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Black Students' Narratives of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives and the Campus Racial Climate: An Interest-Convergence Analysis

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This qualitative study examines how Black undergraduate students attending a predominately White institution (PWI) assess and interpret their university's diversity and inclusion initiatives given their everyday experiences with campus-based racism. Using critical race theory (CRT) this article illuminates how Black students at a PWI interpret their university's implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives. The article illustrates how the students interpreted the rationale behind the university's implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives, questioned who benefits from the implementation of the initiatives, and called attention to how the ineffectiveness of the PWIs initiatives impacted their sense of belonging. By employing the concept of interest-convergence as an analytical tool, this article used the students' narratives to illustrate what happens when initiatives aimed at promoting a more equitable and inclusive campus racial climate converge with the interests of an institution that centers Whiteness. The findings from this study illustrate the ways in which White supremacy undergirds the university's implementation of its diversity and inclusion initiatives and the reality it creates for Black students.

Keywords: race, racism, Black college students, diversity and inclusion

> We have the diversity and inclusion events where we get sat at these tables with a bunch of different people, sometimes administrators, and then we get to talk about these very bullshit questions, and then the administrators, if they're there, will turn it back around on us, and (ask) what are we doing and what can we do? And why aren't we doing this and it's our fault that we're not being included on campus, and it's our fault that people are being racist, and it's our fault that White people do not know how not to be racist.
>
> —Adrianna, senior, journalism major

A considerable body of work has focused on the educational experiences of Black students who attend predominately White institutions (PWIs) of higher education (Karkouti, 2016; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Taylor, Austin, Perkins, & Edwards, 2012). A prominent theme in this body of research focuses on the role the campus racial climate plays in creating an environment where Black students feel unwelcomed, invalidated, and marginalized (George Mwangi, Thelamour, Ezeofor, & Carpenter, 2018; Karkouti, 2016). With campus climates characterized as rife with racism, racial segregation and an institutional neglect of students, faculty, and staff of color, many Black students who attend PWIs are often forced to navigate oppressive structures as they strive to achieve their academic goals (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000).

Many PWIs have created and implemented initiatives focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in an attempt to address their exclusionary past, aid in retention rates, and ameliorate the present forms of racism that manifest on their campuses (Buck & Patel, 2016). While these initiatives are not a new phenomenon in higher education, many PWIs have revitalized their efforts to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity due to increased attention to implicit bias and overt incidents of racism nationwide (Hikido & Murray, 2016). For instance, entering any combination of the terms race, racism, and college in an online search engine campus will reveal a plethora of reports, articles, and news clips depicting a range of racially motivated incidents that have occurred on PWIs within the past years. These incidents include threats of lynching, death threats directed toward students of color, racial epithets (N-word) and racist symbols (swastika) displayed on campus property, and multiple social media posts depicting racist language, images, and events (Case & Ngo, 2017). Although a number of diversity and inclusion focused programs have been created in response to these incidents, a negative and inequitable campus climate around issues of race still remains an issue (Telles & Mitchell, 2018). Given that diversity and inclusion initiatives were created to address and ameliorate racial discrimination and improve the campus climate, much can be learned about how Black students assess and interpret these administrative efforts in light of their experiences with campus-based racism.

This article aims to illuminate how Black students interpret and make meaning of the implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives given their experiences at a PWI. Literature exploring the experiences of Black students in White institutional spaces has

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clearly and consistently established the impact that a negative campus racial climate can have on students' experiences. Despite initiatives taken at the university level, little has changed. By utilizing the critical race theory (CRT) tenet of interest-convergence, the data presented in this article seeks to provide an explanation for the disconnect between interventions meant to address the effects of a negative campus climate and the reality that Black students continue to encounter marginalizing and oppressive environments. Using interest-convergence to structure the analysis of the focus group data enables us to situate the narratives that emerge from the focus groups in a manner that simultaneously explains and critiques the environment Black students are forced to navigate.

Campus Racial Climate

Educational scholars define the campus racial climate as the overall feel and structure of a campus that reflects an acceptance or rejection of racial diversity within the environment (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Solórzano et al., 2000). The campus racial climate can be conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon composed of an interplay between external forces (governmental policy and sociohistorical factors) and internal forces (the respective racial context of the institution; Hurtado et al., 1999). The internal forces or respective racial context of the institution that shape the campus environment can be grouped into four distinct categories: structural diversity, the institution's historical legacy, the psychological climate, and the behavioral climate.

Structural diversity, or the numerical representation of various demographic characteristics, is often touted as the standard way to improve the campus racial climate. Nonetheless, research indicates solely focusing on structural diversity without equal attention to the other dimensions of the campus climate does not improve the climate but rather increases the likelihood of conflict, competition, and separation among student groups (Hurtado, 1992). The psychological dimension of the campus racial climate is comprised of perceived notions of hostility, segregation, racism, and tension held among community members stemming from issues of race (Hurtado et al., 1999). Likewise, the behavioral dimension of a campus racial climate reflects the frequency and quality of cross-racial interactions and whether those interactions are characterized as friendly, open, discriminatory, or tense (Hurtado et al., 1999). Perceptions of the psychological and behavioral dimensions of the campus climate vary significantly between White students and students of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). White students tend to judge the campus racial climate more favorably than Black students, who are more likely to report incidents of racial discrimination in the form of faculty incivility, uncomfortable academic interactions, and environmental cues that devalue their identity (Iacovino & James, 2016).

The history of marginalization and oppression Black students have experienced within higher education is well documented (Buck & Patel, 2016; Karkouti, 2016). Although campus climate research has increased over the years, scholars have also put forth reasons why little change has been made. Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, and Cuellar (2008) contend that campus climate research needs a more in-depth examination of the impact of the campus climate because "most campus racial climate research has been conducted with the students as the unit of analysis" (p. 2016). This article focuses on the experiential knowledge of the students to illuminate the ways in which the campus racial climate impacts them. Affirming the aforementioned sentiment, Hart and Fellabaum (2008) asserted that future campus climate research needs a more holistic approach that focuses on the lived experiences and behaviors of students. This article will place the lived experiences of Black students at the center of inquiry to assist in creating a deeper understanding of the impact of the campus climate, even when structures have been put in place to create a more equitable environment.

Diversity Initiatives in PWIs

Diversity initiatives are university-led efforts to promote a more equitable campus racial climate. Education scholars have developed a typology of diversity that coalesce into three types: structural diversity, interactional diversity, and curricular/cocurricular diversity (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999). As previously stated, structural diversity encompasses numerical/proportional representations of the demographic characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) of a student body. Interactional diversity, also known as cross-racial interaction, encompasses the frequency of informal student cross-racial (i.e., intergroup) contact. Interactional diversity represents the degree to which students from diverse backgrounds come into contact with one another within their respective campus environments (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). Last, curricular/cocurricular diversity denotes programmatic efforts created by the respective institution that are intended to facilitate student's engagement with diverse content exploring race and ethnicity (Gurin et al., 2002).

Most contemporary diversity and inclusion initiatives are the actualization of curricular/cocurricular diversity. Students engage with curricular/cocurricular diversity through their curriculum and/or coursework or through participation with activities that facilitate racial-cultural awareness. Examples include diversity workshops, presentations, intergroup dialogues, and courses associated with promoting multiculturalism (e.g., required and nonrequired diversity courses, ethnic studies courses, and women's and gender studies courses). The primary goal of curricular/cocurricular diversity is to reduce intergroup (or racial) bias (Denson, 2009; Denson & Chang, 2009). Programs and activities aimed at supporting curricular/cocurricular diversity are commonly facilitated through two mechanisms: (a) approaches that involve students learning about other racial/ethnic groups and (b) activities that promote contact among different racial/ethnic groups by bringing them together. Such initiatives are created to "stimulate important mediators, cognitive and emotional processes in the students, which in turn reduce racial bias—a multifaceted phenomenon consisting of attitudes (prejudice), cognition (stereotypes), emotions (negative affect), and behavior (discrimination)" (Denson, 2009, p. 808).

Although the value of the research exploring curricular/cocurricular diversity's impact should not be diminished, it is also important to note a few limitations within this body of work. Research that examines the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives in PWIs, particularly curricular/cocurricular forms of initiatives, typically focuses on quantifiable outcomes related to student learning and growth. Outcomes such as increases in moral

development (Parker, Barnhardt, Pascarella, & McCowin, 2016) cross-racial/intergroup contact and friendships (Bowman & Park, 2015; Rodríguez, Nagda, Sorensen, & Gurin, 2018), democratic involvement (Denson & Bowman, 2013), and students' awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of different racial groups (de Novais & Spencer, 2018) saturate curricular/cocurricular diversity scholarship. This focus on marketable outcomes, rather than ways to create structural institutional change, has given rise to what some scholars refer to as the commodification of diversity in higher education, in which diversity is packaged as something to be managed as a profitable resource (Ahmed, 2007; Case & Ngo, 2017). The manner in which most curricular/cocurricular forms of diversity and inclusion initiatives are conceptualized places an emphasis on a heightened visibility of socially constructed differences, such as racial and other social group differences, rather than a critical analysis of power (Melamed, 2006). For example, intergroup dialogues are a commonly utilized diversity initiative that utilizes a race, class, and gender framework to explore students' lived experiences and how power and privilege impact their everyday lives (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). The purpose of intergroup dialogue is to facilitate dialogues among "social identity groups with a history of separation, avoidance of substantive interactions, and/or intergroup conflict" (Rodríguez et al., 2018, p. 228). Whereas as the outcome of intergroup dialogues have been found to increase cross racial interactions and students' knowledge of racial and ethnic inequality, such initiatives commonly result in student's from nondominate groups carrying the burden educating their more privileged peers (Harris, Barone, & Davis, 2015).

There is a significant dearth of research that employs qualitative methods to focus on how curricular/cocurricular diversity is perceived by students of color, particularly Black students. An examination of this literature also reveals that a large portion of the research examining curricular/cocurricular diversity consists of samples of White students which is noteworthy given that White students, in particular White men, are typically the least engaged in campus diversity and inclusion initiatives (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). In their respective research, both Hikido and Murray (2016) and Vianden (2018) call attention to how White students protect Whiteness and uphold racist institutional structures even when engaging with diversity related coursework. An additional issue within this body of work centers on the manner in which racial bias and racism are conceptualized, a concern that has been voiced for over a decade (Engberg, 2004). For example, in his critique education research examining the impact of diversity and inclusion related interventions on reducing racial bias, Engberg (2004) noted that published research in that period relied "overwhelmingly on attitudinal measures of prejudice to assess changes in racial bias" (p. 32) which overlooks and perpetuates systemic violence against students of color. To date, racial bias is still limited to interpersonal forms (e.g., stereotypes, affective reactions, and prejudices) of racism and ignores the institutional, structural, and ideological mechanisms operating on PWIs that promote White supremacy.

The literature on the impact of curricular/cocurricular diversity in higher education is growing; however, relatively little research has centered the perspectives of Black college students. Therefore, the findings from this study make a novel contribution in that they illuminate the how Black student perceive the impact of curricular/cocurricular diversity (i.e., commonplace diversity and inclusion initiatives) in their everyday experiences on campus. Additionally, this study examines how Black students' insights illuminate institutional mechanisms that perpetuate White supremacy to the detriment of Black students. This article uses of the CRT tenet of interest-convergence as an analytical tool to help interrogate, understand, and ultimately leverage change by using the students' narratives to uncover the inherent tension in implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives in a historically oppressive environment.

Theoretical Framework

To engage in the institutional, structural, and ideological mechanisms operating at the site of data collection I use us the theoretical framework of CRT. CRT is a theoretical framework that emerged from the pioneering work of critical legal studies scholars who sought to address how the persistence of racism within the legal system, and society at large, perpetuates and sustains various forms of structural inequalities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theorists are concerned with disrupting, exposing, and dismantling the racist policies and practices that protect dominant groups and subordinate and disenfranchise people of color (Milner, 2008). CRT-informed research adheres to three assertions: racism is pervasive, racism is permanent, and racism must be challenged (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Research informed by these assertions advances our understanding of the persistence of White supremacy as a fundamental dimension of American society and the numerous ways White supremacy reinforces the oppression of communities of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1996).

CRT research is guided by a set of interdisciplinary tenets that collectively challenge existing modes of scholarship. The tenets, drawn from the work of Delgado and Stefancic (2012), inform CRT scholars of the normalcy of racism in US society, interest-convergence (material determinism), the social construction of race, intersectionality and antiessentialism, and the importance of voice and counternarrative. This article analyzes the students' narratives through an interest-convergence lens as a means to gain an in-depth understanding of how racism and racial discrimination both manifests and persists within an environment focused on promoting equity. Using interest-convergence as an analytical tool will enable the students' narratives to critique the university efforts while providing the tools necessary for structural change.

Interest-Convergence

Interest-convergence, also known as material determinism, asserts that any progress or advances made toward racial equity for people of color will only occur when it converges with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of White people (Harris et al., 2015; Milner, 2008). Derrick Bell (1980) coined the theoretical concept of *interest-convergence* to explain that the decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka or the success of any litigation involving racial issues, were not the result of White morality or altruistic motives (Bell, 2000).[1] Rather, Bell argued that the demands of the Civil Rights movement for school desegregation were only met when the outcomes and gains of such a decision converged with the self-interest of powerful White elites

[1] Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka was the U.S. Supreme Court case in which it was ruled that the racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional.

(Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The global community's growing criticism of the United States' alleged commitment to equality in relation to the glaring lack of human and civil rights of Black people was the main reason why the "separate but equal" clause was overturned (Bell, 2004; Thompson Dorsey & Venzant Chambers, 2014).

Inherent to the concept of interest-convergence are the notions of self- and systematic interest, and a loss–gain binary (Milner, 2008). Self- and systematic interest refers to the tendency of White people to be more likely to support social justice and equity-oriented policies when it does not require them to alter their status (Bell, 1980). Individuals in power will only advance social justice agendas when the progress suits their self-interest and does not require that their "own ways, systems, statuses, and privileges of experiencing life change" (Milner, 2008, p. 334). Similarly, loss-gain binary suggests that the ability of White people to make decisions resulting in more racially equitable policies is shaped by whether they will ultimately lose something important to them—their power and privilege. We use the concept of interest-convergence to analyze how Black students' make sense of the case study PWIs policies and practices regarding the promotion of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The CRT tenet of interest-convergence guides our analysis because it enables us to position the students' narratives in a manner that simultaneously explains the significance of the institution's implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives while also critiquing how these initiatives perpetuate the status quo and Whiteness. An interest-convergence analysis allows us to highlight and make sense of the nuances that are situated in the students' experiential knowledge and show such nuance can be used to enact change. Theoretically, diversity and inclusion initiatives were created as a means to improve the campus racial climate of predominately White environments (Hikido & Murray, 2016) and for them to redress their historical legacy of exclusion nonwhite bodies. Interest-convergence pushes us to look past the surface level logic of these policies and practices and asks us to recognize how they feed into the Whiteness and White Supremacy embedded in these institutions. This article builds upon the work of Iverson (2007, 2012) and Harris et al. (2015) who have used CRT and an interest-convergence tenet to explain the permanence of racism in PWIs. It is our hope that this article will not only build on this work, but also provide the tools necessary to interrogate and challenge the ways in which institutional Whiteness is embedded in the diversity and inclusion and the organization of PWIs.

Case Study Design

This article draws from a larger qualitative case study that explored how a sample of Black undergraduate students who attend a predominately White institution of higher education with widely circulated diversity and inclusion initiatives make meaning of their experiences with racism and its impact on their mental health. The data presented in this article focus on how Black students assess and make meaning of their university's diversity and inclusion initiatives given their everyday experiences with racism on their campus. This research was modeled after a case study design because it enabled us to conduct an in-depth and multifaceted exploration of the complexities embedded within a social, real-life context.

The study data were collected at the University of the Southeast (pseudonym). The University of the Southeast is classified as a large, public, doctoral granting Research I University located in the southern region of the United States. At the time of data collection, a total of 26,362 undergraduate students were enrolled in the university. White students comprised approximately 77% of the undergraduate population, while Black students make up about 10% of the undergraduate population. This study was institutional review board approved. Like most PWIs, the University of the Southeast has adopted and developed many of the core elements that comprise the push for diversity and inclusion (e.g., a chief diversity officer, an Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all major campus schools and colleges). Commonly hosted diversity- and inclusion-related activities and programs include the following: lunches where preselected students, faculty, and staff convene and discuss why diversity and inclusion are important values to the campus community; a speaker series in which invited faculty and staff present interactive and thought-provoking topics related to issues of race and racism; a race and reconciliation program; and various programs hosted by the institutions multicultural center that celebrate and highlight issues of diversity and inclusion.

Data Collection and Participants

Data presented in this article were collected from four focus groups conducted with a sample of 30 Black students. Focus groups were the chosen method of data collection because the shared interactions and knowledge creations that occur within focus groups can result in thick rich data. Each focus group consisted of eight to 12 students and ranged from 45 min to 1 hr in length. The following eligibility criteria were used to recruit students into focus groups: students who were enrolled as undergraduates, matriculated for at least two consecutive semesters, self-identified as Black or African American, and were age 18 years or older. We recruited students with the assistance of faculty and staff who disseminated the recruitment information via listservs, which was comprised of a flyer and script that described the research study. Additional recruitment strategies included disseminating the study flyer through a group chat accessible only to Black students at the PWI and snowball sampling. Most of the students were recruited through the listserv e-mails, and the remainder was recruited through snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Students who participated in the first two focus groups were asked to recruit their peers or classmates. This method of recruitment was beneficial in recruiting harder to reach subsets of Black students, particularly men. For more demographic information, see Table 1.

The first author, who was a doctoral student at the time of data collection, used a semistructured focus group facilitation guide to conduct the focus groups. The facilitation guide consisted of three sections, each targeting a different dimension of the students lived experience. The first section examined the perceptions of cross-racial interactions on campus. The second section consisted of several questions aimed at gathering an in-depth understanding of how the students perceived and navigated the campus racial climate. The final section focused exclusively on gathering information about how the students assessed the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives. Each focus group was audio recorded, tran-

Table 1
Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Major	Academic year
Adrianna	Female	22	Journalism	Senior
Jerimiah	Male	21	Geography	Junior
Briana	Female	20	Public health	Sophomore
Jamison	Male	21	Business	Junior
Hope	Female	20	Social work	Sophomore
Fallon	Female	21	Social work	Junior
Valerie	Female	22	Sociology	Senior
Josiah	Male	20	Marketing	Sophomore
Yasmin	Female	19	English	Sophomore
Christina	Female	21	Political science	Junior
Niama	Female	22	Media arts	Senior
Renee	Female	21	Public health	Senior
Gabrielle	Female	22	Sociology	Senior
Anthony	Male	23	Public health	Super Senior
Raphael	Male	21	International business	Junior
Tamera	Female	19	Finance	Senior
Lisa	Female	20	Elementary education	Sophomore
Candace	Female	21	Exercise science	Junior
Toya	Female	22	Media arts	Senior
Kristina	Female	20	Social work	Sophomore
Angela	Female	19	Exercise science	Sophomore
Joy	Female	22	Black studies	Super Senior
Kendra	Female	21	Finance	Junior
Mercedes	Female	19	Political science	Sophomore
Jordan	Male	20	Sociology	Sophomore
Brittani	Female	22	Geography	Senior
Mia	Female	21	Biology	Junior
Jada	Female	20	Social work	Sophomore
Montrell	Male	22	Public health	Senior

scribed verbatim and analyzed using Atlas.ti software (Muhr, 2019). Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the students.

Data Analysis

The CRT tenet of interest-convergence, a constant comparative approach, and open and axial coding techniques guided the analysis of each focus group (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Employing these methods of data analysis enabled us to construct analytic codes and categories that emerged from the data, place priority on discovering meaning and generating new theoretical constructs, and generate a deeper articulation of the ways in which race and racism manifest in the students' lived experiences (Decuir-Gunby, Chapman, & Schutz, 2018). For example, open coding was essential when reading the focus groups immediately after they were transcribed. Open coding each focus group not only allowed us to develop an initial codebook, it also allowed us to conceptualize patterns that emerged within the student narratives. Example codes developed during the initial phase of open coding included: Whiteness centered diversity, negative campus racial climate, tokenization, feelings of exclusion, sadness about being Black, and White comfort. From the themes and codes that emerged during the initial phase of open coding, we were also able to identify relationships and patterns within the data by using an axial coding framework. Constant comparisons across the focus groups helped identify major themes when analyzed through an interest-convergence lens. Using interest-convergence as an analytical tool helps to acknowledge the role race and racism play in not only the students lived experiences but also the university's articulation of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Trustworthiness and Positionality

As a former student who attended multiple PWIs (including the case study PWI), my, the first author's, engagement in this research stems from my firsthand experience of how racism, including its institutional, interpersonal and internalized forms, negatively affected my sense of self and academic achievement. Therefore, I solicited the narratives of other students to critique and address the intersecting systems of oppression that are embedded in and normalized on college campuses that lead to an array of social and health inequities impacting Black students. When thinking about my experiences and how they have shaped my life, I draw from the works of critical race theory (CRT) to find emotional and spiritual solace and because of this, I am a passionate critical race scholar (and racial realist) who firmly believes that racism is a permanent fixture in U.S. social institutions, especially colleges and universities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and that liberation can be found in the lived experiences and voices of the silenced and marginalized.

I connected with my participants through our shared racial identity and shared educational experiences. Although these commonalities helped me recruit students and facilitate tough dialogues during the focus Groups 1 constantly engaged in reflective journaling and memoing to ensure that I recognized the power and privilege I possessed with the focus groups. For instance, journaling and memoing to help me actively confront unconscious assumptions that the Black experience is a monolith and there are similarities in Black oppression. I also engaged in such measures as member checking and peer debriefing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). These tools also helped me engage with the data more critically during the data analysis phase. As a critical race scholar member checking helped me ensure that I center the experiential knowledge of the students so that their counter narrative could be used to disrupt the commonly held deficit-oriented ideals commonly held about Black students. Debriefing with established scholars and peers in my field during the data analysis process helped further ground my commitment to CRT and interest-convergence because they would challenge any deficits in my analysis.

Findings

This study explored how Black students attending a PWI assess and make meaning of their university's diversity and inclusion initiatives given their encounters with everyday racism. Rich narratives of exploring the intersections of race, racism, and Whiteness emerged out of each focus group as the students reasoned through their experiences and evaluated their university's diversity and inclusion initiatives. As a result, we identified three themes and several subthemes via our iterative and interactive analytical approaches. The following themes emerged from the data: (a) surface level diversity and no inclusion, (b) Whiteness-centered diversity and inclusion, and (c) a sense of (not) belonging.

Surface Level Diversity and No Inclusion

The students' critique of the superficial nature of their institutions' diversity and inclusion initiatives was a common theme across each focus group. The surface-level diversity and no inclusion theme encompassed students' perceptions of their university's implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives and their critical assessment of the reasoning behind its implementation. Three subthemes emerged from the focus group discussions: quota system, under pressure, and becoming a token.

Quota System

Moderator:	What does diversity inclusion mean to you?
Jerimiah (junior, geography major):	It doesn't mean quotas, that's for sure. It doesn't mean we have to have this amount of Black students. But it does mean that we treat our Black students like they're people, not like they're statistics. It's not like we're numbers that they have to meet. A Black student in a classroom is just like a white student in a classroom. But just like any other students, they come with different experiences and they come with different viewpoints and they should be valued and considered just like everybody else's should.

Like most PWIs, the University of the Southeast has dealt with its share of student protests and student demands calling for a more equitable campus racial climate. Instances such as a White student in Blackface, the N-word written on campus property, and social media posts were some of the publicized events that sparked more visible campus activism. Less publicly known, yet still significant, instances indicative of a negative campus racial climate included videos of a professor making derogatory comments about Black people, racist messages sent through the university affiliated Yik Yak account, hyper surveillance of Black students by campus police and a rise in racist behavior following the 2016 election. In response, the university hired a chief diversity officer, created positions for Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within the major schools and colleges within the university, and developed a series of diversity and inclusion initiatives in collaboration with the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. During the focus group sessions, there seemed to be a shared undercurrent of apprehension by the students when they were asked to discuss the university's implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives. Many of the students openly shared their concerns about what they perceived to be the real reasoning behind the university's implementation of the initiatives. For instance, Brianna a sophomore public health major stated,

> Instead of taking our complaints and our concerns and our feelings, actually into consideration and working on making them operable and making this campus a better place for a bunch of different students, who are not white, who are not heterosexual, who are not cisgender, who are not in Greek life, they just kind of are like, "Oh, okay. Cool. So you want this event where we can talk about that?" No, we want changes to the actual infrastructure of the university, to university policy, so that you can show us, we can feel like we belong. You can support us better, because right now, nah. You're not. And it's frustrating. It's really frustrating, because they want to look good. They do not want to do the work.

Many students voiced that they believed the university implemented the diversity and inclusion initiatives as a means to appease the Black students, rather than legitimately promote social and racial justice. Their reasoning behind this assertion centered on how the university conceptualized diversity and inclusion on their predominately White campus. For example, when asked to explain why they felt the initiatives were created to appease Black students, several students responded by stating that they felt as if the university viewed diversity and inclusion as simply admitting more Black students or as a "percentage/ quota system." For instance, Jamison, a junior business major, said his experiences made him feel like the university, "really does have a quota for the number of Black people they allow here." Likewise, Hope and Fallon stated, "I think when they say 'diversity,' it's more like—like a quota, like a percentage," and "we're here to meet a quota, we have to earn our spot."

The exchange between Valerie and Hope, presented in the following extract, encapsulates the perceptions shared by many of the students. The conversation between Valerie and Hope was stimulated by a question posed to the focus group asking them to share their opinions about how they think the university conceptualizes and exhibits diversity and inclusion to the campus community.

Valerie:	This is a tricky one because diversity I feel like as of right now what everybody feels diversity is if you got –
Hope:	One Black person.
Valerie:	One Black, one Asian. You have the token people, too, the people that look the most distinct for whatever the stereotype is, those are the three people that you have for the other minority groups. Then you've got a ton of White people that are just random. It always baffles me that it's like you know, for example, you can identify different kinds of White girls by their hair color, and yet you cannot do that for a Black girl. So it's like, "Oh yeah, that's a blonde. That's a brunette. She has red hair." But for a Black girl, it's like, "Oh that's the Black girl." It's like, "Okay. Well, all right." So I feel diversity is only . . .
Hope:	Surface level.
Valerie:	Yeah, it's only to the surface.

The conversation between Valerie and Hope is one of many examples that emerged within the focus groups that illustrates how and why students regarded the implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives as superficial. Their dialogue critiques the university's use of the racial/ethnic "other" to symbolize diversity and how that is based upon stereotypes that essentialize what it means to be non-White. For example, Valerie and Hope point out that several White students can illustrate diversity but only one

representation of a Black student exists, which feeds into the erroneous idea that Black students are monoliths. The narratives within this theme demonstrate how simply focusing on a structural form of diversity does not equate to a more equitable environment.

Under Pressure

> Someone put a little bit of pressure on them. The Black people was complaining a little bit too much. They said, 'Throw them a bone. Throw them a bone. Get them off me.
>
> —Josiah, sophomore, marketing major

According to the university's website, the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives were a component of a strategic plan created by upper administration to build and maintain an inclusive campus environment where students, faculty and staff could feel welcomed, valued, and supported. By implementing these initiatives, the university aimed to recruit and retain a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff to enhance the campus community. When asking the students about their opinion of the diversity and inclusion initiatives, their perceptions were different from the ideals imagined by the university. Christiana, a junior political science major, stated, "The university is paying a lot of lip service towards diversity and inclusion." In response, Yasmin, a sophomore English major, stated,

> It was something that they were kind of pressured into doing. Like, all of the other schools are doing it; you gotta do it to be competitive. It's like, okay, everyone's being so modernized. All these different schools have Black programs. Let's bring some Black students here. We want to throw that one Black girl and that one Asian kid on our admissions packet.

When asked why they felt that way, Yasmin responded,

> If the pressure's not put on them, they're not gonna do it. So, I feel like it was kind of like where are all the Black people? Like people kind of asked, people wanted to know. And it was like—it was something that they were kind of pressured into doing.

Raphael supported this assertion by sharing his experience as a student activist that was involved in a student organized walk out.

> I think back to the student demonstration when a bunch of students including myself gathered together to present a list of 12 intersectional demands to the university. They accepted them and they said, "Oh yes, we're going to work on these. In fact, we're already working on a lot of these." And that's a lot of what people have said to us and what administration has said to us, and even as we have asked for and demanded transparency, there's still not a whole lot, even when we pressure them.
>
> I do not know what's going on. I do not know what's in the works. I do not know where we are on anything or if we're actually working on anything. And so, they have this Office of Diversity and Inclusion now, that's not actually working on diversity and inclusion. They will show their faces every now and again to tell us and assure us, "Oh yeah, we're working on it. We're making good progress." But as usual, nothing has happened, just a lot of lip service toward diversity and inclusion. They only do it when we pressure them about our demands.

In line with the narratives within the previous theme, the students' assertions make it clear that the ways the university is going about improving diversity and inclusion are superficial and not focused on creating an equitable environment. Their thoughts and concerns not only critique the intention behind the creation of the initiatives, but also speak to why only incremental change has been made. The diversity and inclusion initiatives were not created with the goal of creating an inclusive campus and are destined to produce little to no change because they lack a critical awareness of institutionalized Whiteness and privilege.

Becoming a Token

> I think that they're depending on the fact that there are a lot of different students here to teach students how to be diverse and culturally aware of things. I think that they're depending on the students to teach each other about themselves. I always tell me it's not my job to be professionally Black. It's not my job to educate you or explain myself. I do not want to do that every time. It gets tiring. I do not know. I feel like the university could do more. A lot more.
>
> —Naima, senior, media arts major

Tokenization was a theme that spanned all four focus groups. A number of students voiced their thoughts and concerns regarding the ways in which Black students were being used as props and pawns to position the university as a multicultural and diverse institution. A prime example is the narrative shared by Renee, a junior public health major, who recounted how her photo became a prominent feature on the campus's diversity and inclusion website. Renee's narrative was spurred by a statement made by Gabrielle and Anthony:

> Gabrielle: And it's like, I do not know, you be seeing all these Black people on all the [institution's] websites. Where you finding all these Black people, because I'm a junior and I ain't seen all these Black people.
>
> Anthony: Like, I never seen—[Laughs]
>
> Gabrielle: But you find them for your pictures, do not you?

Renee's recollection of the event began with her sitting in a lunchroom with her friends when she was abruptly approached by another student who asked her if she wanted to be involved in a photo shoot.

> Like, it was, like, literally, like, me and my four Black friends like sitting there. We were just about to have dinner and they were like, "Oh, yeah. We're gonna do a photoshoot. You want to join?" And I was like, "Okay." They're like, "You'll get a free T-shirt." I was like, "Okay, sure." And then they brought this little White girl over and they were like, "Yeah, she's taking the picture with you too. Come sit down. Sit there." And then she, like, sat on the end. And they were like, "No, sit down in between them. Pretend y'all having a conversation." And they, like, made us, like, fake talk so they can come take a picture. I wish I was lying, but I'm so serious. And that was right on the front of the diversity website, it's like all of us laughing and talking. When the reality is, like, it's fake.

In line with Lisa's narrative (to follow), Renee expresses how she and her friends were used as tokens to promote the illusion of diversity and inclusion on the campus. The students' narratives illustrate how they perceive the university to be working toward a superficial form of diversity and inclusion that is not about creat-

ing structural changes. They report that the manner in which the institution conceptualizes and articulates the diversity and inclusion initiatives is driven by the needs of the institution—not the students.

Whiteness-Centered Diversity and Inclusion

The Whiteness-centered diversity and inclusion theme encompasses the students' understanding of the ways in which Whiteness and White supremacy are embedded within the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives. Two subthemes emerged from the focus group discussions: White privilege and White comfort.

White Privilege

> I do not really see them making great, great strides in terms of diversity and inclusion. I feel like it's just a university and it's not directed toward helping Black people be more visible or anything like that. I think it's just day-to-day operations, and in America, day-to-day operations typically favor White people.
>
> —Raphael, junior, international business major

The students' critiques of the diversity and inclusion initiatives also arose out of their direct involvement in university sponsored activities. An overwhelming number of the students had participated in various diversity and inclusion-oriented activities and programs, however, they all seemed to share similar perspective about their experiences. Students acknowledged the value of creating safe spaces to talk about race and racism, while sharing their misgivings about the ways in which the university went about executing the initiatives.

For example, Tamera, a sophomore math major, was very vocal about how her position as the president of a department-level diversity and inclusion student committee meant she frequently attended university-sponsored diversity and inclusion events. She acknowledged the value in having such activities and programs given that she was typically the only Black student involved but discussed how they seemed to fall short of their idealized intent. The event she describes in the following text involved a group of student leaders and activists eating lunch and discussing pertinent topics related to diversity and inclusion with White administration, faculty, and staff. The overall goal of this event was to gather hand-selected students, faculty, and staff to discuss why diversity and inclusion is important and to brainstorm ways to foster an inclusive campus community. Tamera recounted,

> I went to one of the little meetings for diversity and inclusion, and it was supposed to be at a table for diverse people and talk about topics. It was still just the same old, same old, I was one of few Black students. Everybody was scared to speak the truth because you had high officials in that room. Nobody wanted to say the truth of how race relations really are on this campus and what they go through on a day-to-day basis, whether you are minorities or people of different sexualities. Everybody was scared to speak up because what is it going to change?

She continued by stating,

> I think the best way to really increase diversity and inclusion would be to put people who are of color or from marginalized groups into positions of power, in positions that actually dominate the campus and the diversity and inclusion initiatives. I think it would improve so much more if we had a voice up there, because White students are either afraid or do not see or use their privilege.

Although the event was probably created with the intention of fostering an equitable and engaging dialogue, Tamera indicated how they continue to perpetuate the status quo due to unchecked power dynamics. Tamera's experience illustrates how silence is used as a means to ensure the preservation of White privilege. Likewise, Lisa, a sophomore elementary education major, stated,

> I feel like there's a big presence of white privilege on this campus. We're kind of forced to be in their world, and they have the option to pretend that ours doesn't exist. I think a lot of [White] people on this campus choose to do that. How is making an organization for only Black people—how is that gonna promote diversity? What we need is for the white organizations to welcome us into theirs and to make us feel like we have a place to be.

Lisa's narrative illustrates how she believes that rather than address the source of the problem on campus—White privilege—the institution creates organizations that aid in further marginalizing Black students. Each narrative and experience shared within this theme call attention to how White college students, faculty, and staff are able to navigate the campus environment without having to critically examine the unearned privileges and power associated with their race and Whiteness. Whiteness and privilege shields them from acknowledging the shortcomings within the diversity related activities and programs and the ways in which they are complicit. When Whiteness and White privilege are centered within the initiatives they no longer have the best interest of the most vulnerable student groups within the campus in mind. Rather they operate as yet another system that forces Black students to assimilate and conform to White culture in order to thrive on campus.

White Comfort

> I think White people are really invested in their Whiteness. There is a lot that comes with Whiteness that they do not want to give up. They do not want to recognize that areas around the school engages in a lot of discrimination, a lot of racial discrimination. They do not want to admit that they . . . why they do not have a lot of Black people in their Greek organizations. They do not want to give up what it means to be southern, and how great it is to be a southern person. And then it's also a deal about not wanting to admit you're wrong. And also, they are more concerned about being called racist than actually doing racist things. They do not want to change their behaviors. They do not want to confront their own prejudices. They do not want to change their behavior.
>
> —Tiana, senior, finance major

Overlapping the students' discussions about White privilege embedded in the diversity and inclusion initiatives were concerns about White comfort. Namely, the students voiced that the diversity and inclusion initiatives were created in a way that benefitted White people and made them feel comfortable. In the example that follows, three students engaged in a conversation in response to questions about who they thought the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives benefited.

Candace: White people.

Toya: Yeah, it makes them look better.

Candace: It makes them feel better, too.

Toya: It's easy to say that you're doing something, but are you really?

Kristina: It gives them a way to back up the fact that they aren't racist the next time they say something racist.

Gabrielle: Yea, like we have the lunches where we get sat at these tables with a bunch of different people, sometimes administrators, and then we get to talk about these very bullshit questions, and then the administrators, if they're there, will turn it back around on us, and what are we doing and what can we do? And why aren't we doing this and it's our fault that we're not being included on campus, and it's our fault that people are being racist, and it's our fault that White people do not know how not to be racist.

And instead of taking our complaints and our concerns actually into consideration and working on making them operable and making this campus a better place for a bunch of different students, who are not white they just kind of are like, "Oh, okay. Cool. So you want this event where we can talk about that?" No, we want changes to the actual infrastructure of the university, to university policy, so that you can show us, we can feel like we belong. You can support us better, because right now, nah. You're not. And it's frustrating. It's really frustrating, because they want to look good. They do not want to do the work.

Nested within the students' conversations about White students, faculty and staff benefiting from the implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives were their thoughts about why they believed it to be that way. Many students found that the manner in which racist incidents were handled on their campus affirmed their beliefs. The incident the students discuss in the following text involved a picture of a White student writing a racial epithet on school property as a means to explain why certain campus amenities did not work properly.

Moderator: Who do you think may benefit from the diversity and inclusion initiatives?

Angela: It makes White people feel more comfortable.

Joy: They do it to put their stuff out there. So, they just do it just to say they did just so it'll be there, just in case.

Kendra: "Oh, we got stuff for Black people, too."

Angela: Yeah, it makes them feel more comfortable like, "Oh, no, they're totally doing X, Y, and Z for you. So you should be happy that that's happening." But it's like, "Okay." The thing with the girl and the board, did she ever come back to school? I do not know. There was something else that was posted that someone said or did in a group chat. We were all like, "Did you report it?" And she [university administrator] was like, "Yeah, they're going through the conduct process." But then is something really gonna happen? Are they just gonna talk to her? Are there actual consequences? Are you just talking to this person, and they're like, "Oh, I didn't know? I didn't understand"? Are you actually holding people accountable for their actions, or are you just going through these motions to, what is it? Assuage people or whatever so, "Oh, the African-American students can kind of see that we're doing stuff about it." But then you're not really doing anything about it. And then the White students also see [by the administration's action] if they actually care. The white students are like "yeah, they're doing something about it. So don't be mad. Something's being done." But then to the other people that are actually doing the racist things, it's like, "Oh, I'm just gonna get a slap on the wrist."

Mercedes: I feel like, like what you said, it's like it's just there for show.

Analyzing the narratives of the students using the CRT concept of interest-convergence exposes how the rhetoric behind the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives protects White students, faculty and staff, thereby reinforcing their privilege, rather than benefiting the population they were allegedly created to serve. The normalcy of Whiteness and White privilege couched within these narratives is a larger symptom of the White supremacy entrenched in the university and its practices. Although the accounts shared by the students highlight the ways in which this oppressive structure may operate on the individual level, it is also important to point out how they reflect a systemic problem within the university. As asserted by the students' narratives, the diversity and inclusion initiatives were not created to dismantle oppressive structures within the university, rather they are ideals espoused by White staff and administration that only equate to incremental change that doesn't threaten the generations of institutionalized Whiteness and White supremacy that has been built into the university.

A Sense of (Not) Belonging

> Some people think we do not deserve to be here. Some people think we got in solely because of our race or whatever. The whole affirmative action thing, and that's not the case. Some people seem to look at me as if I should . . . I feel like they just assume that I should be playing some type of sport because I'm Black and at a PWI.
>
> —Jordan, sophomore, sociology major

The students' personal narratives about their experiences with racism on campus reverberated within each focus group. Numerous students shared experiences of incidents of discriminatory treatment by faculty and staff in the form of assumptions of cheating due to high test scores, hyper-surveillance by the campus police, and daily racial slights in the form of denigrating racial microaggressions. While acknowledging their experiences with campus racism, the students also articulated how those experiences impacted them given the university's promotion of being a diverse and inclusive environment.

Students' were asked to think about how their experiences with racism on their campus influenced how they evaluated the diver-

sity and inclusion initiatives. An overwhelming number of responses to this question centered on the student's admission that their experiences made them feel like they did not fit in on their campus. The students discussed how the juxtaposition of their experiences with racism and the implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives made them reevaluate how they felt about being a Black student on the campus. For example, when asked how he interpreted his experiences with racism on campus given the diversity and inclusion initiatives, Brittani, a senior geography major stated, "I feel like I am disposable, and that I'm just a temporary and momentary thing. Not only a thing, but an issue that is going to go away eventually." Similarly, Mia, a junior biology major, stated, "I think, personally, the message they send to me is that my place is beneath them." Sentiments such as "I feel like I don't belong here," "I feel alone a lot of the time," and "some people don't want me here, some people would rather I wasn't here and I wasn't at their university" were commonly shared throughout the focus groups.

Many of the narratives captured within this theme are describing the emotional, or affective, impact of living within an environment that purports racial inclusivity while still maintaining racism. For instance, Jada, sophomore social work major, stated,

> I guess, it would be not really telling me that I have a place, but that this is their place. This is their school. They dominate academia. They dominate the classroom. They dominate in population. I feel like they do not have to make room for me because this is their space. So they do not have to be inclusive because, again, this is their campus. So it's not so much of telling me what my place is, it's just, I guess, ignoring you or making you feel disregarded.

Affirming Jada's statement in the preceding extract, Montrell, a senior public health major stated, "[I] think the message is that there definitely is a place, but it's more of a contractually-bound place." When asked to explain what he meant by a "contractually bound place," he elaborated by stating, "Yes, you're here because we have to; we can't not accept Black people. We have to have Black people at our school. We have to fill a certain quota. We have to do this and do that." Montrell continued by stating he feels this way because of the way the school is structured,

> You definitely can tell that the power structures are not really set up as to where there are not really a lot of Black people in power at the executive level who could speak on behalf of us. So there's no Black people sitting in the Provost Office that you could call and file a complaint with; there's no Black people in the president's office and stuff like that. So you kind of feel like your chain of power stops right here. But then, meanwhile, some people can go all the way up here.

Regardless of the purported intentions and expectations behind the implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives, the students' narratives capture the material actualization of the initiatives. The initiatives enabled a campus environment where racism persists in part because of a lack of interrogation of institutionalized Whiteness and structural racism. Their narratives, particularly Montrell's, indicate how Black people's lack of access to higher level positions is yet another mechanism that keeps White power structures in place.

Discussion

The students' narratives illustrate how they perceive their university's superficial, or surface level, approach to the promotion of diversity and inclusion created an environment that was palatable to those in power while perpetuating the oppression of students of color. By employing the CRT concept of interest-convergence in my analysis of students' narratives, the findings illustrate what happens when university initiatives geared toward promoting a racially equitable campus climate converge with the interests of the White academy (White students, faculty, and staff). The findings from this study demonstrate the ways in which White privilege undergirds the university's implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives. How the university's diversity and inclusion initiatives were conceptualized and implemented did not require an analysis of the institutionalized Whiteness prevalent in the structures and practices of the university. The narratives that emerged from the focus groups also highlight how diversity and inclusion initiatives at the case study PWI were perceived to be approached as agenda items, rather than paradigmatic changes, which resulted in perpetuating and protecting institutionalized Whiteness and racism, rather than creating substantive changes toward equity. In this article, I presented the narratives of the students to help understand the manifestation of the marketization of diversity and inclusion as well as whiteness centered diversity and inclusion.

Interest-Convergence and the Marketization of Diversity and Inclusion

This study illuminates how using interest-convergence as an analytical tool offers a valid critique of the commodification of diversity and inclusion at the case study PWI. There is a growing body of literature that incorporates interest-convergence into critical scholarship on education (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Harris et al., 2015; Thompson Dorsey & Venzant Chambers, 2014). One such critique found in the literature is the way in which Black students, and students of color more generally, are used as props to sustain the practice of marketing diversity (structural/visual) to attract students as consumers (Harris et al., 2015). Institutional and administrative leaders, who are usually overwhelming White, possess the power to manipulate and construct a diverse student body, which serves the needs of the institution while situating Black students as a commodity that White students and a broader White public can consume (Iftikar, 2016). This commodification allows Black students to be positioned as providers of diversity that Whites students, faculty, and staff can both consume in order to perpetuate discourses of multiculturalism. Rather than being seen for what they are, students with their own set of needs and goals, Black students are objectified for the market value they can bring (Iftikar, 2016).

Renee's story, highlighted in the preceding text, about being asked to participate in a photo for promotional material for the university is a prime illustration of this concept. PWI marketing/promotional materials typically contain images of diversity that are significantly different than the actual student body (Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013). Rather than presenting representative student demographics in their illustrations, PWIs are more likely to symbolize diversity by oversaturating their materials images

with Black students (Pippert et al., 2013). Most institutions focus on skin color as a way to portray an observable definition of diversity (Urciuoli, 2003). Renee's experience illustrates how Black students are positioned as objects to serve the needs of their institution. Black students are valued for the imagined cultural differences they provide and then they are positioned as objects for consumption which means their own needs are made insignificant under the guise of diversity and inclusion (Ahmed, 2012; Iftikar, 2016; Urciuoli, 1999).

In this article we show how the students' narratives demonstrate how their institution is attempting to create an equitable and inclusive environment. The nominal and incremental changes that were implemented, however, have done little to change the culture of the university, thus preserving the status quo. For example, many of the students acknowledged the creation of safe spaces (e.g., organizations, programs, and activities for Black students) as steps toward creating a more inclusive, welcoming campus racial climate, but they also discussed how such advancements seemed rudimentary, counterintuitive and yet another way to marginalize and silence Black students. Rather than create segregated spaces only for Black students, the participants called for a university staff and administration to take a closer look at the White privilege rampant on the campus. As articulated within the narratives, even with such structures in place, racism and racial discrimination was a commonplace aspect of their college experience. Students' views exemplify how admitting more students of color or creating organizations and programs specifically for students of color are not enough if they continue to feel unwelcomed, unwanted, and invalidated. Such efforts are not a remedy for structural and systematic racism (Puritty et al., 2017).

Whiteness-Centered Diversity and No Inclusion

Many of the students shared the view that the university's implementation of the diversity and inclusion initiatives solely benefited White students, faculty and staff; which made them feel as if they weren't valued members of the campus environment. Most universities conceptualize diversity in terms of the numerical value of people of color to make it more palatable to those in power because "token incrementalism in terms of racial heterogeneity does not substantially threaten generations of institutionalized racial privilege" (Harris et al., 2015, p. 25). Many of the initiatives centered on diversity and inclusion are complicit in perpetuating a historically specific, socially constructed, hierarchical racial order that favors Whiteness (HuDeHart, 2000). The dominant conceptualization of diversity directly centers Whiteness because it "starts from the dominance of White worldviews, and sees the culture, experiences, and indeed lives, of people of color only as they relate to or interact with the white world" (Bell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 907). Such a conceptualization forces students of color to simultaneously assimilate to White culture to succeed while requiring them to be complicit in the marginalization their own culture (Harris et al., 2015). The ways institutions of higher education conceptualize diversity reflects and produces particular realities for people of color on university campuses nationwide (Iverson, 2007). Dominant diversity discourses construct people of color as outsiders, at-risk victims, commodities, and change agents (Iverson, 2007). Although this study did not directly interrogate the case study PWIs written diversity and inclusion initiatives, the concerns and thoughts voiced by the students mirror these findings in that students of color can become commodities or pawns in the business of diversity in higher education (Iverson, 2007).

Another way in which the findings illustrate how Whiteness is centered within the case study PWIs diversity and inclusion initiatives is the manner in which racist incidents have been handled on campus. Within each focus group students consistently emphasized that the methods university administrators used to publicly handle racist incidents on campus seemed like a "slap on the wrist" that ignored the larger problems at hand. This insight is consistent with previous research investigating how universities nationwide respond to racist incidents on their respective campus. Statements college presidents released after a racially motivated campus incident were analyzed. Even though the responses to these events were disseminated on multiple platforms, they typically did not acknowledge the systematic or institutional issues underlying the event (Cole & Harper, 2017).

Given that the majority of the Black college population is enrolled at PWIs, there is a vital need to critically examine the characteristics of these spaces and analyze how they influence the academic and social development of Black college students (Beasley, Chapman-Hilliard, & McClain, 2016). The students' narratives illustrate how structural diversity alone does not acknowledge or ameliorate how racism is built into the university. The absence of discussions about experiences of real, meaningful inclusion among the students is also indicative of the widespread and unacknowledged disconnect between diversity and inclusion initiatives and the actual experience of the students' they were created to serve (Puritty et al., 2017).

A college education can significantly influence overall lifetime health and wellness, life satisfaction, and earning potential (Braveman, Egerter, & Williams, 2011). The enactment of diversity and inclusion initiatives not only function as a response to the increasing number of racial and ethnic minorities at PWIs, but also as mechanism to retain students of color and ensure that they persist to degree completion (Ahmed, 2012; Hikido & Murray, 2016). Many university officials are aware of the importance of addressing the diversifying composition of its students, and that diversity and inclusion initiatives are a means for them to implement new strategies to serve their students and improve their campus racial climate. Despite this, social media, news outlets, and student activism have contributed to the general public's acknowledgment of realities that many students, faculty and staff of color face at PWIs. As a result, many PWIs have discussed and responded to pressures to increase public discourses and interventions aimed at supporting diversity and inclusion—like the university discussed within this article. However, it is also important to note while it is commendable that predominately White universities place value on diversity and inclusion, the means by which they do so is problematic and still perpetuates the status quo. Because the United States is an inherently racist and capitalist society, diversity and inclusion in PWIs is packaged in a that makes the university seem more marketable and thus that lacks an in-depth interrogation of the structures, practices, and institutionalized Whiteness that silences communities of color (Byrd, 2015; Hamer & Lang, 2015; Harris et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Despite the growing number of students, faculty, and staff of color in previously White-only institutions of higher education, the climate, structure, and culture of these spaces continue to be unwelcoming and racially contentious (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2016; Evans & Moore, 2015). This study illustrates the need for more targeted research that examines the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives, from the perspective of students and faculty and staff of color. Although arguably well-intentioned, the students did not find the efforts to promote diversity and inclusion at the case study PWI sufficient. Students wanted structural changes, which they believed were necessary to achieve a more equitable environment. The study findings provide an entry point for researchers and university administrators alike to rethink and reconstruct diversity and inclusion initiatives. These initiatives can simultaneously create a more welcoming and equitable environment for students, faculty, and staff of color while also dismantling the structures built into the university that perpetuate oppression. As students in this study indicated, even with the creation of diversity and inclusion initiatives, when a racially insensitive event occurs on campus, the focus is typically placed on students of color to bring it to the attention of the administration.

When those in power create diversity and inclusion initiatives but do not possess an understanding of the ways in which White supremacy and racial hierarchies structure institutions of higher education, their policies and programs amount to cursory tactics that can be very harmful for Black students. These initiatives can reinforce stereotypes, create unequal positions, and exacerbate self-segregation (Woodall, 2013). As an analytical concept, interest-convergence also reveals how such actions work to obscure a focus on the cause of the racial issue and place the burden on students of color to contend with an unwelcoming environment (Cabrera et al., 2016). This research is one example in the growing body of literature that uses critical methods to challenge the normalized status quo within predominately White institutions of higher education.

Because racism and Whiteness were embedded in the creation of PWIs, the contemporary reality such institutions create for Black students, regardless of the initiatives created to atone for this history, protect a racialized hierarchy that significantly impacts Black students' educational experiences (Bourke, 2016). Incorporating CRT-oriented perspectives into predominately White educational spaces can bring about awareness of the role in which higher education plays in perpetuating and reinforcing racism and White Supremacy. CRT can help unmask the racism that is rooted in PWIs in conjunction with providing the tools necessary to acknowledge and work against the systematic structures that further disadvantage and oppress Black students (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010). For example, the tenets of CRT can help campus leaders, faculty, and students alike acknowledge and actively dismantle the racialized discourses and perspectives, usually anti-Black, that have been incorporated into the curriculum, diversity initiatives, and institutional policies. Given that the CRT tenets address unique, yet interconnected, issues they can be employed to unearth the various ways in which PWIs reproduce racism (Hiraldo, 2010). It is imperative that campus leaders, faculty, and staff grasp both how current conceptualizations of diversity and inclusion operate as yet another way to tokenize and isolate Black students on campus and the material effects such initiatives produce.

In practice, such strategies would mirror the suggestions provided by the students who participated in this study. The remainder of this section will highlight strategies related to the major themes: decentering Whiteness, reconceptualizing diversity and inclusion, and intentionally responding to campus racial incidents. Decentering Whiteness was a motif present throughout the findings section. Drawing from the students' narratives, before any groundwork can be initiated, it is imperative that faculty, staff, and students in positions of power acknowledge their privilege and recognize the covert ways their unearned privilege maintains a racial hierarchy on their campus. As asserted by Harris, Barone, and Davis (2015) "actions justified through stated goals of diversity without acknowledgment of the longstanding effects of privilege, power, and oppression equate to an inability to facilitate meaningful change toward inclusion on college campuses" (p. 25). Without this in-depth internal work, faculty, staff and students will continue to contribute to the structural inequity that permeates the campus and continues to privilege and center Whites. As many students in the study called for a change in the infrastructure of the university and its policies, this initial step could be the catalyst that propels additional structural and intentional change.

Reliance on numerical diversity was an additional concern raised by the students in this study. Focusing on numerical diversity as a means to improve the campus climate simply results in tokenism and suggests that there are formulaic methods, rather than holistic and equitable ways to ensure the well-being of all students. Rather than focusing on token incrementalism, a careful investigation of (a) the purported rational behind increasing diversity, (b) how such policies maintain inequity due to their inability to substantively challenge and dismantle generations of institutionalized racial privilege, and (c) the systemic barriers Black students may while enrolled in a PWI can serve as steps toward change.

Likewise, creating and subsequently implementing intentional methods to respond to racist campus occurrences is another practical strategy that can be put into place. In practice, a move toward creating and implementing intentional methods to respond to racist events could be achieved through capacity building (Kezar & Fries-Britt, 2018). Capacity building, which would involve the development of skills, structures, and resource aimed at responding to institutional concerns, would not only effectively communicate concern and empathy, but also convey to students that they are valuable members of the campus community. Moreover, capacity building could also respond to student's lack of inclusion and diminished sense of belonging by illustrating that the institution is as equally invested in them as they are other students. In summation, racial equity will always be an unattainable goal of PWIs until they begin to tackle and dismantle the critical issue of the matter—racism and Whiteness.

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