory describes how individuals co-construct, with society, the symbolic meanings of their social world. According to symbolic interactionism, society is not structured, organized, or patterned. Instead, society and the unique experiences individuals contrive have the ability to communicate the nuances of human behavior. The theory is grounded in understanding social behavior as an interpretive process that examines how "behavior is changing, unpredictable, and unique to each social encounter" (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p. 2). Examining symbolic interactionism through the lens of Blumer (1969) posits that understanding the self takes place through an interactive process in which symbols communicate meaning in certain situations. Therefore, an examination of human behavior and experience must begin with human associations, and how individuals interpret and make sense of these associations (Huber, 1973).

Four main tenets of symbolic interactionism exist: first, individuals act based on the meanings they attribute to objects; second, interactions take place within a specific cultural and social context, and social objects are defined by individual meaning; third, meaning occurs through interacting with other individuals; and fourth, meanings are continuously created through the interpretation of processes and interaction with others (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism guides this study, as Black students are heterogeneous and their interpretations of their collegiate social world is dependent upon their unique experiences and the symbolic meaning they internalize regarding these experiences as members of a minority racial group within an AANAPISI and an HSI.

Methods

This study sought to understand the in-depth and nuanced racialized experiences of Black students at an ANAAPISI and emerging HSI. Due to the intersectional nature of the participants (e.g., racial self-identification, gender, socioeconomic status, generational status, etc.), the methods for this study were guided by a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was chosen for this study because it explores a phenomenon in-depth and seeks to understand the essence of the participants' lived experiences and meaning making, an approach that honors the complex intersectional identities of participants (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). This section presents the setting and context, participants, data collection and analysis.

Setting and Context

This study was situated at Ocean University (a pseudonym), a public, research-intensive four-year institution located on the West Coast of the United States. A fairly

young institution, this institution has also historically had a strong focus on the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and every university leader since its inception has been a faculty from a science or engineering discipline. In addition, the vision and mission of the university focuses on creating changemakers to advance society and drive economic impact.

Originally a predominantly White institution (PWI), the institution experienced significant demographic changes during the late 1990s and early 2000s. As of 2017, the state in which Ocean University resides is 37% White, 14% Asian, 6% Black, 40% Latinx, and 3% Other. Currently, the racial demographics of the institution are 20% White, 51% Asian, 2% Black, and 16% Latino, with students selecting other or undeclared representing 9%. Thus, this institution is classified as both an AANAPISI and an emerging HSI. Finally, about one quarter of the undergraduate student population on campus consist of international students, making it a global community.

Participants

To capture a heterogeneous pool of Black student experiences and perceptions, the researchers used purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 1998) and snowball sampling (Bernard, 2002) through a center called The Max (pseudonym), which served underrepresented students on campus. Interview participants were selected based upon the following criteria: (a) Participants self-identified as a Black or African American student at Ocean University; (b) Participants were engaged with The Max at some point during their academic tenure at Ocean University. The final sample consisted of 13 students, seven women and six men. Of the 13 participants, eight identified as the first in their families to go to college. The participants also represented

a range of socioeconomic classes. Five of the participants self-identified as coming from a wealthy family, five as coming from a middle-class family, and three as low-income. The participants included representation from all five of Ocean University's academic divisions (i.e. Engineering, Social Sciences Arts & Humanities, Biological Sciences, and Physical Sciences), as well as a diverse array of levels of engagement with The Max, from highly engaged to not engaged at all.

Data Collection

Participants each completed one individual, semi-structured interview about their own racial experiences as well as their views on their peers' racial identities and values. Each interview lasted between 90 to 120 minutes and began with discussing relevant background information and building rapport. Then, the interviews utilized a semi-structured protocol to guide the conversation while allowing students to tell their stories (e.g., What has your experience as a Black student been like? How do Black students navigate this campus? How would you describe your interactions with your peers in and out of class?) Throughout, students could expand the conversation and were encouraged to address other information they felt relevant. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using a deductive thematic analysis, as the initial codebook was grounded in the tenets of Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism: (a) Meaning – humans act toward people based upon the meanings that they have given to those people; (b) Language and Social Interactions – the meanings that have been given to people are derived from talking with others and social interactions; (c) Thought –

meanings are processed through an interpretive process in dealing with what people encounter. We then used Dedoose, a qualitative computer data analysis platform, to organize and analyze the data. This software helped us identify meaningful units of data through coding and run subsequent data reports (Ratner, 2001).

First, we took an example of the first two interview transcripts and conducted open coding on them without the codebook to identify emic codes, themes identified by the researchers, from the data (e.g., competition versus community, invisibility versus hyper-visibility, etc.). Second, we debriefed with each other as well as with two scholars unrelated to this research study but familiar with educational research to ensure trustworthiness of our analytical process (Maxwell, 2013). Throughout this process, the codebook changed as we added new codes and reorganized other codes. Third, after we established the final analysis codebook, we double-coded all transcripts using the codebook. Transcripts were initially coded with broad code names and then line-by-line so that we could capture similarities and differences across the students' perceptions and experiences. The themes here reflect overarching themes across participants; while no two students' experiences are the same, they connect in many ways.

Trustworthiness was established in a few different ways. First, the researchers conducted member checks by asking participants to review the transcripts for accuracy and clarity. Second, after each interview, the researchers wrote analytic memos and debriefed with each other to create the final analysis codebook of emic codes (Maxwell, 2013). Finally, the researchers considered possible biases and differences in interpretation while organizing data, interpreting themes, and choosing illustrative anecdotes and vignettes for presenting findings.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, this study and its participants represent a single case from a particular region, institutional type, and program. The findings may not be applicable to other contexts, although we believe the findings challenge certain theoretical conceptualizations of Black students' racialized experiences in various collegiate environments. Second, although all of the participants in this study were Black, they identified very differently. Some students identified as "African," others as "African American," and others as "Afro-Latinx." Initially, some students were not sure if they were eligible for the study because it originally asked for participants who self-identified as being "Black," which is not the primary identification of all of the participants. In addition, while some students were heavily involved in the Black community at Ocean University, others were removed from the Black community and had little to no desire to be a part of it. These differences should also be taken into account.

Findings

Two findings emerged from this this study, which were interpreted through Blumer's (1969) symbolic interaction theory: 1) Cultural Mismatch, and 2) Racial Visibility and Invisibility.

Cultural Mismatch

Despite being at an MSI, several of the Black students in this study felt that they experienced a cultural mismatch with their Latinx and Asian peers at the university. They felt their peers valued competition over community, obedience over assertiveness, and avoidance over confrontation. Even though there were more Students of Color than

White students, participants still experienced "culture shock" at Ocean University.

DeSean, a second-year Black male student, discusses his lived experience as a Black

man coming into Ocean University as a "big culture shock." He asserts,

> There's not a lot of people that look like you. There's not a lot of people that value my sense of community and my sense of family. There's a lot of individualistic approaches to things. A lot of…fake competition and fake people.

As DeSean mentions, he felt that the institutional culture valued an individualistic rather

than a collectivist approach, and that there was a lot of "fake competition and fake

people." When asked to elaborate, he attributed the competition to an academically

driven culture that was largely driven by the large number of Asians on campus. Aligned

with Blumer's (1969) first tenet of symbolic interactionism, DeSean felt that the

meanings behind his academic values as a Black student were driven by giving back to

family and friends while his Asian and some Latinx students' academic aspirations were

driven by getting ahead. There are two stereotypes evident within DeSean's experience.

The first is the notion of Africans and African American students having a more

collectivist approach focused on community uplift. The second is the notion of Asians

being solely hyper-focused on educational pursuits. According to symbolic

interactionism, the unique experiences people have informed their social reality and

framing. How DeSean interpreted the behaviors of his Asian peers led him to feel

culturally out of place, because his social encounters have taught him that Black

individuals focus more on community uplift and are not as individualistic in their pursuits

of higher education.

Yara, a Black woman who was a second-year student, held similar sentiments, as she too believed the institution was more focused on materialistic measures of success and education prowess. Yara stated,

> The culture at [Ocean University] is that there's no love. They don't value family. They don't value anything that I value. A lot of them just value education, money, like no family, like no love. They just they don't care about that. And it's really prevalent there.

Similar to DeSean, Yara's social interactions within the institution have led her to perceive her values to be culturally incongruent with those of her peers and the institution. Meaning-making is continuously recreated through interactions (Blumer, 1969); therefore, Yara, through everyday experiences, laughs at how incongruent her values are with those within the university.

Participants experienced a cultural mismatch when they felt chastised for being outspoken and for challenging institutional authority figures. For some students, this was another element of the cultural mismatch between their Blackness and the values their Asian and Latinx peers espoused. DeSean, for example, mentioned,

> I figured out that my cultural capital, my independence, my outspokenness, my courageousness, it's not valued here. What's valued is being very meek, being submissive…going with the flow and not being yourself, adapting to or assimilating to the [university] culture. That's what's valued at this campus.

DeSean illustrated this idea with an anecdote in which he pushed back on a staff member's microaggression, and he felt he was seen as "another angry Black man" arguing with the authority figure in the room. He was disappointed that none of his Asian or Latinx peers spoke up in support of him, and he attributed "meekness" and "submission" to this social interaction.

Similarly, Yara was part of a special program at The Max that helped underrepresented students transition to Ocean University. She saw the program as always being spirited and trying to frame students' experiences in a positive way. When she tried to bring up her struggles as a Black woman, the staff members tried to empathize as Asian and Latinx women and brought it back to a "women of color" issue. When she brought up her feeling that The Max was not allowing her to be critical, she felt that the staff members were afraid of confrontation and dismissed her feedback. Of The Max, Yara said, "I never felt…comfortable. I always felt like okay, I'm just an outlier again. I have to navigate myself through this [as a Black woman]." Several other participants also felt that despite having good intentions, The Max was problematic because it claimed to be a "mecca of diversity and social justice," but it muted Blackness by lumping Black students in with other People of Color. Many of the participants felt that despite being a space committed to social justice, diversity, and inclusion, The Max perpetuated the overall campus culture that promoted obedience over assertiveness or criticism.

Finally, a few of the study's participants also discussed feeling distinct differences in cultural modes of social interaction, which made them feel further isolated at Ocean University. Jacquez said,

> When I see other Black people on this campus, I feel like I can smile and look at them. I don't know if that's just the cultural thing. But if I see anyone else on this campus who's not Black, I tend to be like, 'Okay, I don't know what I'm supposed to do culturally. I want to be able to look you in the eye, just acknowledge my presence and acknowledge your presence,' but that generally doesn't happen.

As such, Jacquez ascribed the meaning of submissiveness to his Asian and Latinx peers who were less prone to look him in the eye or acknowledge his presence. This

further perpetuated a feeling of isolation and seclusion for him in the university

community.

Racial Visibility and Invisibility

Although Black students within the sample are attending an institution that enrolls

a majority of students of color, this did not dilute encounters of racial hostility that Black

students endured. Participants noted the institutional culture as hostile and began to

perceive their Blackness as not being welcomed by their Asian and Latinx peers.

Blumer (1969) states that, through social interaction, individuals begin to derive

meaning from such interactions. Hence, encounters of feeling invisible yet hyper-visible

led participants to question if their Blackness was welcomed to the same degree as the

backgrounds of their Asian and Latinx peers. For example, Nate, a first-year Black male

student, mentioned that when he attended STEM supplemental instruction sessions

provided by Ocean University's learning center, a lot of his Asian, Latinx, and White

peers did not want to interact with him. Nate was the only Black individual that would

attend these sessions, and he noted that he was often engaging in academic work solo

there. Nate shared,

> It definitely feels like—people can definitely find a big group of friends that they identify with White and Asian, but then if you're Black, it takes a little longer for people to actually come up to you. So, a lot of times I feel like I have to be the one that breaks the ice, you know what I mean, and then eventually when I do it, I mean, eventually they might come around to it a little bit more open, but initially they are going to be quiet, they are going to try to pretend like they're busy doing something else when they're not.

Hence, Nate recognized that he is visible but also invisible within this space, as he

positions his racial identity to be the cause of other students "pretending" to not see him.

Symbolic interactionism posits that if such encounters become frequent, then individuals

begin to interpret these encounters and behaviors as normative of their social world. Nate did begin to be impacted by such experiences, becoming "emotionally drain[ed]" as he became tired of constantly thinking that "no-one is going to want to come near me when they see me." Therefore, social interactions are not devoid of meaning and do hold symbolic value that is dependent upon the experiences of the individual.

Issues of racial invisibility and hyper-visibility also hindered how Black students discussed issues of race with their Asian and Latinx peers. Given the racial make-up of the campus, Black students felt as if *they* experienced more instances of discrimination than their other peers of color. For example, Kayla shared that she could only process instances she perceived to be racially fueled with other Black students. When she confided in peers of Latinx and Asian descendent, she believed they *really* did not understand her perspective:

> Just because I know with all these different racial tensions that happen sometimes on campus, it's hard to go to my non-Black friend and be like "Oh, my gosh, this person really said this wild thing," right? And they can only nod their head and be like "Oh, I'm sorry you feel that way," but they don't really understand why I feel that way.

Kayla's inability to discuss racialized experiences with non-Black peers serves as a reminder of her "minority-minority" status within the institution. She acknowledges that although she attends a university that is racially diverse, her Blackness is rare at the institution and her descriptions of encounters of perceived discrimination will not be understood by her non-Black peers at Ocean University in the way that she experiences them.

When asked how they felt as Black students on campus, several participants mentioned feeling as if they were invisible because only two percent of the

undergraduate population was Black. All 13 of the participants mentioned having experienced being the only Black person in their class, discussion, or study group. DJ mentioned that it was "an eye-opening experience being in a class of 300 and being the only Black person." Aside from the lack of Black student representation, there was also a lack of Black faculty and staff. Inez mentioned that in her entire three years at Ocean University, she only had one Black professor, and she only really connected with one Black staff member. Due to the low numbers of Black people on campus, Jacquez said, "it's so easy…to feel ostracized on campus."

In addition to feeling invisible, some participants even mentioned feeling like their Asian and Latinx peers viewed them as animals. As the only Black woman in her supplemental instruction group, Cleo said, "It's a little overwhelming when they're like 'Oh, your hair, how it like that?' or 'Let me touch your hair.'" She then mentioned that they went on to give superlative awards and they voted her "Most Ratchet." Cleo explained that she felt she only got that award from her Asian and Latinx peers because she was Black, and that they did not even really know what "ratchet" meant other than ascribing it to Blackness.

Other students felt that their Asian and Latinx peers seemed like they were afraid of Black students. Yara described the campus climate as being anti-Black because she felt that her Asian and Latinx peers "create this idea that Black folks are…not human. They do that by not listening…doing things that are being fearful of us, acting as if we're less than a human, acting as if we're almost like animals." She felt that her peers and even the staff members on campus seemed afraid of her and felt like she might cause a commotion.

Discussion

This study's findings confirm Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson and Covarrubias's (2012) prior research demonstrating how universities in the United States often inadvertently perpetuate inequity for underserved students by promoting mainstream, independent cultural norms. This study's findings, in part, support those findings because the participants felt that Ocean University endorsed values of individuality and competition. However, Stephens et al.'s (2012) study focused on first-generation college students at predominantly White institutions while this study discussed the cultural mismatch Black students experienced an AANAPISI and emerging HSI. Thus, this study brings to light the importance of exploring cultural mismatch in contexts where White people are not the majority. At the same time, eight of the 13 participants self-identified as first-generation Black college students; as such, this study continues to reinforce Stephens et al.'s (2012) findings that cultural mismatch may take place across racial lines.

Our findings may also contradict parts of Reddick, Heilig, and Valdez's (2012) article, which concluded that "HSIs are in a position to become champions of student diversity and inclusion in today's higher education landscape" (p. 207). Their study used a qualitative lens to examine how attending an HSI affects Black male students; they found that black male students found their own community at their institution and had to navigate few instances of institutional and systemic racism in the higher education system. In contrast, this study found that Black students processed a fair amount of neglect, racism, and microaggression from their Asian and Latinx peers. Our

participants felt that even units dedicated to underrepresented students, like The Max, focused more on Asian and Latinx students as opposed to Black students.

The study highlights how reoccurring messages developed meaning for participants and such meaning developed perceptions (Blumer, 1969). For example, several of the participants mentioned their peers were "submissive," "obedient," and "fearful." DeSean said, "There's a lot of emptiness in terms of personality of my fellow peers," which is in line with the recent outcry over Harvard University rating Asian-American applicants lower on "personality ratings" because Asian-Americans were described in the same way. More research is needed to determine where and how the participants drew such meanings regarding their Asian and Latinx peers. Language such as "submissive" and "obedient" is connected to stereotypes of Asian Americans; hence, it was important for scholars to be alert to the types of stereotypes Black students may harbor about spaces that are predominantly Asian- and Latinx-identified.

Implications for Research

This study illustrates the complexity of racial identity formation and the possibility that issues of race are not reducible to a black-white binary. In addition, with some universities already being "majority-minority" and most institutions moving in that direction within the next decade, it is important to examine students' experiences at MSIs such as AANAPISIs and HSIs. Most of the literature on MSIs has focused on student engagement (Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quinoo, & Salinas Holmes, 2007) or academic performance (Flores & Park, 2015); thus, more research exploring racial identity formation of students at MSIs is needed.

In addition to exploring students' racialized experiences, it is also important to examine Black faculty and staff experiences AANAPISIs, HSIs, and other MSIs as well. One of the recurring themes from this study was that the Black students did not see Black representation among faculty and staff. Current literature on Black faculty and staff has mainly examined their experiences within the contexts of being at predominantly White institutions, where Black faculty must navigate diversity-related challenges (Croom, 2017), such as providing diversity-related services, which generates additional stress and work overload (Griffin, Pifer, Humphrey, & Hazelwood, 2011). At the same time, diversity-related service has not been valued in reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions, which is a prime example of microinvalidation, a racial microaggression (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009).

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice may be drawn from this study. First, participants in this study felt that their Black identities were often undermined and invisible because they were lumped in with other "People of Color" on campus. DJ mentioned that Ocean University "struggles to go into depth of responding to different people of different colors…we talk about racism, but we don't talk about anti-blackness." It is, therefore, vital for campus leaders and practitioners to try to understand students' experiences and beware of lumping all racial/ethnic groups into "People of Color."

Students also felt that places like The Max preached about diversity and social justice, but they did not have adequate professional or student staff representation. As such, they felt that The Max was really only focused on Latinx and Asian students, and that Black students were used as a selling point. All practitioners, but especially those

that lead multicultural units or departments that claim to use an inclusive and equitable lens, should examine the diversity of their staff and critically question who may be underrepresented and why.

Finally, this study demonstrates that it is important for institutions of higher education to espouse and promote collectivist values. The participants in this study mentioned that they felt like the institution valued competition over community. Colleges and universities should reconsider their messaging to students, include family and community values into the fabric of their institutions, and reframe learning and assessment to be more collaborative.

Concluding Remarks

As higher education institutions strive for increasing diversity, the ramifications of increased diversity for Black students must be examined; the relationship of Black students to systemic oppression within higher education shares similarities with Asian and Latinx students, but differs given the historical plight and contemporary contexts of the Black experience. The celebration of minority-majority institutions is well deserved given the oppressed histories and contemporary dwellings of people of color, but diversity and inclusion efforts cannot subside due to institutions bolstering unprecedented masses of varying ethnic minorities. The relationship to oppression differs for different ethnic groups. Therefore, spaces of predominantly Asian and Latinx individuals need to process racism, prejudices, and oppression, as these conversations are not solely for predominantly White institutions. As more institutions harbor unprecedented representation of racial diversity, the conversation surrounding diversity

and inclusion must also move to discussing the dynamics amongst Asian, Latinx, and

Black individuals (Sue, 2015).

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