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Education Based on Graduate Marginalized Perspective

Bryanna Edwards
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Education based on Graduate Marginalized Perspective

By

Bryanna Edwards

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Sociology

Emphasis in College Teaching

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2023

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Education based on Graduate Marginalized Perspective

Bryanna Edwards

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

X

Paul Prew
Advisor

X

Yalda Hamidi
Committee Member

X

Aaron Hoy
Committee Member

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Abstract

The United States Education system has received many budget cuts throughout the years. Sixty-six percent of Americans believe that the United States Education system needs major changes or to be rebuilt (Pew Research, 2013). There has been much debate regarding the first step toward reform. To begin to answer this question this research investigated some of the most restrictive educational spaces.

The most available and beneficial first steps to reform lie in the minds and practices within the educational institution. This research could lead to cultivating more inclusive policies and practices, to serve an increasingly diverse student population. Although disciplines such as Gender and Women Studies have begun to embrace the diversity of thought within its discipline, Sociology and most other disciplines have mostly faltered in addressing educational disparities among Black, gender diverse Americans in the classroom.

To cultivate more inclusive policies and practices research garnered from interviews of the most marginalized people inside of graduate education regarding their educational experiences will disclose that hegemonic teaching practices and curriculum perpetuate feelings of exclusion from students of diverse backgrounds. To reduce this exclusion curriculum changes are necessary to reflect the growing diversity in classrooms, in addition to faculty introspection regarding implicit bias in curricular construction and student interaction.

Introduction

Americans are increasingly dissatisfied with the United States Education System (Gallup 2022); however, most Americans lack the socio-historical knowledge related to the system's origins. America has chosen to obscure the appalling brutality that founded the country, especially in regard to school curricula, thereby continuing America's commitment to white supremacy. Textbooks have brushed over and/or excluded (by law in some states) the destruction that colonization inflicted upon Native Americans, the dehumanization and systematic oppression of African and Black Americans, and the continued racism towards various diverse communities. These exclusions continue under the guise of protecting certain students, without addressing the active harm it inflicts upon other students. Although prime research material for those involved and concerned about education, this issue is under-researched for those at the most marginalized intersections in the United States (Morris 2018).

Black people assigned female at birth have been ignored or marginalized regarding Women and Black studies. Experiencing the United States from the most marginalized locations exposes this cohort to a diverse set of problems. For many years Americans have expressed dissatisfaction with the American education system; yet educational policies have not changed, and the education system has not been reconstructed (Yosso 2002; Sue et al 2021; Liou and Rojas 2020; Leonardi 2013).

This research will illuminate deleterious mechanisms inside the educational system which can be combated within institutions through policies and procedures. Reconstructing educational institutions based upon data from one of the most marginalized populations will ensure more diverse and inclusive practices. More diverse and inclusive practices/policies/procedures serve not only to decolonize education, but also to increase diversity of thought and production of human beings capable of challenging false information. Society will gain better educational policies and practices, and consequently individuals capable of problem-solving by utilizing a variety of perspectives.

Although most Americans believe the US Education System needs major changes, most Americans are unsure regarding the first step toward reform (Gallup 2022). Typically, studies regarding educational injustice focus upon the US Grade School Public Education Systems retroactively (Lau and Williams, 2010; Solozano et al., 2000). Correspondingly, this research allows participants of the educational institutions to share their educational experience retroactively and currently to provide data regarding the diverse nature of educational experiences. This research emphasizes the experiences of diverse people involved in one of the most exclusive educational spaces: graduate school. Because graduate programs can magnify social injustices, graduate students-especially those who fall along the ethnic minority alternative gendered, or woman intersection are the perfect participants to identify the mechanisms which reinforce exclusionary practices.

Review of the Literature

Intro

The federal government has decided not to unify education programs across the United States, leaving the responsibility to construct curriculum to the states. The states have maintained the distribution of school funding created after emancipation. School funding was historically designed to ensure that wealthy areas did not contribute to the educational funding of less fortunate areas. States and the federal government have not ensured equitable student outcomes nor changed curriculum to reflect the diversity of the student body and of student learning (Liou and Rojas 2018; Ladson-Billings 2014; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Sue, Nunez, and Harris 2022). The focus of education on American Ideals and white history does not provide proper justice to any student, especially those on the margins (Ladson-Billings 2014; Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco, Casanova, Martin, et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2022). Curricular construction underscores students' position in the classroom (Allen and Liou 2018; Leonardo 2013). The refusal to acknowledge past wrongs/wrongdoings, tell history from diverse points of view, and implement equitable policies has led the US education system to replicate white supremacist ideals and continue to serve the explicitly racist policies in history (Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2022).

For many years Americans have expressed dissatisfaction with the American education system, with a majority citing educational/curriculum

approaches as the source of their dissatisfaction (Gallup, 2022). The educational institution is tiered, meaning different areas of educational institutions have varying degrees of ease to attend. The more exclusive areas are scrutinized the most and often have fewer opportunities for entry. Students who can gain access to these areas are under extreme pressure, which can be amplified if they hold devalued identities. Yet these students still must perform (Grady et al. 2014; Pearlin 1999; Mallinckrodt and Leong 1992; Nelson et al. 2001).

This research aims to illuminate mechanisms of exclusion from the perspective of intersectional marginalized people in the most exclusive educational realms. Black Nonbinary, Gender Nonconforming people, and Women (trans inclusive) with graduate experience have the most enduring experience in the educational institution, featuring multiple oppressive barriers between them and their goals. These barriers can be mitigated utilizing institutional support through inclusive policies and procedures. Reconstructing educational institutions based on data from one of the most marginalized populations will ensure more diverse and inclusive practices. More diverse and inclusive practices/policies/procedures serve not only to decolonize education, but also increase diversity of thought and equitable education.

Educational Institution

Under the correct leadership, the public education system could serve as the great equalizer for the USA, by combating the continuation of oppressive cycles perpetuated against minority groups. This research will focus on the

interactional aspects of public education with people whom identify as Black trans or cis women, non-binary, gender non-conforming people. The approach of focusing on Black Nonbinary, Gender Nonconforming, and Cis and Trans Women highlights how the social organization of educational institutions, especially those which mimic American ideology, serves to further alienate marginalized students (Gillborn 2005, 2006; Liou and Rojas 2018, Chang, Chang, and Ledesma 2005). Black LGBTQ+ and Nonbinary individuals are uniquely vulnerable to marginalization in the learning environment and are among the most marginalized in learning spaces (Morris 2019). This is especially salient for those assigned female at birth. School environment, defined as “social interaction and symbolic communication between teachers and students and among peers...,” directly impacts student outcomes (Kinney, Rosier, and Harger 2003: 583). Positive interactions between students and teachers, or the lack thereof, correlate with student outcomes (Kinney et al. 2003; Morris 2018; Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Ladson-Billings 2009, 2014; Liou and Rojas 2016). Black individuals thrive in a spirit of connectivity and positive relationships (Morris 2019; Sue et al. 2022). Given the prior research regarding student outcomes, the interactions between students and teachers are important for this research (Sue et al. 2022; Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Milner 2009; Holland and Farmer-Hinton 2009; Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968). Some measurements of discrimination in schools include patterns present in student evaluations, student disciplinary actions, and retention rates (Liou and

Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Morris 2019; Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010; Leonardo 2013). The patterns include unclear rhetoric and inconsistencies in student evaluations, which may implicate the role of implicit bias in disadvantaging some students (Kinney et al. 2003; Yosso and Solorzano 2006; Leonardo 2013). The patterns also include disproportionate referrals to the criminal justice system (Morris 2018, 2019). The role of interaction in schools applies to the interactions between people in the school and interactions between the institution, or structural aspects, and the students. These interactions are often informed through culturally learned lenses that uphold white supremacy and patriarchal values even at the highest tier of education, graduate school (Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2022; DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho 2011).

Graduate students often interact extensively with professors and the institutions they attend. Their social location shapes the chronic role strains they experience, the unique set of stressors they face, and their distinct need for social support (Mallinckrodt and Leong 1992; Nelson et al. 2001, Sue et al. 2022). Role strain can cause mental distress (Pearlin 1999). In addition, graduate students' lack of funding from institutions causes mental distress (Grady et al. 2014). Graduate students are often overworked and overwhelmed by their commitment to the institutions in which they attend graduate school. The mental distress graduate students feel can be amplified by lack of institutional support and representation among faculty. Often learning environments are biased against

Black LGBTQ+ and Nonbinary people and their lived experience; this bias is coded in language, policies, and practices that undermine their capacity to recognize their potential as scholars (Morris 2019; Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2022). Lack of institutional support includes meaningful ways of ensuring professors are not discriminatory and promote inclusivity in their teaching practices and curriculum.

Interactions between People

Within the Educational Institution, students encounter peers, teachers, and administrators to varying degrees, and within the higher tiers of education, this does not change except that administrators are referred to by their rank within the institutional hierarchy. Black Women and Nonbinary individuals are subject to discrimination regardless of who they are interacting with. Students participate in discriminatory behavior that includes, but is not limited to, vandalizing school property with racial epithets, sharing racial microaggressions during class participation, and directly sharing their harmful racial ideology with students of diverse backgrounds. Peer related discrimination is especially harmful when the discriminatory individuals rarely receive repercussions for their discriminatory behavior and when students are penalized for their response to peer related discrimination (Morris 2018). Black students' safety concerns are often met with a lack of response from people inside of institutional power structures (Morris 2019).

The role of the teacher is undervalued in the United States easily identifiable by low teacher wages which may explain the massive teacher shortage (Huebeck 2021; Will 2022). The amount of time students and teachers spend together is considerable, and the interaction between students and teachers corresponds to much more than lesson planning and the course content. This interaction requires a type of love or bond between the student and teacher (Hooks 2017:583; Kinney et al. 2003). To effectively create this bond, teachers must have an understanding of the student's environment (Garry 2018). The teacher must be able to adapt to student needs that correspond to their environment (Sue et al. 2022). Students in more urban low socioeconomic locations, sometimes referred to as "African Ghettos," are disproportionately disadvantaged for student advancement (Garry 2018). Lower results for student advancement are caused by miscommunication and misunderstanding between students and school officials stemming from instructors failing to fully comprehend the students' environment (Garry 2018). Students of color have been underserved by traditional training, and race and racism are often not covered or covered superficially in curriculum (Sue et al. 2022). This enables generations of students to be uneducated connecting hegemonic ideology to the lives of people instead of being able to deconstruct reality based on the facts regarding the structural and systematic degradation of marginalized people. Systems of exclusion cannot be ignored, and teachers can affect systematic rewriting of the educational contract (Liou and Rojas 2018). In an educational

setting such as graduate school, this disadvantage based on the teacher-student relationship could be exacerbated by the diverse backgrounds and variety of students professors encounter. These diverse backgrounds range from in-state students to international students. This lack of environmental understanding adds an additional layer of complexity regarding student learning and the teacher-student relationship. Contributing to positive teacher-student interactions are a part of pedagogical approaches, the various ways in which the professor attempts to inform students of the course materials (Liou and Rojas 2018). Teacher related discrimination can stem from a lack of understanding of student backgrounds, however this is not the only mechanism of teacher related discrimination (Liou and Rojas 2018; Sue et al. 2022; Suarez-Orozco 2015; DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho 2011; Liou and Rotheram-Fuller 2016; Reid and Moore 2008; Gillborn 2005; Holland and Farmer-Hinton 2009). The subjective nature and lack of transparency necessary for teacher expectations, disciplinary referrals, and perceived deviance are all ways teacher related discrimination can happen unintentionally because of implicit bias (Morris 2018). This implicit bias could influence students' drive and ability to reach college (Gregory and Huang 2013; Luna and Martinez 2013). Although most educators are well meaning, some are not; teacher bullying has only recently received acknowledgment and begun to be studied as a mechanism for disproportionate student outcomes (Morris 2018; Suarez-Orozco 2015). Teacher bullying not only affects the student being bullied but also encourages peer related discrimination (Morris 2018). This

discrimination remains and, in some cases, expands at the graduate level because of lack of institutional oversight of syllabi, policies, and procedures. Educators can reduce discrimination by practicing inclusive and participatory pedagogy that serves to dismantle structures of oppression (Morris 2019; Sue et al. 2022; Suarez-Orozco 2015; Liou and Rojas 2018). Reducing discrimination can include but is not limited to including Black Feminist Theory, Intersectionality, and Street Fiction works that aid in developing rapport and making the space inclusive and supportive of all who attend (Morris 2019; Sue et al. 2022; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2014; Liou and Rojas 2018). “When teachers operate beyond their prejudicial beliefs, they can affect systematic interpretations of race and school structure” (Liou and Rojas 2018:715).

Administrators are the highest level of hierarchy in the educational institution and are often students’ last hope to receive institutional support. Black girls are overrepresented along the entire continuum of discipline in schools; Black girls are seven times more likely to be suspended from school, and three times more likely to be referred to the juvenile court system (Morris 2018, 2019). These statistics demonstrate administrative support for removing Black girls from school. This level of discrimination appears in graduate school as a lack of support for Black individuals seeking more diverse and inclusive curriculum, practices, and procedure (Sue et al. 2022). This discrimination relays powerful messages to those affected regarding their presence and belonging in educational spaces.

Interaction with the Institution

Without equitable government intervention in education finances, some schools simply do not have the resources to support students. Lack of resources in extreme poverty schools has a negative effect on the student experience (Milner 2013). Poverty alone cannot be synthesized without considering the intersection of race (Milner 2013). The Jim Crow era of US history enabled practices including redlining that prevented upward social mobility for many Black Americans, and the effects of that era remain an issue for minority communities (Garry 2018; Lukes and Cleveland 2021). For example, broadband access is disproportionate based on the history of housing segregation (Skinner, Levy, and Burtch 2021). Broadband is an educational resource because of its importance in completing homework and online courses (Skinner et al. 2021). The effects of redlining include school funding in those areas, because of the unrectified history the homes and communities lack resources including financial resources which through property taxes contributes to school funding. The growing ignorance of the United States' racial history, that schools often mistake or ignore, allows strong ties between education and housing policy to persist (Rothstein 2015; Liou and Rojas 2018). That ignorance also leads to the exclusion of history related to minority students, further alienating them from the learning experience (Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015; Sue et al. 2022). The ongoing legacy of redlining contributes to an educational achievement gap increasing along racial lines (Lukes and Cleveland 2021). Some policies have

attempted to put a band aid on the problem, but housing vouchers are not effective to raise educational achievement (Barton and Coley 2010). Schools explicitly and implicitly differentiate whites as fully educable knowers; people of color are viewed as sub knowers who need an education to assimilate into the agreements in the white social contract (Leonardo 2013; Liou and Rojas 2018). “As schools become more diverse across this country, the racial contract becomes increasingly salient, calling upon school administrators to effectively manage whiteness...” (Liou and Rojas 2018: 727). For students with marked racial/ethnic identities, race is a central feature of their educational experiences (Solorzano 1998). Students form social networks in school, strong network ties are more beneficial for resource attainment (Granovetter, 1973). “Teachers’ educational expectations sort students into different groups with correspondingly different learning opportunities...” (Liou and Rojas, 2020:718). This issue is only exacerbated when examining the graduate level. Because of the rise of online learning software, graduate students are expected to know how to operate that software when that may not be accessible in low-income households, and no formal teaching is provided for learning to operate this software. This along with the financial and time constraints implemented by the institution serve to cause further mental distress to students from marginalized backgrounds.

The criminalization of low economic school systems, influenced by policies and media, has disproportionately affected Black girls, adding to another layer of educational oppression further moving Black girls out of the education system

(Morris 2018, 2019). Black girls are the only group of girls overrepresented along the entire continuum of discipline in schools (Morris 2018, 2019). Black girls are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to policies that are subjective in nature causing them to suffer from implicit bias imposed on them for their appearance (Morris 2018). Black girls are more likely to experience oversexualization and objectification of their bodies, easily identifiable through dress code enforcement resulting in the loss of their bodily autonomy and forever harming their psyches (Morris 2018). Policies, teachers, and other school officials not fully aware of the importance of the joy of learning for success and social mobility for Black girls (Morris 2019). Similar to voucher programs, charter schools and other educational policies continue to fail young women of color (Kendall 2020). Colorblind ideology in schools mask racially problematic ideologies with niceness and harmony but only cause deeper complications for students by leaving white supremacy unchallenged (Brown 2018). Educational policy promoting colorblind schooling without examining the ideologies underpinning white power is an act of white supremacy (Gillborn 2005; Liou and Rojas 2018). The subjective manner of policies and procedures also affects students at the graduate level as there is much more ambiguity when attempting to meet professors' expectations which may not be clearly outlined in graduate assistantships nor in course syllabi. There is often no oversight in classrooms nor regarding course syllabi, and often the professor causing conflict is the only person with the authority to resolve student issues. Personal experience suggests

graduate expectations and interactions are highly subjective allowing space for implicit bias and differential treatment for Black People that identify as trans, nonbinary, or woman.

The Pushout

Morris (2018) introduces the concept of pushout in relation to the criminalization of girls in schools, analyzing the mechanisms that serve to detach black girls from educational institutions. Pushout has been expanded here to include any factors that promote exclusion from educational spaces. Subjectivity in responses to school related discrimination, outlined above, serves to remove Black girls from the learning environment (Morris 2018). “To counteract these ideological and material premises, teachers and students need to remake the meaning of a racialized school structure through curriculum and instructional strategies” (Liou and Rojas 2018:719). Being hyper visual has become normalized for certain groups exemplified by asking Black girls to imagine school without police (Morris 2019). School based policing is the fastest growing part of law enforcement, which is especially problematic considering law enforcement is a fabricated construct of safety (Morris 2019). Police coddle school officials’ and parents’ feelings but pose a psychological threat to student movement, experimentation, and communication (Morris 2019). This increased police presence leads to increased violence to Black individuals and that violence is often perceived as deserved without regard for the original issue or age (Morris 2019). School officers are not trained for interacting with students and trends

have demonstrated students that challenge authority and are not economically advantaged get labeled unacceptable (Morris 2019). Unacceptable can mean that students do not fall in line, are acting out, are crazy, or have an attitude (Morris 2019). Regardless of perceived attitude, students often are engaging in a response to injustice (Morris 2018). That response to injustice is then scrutinized instead of the injustice itself.

Under white supremacy, the educational status of people of color is conditional based on approval of whites determined by agreement to the racial contract (Liou and Rojas 2018). Despite the ideology schools continue to operate within racial context (Liou and Rojas 2018; Suarez-Orozco 2015). Overt forms of racism and discrimination may have declined, however covert racism and implicit bias have remained intact (Devos and Banaji 2005; Gaertner 1996). “As educational settings increasingly serve students from a broad variety of backgrounds and social circumstances, microaggressions on campus are a growing concern” (Suarez-Orozco 2015:152). Study of such phenomena in the educational institution is through qualitative analysis in the classroom (Liou and Rojas 2018), classroom interpersonal microaggressions (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015) and identifying course colorblind spots (Sue et al. 2022).

Teacher–student interaction is not the sole cause of the push out of Black women and girls; however, research demonstrates that hegemonic pedagogical approaches exclude minority students (Morris 2018, Sue et al. 2022). Research shows long term effects of teacher expectations and how they are strong

predictors of a student's college completion (Boser, Wilhelm, and Hanna 2014; Sebastian Cherng 2017). Through these hegemonic experiences students become the bearers of negativity against them (Willard and Madon 2016; Liou and Rojas 2018). Teachers' consciousness is a significant mediating factor that contributes to teacher student interactions through school structures and curriculum in preparation for college and the future (Liou and Rojas 2016, 2020). Although there has been some research into the plethora of ways the education institution disadvantages certain groups, only a small portion focuses specifically on the intersection of multiple oppressed groups. Within this literature, research does not include how these issues are maintained through educational institutions, including at the highest educational levels. To begin to address this gap, this research will focus on some of the most marginalized groups in the United States of America, Black Women, Gender Nonconforming, and Nonbinary people's experiences in the graduate educational institution. The research will help identify the mechanisms that serve to pushout members of this group, the strategies these students utilize, and approaches faculty could use to help.

Methods

Participants

The research was advertised as an interview about "Education and Black Trans, Non-binary, Women, and Gender Non-conformist." Data was collected between March 2023 and April 2023. All study procedures were approved by Minnesota State Mankato Institutional Review Board. For recruitment purposes

the interview flyer was distributed to graduate coordinators, and diversity and inclusion staff, at Minnesota State University, Mankato, to distribute to graduate students. Any recipients were allowed to post the interview flyers in any additional locations. These participants must be in graduate school or have recent graduate experience. These participants must identify as Black American, or African American, or Mixed with either Black or African American. These participants must identify as trans, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, or woman.

Interview Design

Data for this study was obtained by inviting people that identify as: woman, gender nonconformist, non-binary, trans, Black American, African American, graduate student, Multiracial where at least one of the races listed includes Black American, or African American to participate in a research project. Data from those who did not meet eligible criteria were excluded, as were participants with missing data on key variables and those who have not participated in the US public education system. Firstly, participants will be provided with informed consent. Disclosing that participating in this research will prompt further thought regarding their educational experiences which can be traumatic for some individuals. The semi-structured interview format will allow me the opportunity to ask additional follow-up questions during these conversations and clarify concepts, topics, and ideas, as well as better understand how the participants make sense of their experiences during this period of their

lives (Lamont and Swidler 2014). Interviews have been utilized in studies regarding the Black experience in schools and have provided participants with freedom of expression, essential to providing a safe environment for participants (Morris 2018, 2019). Much of the research collected regarding education related microaggressions have been in 4-year institutions from the victims' point of view (Lau and Williams 2010; Solorzano et al., 2000; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015). This research continues to study from the victim's point of view but does not specifically emphasize microaggressions. The victims' point of view serves to demonstrate how the participants feel excluded from the educational institution, both recently and retrospectively through their educational experience. The interview will aim to illuminate institutional barriers and strategies they use to mitigate these barriers, in addition to how faculty could help.

The interview guide is focused on identifying the mechanisms that demonstrate lack of inclusion in course material, relational aspects with professors, in the discipline, or at the institution at large. Microaggressions in interpersonal classroom interactions can serve as toxic raindrops falling corrosively into the learning environments (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015:157). Curricular construction as it relates to whiteness and people of color informs students' intellectual and epistemological positions in the classroom (Allen and Liou 2018; Leonardo 2013; Liou and Rojas 2020). The interview guide is designed to guide participants to provide their experiences with learning in and out of the educational institution. Where educational institution is defined as the

structural components and geographical location within the United States Education System, both public and private. The interview guide is structured into four sections: demographics, education, educational experience, and educational interactions. Interview questions that aim to obtain demographic information include questions regarding participant age, hometown, race, and educational accomplishments. However, to encourage participant speech, the first question will allow them to speak from their point of view. The education section of the interview guide asks questions that aim to divulge if participants learned more within or outside of the educational institution, how their environment correlates to their formal education, and if representation among teachers plays a role in their education. The educational experiences section will ask questions to aid participants in being expansive about their educational experiences including the demographics of the environment in which they happened. In the educational interactions section, I will be paying particular attention to the “strength” of network ties, as per Granovetter’s (1973) theory of strong and weak network ties, and the diverse types of support that they received from those different network ties.

Following completion of each interview, data will undergo three stages of analytic coding process to identify the possible mechanisms of pushout including but not limited to lack of inclusion in course material, relational aspects with faculty, the discipline, and/or the institution at large. The interview is designed for participants to expand on their educational experiences and provide an

extended debrief to explain the different sociological perspectives that may aid in comprehending and healing from their experiences. The structure may cause the participant to think about their educational experience more critically after participating. The interview section will end with a debrief and an opportunity for participants to ask questions.

Analyzing the data

Detailed notes will be written during and after each one-on-one interview. Any names, of individuals or institutions, will be replaced with pseudonyms. I will analyze the detailed notes using a three-step inductive method, allowing themes and concepts to emerge from the interview (Charmaz 2006). First, I will conduct open coding on the notes, followed by writing some initial analytic memos to help identify any emerging themes or concepts. Second, I will perform focused coding to help identify mechanisms, and types of strategies. Finally, a final round of analytic memos will help identify similarities and differences within the mechanisms, as well as determining if any additional categories may exist. During the analytic memo writing, I will make sure to make note of any inconsistent data for further analysis. To end the analytical process, a final round of analytic memo writing across the data will identify mechanisms that serve to keep education homogeneous.

Limitations

All participants were varying middle class socioeconomically, 2 of 3 had their needs met excessively, and 2 of 3 reported economically diverse college

experiences. 2 of 3 respondents were biracial and lived in a disproportionately white dominant state; these respondents were also lighter skin toned decreasing the amount of colorism they may encounter. The interview guide did not include any questions regarding sexual violence which is important as 13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault reported by the US Department of Justice 2014 Rape and Sexual assault special report. In the final coding, microaggressions should be added with other hegemonic influences. Due to the time-consuming nature of in-depth interviews, the time demand graduate students endure, and the very limited demographic scope, the sample is not representative nor generalizable. This research should be conducted again providing 1-2 years of data collection with an improved interview guide including questions regarding sexual violence. In addition to interviews, surveys of all racial demographics would provide more contextual information regarding the commonality of these experiences to all students.

Data Analysis

The first stage of coding went through each section of the completed interview guide individually. Completed interview guides contain participant responses and detailed notes regarding their interview. This first stage of coding focused on interpreting participant responses in each section. Interpretation is helpful to fully understand the impact of these experiences because it adds context from previous literature, that respondents may not be knowledge of to reference themselves. This stage of coding revealed several things that were utilized to

structure the next stage of coding. All respondents had experiences in predominately white areas. Traditional education did not prepare them for real life. The interview guide asked questions specific to the role teachers play in their educational experience. Because most participants attended predominantly white schools and did not have any teachers that looked like them in their later years of education, this stage of coding implicated a role specific to white teachers. Microaggressions were present for all participants. All participants cited a negative impact related to education, and lack of institutional support. All participants reported high instances of discomfort and safety concerns in institutional educational spaces. Participant provided strategies were often hyper individualistic, involving drug relief, and coping with stigma. Previous research on coping with stigmatized identities identify accounting types, or coping strategies, respondents used when responding to “accusers” or “account takers.” They are divided into 5 types: humorous accounting, utilizing humor to construct an encounter specific account that implicitly questions the accusers right to question someone; educational accounting, a deliberate pedagogical role of an educator diligently addressing trivializes cultural stereotypes to debunk them; defiant accounting, the stigmatized make explicit demands for counter explanations showing agency by challenging other’s right and rationale to request such information; cowering, allowing external conditions to play out without interruption to avoid greater harm; and passing, how people present their identity to eliminate the need for an account (Marvasti 2005).

The next stage of coding recorded themes of mechanisms from initial coding to complete focused coding of each participant's interview, including the first stage of opening coding. Themes for focused coding were predominantly white/white supremacy, traditional educational fails/nondiverse teachers/microaggressions, mechanisms microaggressions/negative impact/lack of institutional support, discomfort/safety concerns, and strategies. In this stage of coding each theme was coded individually for each interview; only three were labeled as mechanisms from initial coding because they were the most common from the education interaction section which was constructed to identify possible mechanisms. The interviews highlighted 27 impacts on their schooling categorized under Traditional Education Fails. Schools' messages to participants were that they are not worthy of educating, or being educated about, and that school will not help them in life. There were 22 references to predominantly white areas and white supremacy; these fell in line with the racial contract. The interviews included 18 mentions or references to microaggressions. Microaggressions are interwoven through other mechanisms but were not referenced that way by participants. Interviewees also mentioned 18 discomfort and safety concerns explained as psychological and physical harm. The respondents made eight references to lack of institutional support and five references to negative impacts which students are not fully able to articulate because being a minority student is the only experience they know. These two will be used to articulate suggestions for faculty. These mentions are related to the

mechanisms that serve to push the participants from education. Based on overlap and connections through themes, some of these were combined into the same color codes for the final coding stage. After mechanisms were formulated, they were combined into color codes based on the specific effect to respondents; these color codes were used to highlight completed interview guides to exclude interpretation and directly identify what was outlined by participants. The second stage of coding with the interpretation and the interview demonstrated the need to code all themes as mechanisms, excluding strategies, because they all contributed to the discomfort and lack of belonging in education, however each color code's means of exclusion were different.

Many of the mechanisms seemed to be interrelated and connected, however some were more closely related, and those were combined into the same color code. The colors were applied directly to completed interview guides. The colors represented the mechanisms, however coding distinguished between the specific rationale while the color code represented how the specifics provided similar outcomes to the participants. Predominantly white, white supremacy, traditional education, and specifically nondiverse teachers were highly interrelated sharing many instances that were connected to one another and resulting in the same feeling of exclusion from participants. The cultural element of white supremacy is pervasive in the traditional educational experiences of participants. Exclusion in overt or covert ways causing feelings of not belonging was color coded grey. Microaggressions were coded in two different sections

previously but seemed to substantiate a section of its own due to its explicit racial nature. However, without interpretation of such events, it can be hard to identify due to its covert nature and lack of explicit statement regarding race (Suarez-Orozco 2015).

“...when people would microaggress me I didn’t always know what was happening or thought no one would help me. When my classmates called me the N-word I told the teacher, and their first response was to ask me if I’m sure that actually happened.”

~Amber

Amber provided this example which demonstrates how they did not have the rationale nor vocabulary necessary to label this event as a microaggression from their teacher but after reflecting during the interview realized it was. Negative impacts and lack of institutional support were combined to craft specific suggestions for faculty improvement in reducing pushout. Strategies and discomfort/safety coding categories remained the same. The final stage of coding prompted the addition of community building to the analysis of participant strategies.

Participants strategies (green code) were most often hyper individualistic, 19 mentions of hyper individualistic strategies. Community building and coordination was the next often referenced by participants, including eight mentions of joining or building a community for support. Drug use and coping strategies related to stigma each had five mentions. Strategies related to joining

or participating in sports had three mentions throughout interviews. Most of the community strategies were from the only non-mixed participant, who did not have experience solely in an 80% white dominated state. All sports references were from Biracial participants where a participant explicitly stated the value of minorities in the community was linked to their athletic abilities.

The community around the school was “strong and inclusive depending on how involved and known you are for sports if you’re a minority.”

~ Ruby Warm

The grey code identified 32 mentions of traditional education fails, 29 white supremacy mentions, 25 predominately white mentions, and 14 mentions specific to nondiverse teachers. Predominately white is a description and white supremacy is the feeling people of color suffer from especially in a predominately white society. The distinction between the description and the feeling is necessary here because the feeling leads to pushout more often than the description. Microaggressions coded yellow were harder for participants to explicitly name/point out because they experienced this for the majority, if not all, of their lives and had become normalized as daily aspects of their life. These also are ingrained parts of white supremacy that I labeled there if the racial aspect was not explicit. There were seven mentions of microaggressions in the interviews. Microaggressions are by their very nature elusive (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015, 152), meaning that if it cannot be tied specifically to race or gender the encounter was coded under grey code because of the hegemonic nature. Discomfort and

safety, coded red, represented moments of harm both psychological and physical. Participants reported high numbers of psychological harm and low levels of physical safety concerns. Victims of microaggressions report feeling distinctly uncomfortable afterwards (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010a; Sue et al. 2007; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015). This category could also incorporate microaggression, but the effect was discomfort and not correlated to hegemonic ideals by participants. However, the interview guide did not ask any questions regarding sexual violence which may have been a very important factor because of the hyper sexualization of Black girls and women. Seven mentions of blue coded for negative impact and lack of institutional support illuminated four suggestions to reduce the negative impact and lack of institutional support in curriculum.

Discussion

Respondent provided strategies were most often hyper individualistic according to the data. Lack of institutional support led to participants being less likely to seek institutional solutions, demonstrated by Amber's response when asked if people got praise for restating their idea.

ALL THE TIME *Sings* but in school I usually reach out to my professor (to get credit for my ideas) and take up for myself ("that's what I said"). I was always happy when they believed me. It used to bother me when people would get credit for my ideas, but now I kinda don't care because my work speaks for itself, and I don't have to defend anything.

Amber used to seek institutional support from teachers and was happy when they were positively reinforced, however now Amber has shifted to relying on self-worth demonstrated by their work. Ruby Warm demonstrates hyper individualistic strategy of having confidence stating, "... it has made me more aware of how much confidence I need to succeed in a world that is structured to make me fail." When Ruby Warm was asked about their educational experience they stated, "Filled with self-growth improvement and advocacy," demonstrating hyper individualistic strategies utilized in their educational experience. Amber cites optimism as a strategy to help them combat negative experiences, demonstrating hyper individualism and lack of institutional support. Moonshine responds to combating negative school experiences with all hyper individualistic strategies, "self-care, weighing pros and cons, goal setting, celebrating small milestones."

Seeking community usually involves seeking diversity in racial affiliation or familial support. Amber states "... I wanted to seek relationships with Black people, so I didn't feel othered... Not just Black people but people of color so I could talk to people that understood me. It helped me appreciate myself and my culture, then I had more people to relate to, and I didn't feel othered." Strategies related to coping with stigma participants most closely resembled defiant accounting, challenging other's right to question them by demanding counter explanations, by the non-mixed participant, cowering, going along to avoid greater harm, and passing, avoiding markers that might associate them with

stereotypes, for mixed participants (Marvasti 2005). Amber stated people made them feel small/weak/inferior all the time and continues, “Someone asked if I was a first-generation college student, I didn’t even know him; then he asked if my grandparents went to college. He said I was ‘well spoken,’ but when I said we sounded the same, he was confused... People are arrogant and have an attitude like I shouldn’t question them because of their status. People are always surprised when I correct them.” When asked how they combat negative interactions Moonshine states, “Silence: I didn’t want to be labeled the angry Black Girl.” All respondents reported seeking relief through drug use. All participants reported alcohol and two reported marijuana use.

Grey code demonstrates the largest pushout mechanism provided by participants, representing the hegemonic nature of their experiences. Traditional education does not help or prepare these students for life outside of school. They rarely connected to traditional education and encounter barriers to those similar with existing while Black under white supremacy. “(Silence) ... Damn I do not know” was Ruby Warm’s response to the most valuable part of education. Amber states “many times school doesn’t provide you with information that’s applicable to the real world in the curriculum however the hidden curriculum is very applicable to the real world.” Moonshine shared, “I learned more outside of the classroom; school is usually focused on everything else. You learn a lot about different subjects in general education but that’s specific to academics. Personal experiences were more urgent matters for me because they teach you things

books cannot...” Only one participant had been taught by diverse faculty that resembled them, and only one participant reported an influential teacher. Participants specifically referenced the role of nondiverse teachers in making culturally relevant connections, maintaining dominant cultural structure, and were not competent teachers of racial topics. Warm states that not having diverse teachers “greatly negatively affects my learning because the struggles are similar to surviving in a predominately white area.” Amber stated “elementary through high school I was never taught by Black person. In college I saw professors of color, but I was never taught by one, and I don’t think the field is very diverse. I can see it in the professors and the curriculum that the point of view is typically from a white person.” Moonshine shares non-diverse teachers made their learning “very biased because what they were teaching, they couldn’t relate to, like race and Black history. They didn’t have any connection to the material, and I could tell it didn’t impact them as much ...and the environment wasn’t welcoming for me to ask questions.” All participants had hegemonic educational experiences describing their surrounds as being predominantly white, but participants were more focused on feeling white supremacy replicated in school environments. All participants reported discrimination in school interactions, and lack of representation in the school curriculum. All participants experienced someone else being credited for their original idea. Brown (2018) refers to an instance of this as messaging that white approval and interpretation is necessary before ideas are considered good (76). All respondents reported strict rules regarding their

bodily presence in class, and one had learned not to ask questions for fear of unnecessary reprimand for pursuing their education. Moonshine states “No, I don’t ask questions because of fear that might happen.”

Yellow code/Microaggressions were more prevalent in the interpretive coding of participant experiences, demonstrating that as Amber stated they were not always sure when they were being microaggressed, and when they did, they explicitly stated they believed it to be race based excluding any instances that may have been related to their gender. Ruby states “not in trouble (for asking questions and saying course material was not inclusive) but definitely overlooked and pushed aside.” Amber states “sometimes it would be weird because people would feel uncomfortable with me when I hadn’t done anything. I really got the sense of racial undertones when this would happen.” This category can also be intertwined with the feeling of white supremacy and discomfort since when it happens it is not always explicitly clear to participants that they are experiencing a microaggression. Subtle microaggressions, whether realized by recipient or not, have negative emotional, cognitive, and behavioral implications for victims (Sue 2010b).

Code red is for discomfort and safety in schools. Safety concerns or threats to physical harm were related to hate crimes on campus. Ruby Warm states, “first year of college was at a small school in WI. I left due to hate crimes against a Black person and no support from faculty.” Most participants reported discomfort in their bodily autonomy meaning people would invade their personal

space, touch them, or make them feel uncomfortable regarding their attire. Moonshine shares “the security guard was always touching people - little play fighting.... They used to walk us to lunch like prisoners then put us in a separate room. Seemed like there were only Black kids in ISS. The security guard used to always be in the same area as the Black kids.” Amber shares “yes (people invaded my personal space), my hair, so many people would invade my personal space. I would have preferred if people would not touch me. They would touch me and my hair just because they like it. Which was super weird.” Ruby shares, “...people of color are not treated fairly regardless of their standing in the school.” This mechanism leads certain students to believe they do not belong nor are welcomed in school environments. Similar to the effects of white supremacy and the grey code however, participants expressed harm done more explicitly in this category. While grey codes included normalized feelings, this category does not.

Blue coded negative impact and lack of institutional support found that teachers should utilize a real-world orientation in curriculum planning. Amber states “developmental econ was real world-oriented food deserts, corrupt government, and corruption in nonprofits. Utilizing current events to teach in the classroom made it easier to make connections about the Covid situation.” Instructors should make an intentional effort to have diverse and inclusion interwoven in the curriculum (Liou and Rojas 2020). This specifically will reaffirm belonging, include cultural references, teach perspective, and critical thinking (Sue et al. 2022; Liou and Rojas, 2016, 2020; Milner, 2010). Amber

shares “the connections presented by a person of color of Asian descent I could relate to a lot of his experience and that really helped my learning.” Amber states “a professor, a white woman, she had none of my experiences, but she acknowledged her privilege, and she used her power to discuss race in the classroom. She was a feminist. We still talk today. I use her philosophy to this day. I want people to be able to succeed in whatever they want to do without any obstacles. She is successful and using her power to change classrooms and make literature relevant.” Craft more opportunities for student agency and decision making in assignment completion. Provide and encourage intersectional analysis as a form of critical thinking to meet student needs outside of the classroom (Sue et al. 2022). Preparing students by providing class space to gasping the complexity of life from an intersectional perspective enables them to distinguish fact from fiction in daily life and thoughtfully make decisions that will most benefit them.

Conclusion

Educational ideology is believed to be post racial and equally beneficial for all students. Mills (1997) explains the construction of the Western social contract or agreements for people to coexist and cooperate in the name of collective interests is a false narrative of social inclusions and equality. Access to college and graduate school has “long been perceived as the rightful property of white, maintaining the racial contract underpinning school structure and curriculum” (Liou and Rojas, 2020, 717). However hegemonic educational practices aid social

reproduction in reproducing disproportionate educational benefits (Liou and Rojas, 2020; Leonardo, 2013; Morris, 2018, 2019). Despite Black women trending upward in educational attainment their experiences, needs, voice, and knowledge are not utilized nor acknowledged in educational spaces. "...the history and systems of exclusion that disproportionately impact people of color is a reality we cannot ignore" (Liou and Rojas, 2020:715). Ruby warm shares "Black people are marginalized. The world knows and doesn't do anything about it. Education can raise awareness, but it starts with educators because they are the foundation. AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth) Black people are the foundation to society but are overlooked and not considered when it comes to education." Hegemonic practices and procedure significantly affect pushout of Black Genderqueer people and Women. Teachers must be active and intentional to disrupt this trend. Including course material from different perspectives and providing instruction on intersectional analysis are individual steps teachers can take to ensure inclusivity in their classrooms, mandating inclusion in curriculum is an institutional solution. Institutions can also mandate teacher training of detecting and addressing implicit bias. The next largest mechanism is the extreme discomfort and psychological harm associated with that discomfort in educational institutions. In short, education, the best legal way for upward mobility, is not equally or equitably accessible to all. Some students are made to feel pushed out by that space more than others meaning if decisive action is taken to mitigate those effects, all students would benefit by not suffering from

different branches of the same issue or suffering from less of them because of their white identity.

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