



Three papers on Black student well-being in HWCUs: Social capital, belonging and identity

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Presented by **Ahmmad Allan Brown**

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Date: April 28, 2022

**Three papers on Black student well-being in HWCUs: Social capital, belonging and
identity**

A dissertation presented by

Ahmmad Allan Brown

to

The Committee for the Ph.D. in Business Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of Organizational Behavior

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
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Three papers on Black student well-being in HWCUs: Social capital, belonging and identity

ABSTRACT

In the tradition of studies that focus on Black students' experiences in historically-White colleges and universities (HWCUs), the three papers in this dissertation broadly address how organizational structures and campus environments at HWCUs influence the experiences of Black students. I examine this topic at a single site, Millington College (pseudonym), a college of performing arts in the United States. Millington is a particularly relevant site to examine my research question as the beginning of my research coincided with the creation and implementation of LEAD (pseudonym), a pre-enrollment and academic year support program for Black students. Programs like LEAD, which I broadly refer to as race-specific enrichment programs (RSEPs), are one of several tools that higher education administrators use to support Black and other minoritized students. As I discuss in this dissertation, HWCUs' attempts to create structures to support Black students can have unintended consequences for the students who attend these programs, despite administrators' best intentions.

The three papers included in this dissertation draw on 50 interviews with 37 informants, as well as a survey of 32 students. The totality of my data collection at Millington, however, was more expansive and included roughly 20 hours of participant and non-participant observation, two interviews with students who identify as Black but are not US citizens or permanent residents, and in turn, were outside of the scope of my research, and interviews with 10 Millington faculty and administrators. Though these data do not appear explicitly in the chapters that follow, the insights and perspectives I gained in collecting and analyzing these data helped shape my thinking and the according conclusions that I present.

The first paper, presented in chapter 2, examines Black students' experiences with different-race interactions on campus, and how these interactions are associated with their willingness to engage in different-race interactions. Drawing on interviews with 37 students, I induced three core findings. First, several informants who were socialized in predominantly-Black high school and neighborhood contexts chose to attend Millington, in part, to have relationships with non-Black peers. Second, perceptions of racial homogeneity among social groups at Millington preceded many informants' reticence to have interactions with different-race peers. Last, several informants were subject to experiences of microaggressions and racism, which alongside their perceptions of racial homogeneity in social life at Millington, reinforced their reticence to have interactions with different-race peers. I discuss these findings in the context of recent contributions to the homophily literature.

Chapter 3 focuses specifically on participants in the LEAD program and addresses two questions. First, what is the relationship between Black students' identities and the experiences of their relationships with same-race peers in an RSEP? Second, how do Black students' experiences of these relationships influence their perceptions of the costs to access the benefits of the social capital the RSEP is designed to generate? Drawing on 27 interviews with 18 participants in LEAD, I find that students' experiences with their same-race peers varied based on the extent to which they had prior exposure to predominantly-Black institutions and communities, and whether they held salient and marginalized non-racial social identities. Based on these findings, I identify three ways that the informants experienced relationships with same-race peers in the LEAD program: affirmed, rationalized, and alienated. While nearly all informants identified benefits of the social capital that LEAD generated, informants who experienced rationalized and alienated relationships perceived costs to access the social capital

that LEAD generated, and in turn, to remain connected to the LEAD community. I discuss these findings in the context of theory on social capital and the intersectionality literature.

Chapter 4 further focuses on participants in the LEAD program, and places findings from interviews with 28 students and 32 survey respondents in the context of the literatures on belonging and identity. Despite the prevalence of RSEPs, there are two related gaps in our understanding of RSEPs and how they influence their participants' experiences of social life in HWCUs. First, scholarly investigations of minoritized students' experiences in HWCUs often take for granted that they generally experience belongingness in their campus' co-ethnoracial groups and communities. Second, we know little about how minoritized students' perceptions of their ethnoracial identities change once arriving on campus and participating in RSEPs, and how these perceptions are associated with their feelings of belonging to the RSEP. In two phases of research, I find that without explicit programmatic supports that emphasize the importance of inclusion within the RSEP, students with limited prior exposure to same-race peers may experience RSEPs negatively. I close by discussing the practical implications of this research for college administrators and student affairs professionals whose campuses support minoritized students through RSEPs.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the collaboration and partnership of the faculty and administrators at Millington College, and most importantly, the participation of Millington students. I am immensely grateful to the entire Millington community, and the Millington students who so graciously shared their experiences and perspectives with me.

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Lakshmi has been an incredible support to me both personally and academically throughout my time at Harvard. In every meeting I've had with her she makes sure to check in with me personally before discussing my work. My relationship with Lakshmi has provided me a model for the type of mentor and advisor that I hope to one day be. Academically, Lakshmi's guidance helped me bridge my macro- and micro-level theoretical orientations in a way that I believe few others could have. The three papers in this dissertation would undoubtedly be less sophisticated and theoretically robust without Lakshmi's input.

One of the pleasures of going through a doctoral program is seeing the successes of students who precede you. When I first joined the Harvard community, Allie was a senior graduate student whom I held in the highest regard. Her presentation during admitted students' weekend on racial and gender discrimination in information sharing was evidence that I could focus on inequality in a program housed at a business school. I should have already known this based on my conversations with Frank and Lakshmi, but seeing a student presenting this kind of research gave me confidence that I could ask and answer the questions that were most dear to me. A few short years later, Allie graduated and joined the faculty at HBS. I, like many other students who knew her, celebrated her success. A few more years later, Allie kindly agreed to serve on my dissertation committee. Her thoughtful feedback and literature suggestions have been invaluable to the development of my dissertation.

Last, although not a formal member of my dissertation committee, my academic journey at Harvard has been greatly influenced by Robin Ely. If not for the most unfortunate of circumstances, I would have asked for Robin's participation in my committee. Between my time with her in Design for Field Research Methods and the Gender Race and Organizations research group, as well as her personal support and guidance on my research, I have been able to develop and refine my academic skills to become a skilled enough qualitative researcher to effectively answer the research questions I pose in this dissertation.

Frank, Lakshmi, Allie and Robin have been instrumental in my academic journey over the past five years, but my path to this point has been a lifetime in the making. I am deeply grateful to the countless mentors, teachers, and friends who have shaped my perceptions of the world, the questions I have about society and organizations, and the analytic approaches that I bring to bear to answer these questions. Several of these people deserve specific mention.

In many ways, my academic journey began formally at Swarthmore College where I conducted ethnographic research on youth culture in Japan under the supervision of Aya Ezawa. It was through her tutelage that I learned the importance of empathy and reflexivity when collecting and analyzing qualitative data. My academic path was further defined at Stanford University while pursuing an MBA and MA in Education, and with the guidance of two professors: education historian, David Labaree, and sociologist, Jesper Sørensen. It was while taking a class with David that I was reminded of my love of research and theory. And, it was Jesper's encouragement in my strategic leadership class during my first quarter at business school that gave me the confidence that my ideas had potential and were relevant to the organizational behavior field.

The impact of the faculty with whom I've had the privilege of working has been grand, but the foundation for my path was paved far earlier in my life. The curiosity instilled in me by my parents and their encouragement of my intellectual interests were instrumental to my development. I could write a book on the support that my parents provided me and their influence on my life, but most notably my mother's encouragement of my reading habits in elementary school set me on a path in which I valued ideas and thinking in abstracted and conceptual terms. That my parents gave me these gifts is astonishing given that neither of them graduated college. Although I never had the chance to tell them, it was their dedication to my educational journey that instilled in me a desire to spend much of my professional life working to create a world in which all people, irrespective of their backgrounds, can have educational opportunity.

There have also been countless friends who have pushed my thinking as I've developed perspectives on the research topics that are most dear to me. Three of them warrant specific

attention here. I learned to become a professional at Williams College with my former colleague, Sulgi Lim. As young and ambitious members of the Williams admission office, Sulgi and I spent countless hours discussing ways to support students of color, and the *responsibility* that institutions like Williams had to develop programs and initiatives to his end. The very framing of my research questions is in part a result of the many conversations we had nearly 15 years ago.

Aside from my aforementioned academic influences, my perspectives on issues relating to issues of identity and belonging have been most influenced in recent years by my friends Jéssica Oliveira and Neha Sharma. As roommates five years ago, we would spend hours discussing issues of diversity and inequality. Their insights have proved just as foundational to my thinking on issues at the intersection of ethnoracial identity, gender and sexual orientation as any codified academic theory. I am immensely grateful for their continued support of my intellectual and personal growth.

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leadership responsibilities for the gender and race readings in classical social theory as first-year students. Our conversations about qualitative research have been instrumental to my ability to make sense of the loads of data that interviews yield. Similarly, Lauren has been a consistent source of support for me academically and professionally—I've benefited from her kindness and generosity more times than I can count. Her feedback in the nascent stages of developing my dissertation was crucial to my ability to make progress on my work. And Cherrie's general encouragement through the ups and downs of the student experience helped me make it through the tough times. I've also learned so much from Cherrie, who has become my personal quantitative guru. The friendship that the four of us have been able to maintain and grow despite the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant the world to me.

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I am also immensely grateful for the friendship and academic advice I have received from Julie Yen, with whom I co-coordinated the Work, Organizations and Markets (WOM) workshop for two years, and Elizabeth Johnson, who has served as a brilliant thought partner and collaborator. And there are also the once graduate students who preceded me in this journey. Lumumba Seegars, currently a member of the HBS faculty, helped me refine my thinking early in my doctoral career and encouraged me to pursue my research questions before I could coherently articulate them to myself. And Emilie Aguirre, now at Duke Law School, was an accountability partner and much needed friend during some of the most difficult times in the program.

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To Alex and Hazel

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In the context of the ongoing Civil Rights Movement and amidst increasing civic and student protests calling for greater social and racial justice in the mid- to late-1960s, many historically-White colleges and universities (HWCUs) began to actively recruit and support the enrollment of greater numbers of Black students (Anderson 2004; Karabel 2005; Stulberg and Chen 2014). This created a fundamental shift in the make-up of HWCUs in the United States. Whereas the great majority of institutions of higher education had, to this point, largely served Whites, they would now see an influx of students who had previously been marginalized and excluded from higher education (Anderson 2004; Karabel 2005).

In this context, an entirely new set of questions would come to occupy higher education scholars and practitioners alike: what accounts for Black students' success, or lack thereof, in HWCUs? In the decades that followed, scholars would examine this question by primarily focusing on individual-level characteristics that might be predictive of Black students' success in HWCUs, such as the extent to which students had a positive self-concept, or whether students were long- or short-term goal oriented (Sedlacek 1987). Sixty years after the civic and campus protests of the 1960s, similar questions are still being asked by scholars. However, we are seeing a change in the focus of this research. Whereas much of the earlier research focused on characteristics and traits of students themselves, more recent research focuses on the institutional-level characteristics that support or hinder students' success (Museus 2014; Museus, Yi, and Saelua 2017).

That Black students have historically and continue to face challenges in HWCUs should come as no surprise given the depth of the inequalities that Black people experience in American society at large. These inequalities can manifest as experiences of cultural marginalization or

exclusion (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011), or structurally in terms of access to economic resources and wealth (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). As inequality scholars have long pointed out, organizations of all kinds often internally reproduce societal-level inequalities (Acker 2006), and more recently, scholars have specifically noted that organizations are not race-neutral and can legitimize the unequal distribution of both material and non-material resources along racial lines (Ray 2019). Institutions of higher education, even though many of them explicitly pledge to honor and cultivate diversity and inclusion, are not immune from these dynamics.

With these broader societal-level inequalities in mind, and following in the tradition of studies that focus on Black students' experiences in HWCUs, the three papers in this dissertation broadly address how organizational structures and campus environments at HWCUs influence the experiences of Black students. I examine this topic at a single site, Millington College (pseudonym), a college of performing arts in the United States. Millington is a particularly relevant site to examine my research question as the beginning of my research coincided with the creation and implementation of LEAD (pseudonym), a pre-enrollment and academic year support program for Black students. Programs like LEAD, which I broadly refer to as race-specific enrichment programs (RSEPs), are one of several tools that higher education administrators use to support Black and other minority students. As I discuss later in this dissertation, HWCUs' attempts to create structures to support Black students can have unintended consequences for the students who attend these programs, despite administrators' best intentions.

The three papers included in this dissertation draw on 50 interviews with 37 informants, as well as a survey of 32 students. The totality of my data collection at Millington, however, was more expansive and included roughly 20 hours of participant and non-participant observation,

two interviews with students who identify as Black but are not US citizens or permanent residents, and in turn, were outside of the scope of my study, and interviews with 10 Millington faculty and administrators. Though these data do not appear explicitly in the papers that follow, the insights and perspectives I gained in collecting and analyzing these data helped shape my thinking and the according conclusions that I present.

A Note on Millington and Implications of this Research

A core contention of this dissertation is that institutions that serve undergraduate students, many of whom are as young as 17 or 18 years old, have a moral responsibility to ensure that their students feel a sense of belonging and human dignity. Well-resourced institutions are better equipped to provide supportive structures to this end, but as I discuss in the papers that follow, a relative lack of resources is not an excuse for institutional failures to support Black and other minority students.

In many ways, Millington is an atypical empirical context from which to derive insights that would be generalizable to institutions of higher education more broadly. As a mid-sized (roughly 6,000 undergraduate students) school of performing arts, Millington does not readily compare to frequently examined categories of higher education institutions, such as large research universities or small liberal arts colleges. The closest categorical approximation for Millington is the medium-sized university. However, few medium-sized universities are as specialized as Millington.

In other ways, however, Millington allows for the collection of rich data on several topics of interest to scholars of postsecondary education and students' experiences there within. In the world of performing arts colleges, Millington College is very well-regarded and highly sought

after by high-performing students. It is also, however, relatively resource-constrained, and is unable to provide resources and support to its students to the extent that traditional institutions of commensurate status might be able. As a point of comparison, Millington's per capita endowment, including undergraduate and graduate students for the 2020-21 academic year, was roughly \$50,000. Tufts University, a school of arguably commensurate status in its space and of similar size had a per capita endowment of roughly \$170,000 for the 2020-21 academic year, nearly three-and-a-half times that of Millington's.

This combination of high status and relative resource constraint at Millington allows for a unique context to examine Black students' social experiences in college. In her study of students' perceptions of diversity initiatives at Brown, Harvard and Oxford Universities, Warikoo (2016) noted that her informants did not lack in confidence or self-assuredness, which she argued was, in part, an artifact of their affiliation with high-status and well-resourced institutions. My experience at Millington could not have been more different. Despite Millington's high status, my informants consistently minimized their impressive accomplishments, and emphasized how much work was in front of them to achieve success—be it financial or otherwise—with great humility and thoughtfulness. Further, for many of my informants, they did not expect much in the form of support from Millington; their success in college, as they perceived it, would be a function of their ability to deal with the challenges that they either expected or would become aware of in their first year on campus. For these informants, the experiences of microaggressions, racism and non-belonging were taken-for-granted realities that were to be treated as surmountable obstacles on their path to achieving their personal or professional goals.

An Overview of What Follows

The remainder of this dissertation is broken into three empirical papers that can be categorized based on the stage of my research and involvement at Millington. Papers 1 and 2 reflect data that I collected on Millington students' experiences as first- or second-year students during the first two years of LEAD's existence. My findings and according conclusions in these papers were reported to Millington and LEAD faculty and administrators, and in turn, informed key components of the programming for the third LEAD cohort, which is one of the empirical contexts for paper 3.

Paper 1 addresses the broadest question of the three papers: How are Black students' social experiences with different-race peers once in college associated with their willingness to have relationships with these different-race peers? Drawing on interviews with first- and second-year Black students at Millington I found that many of my informants perceived social life at Millington to be organized by ethnoracial identity. In concert with experiences of microaggressions and racism, these perceptions of ethnoracial homogeneity led many students to seek relationships primarily with fellow Black students. Building on previous studies that suggest the persistence of ethnoracial homogeneity in social groups in HWCUs (Espenshade and Radford 2009; Stearns, Buchmann, and Bonneau 2009; Wimmer and Lewis 2010), I make two related arguments. First, I call for a greater emphasis on experiential variables—variables that assess students' experiences with different- (and same-) race peers—alongside the structural and campus engagement variables that are typically used to explain limited different-race peer interactions among Black and other minoritized students' in HWCUs. Second, to the extent that homophily is used as an explanation for limited different-race interactions in HWCUs, scholars should explicate the mechanism by which homophily manifests in their empirical contexts. Here,

I draw on recent contributions to the homophily literature that distinguish between interpersonal choice and activist choice homophily, with the former referring to homophily that manifests based on similarity between individuals, and the latter referring to homophily that manifests based on affiliation with a social category (Greenberg and Mollick 2017). My findings suggest that for Black students at Millington, homophily manifested primarily as induced choice homophily rather than interpersonal choice homophily.

Paper 2 examines the consequences of ethnoracial homogeneity in social groups for Black students' social experiences in HWCUs, particularly when homophily among Black students is encouraged by an RSEP. Paper 2 specifically addresses two related questions. First, what is the relationship between Black students' identities and the experiences of their relationships with same-race peers in an RSEP? Second, how do Black students' experiences of these relationships influence their perceptions of the costs to access the benefits of the social capital the RSEP is designed to generate? I find that students' experiences in LEAD depended on their prior exposure to Black peers and their orientations to their racial identities, such that, while nearly all of my informants experienced benefits from participating in LEAD and accessing the social capital that the program generated, several of my informants also experienced costs to access this social capital. Specifically, I identified three ways that Black students experienced relationships with same-race peers in the LEAD program: *affirmed*, *rationalized*, and *alienated*. Informants who experienced *affirmed relationships* perceived few or no costs to access the social capital that the LEAD program generated. Students who experienced *rationalized relationships* perceived both benefits and costs to accessing LEAD's social capital, with the benefits, however, outweighing the perceived costs. Conversely, informants who experienced *alienated relationships* had backgrounds or non-racial marginalized social identities that were incongruent

with the norms and expectations of the LEAD community. In turn, they perceived the costs of accessing the social capital generated by LEAD to be high and potentially in excess of the benefits they received. Drawing on scholarship that examines the consequences of social capital (Portes 1998; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993), I show that RSEPs, while potentially beneficial for Black and other minority students, must be designed inclusively, with attention to students' varying backgrounds, and multiple and intersecting identities.

Paper 3 focuses on the relationship between belonging and identity among RSEP participants in two phases of research. In the first phase, which draws on the same data used in paper 2, I focus mostly on the experiences of two students whom I treat as intensity cases (Patton 1990): Donna, whose high school and pre-college neighborhood was majority Black, and Nancy, whose high school and pre-college neighborhood was predominantly-White, with fewer than 2% of her high school population identifying as Black. Donna experienced belonging among her LEAD peers, while Nancy experienced non-belonging with the same peers. In particular, Nancy was alienated from the majority of her LEAD peers as several of them questioned her Blackness.

Based in part on my findings from the first phase of research for paper 3, programming for the third and subsequent LEAD cohort was partially re-focused to emphasize inclusivity within LEAD and included a module that I led on the importance of creating a community in which all Black students could be their authentic selves. In examining the experiences of students in this specific LEAD cohort, I found that my informants, generally irrespective of their backgrounds and non-racial social identities, were able to experience a sense of belonging to the LEAD community. Further, informants whose pre-college exposure to same-race peers was limited reported a stronger connection to their Black racial identity as a result of participating in LEAD. I conclude this paper by arguing that for RSEPs to be experienced positively by all

students, a thin line must be walked: RSEP programming must foster community cohesion among co-ethnoracial peers while being inclusive of the different ways that participants have experienced their ethnoracial identities.

Last, and before proceeding, one note on language. Henceforth in this dissertation, I use the term “minoritized” to refer to people who are traditionally classified as ethnoracial minorities. This choice follows Harper (2012) who conceives the state of being a minority as socially constructed depending on local context. As I show in each of the papers in this dissertation, for many Black students, the experience of being a minority, at least in a local context, is not salient to them until their enrolment at an HWCU. Thus, I use the term minoritized to emphasize that the experience of being a minority is context-dependent, rather than an innate reality that describes peoples’ experiences in all social contexts.

CHAPTER 2. EXPLAINING LIMITED DIFFERENT-RACE INTERACTION AMONG BLACK STUDENTS IN HWCUs: PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT AND EXPERIENCES WITH DIFFERENT-RACE PEERS

In the decades since *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (Tatum 1997) was first published, several studies have shown that racial homogeneity persists in students' social groups in many historically-White colleges and universities (HWCUs) (Gilkes Borr 2019; McCabe 2009; Thelamour, George Mwangi, and Ezeofor 2019).¹ This is especially the case for Black students who tend to have fewer different-race interactions than their minoritized peers (Espenshade and Radford 2009; Fischer 2008; Stearns et al. 2009; Wimmer and Lewis 2010).

Scholars have generally explored this phenomenon using quantitative analyses that focus on two types of explanatory variables. First, scholars have used *structural variables*, variables that directly or indirectly relate to core characteristics of the institutions to explain the frequency of different-race interactions. These studies often cite theoretical and empirical work on homophily (e.g., Fischer 2008; Wimmer and Lewis 2010), the tendency for people to create social ties with like others (Mcpherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Second, scholars have focused on *engagement variables*, variables that focus on students' engagement or participation in pre-existing and formal student groups and organizations (e.g., Bowman and Park 2014; Goldstein 2013).

By contrast, rarely have studies explicitly focused on the relationship between what I refer to as *experiential variables*—students' experiences with different-race peers once in college—as explanatory variables for limited different-race interactions among Black and

¹ Many of these studies examine homophily in relation to ethnicity as well as race. For simplicity, I use race to refer to analyses that examine race or ethnicity. I distinguish ethnicity from race when it is theoretically or empirically important to my argument.

minoritized students. The implications of a lack of focus on experiential variables are grand. Although structural and engagement variables are undoubtedly important to explain the frequency and prevalence of different-race interactions in HWCUs, an over-reliance on these variables potentially obscures the interpersonal and group dynamics that may be as, or even more influential in Black and other minoritized students' willingness to interact and have social relationships with different-race peers.

With this context in mind, this paper addresses the following question: How are Black students' social experiences with different-race peers once in college associated with their willingness to have relationships with different-race peers? In answering this question, I pay particular attention to how students' pre-college exposure to different- (and same-) race peers influences their expectations for and experiences of different-race interactions in colleges for two related reasons. First, there is great racial segregation in neighborhood and community contexts (Reardon and Owens 2014), which means that many students, irrespective of race, will have limited different-race interactions prior to college enrollment. Second, students' pre-college experiences with different-race peers have been shown to influence their interactions with different-race peers once in college (Stearns et al. 2009).

Drawing on 50 interviews with 37 Black students at Millington College, a four-year college of performing arts in the northeastern United States, I induced three core findings. First, the majority of my informants reported that perceptions of racial homogeneity in social life at Millington—among Black and non-Black students alike—preceded their eventual preferences for engaging with same-race peers. Further, for several students, including many of those who had significant exposure to same-race peers prior to attending Millington, the perceptions of racial homogeneity were experienced as a disappointment as they chose to attend Millington

College, in part, to have relationships with non-Black peers. Last, several of my informants were subject to experiences of microaggressions and racism, which alongside their perceptions of racial homogeneity in social life at Millington, reinforced their individual preferences for same-race interactions.

I proceed by reviewing the literature on different-race interactions in HWCUs, paying attention to the different ways that scholars have conceived the phenomenon of limited different-race interactions in HWCUs. After outlining my methods and detailing my findings I discuss the theoretical implications of this research and make two related arguments. First, I call for a greater emphasis on students' perceptions of campus environment in empirical work that examines the frequency of different-race interactions in HWCUs. Second, drawing on recent contributions to the homophily literature (Greenberg and Mollick 2017), I argue that to the extent that homophily is used as an explanation for limited different-race interactions in HWCUs, scholars should explicate the underlying mechanism by which homophily manifests.

Explaining (the Lack of) Different-Race Interactions in HWCUs

Tatum's seminal work was groundbreaking in that it emphasized Black adolescents and young adults' negative experiences with different-race (and often White) peers to explain the phenomenon of racial homogeneity in social groups in both secondary and postsecondary educational contexts. Take, for example, Tatum's reporting of data she collected from a young Black woman with whom she spoke at an HWCU who eventually decided to transfer to a historically-Black College or University (HBCU) (Tatum 1997:78):

Assigned to share a dormitory room with two White girls [at the HWCU she attended], both of whom were from rural White communities, she was insulted by the assumptions her White roommates made about her. Conflict erupted between them when she was visited by her boyfriend, a young Black man. "They put

padlocks on their doors and their dressers. And they accused me of drinking all their beers. And I was like, 'We don't drink. This doesn't make any sense.' So what really brought me to move out of that room was when he left, I came back, they were scrubbing things down with Pine Sol. I was like, 'I couldn't live here with you. You think we have germs or something?'"

Integral to this experience is the microaggression that Tatum's informant recalled.² Conceived as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities" unintentionally or intentionally directed at people of color and members of other traditionally marginalized groups (Sue et al. 2007:273), Tatum generally argued that Black students' negative experiences with different-race peers in educational settings explained the phenomenon of Black students "sitting together in the cafeteria."

Despite broad evidence of Black students' negative social experiences in HWCUs that Tatum described in her work (e.g., Griffith, Hurd, and Hussain 2019; Harper 2013; Lewis et al. 2021), models that examine the prevalence and frequency of different-race interactions in HWCUs have often used structural variables as primary explanatory variables. I conceive structural variables as those that directly or indirectly relate to core characteristics of the institutions, and in turn, are relatively stable from the student's perspective, and are not able to be influenced by the students themselves. For example, studies have used hierarchical linear modeling to compare the frequency of different-race interactions across institutions with a focus on the demographic compositions of each institution examined (e.g., Bowman and Park 2014; Fischer 2008; Park et al. 2019; Park and Denson 2013). Structural variables have also been used that indirectly relate to institutions' core characteristics. For example, studies have examined the racial composition of courses in which students are enrolled (Stearns et al. 2009) and the

² Tatum did not use the term "microaggression" as it was not conceived in the way it is used in contemporary scholarship for another decade. The situations she described, however, could be conceived as such.

racial identity of students' roommates in contexts in which students do not have a choice over who their roommates are (Mark and Harris 2012).

Campus engagement variables—variables that examine co-curricular and other formal campus activities in which students participate—have also been used to examine different-race interactions in HWCUs. Generally drawing on the core tenets of contact theory that suggest that intergroup prejudice can be reduced through active and goal-oriented contact (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998), investigations have focused on participation in different student organization types (e.g., Bowman and Park 2014; Goldstein 2013). Although such studies have shown associative relationships between engagement variables and the prevalence or frequency with which students have different-race interactions, the question remains as to *why* students choose to engage in specific activities in the first place. Without examining this question, we leave ourselves with the possibility that preferences for same-race interactions are associated with their engagement preferences, potentially including racial homophily.

By contrast, relatively few studies have focused on what I refer to as experiential variables, or variables that assess how students experience interactions with their peers. Saenz (2010) is a notable exception in that his model included a battery on college attitudes and views, with items that assessed feelings of belonging on campus and whether students have felt singled out because of their ethnoracial or gender identities. Here, Saenz found a statistically significant association between students' college attitudes and views and the frequency with which participants experienced positive cross-racial interactions.

Methods

Millington is a college of performing arts in the United States where roughly 25% of the student body identify as people of color with United States citizenship or permanent residency, including fewer than 10% who identify as Black or African-American. This paper draws on data collected as part of a larger project that examined the experiences of Black students at Millington.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with 37 students from a convenience sample of three cohorts of Black students at Millington, 26 of whom identified as women.³ I sent interview invitations to all Black students who were United States Citizens and permanent residents (I received a list of students from Millington administrators). My informants received either a \$5 gift card (the first two cohorts I interviewed), or a \$10 gift card (the last cohort I interviewed) for each interview they completed with me.

Interviews occurred no earlier than the end of the informants' second semester at Millington, and no later than the end of their fourth semester. Each interview lasted at least 30 minutes and as long as 90 minutes. The data analyzed for this paper are drawn primarily from informants' answers to six questions: 1) Tell me a little about yourself and the path that led you to Millington, 2) Tell me about the different student groups at Millington and how they form, 3) Are students typically members of multiple groups? 4) In which of these groups are you

³ One of my informants, in their interview with me, identified as gender non-binary. To preserve the anonymity of this informant, I report their data using a gendered pseudonym and gendered pronouns that align with the gender marker that was associated with them in the contact information that Millington provided me at the beginning of this research.

involved? 5) How important is it for you to feel like you belong to a group at Millington? and 6) How connected do you feel to the Millington community in general? At the beginning or conclusion of each interview, I collected general background information from informants including the high school they attended, and their current or intended areas of study.

In line with the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I refined my project's research questions as I gathered and coded additional data. After completing roughly 15 interviews, I refined my project's broader research questions, which included the research questions identified above for the present paper. After completing all interviews, I returned to the data and conducted an additional two-stage coding process, first looking for themes in the data, and then looking for connections between individual cases (Charmaz 2006).

In analyzing my data, two considerations were particularly important. First, I was particularly conscious of a potential correlation between informants' likelihood of having relationships with same-race peers, and the artistic genres in which students were interested or the academic majors that students intended to pursue. My sample was well-distributed in that multiple informants were affiliated with all of the genres and majors that are represented at Millington.

Second, a primary purpose of this research was to understand the ethnoracial makeup of students' pre-college environments, and most notably, their neighborhood and high school demographics. Many of my informants mentioned the demographic makeup of their high school and neighborhood settings when I asked them about the path that led them to Millington. For informants who did not, I followed up by explicitly asking the informant to tell me about the demographic makeup of their hometown communities and high school settings. The data I report in this paper on students' community and high school demographic compositions are based on

students' reporting in interviews. I confirmed informants' reporting of their high school demographic makeup by referring to the National Center for Educational Statistics for public schools, and a popular K-12 school data aggregator for private schools. All data presented in this paper representing students' perceptions of their high school ethnoracial composition are accurate.

The primary limitation for this research is the generalizability of my findings given that my findings are drawn from a convenience sample at a single research site. Nevertheless, the purpose of this research is to identify the potential processes by which Black students may develop a reticence to have different-race interactions. Here, I am not interested in making distributional claims. Rather, in line with the tenets of sequential interviewing (Small 2009), I am interested in identifying potential mechanisms for the manifestation of the aforementioned phenomenon in individual cases (individual informants), and then across cases.

To preserve the anonymity of my informants, I use pseudonyms I selected after data collection when attributing quotations.

Findings

Several of my informants emphasized that they chose to attend Millington because of a desire to interact with peers of diverse ethnoracial backgrounds. Michael, for example, who attended a high school whose student body was composed almost exclusively of Black students stated:

I wanted to come to Millington because it wasn't all Black people. I didn't want to go to an HBCU because at the end of the day America is made up of, mostly of people who [are] not necessarily us. So, I needed to get that experience of dealing with people who don't look like me.

Similarly, Liana, who grew up in a predominantly-Black neighborhood and whose high school student body had a plurality of Black students stated, “I think that for me coming from a place where there is a good amount of people who are just like me to go somewhere where there's not, it's great to be able to interact with people of other cultures.”

My informants who were socialized in predominantly-White environments generally reported greater frequency of interaction with different-race peers at Millington, and greater comfort engaging in these interactions than their peers who were socialized in predominantly-Black environments. For example, Samuel, who described his upbringing as taking place in a “White, middle-class, gentrified” environment, described his friend group at Millington as being composed of students from multiple ethnoracial backgrounds, and spoke of the broader Millington community positively: “I feel very loved and welcomed by the Millington community...Basically, I feel very, very supported and very loved and very welcomed by it.”

Samuel's case, however, was an outlier in my sample, even among students who were socialized in predominantly-White settings. Although students who were socialized in predominantly-White settings generally described a greater *ability* to engage with different-race peers than informants who were socialized with significant numbers of Black peers, they also emphasized the challenges associated with engaging across race.

Observation of Ethnoracial Homogeneity in Social Groups

When I asked my informants how social groups form at Millington, the majority of them emphasized racial and ethnic identity. For example, Carla, who attended a predominantly-Black high school, explained, “Most people stay with their race. That's definitely a thing here. Like the Asians with Asians, Blacks with the Blacks, Whites stay with Whites.”

Similarly, Marcus, who attended a high school whose student body was composed of nearly all White students, explained that there were physical and spatial aspects of the ethnoracial homogeneity of social groups at Millington:

[There are places where] I know if I walk in I'm going to see all Black people or I'm going to see all Hispanics or all Asians. It's not very common that I see a Black and White person walk together or an Asian and Hispanic walk ... Actually, I've never seen that. I've never seen an Asian person and a Hispanic or Latino walk together.

Some of my informants were sheepish about acknowledging the homogeneity of social groups at Millington. For example, Tyler, who attended a predominantly-White high school, responded to my question about how social groups form at Millington by stating, “I hate to admit it but if you just go in the cafeteria, you will see it's not even just exclusive to Black people. Like a whole bunch of Spanish people sitting together. Asian people. Whatever. Korean. It is by race.”

Some of my informants expressed surprise at the homogeneity of social groups at Millington. For example, Kaya, who attended a mixed-race high school, stated, “I feel like there is a big divide between American ethnic groups and international ethnic groups...You don't really see people walking with other people who do not look like them. It's very segregated. More segregated than I would have thought it would be.”

The Impact of Negative Experiences with Different-Race Peers

Initially introduced in the management literature in the context of women's experiences in corporate settings (Kanter 1977), tokenism refers to negative social experiences that women and other minoritized people have when there is limited representation of members of their group in a larger group or organizational context. Conceived as a specific type of microaggression (Williams, Skinta, and Martin-Willett 2021), experiences of tokenism are distinct from experiences of other forms of microaggressions in that the negative experience is dependent on

the demographic makeup of a social group; experiences of tokenism are microaggressions that occur, in part, *because* the minoritized person is one of only a few (or the only) members of their group in the social setting.

Several of my informants reported feeling discomfort with being the only, or one of few Black students in academic contexts at Millington. Imani, who attended a mixed-race high school with a large population of Black students explained:

Sometimes being in certain classes where we start talking about contemporary issues, or things dealing with race and everybody turns around and looks at me like I have to answer. I don't necessarily want to answer. Maybe it's something that kind of triggers me or makes me uncomfortable, but just the feeling of having maybe 16 to 20 White kids turn around and look at you and you're the only one and they need you to answer this question, and the teacher's looking at you, too. You kind of feel put in a box.

Lauren faced similar experiences in which she was expected to speak as a representative of her racial group in a classroom setting: "So, while learning about slaves and while learning about how Black people were treated [in America], the other students start to turn to me and ask me [questions]. And I'm just like, "I wasn't there. I can't tell you."

Not all of my informants' negative experiences could be construed as unintentional as several of them experienced racism. Experiences of racism are distinguished from experiences of microaggressions; whereas microaggressions are brief, potentially subtle, potentially unintentional, and commonplace (Sue et al. 2007), racism is intentional and rendered with the intention to denigrate (Clark et al. 1999). For example, Stacy, who attended a predominantly-Black high school, explained a harrowing classroom situation with White peers:

[Several White classmates] made a bunch of racist jokes [in class], and it was me, the [only] Black person in class. The faculty member was Black, [but] his hearing wasn't great. So, they would say [slurs] under their breaths. I'm over here like, "I'm here." And they would drop a slur on me.

Stacy's situation ultimately came to a resolution as she was able to connect with a faculty member who ensured the students were punished for their behavior. Nevertheless, this experience had a profound impact on Stacy. Reflecting on her social interactions at Millington, Stacy cited her experience in a classroom earlier in the same day that I interviewed her: "So, I walked into [a social science] course today, and I was just quiet for a little bit. And I was just like, 'Okay, I'm going to feel out the room and see what these people are for.' And *then* I was able to open my mouth up and speak."

The caution and reticence that Stacy described before interacting with different-race peers was shared by other informants and was often expressed in inverse terms by my informants, with an emphasis on the comfort they experienced interacting with same-race peers. This comfort was expressed by informants irrespective of whether their pre-college relationships were primarily with same-race peers or not. Donna, for example, who was socialized in predominantly-Black settings, explained that it was difficult for her to interact authentically with non-Black members of the Millington community: "I felt like I couldn't be myself the first couple weeks once I got here... When I'm in the classroom, in a predominantly-White classroom I don't feel like I can be myself. I notice that I change completely." Similarly, Tiffany, who attended a high school without a majority of any ethnoracial group and a significant portion of Black students stated that she prefers to interact with Black peers, rather than different-race peers: "I want to be around people who are like me who understand my situation, [who] understand what I'm going through."

These sentiments were shared by my informants who attended predominantly-White high schools. For example, Marcus stated:

I kind of grew up being somebody who hangs out with all types of people, [but] at Millington, I would say for my own wellbeing, I hang out around a lot of Black

people, because it gets very draining when I'm not around [the] Black community... I feel like we all share a similar mindset that other groups of people can't really wrap their head around. I do try and spend a good bit of time just being around Black people.

When I asked Marcus to elaborate on the “shared mindset” to which he was referring, he explained that the Black community provides a “safe place” for people who can understand the difficulties of being Black at Millington.

Despite differences in students’ pre-college exposure to different- and same-race peers, there was a recurring theme in the great majority of my interviews: the Black community was a safe space or even refuge for the difficult experiences that they faced in the broader Millington community. Imani’s explanation of the Black community at Millington best illustrates this theme and the perspective of many of my informants: “Nobody is going to have your back like another Black person.”

Discussion

The present study revealed three core findings. First, my informants’ expectations for different-race interactions once in college varied, with some students specifically choosing to attend Millington given the racial diversity among its student body. Notably, the students in my sample who expressed this sentiment had significant prior exposure to Black peers, indicating that Black students coming from settings in which they interact primarily with same-race peers does not necessarily predict a preference to interact with same-race peers once in college. This builds on recent work that shows Black high school students vary in their preferences to attend HWCUs or HBCUs (Holland 2020).

Second, racial homophily in my sample was influenced, in part, by perceptions of pre-existing racial homogeneity among social groups at Millington. This suggests a potentially

recursive relationship between racial homogeneity in social groups and homophily in HWCUs. Last, experiences of microaggressions and racism in social and academic spaces further instilled a desire to engage mostly or exclusively with same-race peers among many of my informants.

Although the literature on Black students' negative experiences in HWCUs is vast, it has rarely been in explicit conversation with the literature on racial homophily in HWCUs. This study's findings, however, speak well to recent contributions to the homophily literature that distinguishes three types of homophily: induced, interpersonal choice, and activist choice (Greenberg and Mollick 2017). Induced homophily is well-understood in the sociology literature and refers to the structural dynamics of a group, organization or other unit in which interactions take place. By contrast, choice homophily refers to the peoples' agentic choices to engage with like others; in choice homophily, the mechanism for the prevalence of same-race interactions are individuals' preferences, rather than the structural characteristics of the organization or group to which they belong.

Importantly, Greenberg and Mollick distinguish two types of choice homophily: interpersonal and activist. The former refers to preferences that people have to engage with others who share their interests. The latter refers to homophily that manifests as a result of affiliation with and commitment to a social group or category. My findings suggest that activist choice homophily was the most salient form of homophily that appeared in my data; more frequently than not, my informants cited the shared experience of being Black at Millington as a reason they sought social interactions primarily or exclusively with same-race peers. Similar findings have been shown in recent scholarship that suggests Black students seek same-race relationships for strategic purposes to affirm racial identity and experience community (Gilkes Borr 2019; Thelamour et al. 2019), and to buffer against stress induced by experiences of racism

(Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard 2015). Thus, to the extent that homophily is used as an explanation for limited different-race interactions in HWCUs, scholars should explicate the mechanism by which homophily manifests—induced, interpersonal choice, or activist choice homophily—in their empirical contexts. In not distinguishing the mechanisms that underlie homophily, the role of experiential variables in explaining limited different-race interactions in HWCUs is minimized or not considered at all.

Conclusion

In under-examining the experiences of Black students after enrolling in college when invoking homophily as a theoretical explanation for racial homogeneity in social groups in HWCUs, we limit our ability to fully understand how and why racial homophily manifests in the first place. A primary or even exclusive focus on structural and engagement variables to explain limited different-race interactions among Black students minimizes analytic attention to the influence that students' interactions with different-race peers upon matriculation in college have on their subsequent desire, or lack thereof, to continue engaging in these interactions. Further, in focusing on structural and engagement variables at the expense of students' experiences to explain fewer different-race interactions among Black students in HWCUs we run the risk of reifying a narrative that racial homophily is a phenomenon that is to be expected and taken-for-granted. By placing a greater emphasis on students' experiences in how we conceive and execute studies on different-race interactions in HWCUs, we can generate a fuller understanding of how and why racial homogeneity in social groups persists in many HWCUs.

CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: THE COMPLEXITIES OF BLACK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN A RACE-SPECIFIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

“The alliance exists purely because we're Black...LEAD is what it is because it creates the alliance. It creates that general, overarching understanding. Okay, cool, we're Black in a predominantly-White school. Let's not go against one another.”

-Isiah (pseudonym)

“I'm giving a lot to the LEAD community and I'm not getting anything in return...I wasn't taking the time to meet people on my own... I wasn't taking the time to do that because I'm thinking, ‘Oh, I have these people that I met through LEAD and I almost feel this obligation. These are my people, so I'm supposed to be friends with them.’ But that just didn't end up being the case, and when I realized that, I looked around and I was like, ‘Wow, I really do not feel like I have anybody here.’”

-Kristen (pseudonym)

Speaking on their experiences at LEAD (pseudonym), a pre-orientation and academic year race-specific enrichment program (RSEP) for Black students at Millington College (pseudonym), Isiah and Kristen highlight two sides of the same coin of social capital. On the one hand, the cultivation of strong ties in group settings consolidates resources and facilitates the exchange of resources among individuals in a group (Portes 1998; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). On the other hand, there are also negative consequences of social capital as seen in the case of Kristen. Through the exploitation of group norms, individuals can experience costs to sustain membership in the group and have access to the social capital the group generates: restrictions on individual freedom (an inability to display elements of one's identity or

characteristics) and being subject to excess claims by fellow group members (the experience of giving more to the group than is received from the group) (Portes 1998).

The logic of supporting Black students in historically-White colleges and universities (HWCUs) through the cultivation of social capital among their co-racial group members is well-supported by the sociology literature.⁴ Sociologists have long shown that frequent interaction in group contexts among co-ethnoracial group members can proliferate norms of mutual support that facilitate the exchange of information-based resources (Aguilera and Massey 2003; Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002; Whitehouse 2011) and social support (Domínguez and Watkins 2003; Jarrett, Jefferson, and Kelly 2010; McGrath 2010). However, the underlying logic of many programs that support minoritized students—that the deliberate cultivation of a community of individuals with a shared ethnoracial identity will generate social capital within the group, and allow students to give and receive support from one another—takes for granted that students’ orientations to their ethnoracial identities are generally similar. As organizational scholars have come to recognize, people hold intersecting identities, along which ethnoracial identity is only one dimension of identity that might be salient and important to people’s experiences in group contexts (see Ramarajan 2014 for a review of varying theoretical perspectives on identity in organizational contexts).

Although the antecedents and consequences of social capital have been examined in co-ethnoracial community and neighborhood settings (Aguilera 2005; Lancee 2012; Sanders et al.

⁴ In line with many contemporary scholars of ethnicity and race, I use “ethnoracial” to refer to both ethnic and racial identity categories given the conflation of these categories in the United States. See Alba (2020) for commentary on the use of ethnoracial in social science research. See Torres-Saillant (2003) for a discussion of the relationship between ethnic and racial identity in the United States.

2002), to the author's knowledge, no studies have examined how organizationally designed and operated efforts to foster social capital among people with a shared social identity influences people's experiences with their same-identity peers. With this gap in mind, the present study addresses two related questions. First, what is the relationship between Black students' identities and the experience of their relationships with same-race peers in an RSEP? Second, how do Black students' experiences of these relationships influence their perceptions of the costs to access the benefits of the social capital the RSEP is designed to generate?

Drawing on 27 interviews with 18 LEAD participants I found that while nearly all of my informants were able to identify the benefits of having access to the social capital that LEAD generated, the extent to which they also perceived costs to access this social capital depended on how their backgrounds, and salient and marginalized non-racial identities, aligned (or did not align) with prevailing conceptions of Blackness among their LEAD peers. Specifically, I identified three ways that Black students experienced relationships with same-race peers in the LEAD program: *affirmed*, *rationalized*, and *alienated*. Informants who experienced *affirmed relationships* perceived few or no costs to access the social capital that the LEAD program generated. Students who experienced *rationalized relationships* perceived both benefits and costs to accessing LEAD's social capital, with the benefits, however, outweighing the perceived costs. Conversely, informants who experienced *alienated relationships* had backgrounds or non-racial marginalized social identities that were incongruent with the norms and expectations of the LEAD community. In turn, they perceived the costs of accessing the social capital generated by LEAD to be high and potentially in excess of the benefits they received.

I proceed by first reviewing the literature on social capital in group contexts, and how theory on social capital has been used to examine the experiences of Black students in HWCUs. I

then review the literature on Black students' experiences in HWCUs, with attention to research that examines variance in these experiences by pre-college experiences, with particular attention to studies that examine the experiences of women and LGBTQ-identifying Black students, two identity categories along which Black people differentially experience groups, organizations and society at large (McCall 2005). After providing additional detail about LEAD and Millington, I show how LEAD participants experienced the social capital that the program generated, and describe how students in the aforementioned categories—affirmed, rationalized and alienated—differentially perceived the costs of accessing LEAD's social capital. I close by discussing the theoretical implications of this research and emphasize the importance of taking intersectional approaches to examining Black students' experiences in HWCUs.

Social Capital and Same-Race Relationships among Black Students

Bourdieu (2010:86) [1986] defined social capital as “resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships.” Over the past three-and-a-half decades, scholars have elaborated on Bourdieu's initial definition, with one perspective treating social capital as a group-based resources resulting from group norms and values that can be used by group members for their individual purposes (Coleman 1988). In this conception, embeddedness, or the extent to which an actor's behavior is constrained by ongoing social relations (Granovetter 1985), allows for group norms that facilitate the flow of information and resources within the group (Lin 2001).

The benefits of social capital have long been examined in communities in which resources are pooled for people who share an ethnic or racial identity. These benefits have been shown to manifest as the receipt of information that allows people to access employment and higher wages (Aguilera and Massey 2003), higher-status employment opportunities (Sanders et

al. 2002), and exchange markets (Whitehouse 2011). The benefits of social capital have also been shown to manifest as the receipt of access to social support, such as low-socioeconomic status (SES) Black and Latine women's ability to receive advice and encouragement (Dominguez and Watkins 2003) and general psychosocial support among low-income Black mothers in an urban American community (Jarrett et al. 2010).

The benefits of ethnic- or race-based social capital have been shown to manifest in college settings as well. Black students' greater success in historically Black college and university (HBCU) settings relative to HWCUs has, in part, been attributed to the social capital that is generated through shared racial identity and norms of mutual support among peers that manifest as expectations for students to provide advice and encouragement to each other (Palmer and Gasman 2008). More recently, Mishra (2020) reviewed the literature on the role of social capital in minoritized students' experiences and HWCUs and found that researchers have shown relationships between the availability of social capital for minoritized students, and their ability to access information related to their academic pursuits and receive social support.

There have been several empirical examinations of RSEPs (also called sociocultural initiative programs by some scholars) that investigate how RSEPs generate (additional) social cohesion—and social capital—among students with a shared ethnoracial identity. Many of these studies, however, have focused on how faculty and staff affiliated with RSEPs provide students support (e.g., Baier, Markman, and Pernice-Duca 2016; Guiffrida 2005; Museus and Neville 2012), rather than the support that students receive from relationships with peers in the RSEP. There are, however, a few notable exceptions. For example, Brooms (2018) shows how a program for Black men at an HWCU fostered social cohesion among program participants, and improved students' campus engagement behaviors and sense of self. Stolle-McAllister (2011)

shows how a summer RSEP developed students' networks to support their ability to integrate academically and socially in their campus environments. Similarly, Druery and Brooms (2019) show how participants in a Black male initiative program were able to access social and cultural capital to support their academic and social well-being.

Although RSEPs have the potential to harness social capital that is rooted in a shared social identity for the benefit of students who have been traditionally marginalized, little attention has been paid to how such programs are experienced by people who hold other salient and marginalized social identities, and the potential costs of accessing the RSEP's social capital in relation to these identities.

Black Racial Identity and Intersecting Identities in HWCUs

The challenges that Black and other minoritized students face in their social experiences at HWCUs have been well documented and include experiences of interpersonal racism and prejudicial campus environments (Harper and Hurtado 2007). Despite the salience of race in society generally and in organizational contexts, non-racial identities can influence students' experiences in educational settings as well. In their study of Black students at a selective predominantly-White liberal arts college, Smith and Moore (2000) found that biracial students, students who attended predominantly-White high schools, and low SES students felt less closeness to their institution's Black community. Smith and Moore also found that less interaction with Black peers prior to college was associated with less closeness to the Black community. Variance in Black students' relationship to their institutions' Black communities has also been shown at a highly selective urban university, in which Black students from higher SES and integrated (multiracial) backgrounds were less comfortable interacting with low-SES Black peers than Black students from segregated or monoracial backgrounds (Torres and Massey 2012).

Despite a theoretical focus on the experiences of Black women and Black LGBTQ-identifying people in the intersectionality literature (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Holvino 2010; McCall 2005; Rosette et al. 2018) and empirical work in the same areas (Livingston, Rosette, and Washington 2012; Settles 2006), there are relatively few studies that examine the experiences of people with these intersecting identities specifically in higher education contexts. Winkle-Wagner (2015) emphasizes that within-group differences among Black women in HWCUs have been underexamined, and argues that the lack of intersectional approaches to examinations of Black women's experiences in HWCUs precludes us from having a full picture of Black women's experiences in such settings. To the extent that empirical examinations that have been conducted focus on Black women's experiences in HWCUs, the results are conclusive: Black women face several unique challenges relative to their Black male peers (Henry, Butler, and West 2011; Shahid, Nelson, and Cardemil 2018).

Similarly, while researchers have elucidated the challenges that LGBTQ-identifying Black students face in HWCUs (Blockett 2017; Goode-Cross and Tager 2011), there has been limited attention to how LGBTQ-identifying Black students experience social life with same-race peers. A notable exception is Patton and Simmons' (2008) study of lesbian-identifying Black women at an HBCU where they found that their informants developed a "triple-consciousness" in which their social experiences in college were informed by their gender and racial identities and sexual orientation. Patton and Simmons particularly noted experiences in which their informants were the subject of anger and resentment from Black men for their sexual orientation.

Thus, Black students in HWCUs face a social context in which race is salient and likely to be a key lens through which they experience social life. At the same time, we can expect

Black students to have different pre-college experiences, and hold salient and marginalized non-racial social identities that may inform how they experience relationships with same-race peers in college.

Methods

Millington is a medium-sized four-year college of performing arts in an urban setting whose student body includes roughly 5% of students who identify as Black or African-American (with US citizenship or permanent residency). Roughly 15% of the student body are Pell Grant recipients. The LEAD program was designed by Millington faculty and administrators to cultivate a stronger sense of community among Black students on campus. Although open to students of any racial or ethnic background, all admitted United States citizens and permanent residents who self-identified as Black were specifically invited to participate in the program. All students in the two LEAD cohorts I examined self-identified as Black or African-American.

LEAD's primary programmatic component is a week-long pre-orientation program that includes two pedagogical elements: social and cultural modules accounting for roughly 80% of the program, and core academic concepts accounting for the remaining 20%. Millington pays all student expenses associated with participation in the week-long pre-orientation program. For the two cohorts I examined, 62% of invited students attended LEAD.

All students who participated in the pre-orientation program had the opportunity to participate in community-building activities during the academic year, including monthly "family dinners," and academic and career planning sessions. In addition to their instrumental purposes, academic year activities provided venues for LEAD participants to build and maintain community beyond the initial week-long program. LEAD administrators reported that attendance

of these events ranged from five to 70, with greater attendance at family dinners than at academic or career planning sessions.

Data Collection and Analysis

I investigated my research questions using semi-structured interviews with the two inaugural cohorts of the LEAD program at Millington College as part of a larger research study on Black students' experiences at Millington. I created a convenience sample by recruiting informants through recruitment emails that I sent to all LEAD participants in the two cohorts I examined. Informants received a \$5 gift card for their participation, and were interviewed no earlier than the end of their second semester, and no later than the end of their fourth semester at Millington. I conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with 18 informants. The sample was over-representative of the number of women in LEAD (56% for the sample and 43% for the population), and under-representative of the proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students in LEAD (33% in the sample and 50% for the population).⁵

In line with a grounded theory approach that focuses on inductive theory building (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and ethnographic interview methods (Spradley 1979), I conducted an initial set of interviews with seven students to collect data to gain a general understanding of how Black students experience social life in the LEAD program as part of my broader research project. I specifically asked all of my informants four questions: 1) Tell me about the path that led you to Millington, 2) Tell me about your experiences so far at Millington, 3) Tell me about your experiences with the LEAD community, and 4) How connected do you feel to the LEAD community? From this initial set of interviews, I began to formulate my initial theory that

⁵ One student with whom I spoke identified as transgender. To preserve their anonymity, I refer to them in the narrative by the gender identity they selected in their application to Millington.

students varied in the extent to which perceived costs of accessing the social capital LEAD generated based on their backgrounds and other identities they hold.

After doing initial coding of these interviews and consulting the literature on social capital, I defined the two research questions detailed above. To address these questions, I re-interviewed six of the seven students with whom I initially spoke, and interviewed an additional 11 LEAD participants for the first time. My interview guide in this second wave of interviews focused on five questions: 1) How do you identify racially and ethnically, and what does this identity mean to you? 2) What other identities do you hold that are important to you? 3) To what extent do you feel like you can be yourself in the LEAD community? 4) Do you feel like your contributions to the LEAD community are seen and acknowledged? and 5) What, if anything, would you change about the LEAD program? I also asked informants about their experience with the Black church given the importance that informants in the first wave of interviews placed on this experience. I later re-interviewed three students from this second wave of interviews to refine my understanding of their experiences with the LEAD community.

At the conclusion of each first-round interview, I also asked informants to complete a short questionnaire so they could self-report their Pell Grant status, parents' highest levels of educational attainment, and parents' occupations, as well as several other data points specific to their academic choices at Millington (e.g., intended major, primary art form). Completion of this questionnaire and specific items within the questionnaire was optional.

After completing all interviews, following Charmaz (2006), I analyzed the data using a two-stage coding process, where in the initial stage I stayed close to the data, highlighting key themes that explained how students perceived the benefits of participating in LEAD, and the costs associated with accessing these benefits. In the next stage, following Grodal, Anteby, and

Holm (2021), I categorized and identified patterns between key themes that addressed each of my research questions.

I believe that the richness of the data I was able to collect was in part attributable to several elements of my identity. As a Black man who presents as younger than many of the people at Millington my informants perceived as authority figures, I was able to establish commonality and rapport with the majority of my informants within the first few minutes of conversation. Further, after introducing myself as a doctoral student at a high-status university, many of my informants expressed pride in my accomplishments. Even before asking my first question, several students expressed great interest in me and how I navigate experiences in HWCUs. This allowed for a bi-directional exchange of personal stories that created space for comfort, vulnerability and the sharing of personal details that I do not believe I would have been able to access otherwise.

To preserve the anonymity of my informants, I selected pseudonyms for them after the completion of the data collection process.

Limitations

The two primary limitations of this study relate to sample creation. First, because I constructed a convenience sample, I was unable to ensure representation across non-racial social identities along which Black students would differentially experience relationships with their same-race peers. Second, as a school of performing arts, my findings do not readily generalize to other HWCU settings. However, findings from this research can provide insight about the micro-level mechanisms by which race-specific programs, and social-identify specific programs in

general, successfully (or unsuccessfully) generate the ability to access the benefits of social capital.

Findings

My data indicated that many of my informants felt a strong sense of community with other LEAD participants rooted in shared Black identity. This sense of community allowed for the creation of interpersonal relationships in which LEAD participants received and provided two types of resources: access to information, and social support. My informants generally provided these resources to their LEAD peers with little or no expectation that they would receive recompense directly or individually. Rather, for nearly all of my informants, the only expectation was that the provision of resources to members of the LEAD community would eventually be accounted for via the commitment and the provision of resources by others in the program to the LEAD community generally.

However, my informants differentially perceived the *costs* associated with accessing LEAD's social capital. Table 1 details the three categories of LEAD participants I identified—affirmed, rationalized and alienated—based on their prior exposure to Black institutions and communities, and the salience of their non-racial social identities, which informed their perceptions of the costs to access LEAD's social capital. I first discuss how social capital manifested within the LEAD community, and then describe these categories of LEAD participants and their experiences with accessing LEAD's social capital.

Table 1. Key Descriptive Statistics for Informants

Name and Coded Category		High School (HS) Demographics		Personal Information		
Pseudonym	Category	Largest Ethnoracial Group in HS ¹	Percentage Black in HS ¹	Gender ²	Pell Grant? ³	1st-Gen College? ³
Lauren	Affirmed	Black (90% to 100%)	90% to 100%	F	--	--
Michael	Affirmed	Black (90% to 100%)	90% to 100%	M	N	N
Donna	Affirmed	Black (60% to 69%)	60% to 69%	F	N	N
Jordan	Affirmed	Black (50% to 59%)	50% to 59%	M	N	N
Alyssa	Affirmed	Black (40% to 49%)	40% to 49%	F	N	N
Isiah	Affirmed	Black (40% to 49%)	40% to 49%	M	N	N
Terry	Affirmed	White (30% to 39%)	30% to 39%	M	Y	N
Gregory	Affirmed	White (60% to 69%)	20% to 29%	M	Y	N
Tyler	Affirmed	White (50% to 59%)	20% to 29%	M	N	Y
Dimitri	Affirmed	Hispanic (60 to 69%)	0% to 9%	M	Y	N

¹ Based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data from the 2020-21 school year for public schools, and niche.com data for private schools, which are sourced from the Private School Universe Survey administered by NCES. Ranges are presented, rather than exact percentages, to preserve informants' anonymity | ² As reported in the informants' application to Millington | ³ Self-reported.

Table 1 (continued). Key Descriptive Statistics for Informants

Name and Coded Category		High School (HS) Demographics		Personal Information		
Pseudonym	Category	Largest Ethnoracial Group in HS ¹	Percentage Black in HS ¹	Gender ²	Pell Grant? ³	1 st -Gen College? ³
Jessica	Rationalized	Black (40% to 49%)	40% to 49%	F	Y	Y
Kaya	Rationalized	White (30% to 39%)	20% to 29%	F	N	N
Sarah	Rationalized	White (70% to 79%)	10% to 19%	F	N	N
William	Rationalized	White (50% to 59%)	10% to 19%	M	-	-
Stacy	Alienated	Black (70% to 79%)	70% to 79%	F	N	N
Kristen	Alienated	White (30% to 39%)	20% to 29%	F	N	N
Imani	Alienated	Hispanic (60% to 69%)	10% to 19%	F	N	Y
Nancy	Alienated	White (60% to 69%)	0% to 9%	F	Y	N

¹ Based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data from the 2020-21 school year for public schools, and niche.com data for private schools, which are sourced from the Private School Universe Survey administered by NCES. Ranges are presented, rather than exact percentages, to preserve informants' anonymity | ² As reported in the informants' application to Millington. | ³ Self-reported.

Social Capital among LEAD Participants

My informants—across the affirmed, rationalized and alienated categories—perceived the benefits of being in LEAD as having privileged access to both information and social support. In the case of the former, several students cited the benefits of gaining tacit knowledge from LEAD peers about how to navigate Millington’s academic processes. For example, Lauren explained:

[I receive] advice on who I should talk to get in certain classes, who do I need to just show my face to so that I can always have some help if ever need it. [LEAD peers] are telling me who I need to speak to, “who's who” on campus, the faculty I need to talk to just so they know my face, and [which] teachers can help me out with certain things...So they kind of tell you the "ins and outs” of ways to get things done here at Millington.

Many of my informants also mentioned how they were able to access information from the LEAD community for material benefit. For example, Michael stated:

[LEAD participants] do watch out for our own... We're extremely supportive because if you need a [specific type of artist] or anything, it's really easy to get it. Ask your bro or your sis, and it's a “yes.” Especially if you have a great work ethic.

Michael described access to artistic groups that received paid performance opportunities as a core benefit of being a member of LEAD.

The majority of my informants also mentioned the receipt of social support as a primary benefit of LEAD. Kaya offered a sentiment that was shared by many respondents: “I think I received some of the greatest friends that I probably have known so far in my lifetime [from LEAD].” Isiah explained his friendships with LEAD peers in more acute terms, emphasizing the mental health support he receives from them: “I just need help right now [as a college student]. So, can I call you—can I call this person? Can I call that person [when I’m struggling]?”

Similarly, Imani, who expressed great appreciation for the LEAD community given that she was grappling with several family challenges as a first-year student stated:

Even if [fellow LEAD participants] might not have known what I was exactly going through, they were still very supportive, or they could tell, “Oh, I think Imani’s kind of going through something,” and they would just cheer me up, or even if they didn't know they would just be like, “Oh, hey Imani!”

Many informants also spoke of the resources that they provided to the LEAD community. For example, Donna described how she supported another Black woman who participated in LEAD on having confidence in her performance abilities. Donna closed the anecdote by stating:

I just want to see the best in everyone. That's why I go around calling everyone queen. “Go king, you're beautiful!” “Hello beautiful, how are you doing queen?” I found myself using that language. That's all I use now when I'm greeting someone, just to make sure they know that I know that they're beautiful and I want to help you.

More often than not, students spoke of LEAD as a “community” or “family,” rather than a program. When pushed to explain this distinction, many informants mentioned that community was characterized by a shared sense of mutual support. As Jordan explained, “[LEAD] is a community of people who kind of watch out for each other.” The emphasis on “helping,” “looking,” or “watching out” for one another was shared by several students with whom I spoke. Take for instance Gregory’s conception of the LEAD community:

The sense of community between Blacks is wonderful because it's like a real family. We call it the LEAD family and it's like an actual family. For me, every time I see somebody at LEAD, or just even Black in general, that's in the hallway, or just anywhere, I'm shaking everybody's hand. It's like that for everybody. It's like, we're always in a big group, we're always stuck together.

For Gregory and several students with whom I spoke, there was a taken-for-grantedness that Black students at Millington, and especially LEAD participants, would “stick together” for mutual support and the sharing of resources.

The benefits of the social capital that LEAD generated, however, did not come without expectations. Several LEAD participants spoke of the responsibilities associated with being in the LEAD community in transactional terms. Take, for instance, Alyssa's perspective on involvement in the LEAD community:

You have to bring something so that we know what you offer, so that we can, if we need you for something, we can come to you for something. We can trust you with that. Or we know that you are good enough... So that's how I kind of see it as, "Okay, I'm not going to compare myself to you because I already know what I can do. What are you bringing?"

This sentiment was similarly expressed by Tyler:

You always have accountability when you're a member of the community. You have to be an active part of the community... Within your peers there's an accountability that we're going to support each other and be there to support each other. Amongst our [LEAD] peers there's that expectation.

The Varying Costs of Accessing LEAD's Social Capital

My informants perceived the costs of accessing LEAD's social capital—the “accountability” and “being an active member of the community,” to which Tyler referred—differentially based on their prior exposure to Black institutions and communities, and the salience of non-racial social identities that they held. In turn, students experienced relationships with their LEAD peers—the foundations upon which LEAD's social capital was based—in one of three ways: affirmed, rationalized, and alienated.

Affirmed Relationships. Students in the affirmed category highlighted two experiences that fostered a sense of connectedness with their LEAD peers: attendance of a predominantly-Black high school, and exposure to Black peers in non-academic settings, most notably the Black church. In the case of the former, Michael stated bluntly:

I think I'm very connected [to the LEAD community] because I went to an all-Black school, so yeah, I think it's harder for people who have gone to all White schools and they've been labeled as Oreos or things of that nature, if Black people were acting White.

When I pushed Michael and the few others who expressed similar sentiments to articulate what “acting White” meant, they struggled to come up with anything precise, aside from having non-Black friends. In a second interview with Michael, however, he shared additional insight on how some LEAD participants might be perceived as acting White or feel less of a sense of belonging: “If a Black person was to say they never watched a specific Black movie or haven't eaten a specific Black food... I can see in the same way of not knowing a specific [music] artist or maybe not even liking hip hop or R'n'B and things of that nature.” Michael went on to explain:

I know one person where they do hang out with African-Americans, but more so they hang out with a lot of people who aren't a part of the race [because] that's who they seek to get married to...[When they were] in high school they faced the whole concept of not being Black enough, because they liked anime or because they [didn't] listen to hip hop and things of that nature.

Jordan provided additional context for how some LEAD participants might feel a sense of cohesion and connectedness with their LEAD peers, while others might not:

When you say LEAD, the faces that people generally think of, they're usually... Not all of them are loud per se, but I feel like they have a very typical Black experience. A very typical Black personality. So, when I say that, I mean [they're] very spontaneous. [They] wouldn't be scared to break out in the middle of the street and sing and dance and shit like that. Or even just are able to... Just basically share common Black experience. "When I was younger my mom would say this, and blah, blah, blah." You know what I mean?... I feel like [for] other people in LEAD there was probably some kind of disconnect... a [lack of] compatibility with how those people act and portray themselves.

Jordan did not ascribe a value judgement to LEAD participants who did not act or portray themselves in a way that was consistent with the prevailing behavioral norms of the LEAD community that he described. However, he explicitly acknowledged that the LEAD community was not a space in which all Black students would feel a sense of belonging.

Although experience in predominantly-Black high school settings was the primary means by which my informants felt aligned with the prevailing norms of the LEAD community, exposure to Black peers in other institutions and community contexts frequently came up as well. Many of these institutions were the locales in which my informants developed their artistry, such as traveling performance groups. For example, Terry, who attended a mixed-race high school with a plurality of White students, cited his travels across the United States and abroad with other Black artists as a means of exploring and affirming his Black identity and gaining familiarity with Black peers. Terry further explained that conversations with his father also allowed him to reflect on racialized experiences he had while traveling, and to develop a strong Black identity:

Since I was young, I've been traveling a lot [for my artistic pursuits], so [my father] would always ask me tough questions. It wasn't to be mean or anything. It was more so just to prepare me for the world. [So], I feel very connected [to the Black community]. I identify with the issues that we're having nationally and locally [in my hometown], especially with police and things like that. Race relations and going to a predominantly-White high school. I definitely understand because I've been put in those situations, just traveling; being 15 to 16 and driving through [the Deep South].

Similarly, Dimitri reported having interactions with same-race peers outside of his high school context, which was predominantly-Latine, through his artistic activities.

By far, however, the most notable venue outside of school settings in which my informants were exposed to Black communities was the Black church. The importance of having experience with the Black church in aligning with the norms and behavioral expectations of the LEAD community was often best explained by students who were not in the affirmed group. For example, Kristen stated:

You have these times where during a [performance], [LEAD students] will go into a shout and it's like... Before I came here, I didn't know what a shout was.

And the only reason why I do know that is because it's happening in all of these events where you have this large African-American population, and it's something that doesn't stop after LEAD.

Referencing the traditional African-American practice in which worshippers dance, stomp, run, or shout with exuberance (Hafar 2013), Kristen identified an experience that many LEAD participants erroneously assumed was shared by their same-race peers.

Newly-found Affirmed Relationships. For some students in the affirmed category, the experience at LEAD brought a welcome change in the way they experienced relationships with same-race peers. Based on their prior experiences with Black peers, to whom they had some but not exclusive exposure in racially mixed or predominantly-White high schools and neighborhood contexts, they had low expectations for LEAD prior to arrival at Millington. For example, Jessica, who grew up in a mixed-race community, expressed trepidation about attending LEAD:

In the schools that I went to, even though there's not a lot of Black people, [there was a lot of] fighting against each other, and I didn't really get that because you should, I mean, for me, I was like, why aren't you supporting me instead of bullying me? It shouldn't really be that way. So, I really never got that. And I wouldn't say I had a certain perspective on all Black people, but that was something that I just never got. [I] never understood that.

Jessica's experience with Black peers changed dramatically, however, after enrolling at Millington and attending LEAD: "Me being at LEAD and then in that specific moment of just so many beautiful Black human beings in one space supporting each other. I mean, it gave me a lot of hope." Despite negative experiences with Black peers in the past, Jessica experienced her relationship with the LEAD community exclusively positively.

Alyssa, who had exposure to Black peers in church contexts reflected on the ways that prior to attending Millington she felt distant from her Black community: "I was always called 'White girl' [by Black peers]. So, I'd never had any great experiences with Black people, because

it was like... They just called me 'White girl.'...So I just stayed away from Black people most of the time.” After having a positive experience in the pre-orientation portion of LEAD, however, Alyssa described reporting to a LEAD-affiliated faculty member how thankful she was for the program:

In my year that I've been here, I've never been called "White girl." [I've] never had anybody judge me because I talk... I speak proper and I act a certain way. It's all based on character, not based on stereotypes or what they think you should act like.

For this subset of students in the affirmed category, LEAD provided, for the first time in their lives, an opportunity to feel a sense of connectedness with same-race peers. This newfound sense of connectedness led these students to perceive only positive benefits of the LEAD program with little to no cognizance that LEAD might be experienced less positively by some of their peers.

Rationalized Relationships. Students in the rationalized category had little to no experience with Black peers prior to enrollment at Millington as they attended predominantly-White high schools and did not have exposure to same-race relationships in non-school settings. Thus, when they encountered the LEAD community, they were occasionally subject to explicit or implicit accusations of “acting White” by Black peers for the first time. Nevertheless, students in the rationalized category generally maintained strong connections to the LEAD community because of the salience of their Black identity.

The majority of students in the rationalized category expressed discomfort with some of the behavioral expectations in the LEAD community. Sarah, a student who grew up in a predominantly-White environment, identified negative aspects of being in LEAD: “I've been told that I'm not Black because I don't have a certain way of speaking. I've been told I'm not Black because I don't watch Madea movies.” Despite these experiences, Sarah maintained her affinity

with the LEAD community: “I feel like an instant connection whenever I meet someone who is Black or from the African diaspora...It's hard to find people like yourself in a school where you're surrounded by other people, other ethnicities.”

For Sarah, similarity with her Black peers refers more to the shared social identity rooted in common experiences, rather than a shared set of behaviors perceived to be associated with Blackness. Take for instance her reflections on her relationship to the LEAD community and her Black identity.:

[Black people] have a culture, and other races do have a culture, but our culture is so unique because we have so much history. It's ugly history, too. There's so much behind who we are. Even though we've gone through a lot of bad things, it has brought us to where we are now... [My experiences with Black peers] could be better, but I mean everything could be better. The world's not perfect, so you can't expect everything to go perfectly in our lives.

Similarly, William, who attended predominantly-White middle and high schools, has been told by members of the LEAD community that he “talks White,” and has been questioned about his musical preferences that are not in line with what they perceive to be associated with Black identity. Despite these experiences, he maintains a strong connection to his Black identity:

The world would not be what it is today without Black Americans and I take pride in the contributions that Black people, Black Americans have made to the world. And so that makes me proud to accept the identity. It makes me proud to flaunt that identity and not hide it and not be ashamed of it.

Despite feeling connected to the LEAD community, William hid aspects of his identity as he has little experience with the Black church:

I'm working at [a church], which is not a historically-Black church, but it's working out great. I love the community there...I know a lot of people, they come from Black churches, so they want to go right to a Black church. Whereas for me, it worked out better that I'm in I guess a traditionally White church, you know?

I followed up by asking what his LEAD peers think about this. William responded that he hasn't actively talked about his choice to attend a predominantly-White church with members of the LEAD community.

Similar to Sarah and William, Kaya, one of two biracial (Black and White) students with whom I spoke, explained that she sometimes feels like an outsider in Millington's Black community: "[I frequently sense from my peers] 'Oh, you're not Black enough,' but I don't feel it all the time, it's just very specific situations." In particular, she pointed to moments in which she has felt pressure to use the n-word: When I asked Kaya if these experiences bother her, she responded affirmatively, but she has also chosen to focus more on the ways she feels solidarity with the Black community:

It does [bother me], yeah...It does just because it's like I said, we do share the same identity. We go through a lot of the same struggles, we experience the same forms of microaggressions and racism in Millington and anywhere else in the city or country, and it's kind of strange to feel that from someone who may look like me, or look similar to me... I feel like it hurts because I feel like we share an experience and I'm being taken away from that experience.

Kaya continued to explain the importance of the LEAD community to her:

There's this whole thing of Black excellence, but I really feel like that's so true. It's like every single show that I go to at Millington I always see at least one or two LEAD students there. I feel like that within itself, it promotes the program, it shows how talented we are, and it shows how underrepresented we are in the school, and I think all of those are just things that help to show how important the program is.

For Kaya, a strong local connection to her Black peers and the benefits that LEAD provided outweighed the costs of accessing LEAD's social capital, including difficulty engaging with her same-race LEAD peers in a way that is authentic to her personal values.

Alienated Relationships. For several of my informants, the experience of not feeling welcome in the LEAD community, to varying degrees, was a result not of their backgrounds, but

of the maintenance of another salient identity that was incongruent with the norms and expectations of the LEAD community. In particular, some of my informants identified as either LGBTQ or strong allies of the LGBTQ community. These students occasionally (or frequently) had negative experiences with their LEAD peers, irrespective of their prior exposure to Black peers, or the nature of their previous experiences with Black peers. For example, Imani revealed that she is often questioned by LEAD participants about having beliefs that are in support of LGBTQ populations: “A lot of people even in the Black community kind of look at me like, ‘You're okay with people who are transgender? You're okay with people who are gay?’” Imani went on to state, “I'm considered a weird Black girl, I'm not a normal Black girl or whatever, so sometimes a lot of people have a hard time kind of understanding me... I feel connected to [the LEAD community], there are just certain aspects as far as unique parts of myself that I feel like people don't necessarily understand or they don't want to understand.” Despite these experiences, Imani was able to see positive aspects of her experiences with LEAD: “[LEAD] is just a big family, there are no airs with anyone, it's just all love all the time. It's a sense of comfort. It's just kind of like a home away from home, like you always know you have it, you always know there's somebody there for you.”

Imani, who attended a mixed-racial high school, and had significant exposure to Black peers through church prior to Millington, shared several characteristics with my informants in the affirmed category. In turn, the extent to which she felt alienated from members of the LEAD community was minimal given she felt she received many benefits from the LEAD community. Although she was an outspoken ally of the LGBTQ community, she did not herself identify as LGBTQ. For those who did, however, the costs of accessing LEAD's social capital were greater.

Stacy, an informant who identifies as queer, explained the challenges she has experienced being Black and queer at Millington: “I’m kind of two faced at Millington...I will constantly lean back on some of my identities in order to assimilate into certain communities... [In the] Black community, I do hang back some... I do feel like I did that, and it sucks.” Kristen, who also identifies as queer, offered similar sentiments:

I feel like when you think about being Black, you really only think about being Black and not really anything else. What does it mean to be a Black female? What does it mean to be Black and gay?... I feel like LEAD, quite frankly, was one of the first places where I genuinely sat down and thought about that.

Kristen went on to explain that most of her relationships with fellow Black students are with those who also identify as queer.

In addition to experiences of non-belonging, Kristen, as indicated in this paper’s epigraph, felt that she gave much more to the Millington community than she received. Speaking on how she contributed to the LEAD community, Kristen revealed that she has experienced excess claims on her involvement in the LEAD program:

[Fellow LEAD participants] would come up to me just a day before they have an assignment due...and I would try to sit there and explain it to them, and what are they doing? On their phone doing something else... There would be times where I would help them with their assignments and then it would be 2:00 AM, and then I would go back to my room and do my own homework...Why am I doing this for you when you're not doing it for yourself?

Notably, Kristen’s experiences of being the subject of excess claims were *perceived*. Other informants with whom I spoke identified homework help as a standard means of support for fellow LEAD attendees. Whereas students who contributed homework support to the community felt their contributions were “seen” or “acknowledged” given that they felt they received psychosocial or instrumental support, or merely a sense of connectedness to the LEAD community, Kristen did not perceive that the community gave her much in return.

Students in the alienated group illustrate the extent of challenges for Black students in HWCUs, who in addition to potentially experiencing feelings of non-belonging in the broader campus community, may experience non-belonging *within* the Black community as well. However, a combination of cognitive identification with their Black identity, and negative cross-racial experiences at Millington generally kept these students engaged in the LEAD community. This was articulated by Kristen, who responded as follows when I asked why she and other students who have negative experiences with LEAD remain connected to the LEAD community:

Honestly, where else would they have to go? I know that is a very depressing answer... Honestly LEAD is the easiest [community] to put up with [at Millington] to an extent. It's kind of like going to a family gathering... It's a large community of Black people where, to an extent, I'm an outsider... while there are [a lot of negative experiences], there are a lot of great opportunities that come through LEAD that I personally have turned my attention [to] more.

Gender as a Nested Identity within LEAD

Gender did not directly come up organically in many of my conversations with LEAD participants. However, when I prompted women to discuss how their intersecting racial and gender identities influenced their experiences of LEAD, they recalled instances in which men in the LEAD program participated in sexist or misogynistic behavior. For example, Kaya explained the role that gender plays in her experiences generally and with LEAD:

I feel like being a woman and being a Black woman [are] pretty much what dictate my life... Any Black woman in any kind of position of power is constantly belittled by their environment... In my identity as a Black woman, I feel like there are definitely Black women who have gone through [LEAD] who understand what that's like and are just as frustrated as I am. [There] are also Black men in the program who are constantly belittling women.

Kaya specifically referenced Black men in LEAD who diminish women's performance abilities and recalled a comment made by a male LEAD participant, "Yeah, there's no way that a woman would ever be able to outperform me." Kaya closed our conversation by stating, "I feel like

there's a community that Black men share in LEAD that Black women don't share." Kaya went on to state:

I've felt belittled by students. I've felt belittled by professors. I just feel like there's not encouragement or space for me [as a Black woman] in what I want to do and what I want to learn, which is kind of frustrating, just because I am here to learn at the end of the day. It's always just little things. It's kind of microaggressions, I guess. It's just like telling someone, "Oh, this is what I'm planning on doing. This is what I'm majoring in." "Oh wow, that's really ambitious. That seems really ambitious," or "Are you sure that's what you want to do? What do you want to do with it?" Stuff like that.

In contrast to the dimensions of identity along which my informants in the rationalized and alienated categories felt distance from the LEAD community, Kaya described gender as a dimension along which women in the LEAD community were able to create a nested space—a space for Black women within the broader LEAD community. What was unclear from Kaya's experiences, however, was why she and other Black women do not form community with other women, irrespective of racial identity, given the sexism that they experienced from Black male members of the LEAD community. Kristen's perspectives shed light on the answer to this question when I asked why Black women continue to engage with LEAD:

From my perspective, it's like you go to this community of women and it's got a lot of White women, and that's already a problem.... When you have so many different layers of stuff, you start to realize that a lot of people in the world, they might be one thing, but they don't understand a lot [else]. But they think that they understand because they are this one thing... Even being in a space with a lot of queer people, it's better than with White women. But [even in queer spaces], there's something [missing].

Kristen's experiences underscore the ways that social identities intersect. As a queer Black woman, Kristen was unable to find communities, groups or spaces—be they formal or informal—that were rooted in a single shared social identity and valued her set of social identities in their totality. In this context, while not perfect, involvement in the LEAD

community—even if minimal— provided the most benefits with the least relative costs for involvement for Kristen.

Discussion

My findings show that the extent to which participants in LEAD perceived costs to access the social capital that was generated by the program depended on their prior exposure to Black institutions and communities, and the salience of non-racial and marginalized social identities. The relationships that surfaced in my data can be expressed as two propositions: (1) an individual's prior exposure to same-race peers in high school, non-school activities, and neighborhood contexts is negatively associated with the perceived costs to access social capital from the RESP, and (2) the relationship between prior exposure to same-race peers and the perceived costs to access social capital is moderated by the salience of non-racial social identities that the student holds, such that students with salient non-racial social identities will perceive greater costs to access social capital from the RSEP.

Despite experiencing cohesion with their LEAD peers on the basis of race, Black women and LGBTQ-identifying informants in this study had different experiences of the program than their straight, Black male peers. For LGBTQ-identifying informants, the costs of accessing LEAD's social capital prompted them to withdraw from the LEAD community to varying degrees. In the case of gender, however, Black women chose to continue to engage the LEAD program, while also creating a nested space for themselves. It is possible that the (presumed) larger number of women than LGBTQ-identifying people in the LEAD program allowed for a nested group among Black women in the broader LEAD community that was less feasible for LGBTQ-identifying LEAD participants. Future studies on RSEPs, and the experiences of Black

and minoritized students in HWCUs broadly, would do well to consider the role of students' intersecting identities in their experiences with their peer relationships.

This study's findings highlight the tension between exclusion and inclusion in generating social capital in relation to a shared social identity in organizational settings. On the one hand, the creation and maintenance of clear boundaries for who is and is not a member of a group fosters the creation of social capital, and systems of mutual support within the group (Coleman 1988). Thus, highly embedded networks with clear norms and values can be particularly useful to generate social capital for groups that have been traditionally marginalized and lack the means to access resources and support in broader organizational contexts. On the other hand, the narrower the extent to which group norms and values are defined, by definition, the less inclusive they are.

This tension suggests a need for intersectional approaches to the analysis of formal identity-based support programs, as well as the informal ethnoracial groups and communities that form in HWCUs and organizations more generally. In discussing the importance of taking intersectional approaches to studies in organizational settings, Holvino (2010) emphasizes that organizations reproduce inequalities in relation to gender, race, sexual orientation and other social identities (also see Acker 2006). To effectively identify these inequalities, McCall (2005) describes anticategorical and intracategorical research approaches that allow for the collection of data that accounts for the experiences of people whose intersecting identities place them at the margins of organizations and society at large.⁶ The anticategorical approach relies on inductive case-based work to generate thematic groupings in the relevant empirical context, with little to

⁶ McCall also describes the intercategorical approach.

no prior attention to pre-established analytic categories. By contrast, the intracategorical approach involves simultaneously acknowledging that stable and durable categories exist while taking a critical approach to their use and how the categories are associated with people's experiences. Notably, McCall points out that these approaches can be used in tandem, as was the case in the present study. My research questions and subsequent analyses were framed from an intracategorical perspective which paid particular attention to the experiences of women and LGBTQ-identifying LEAD participants. However, it was through inductive work on their experiences in the specific LEAD context—an approach that aligns with McCall's description of the anticategorical approach—that revealed the nuances by which my informants' backgrounds and identities were associated with the perceived benefits and costs to access LEAD's social capital.

Although conceived as analytic frameworks to conduct social science research, the goal of capturing the under-examined experiences of people with intersecting marginalized identities through approaches that McCall describes is useful for practitioners to consider as well. In particular, when designing and implementing programs that support members who hold a specific social identity, it is important to acknowledge (and keep at top of mind) that people who hold that identity also hold other social identities that create intersecting identities that inform how they experience relationships in organizations and society at large. Further, these experiences will be filtered through the specific dynamics of a specific organization. For example, in my data, gendered notions of who could be expected to be strong artistic performers were associated with some of my female informants' experiences in the LEAD program. That gender is a dimension along which my informants differentially experienced the LEAD community is not unique to my empirical setting. From a practitioner's perspective, however, the

specific *ways* that gender inequality might manifest among co-racial group members may vary. In turn, when developing and implementing RSEPs and similar programs to support Black and other minoritized students, research should be done in advance to understand the specific ways that inequality might manifest in relation to people's non-racial social identities.

Although the goal of this research is not to generalize its findings to other similar programs in HWCUs, there are two key notes for scholars and practitioners who may make inferences from this study for their own research or practice-based purposes. First, somewhat unexpectedly, there was little variance in my informants' experiences of LEAD based on their SES, be it in relation to their Pell Grant status (a proxy for family income) or parental education levels. This, I believe, is an artifact of the unique empirical setting, in which my informants often alluded to the meritocratic nature of Millington and the arts in general. In line with the comments that Alyssa and Tyler made, there was a prevailing expectation that students at LEAD (and Millington in general) are expected to show their value through their artistic abilities. Generally, my informants, including those who were Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college students, did not speak about the way that their backgrounds and SES influenced their ability to develop their artistic abilities. I would expect that similar studies in more traditional or liberal arts-oriented institutions would reveal greater variance in relation to students' SES.

Second, many programs that support minoritized students are created for minoritized students in general, rather than one specific ethnoracial group. Future studies would do well to examine whether the programs that focus on minoritized students of multiple ethnoracial backgrounds similarly generate social capital for their participants and whether participating students experience the perceived costs and benefits of participating in such programs in the same ways that my informants did.

Conclusion

Portes (1998) reminded us that social capital should not be exclusively treated as positive by highlighting the negative consequences of group-based social capital. While the positive consequences of social capital are well-understood and can be used for positive outcomes in RSEPs, for scholars and practitioners alike, moving toward a more nuanced approach that acknowledges the heterogeneity of identities and experiences among people who share a salient identity is necessary to achieve the best possible outcomes for such programs.

CHAPTER 4. THE PROMISE AND DANGER OF RACE-SPECIFIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS IN HWCUs: ON BELONGING, IDENTITY AND MINORITIZED STUDENT WELL-BEING

“[One time] I was sitting in class thinking, ‘I’m so different.’ I am sitting here looking almost scared to even talk. I’m like why? ... That’s the number one thing I think about is just me being comfortable around different groups of people and how I change... I don’t know what’ll help me with being comfortable in my own skin all the time, but it helps when I’m with other Black people.”

-Donna (pseudonym)

“I was kind of alienated from everyone else [in LEAD]. They didn’t accept me really and I didn’t feel like I really fit in with them...I thought once I met some more African-American people I would finally be around people who were like me. But now I kind of keep my distance [from LEAD peers].”

-Nancy (pseudonym)

Defined as having access to temporally stable, frequent and affectively pleasant interactions with others in group contexts (Baumeister and Leary 1995), belonging is one of the most written about and discussed elements of minoritized students’ experiences in historically-White colleges and universities (HWCUs). Over the past decade, scholars of higher education have conceived belonging as “a key to educational success for all students” (Strayhorn 2018), with empirical work examining the antecedents (Johnson et al. 2007; Museus and Maramba 2011; Museus et al. 2017) and consequences (Booker 2016; Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods 2007; Murphy and Zirkel 2015) of belonging on college campuses for minoritized students.

To support minoritized students' belonging, many HWCUs have developed what I refer to as race-specific enrichment programs (RSEPs)— programs that are meant to foster a sense of community and cohesion among students with a specific ethnoracial identity (see Gurin and Nagda 2006 for an overview of the theoretical bases on which RSEPs and similar programs are developed). Despite their prevalence in general, and particularly for Black students, there are two related gaps in our understanding of RSEPs and how they influence their participants' experiences of social life in HWCUs. First, scholarly investigations of minoritized students' experiences in HWCUs often take for granted that they generally experience belongingness in their campus' co-ethnoracial groups and communities. Although minoritized students may experience their campus' co-ethnoracial groups and communities *less negatively* than the broader campus community it does not necessarily follow that minoritized students experience these groups and communities *positively* and with a sense of belonging.

Second, we know little about how minoritized students' perceptions of their identities—the subjective knowledge, meanings, and experiences that are self-defining (Ramarajan 2014)—change once arriving on campus and participating in RSEPs, and how these perceptions are associated with their feelings of belonging to the RSEP. This gap in our understanding is noteworthy because there is variance in minoritized students' exposure to different- (and same-) ethnoracial group peers prior to arrival in HWCUs (Espenshade and Radford 2009), and as psychologists have shown, adolescent exposure to different- and / or same-ethnoracial group peers is associated with how adults conceive their ethnoracial identities (Jugert, Leszczensky, and Pink 2020; Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014).

With these issues in mind, the present paper examines the experiences of Black students in LEAD (pseudonym), an RSEP for Black-American students at Millington (pseudonym), a

historically-White college of performing arts in the northeastern United States. Over a three-year period, I spoke with 28 LEAD participants to understand two questions: (1) How do RSEP participants experience belonging to their RSEP community? and (2) What is the relationship between students' perceptions of their racial identity and feelings of belonging to the RSEP community?

I address these questions in two phases of research. In the first phase, I draw on data from semi-structured interviews with students who participated in the two inaugural LEAD cohorts. In reporting findings from Phase I, I focus particularly on the experiences of two students whom I treat as intensity cases (Patton 1990): Donna, whose high school and pre-college neighborhood was majority Black, and Nancy, whose high school and pre-college neighborhood was predominantly-White, with fewer than 2% of her high school population identifying as Black. Donna experienced belonging among her LEAD peers, while Nancy experienced non-belonging with the same peers.

Phase II of this research examines the third LEAD cohort whose programming included several new programmatic components that emphasized inclusivity *within* the LEAD community. In line with the tenets of action research (Stringer 2007), the additional programming was implemented in part due to findings from Phase I of this research. In triangulating survey and interview data from this phase, I find that students in my sample generally reported feelings of belonging to the LEAD community irrespective of their prior exposure to same-race peers. Further, several informants in this phase of the research who had limited prior exposure to same-race peers reported that LEAD prompted them to reflect on their racial identities in new ways, allowing for personal growth and an ability to have stronger relationships with same-race peers.

I proceed by first reviewing the literature on belonging for minoritized students in HWCUs. I then review the literature on ethnoracial identity development, with a specific emphasis on models that address Black racial identity development. I close my review of the literature by discussing how the belonging and ethnoracial identity literatures provide both theoretical rationale for the development of RSEPs and frameworks to consider the ways that RSEPs might not effectively support all minoritized students' needs. I follow by describing my methods and findings from both phases of my research and use the balance of the paper to discuss the practical implications of my findings for administrators who might develop and implement RSEPs.

Minoritized Students' Experiences of Belonging in HWCUs

HWCUs' development of RSEPs has come alongside several decades of research that suggests belonging is associated with positive outcomes for all students in HWCUs, and minoritized students particularly. Comprehensive reviews of this literature can be found elsewhere (Strayhorn 2018), but notably, belonging to campus communities has been shown to be associated with several positive outcomes for minoritized students, including persistence (Booker 2016; Hausmann et al. 2007; Murphy and Zirkel 2015) and academic achievement (Murphy and Zirkel 2015). Antecedents of belonging among minoritized students in HWCUs have also been examined and include participation in campus organizations and perceptions of campus climate (Hurtado and Carter 1997), and the quality of students' cross-racial interactions (Strayhorn 2009).

Much of the literature on minoritized students' feelings of belonging in HWCUs has focused on belonging in relation to the broader campus community. This is an important area to examine because whereas many high-status HWCUs are relatively diverse and mirror the

average demographic composition of the United States, most neighborhoods, and by extension, public high schools, have limited ethnoracial diversity (Billingham 2019; Owens 2017; Reardon and Owens 2014). In turn, few minoritized students, and few Black students in particular, hail from high schools and neighborhoods with demographic makeups similar to HWCU campus demographics given the level of ethnoracial segregation in high schools and neighborhood contexts (see Alba 2020 for a discussion of increasing ethnoracial diversity in American neighborhood contexts). While this is also the case for White students, they generally have less social and cultural distance to traverse given that HWCUs are rooted in values and norms associated with (high socioeconomic status) White culture (Museus 2008). Thus, for minoritized students who come from segregated high schools and communities, RSEPs will approximate the demographic composition in which they were socialized in adolescence. However, for students who do not hail from such backgrounds, RSEPs may present a situation in which they are interacting primarily or exclusively with co-ethnoracial group members for the first time.

To date, few studies have specifically examined how minoritized students experience relationships with co-ethnoracial group members, be it in RSEP settings, other formal contexts, or informal group contexts. There is at least one notable exception, however, whose findings highlight the importance of examining minoritized students' feelings of belonging with co-ethnoracial group peers. Smith and Moore (2000) examined how Black students at a high-status HWCU experienced relationships with their same-race peers and found that students who were socialized in predominantly-White high school and neighborhood settings experienced social distance with their same-race peers. These findings underscore the importance of accounting for the fact that students who share an ethnoracial identity have varying backgrounds, and in turn

perceptions of their ethnoracial identities, which may influence their experiences of belonging with co-ethnoracial group members.

Ethnoracial Identity Development and Change among Young Adults

Psychologists who study ethnic and racial identity (ERI) have shown that people's cultural contexts during adolescence, including experiences in neighborhoods and communities, and experiences with immediate family members, are associated with how people perceive their ethnoracial identities as adults (Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014). Because college enrollment is a key marker in the transition from adolescence to adulthood for traditionally-aged college-going students, we would expect participation in RSEPs, alongside the experience of transitioning to college generally, to be associated with how students conceive their ethnoracial identities as they enter adulthood.

Three perspectives on ERI are particularly relevant to this topic and the present research. Perhaps the most notable work in the ERI literature is Phinney's (1989, 1992) conceptualization of ethnic identity development. Drawing on Erickson (1968) and Marcia's (1980) foundational work on identity development, Phinney proposed that adolescents develop their ethnic identities as they proceed to adulthood in four stages, beginning with a "diffuse" stage in which the individual has not yet examined the various ways that their ethnic identity can manifest before selecting an enduring ethnic identity. Subsequent stages involve adolescents either "foreclosing" on their ethnic identity after some exploration, or entering a state of "moratorium" in which the individual has not achieved clarity about their ethnic identity despite some exploration. Finally, Phinney's model suggests that some people reach an "achieved" state in which they gain a clear understanding of their ethnic identity after a period of exploration. In her early empirical work, Phinney (1989) found that processes of identity development for minoritized adolescents across

ethnoracial groups were similar to one another, and distinct from White adolescents, with White adolescents engaging in limited exploration of their ethnic identities, and in turn, not proceeding through the stages described in her conceptual model.

Other models of ERI development have focused specifically on Black identity, most notably Cross' (1971, 1991) Nigrescence Theory, which suggests that Black racial identity develops in four stages in reference to a racialized “encounter” in which the individual has a racialized experience that challenges pre-conceived notions about their Black identity (see Vandiver et al. 2001; Worrell, Cross, and Vandiver 2001 for reviews of Nigrescence Theory and its associated scale). The four stages of Black racial identity that Cross identified are: (1) the pre-encounter stage in which the individual perceives the world and themselves from a Euro-American perspective, (2) the experience of the encounter itself, (3) the immersion stage in which the individual experiences rage at the Black condition and generates a sense of strong Black pride, and (4) the internalization stage in which the individual’s attitudes toward Whites becomes less hostile and the individual’s Black identity becomes more oriented to the Black race as a group than their individual experience. The value of applying Cross’ framework to RSEPs that target Black students, and potentially other minoritized students as well, is that the model conceives Black identity development in the context of broader societal dynamics in which Black people, and Black identity itself, are marginalized and lower-status, with Black people (and potentially other minoritized people) being subject to institutionalized processes of inequality (see Ray 2019 for a discussion of institutionalized race-based inequality). Cross’ incorporation of status dynamics associated with ethnoracial categories (and specifically the Black racial category)

emphasizes the uniqueness of Black racial identity development in the context of institutionalized inequality at the societal level.⁷

Although Cross emphasized that the four aforementioned phases of Black identity development need not be completed in totality, his initial model did not leave space to conceptualize how Black identity is related to other dimensions of identity that people may hold. Sellers and colleagues' (1997) seminal work on Black racial identity fills this gap by conceiving racial identity centrality as the extent to which an individual defines themselves in terms of race; unlike previous ERI theorists, Sellers and colleagues did not take for granted that ethnoracial identity was an important, or the single most important dimension of a person's self-identity. Further, they conceived racial identity regard as a person's perception of their racial identity.⁸

In summary, the ERI literature provides three important insights to investigate the role of RSEPs in influencing students' perceptions of their ethnoracial identities. First, the transition between adolescence and adulthood—the point at which traditionally-aged college students enter RSEPs—is a crucial time for identity development broadly. Second, minoritized students, and

⁷ Gender is also a social identity category along which institutionalized inequality persists in organizations and society in general. In line with Ridgeway (2011) I distinguish racial-(and ethnic-) based inequality from gender inequality given the relative infrequency with which different groups of racially- or ethnically-minoritized people (lower-status) interact with White people (higher-status). In most contemporary organizations, and certainly in society at large, there are few, if any, examples of women not having interpersonal relationships with men. By contrast, we can imagine many contexts—including the K12-education system—in which there are relatively few structural opportunities for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) to have interactions with White people. In turn, as Ridgeway argues, gender inequality is uniquely influenced by interpersonal processes as well as institutionalized processes, while the inequality experienced by BIPOC (i.e. ethnoracially minoritized people in predominantly-White organizational contexts) is more a result (though not exclusively) of institutionalized processes.

⁸ Sellers and colleagues (1997) further delineate racial identity regard into two sub-categories: private regard and public regard. The former refers to people's perceptions of their own racial identity. The latter refers to how people perceive that *others* perceive the racial their racial identity.

Black students in particular, will vary in the extent to which they have experienced what Cross refers to as an (ethno)racial encounter; some students who attend HWCUs will have already experienced an encounter, while others may experience an encounter for the first time in their HWCU environment given their lack of exposure to non-Black peers. Last, the extent to which students will conceive their ethnoracial identities to be important relative to their other identities, and the extent to which they have positive (or negative) regard for their ethnoracial identities, will vary.

Phase 1

After receipt of a substantial gift to support Black students' success at Millington, LEAD was launched with an inaugural cohort in the summer of 2017. Designed with studies that show RSEPs can support minoritized students' abilities to navigate academic and social life in HWCUs in mind (e.g., Guiffrida 2003), the programmatic components of LEAD focused on building a stronger Black community at Millington that students could access when experiencing difficulties in the broader Millington community. Programmatic components that focused on academic content were limited to 20% of the program.

The present paper is part of a larger research project that examines how Black students experience HWCUs and RSEPs. Phase I of the present research examines the aforementioned research questions with a sample of students from the first two LEAD cohorts.

Methods

Drawing on the tenets of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) I designed an inductive study to answer my aforementioned research questions. In line with grounded theory methods, I collected data in an iterative manner in which I analyzed my data as it was collected

to contextualize initial and emerging findings in extant theory on belonging in HWCUs and ethnoracial identity.

In this phase of my research, I generated a convenience sample of 18 students from the first two cohorts of LEAD. Participating students received a \$5 Starbucks gift card for each interview they completed. These 18 students represented roughly 15% of the overall LEAD participant group from the first two cohorts of the program.

My interviews were semi-structured and focused broadly on how students experienced social life at Millington, and their perceptions of their ethnoracial identity. I asked the following questions of all informants: 1) Tell me about the path that led you to Millington, 2) Tell me about your experiences so far at Millington, 3) Tell me about your experiences with the LEAD community, 4) How connected do you feel to the LEAD community? 5) How do you identify racially and ethnically, and what does this identity mean to you? 6) What other identities do you hold that are important to you? 7) To what extent do you feel like you can be yourself in the LEAD community? and 8) What, if anything, would you change about the LEAD program? I re-interviewed nine informants to clarify emerging themes from the initial interview. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

I analyzed the data using open coding techniques to identify emergent themes that I later categorized into higher-level codes (Grodal, Anteby, and Holm 2021). In reporting my findings, I focus on two cases —Donna and Nancy—while interspersing the experiences of other informants as thematically appropriate. Given their different backgrounds—Donna having grown up in a predominantly- Black environment, and Nancy in a predominantly-White environment with very few Black peers—their respective experiences highlight the ways that RSEPs can work well and be essential supports for minoritized students in the case of Donna, and how RSEPs can

potentially create additional challenges for students whose familiarity with the ethnoracial group on which programming is based might be limited in the case of Nancy.

To preserve the anonymity of my informants, I selected pseudonyms for them after the completion of the data collection process.

My positionality

My relationship with Millington College and LEAD reflects a long-term collaboration that began prior to the start of my doctoral studies. Given my previous experience as a management consultant, alongside a previous career in college admissions, I was recruited by Millington to serve as an adviser and project manager for the development of what would become the LEAD program. Thus, prior to the start of my research, I had strong relationships with several key faculty and administrators at Millington, which afforded me great access to Millington and the LEAD program in particular. My informants, however, were largely unaware of my previous role in the creation of LEAD as I enrolled in my doctoral program roughly one month prior to the first LEAD cohort's arrival at Millington.

During data collection, several of my informants revealed that my identity as a Black person in my 30s—younger than many of the authority figures at LEAD and Millington more broadly—afforded a sense of comfort and trust, which I believe allowed me to collect richer data than I would have been able to otherwise. Further, my perspective as someone who has attended HWCUs, and predominantly-White primary and secondary schools, undoubtedly shaped my analytic approach and the formulation of the very research questions that I seek to answer in this paper.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this research is generalizability in relation to both Millington and HWCUs more broadly; because I use a convenience sample, my findings are not generalizable to the LEAD community, or Black students' experiences in HWCUs broadly. The goal of this research, however, is not to make distributional claims about LEAD or Black students' experiences in HWCUs. Rather, it is to identify different ways that minoritized students, and Black students in particular, might experience identity development and change, and feelings of belonging in RSEP settings. In turn, my findings are useful to researchers and practitioners alike in conceiving the ways that RSEPs might benefit, or potentially create further challenges for their participants.

Findings

Two categories of informants emerged based on the extent to which they felt a sense of belonging to the LEAD community. First, there were students who generally felt a sense of belonging with the LEAD community, and in turn, a sense of safety in the context of a Millington community in which they experienced microaggressions and racism from non-Black peers. Second, there were students who did not feel a strong sense of belonging to the LEAD community, and given Millington's racial climate outside of the LEAD program, did not necessarily feel a sense of belonging to any social group at Millington. Although the number of students in the latter group was smaller than the former group, their experiences highlight the dangers of RSEPs that can manifest as experiences of isolation from both the RSEP and the broader campus community.

The Promise of RSEPs: Safety

The experience of feeling safe—a more fundamental human need than belonging as articulated by Maslow (1954)—was reported by several of my informants who hailed from predominantly-Black high schools and neighborhood contexts as a core benefit of participating in LEAD. Donna, who appears in this paper’s epigraph and expressed a deep connection to her Black identity, stated multiple times in our interview that being with LEAD peers provided a reprieve from the difficulties of social life with non-Black peers at Millington. In elaborating on her sentiments that appear in the epigraph, Donna stated:

When I go to class and there's no one that I know and no one Black in there I feel like I don't belong, and I kind of change my demeanor and the way I act. It's like I automatically shrink a little bit...You can tell I'm not like the majority...There's always something in my mind that's scared.

Although Donna does not explicitly name safety, other students directly used the word “safe” or its derivations to describe their experiences with LEAD peers. For example, Terry, a student who attended a mixed-race high school with a large Black population stated, “LEAD has allowed me to feel safe. I feel like I have help. I have a safety net if something goes wrong. I have people that I can call.”

The sense of either receiving or providing safety for other Black students was expressed by many of my informants who had significant pre-college experience with same-race peers. Later in my interview with Donna, when I asked what she provides her LEAD peers she stated, “I give [my LEAD peers] a mother figure...I'm like that church mother. You can come to me with pretty much anything and I try my best to get you out of how you're feeling when you're down. I want to be that person you can come to with anything.” In describing some of the conversations that she has with her LEAD peers, Donna mentioned that they often focus on

issues that she goes through as well, including a lack of feelings of belonging in the broader Millington community, and the lack of confidence that accompanies feelings of non-belonging for Donna and her confidantes.

For other informants, the theme of safety manifested as an inability or unwillingness to be authentic or share their feelings on racially-themed issues in classroom settings. For example, Jordan, who attended a predominantly-Black high school described an instance in which his trust was betrayed by non-Black peers in a social science class on contemporary social issues:

I was the only Black person in my class.... throughout the entire semester, it'd be people saying, "I feel so bad [about contemporary race relations]. Like, I'm such an ally." And then at the end of the semester, while the teacher was out or something, somebody turns to me and goes, "I can't wait until this class is over so we don't have to talk about this stupid 'S' anymore." And then all these other people were like, "Yeah, I know."...I think that's when I realized like the kinds of subtleties of discrimination. That was when I realized people will act like they care about something that they really don't. And it kind of hit me hard I guess. And I think that's really when I was just like, let me, um, see people out before I decide [to interact with them], you know?"

As Jordan indicated in the above quotation and later in our interview, this experience caused him to be more guarded in his relationships with non-Black peers, and to seek belonging at Millington primarily with his LEAD peers.

Although Jordan's experience can be conceived as the experience of a microaggression, several of my informants indicated that they experienced racism in the broader Millington community. Stacy, a student who attended a predominantly-Black high school, described such an experience: "I literally had someone come up to me and go, because they made a joke about the KKK in class, they said, 'Oh, are you still afraid of the KKK? Good.'" There was a resolution to Stacy's experience in that she reported this experience to a LEAD administrator and Millington faculty member who brought the situation to Millington administration and levied punishment on

the offending students per the school's policies. Nevertheless, experiences like these prompted many LEAD participants—particularly students who hailed from predominantly-Black environments—to draw on the LEAD community for feelings of belonging and safety that the broader Millington community did not provide. As Donna put it:

When I'm around LEAD people or just other Black people I can always be myself even when there are other people around. When you have a group of family, you feel more comfortable and I feel like even in the [cafeteria] when I see somebody [from LEAD] I know or see a group of people I can be myself [with]. But it's when I don't see someone like me that makes me feel like I can't.

The Danger of RSEPs: Isolation

Nancy responded to my question asking her to describe what LEAD was from her perspective by reflecting on how she came to attend LEAD: “I was so excited because I thought I was going to finally fit in with a group like this. So, I was really, really excited [to attend LEAD].” This excitement was largely related to several negative racial experiences she had in high school, including being called an “Oreo” or “Frappuccino Baby” by White peers she conceived as friends at the time. Nancy’s excitement to attend LEAD, however, was tempered almost immediately after her arrival at Millington when some of her Black peers in the LEAD program called her the “Whitest Black girl they’ve ever met.”

Nancy, who is biracial (Black and White), attributed this treatment by her LEAD peers, in part, to her lighter skin tone. Although the literature on colorism (e.g., Monk 2021) gives credence to this explanation, other Black and White biracial students in my sample, particularly those who were socialized in predominantly-Black high schools and communities, were not subject to such specifically racialized comments. For example, Kaya, who attended predominantly-Black middle and high schools generally commented positively on her relationships with LEAD peers:

[My parents] always really instilled in me a cultural identity of Blackness and kind of just showed me that no matter what, that's who I am. And I never really felt lost about my identity or anything like that... I do feel widely accepted by the Black community [at Millington]...[but] there's also certain things that I can't necessarily relate to other Black students about like having a lot of violence in different high schools. These are kind of like stereotypes that are put on Black people but it's also part of a lot of Black people's experiences, and it's just never really something that I've experienced, so those are also the times that I felt on the outside [of the LEAD community].

For Kaya, moments in which she felt less of a sense of belonging with the LEAD community were attributable to her different prior social experiences, rather than her biracial identity in itself.

In my second interview with Nancy, she cited differences in background and experiences from her LEAD peers as a reason that several of them referred to her as “White.” To illustrate her point, Nancy provided an example of an interaction with a LEAD peer:

One time when we were doing homework and [a LEAD peer] was like, "Give me a dap." And I was like, "What does that mean?" I was like, "I don't know what that means. Like, what are you talking about?" He's like, "How do you not know what that means?" And I was like, "I don't know."

This event stuck with Nancy in the context of several similar incidents at LEAD that underscored the differences between her prior social experiences and her LEAD peers and eroded her feelings of belonging with the LEAD community.

Nancy's case is somewhat extreme in the LEAD context as she went to a large public high school with very few Black students—according to Nancy, you could count the number of Black students in her class of nearly 1,000 on one hand.⁹ Nancy's experiences, however, were not strictly unique. Take for example Tyler, who attended a predominantly-White high school:

⁹ Nancy's estimations were correct in that fewer than 2% of the students in Nancy's high school identify as Black.

My [extended] family is based in [a large city]. It's Black. It's the hood. It's as Black as it comes. [I was] the suburb kid just coming into a hood, everything would be picked apart about me. The way that I talk. The way that I dress. The way that I walk. Everything is just being criticized or whatever because I don't do it like a Black person in general.

Unlike Nancy, however, Tyler reported being more comfortable with his Black identity as a result of participating in LEAD: “As time goes on I feel a little more connected [to the Black community]. I think LEAD has helped.” Nevertheless, Tyler still did not completely feel a sense of belonging with his LEAD peers as he went on to say, “LEAD has kind of opened me [to relationships with Black peers]... I feel a little connected [to the Black community].” Tyler closed this portion of our conversation by stating, “There are references that I don't understand. Like a Thanksgiving clap back or something. [But] of course I'm Black.”

For Nancy, and to some degree other students like Tyler, having self-perceptions of being culturally dissimilar from their Black peers, or being told by their Black peers that they were not Black enough, were profound experiences. Having established in my larger research project that social groups at Millington largely formed around ethnoracial identity, I asked Nancy if she belongs to any social groups at Millington. She responded, “Not really any, no.” Later, Nancy stated, “So, I didn't grow up around the African-American community and I just notice from when I was in LEAD, I'm completely different from who they are.” In turn, for Nancy, and others who may have similar experiences as her, she found herself in a situation in which it was difficult to find a group to which she belongs, be it with her Black peers, or with the broader Millington community.

Discussion

Donna and Nancy's distinct experiences at LEAD and Millington more broadly speak to their vastly different pre-college experiences despite their sharing of Black racial identity. These

different pre-college experiences are an artifact of the ethnoracial segregation in high schools and neighborhoods in the United States. It is important to note that the lack of ethnoracial diversity in Donna and Nancy's experiences is closer to the social reality of most Americans' social experiences than high-status colleges and universities like Millington, which strategically prize diversity (Ahmed 2012; Smith 2020; Warikoo 2016). In turn, many minoritized students attending HWCUs—be they from predominantly-Black or predominantly-White pre-college social environments—will be exposed to social contexts with more diverse ethnoracial makeups than their prior environments. As seen in the case of both Donna and Nancy, exposure to such a context can create challenges for Black students' sense of belonging to the campus community. Further, for students like Nancy who have limited prior exposure to same-race peers, the experiences of belonging are further complicated in RSEP contexts that may have their own values and norms aside from the broader campus community.

Among my informants, those who experienced safety with LEAD already had a high level of racial identity centrality and regard. These informants were more often than not from predominantly-Black high schools and / or neighborhood contexts, and expressed high degrees of cohesion with the LEAD community, both for the benefits that participation in the community provided, and due to a shared sense of identity around Blackness. For some of these students, like Jordan, the experience of what Cross refers to as an encounter only strengthened their sense of cohesion with the LEAD community.

By contrast, Nancy and informants with similar experiences of LEAD tended to have limited prior exposure to same-race peers, which created a barrier to their ability to comfortably have positive relationships with their LEAD counterparts. Crucially, Nancy reported having racial encounters prior to attending Millington; in attending a predominantly-White high school

with hardly any Black peers, she was subject to microaggressions and racism from her White peers. These encounters prompted her desire to connect with other Black peers—an option that was not readily available to her in high school. Somewhat ironically, however, it was upon attending LEAD that Nancy experienced another type of encounter—this one with her same-race peers. Like several of her White peers in high school, several of Nancy’s Black peers at Millington made it clear that in their social contexts, she was not Black enough for their standards.

With Nancy’s experiences in mind, the question then becomes can RSEPs exist in a way that can adequately support students like Donna by emphasizing the shared experiences and challenges that Black students have in HWCUs and society at large, while also leaving space to support students like Nancy who have limited or no prior exposure to same-race peers, but nonetheless experience the same discrimination and inequality as others who are racially categorized as Black.

Phase 2

As a result of Phase I of my research, LEAD administrators implemented several program elements in the pre-orientation program and throughout the academic year that highlighted the importance of fostering an inclusive community that embraced all Black students irrespective of their previous exposure to Black peers or fluency with prevailing perceptions of what it means to be Black. I was asked to be a part of these efforts. In turn, this phase of my research draws on the tenets of action research (Stringer 2007) to examine how LEAD participants from Phase II differentially experienced the program relative to informants from Phase I.

Methods

On the first full day of programming for the third LEAD cohort, I presented a session on the importance of inclusion *within* the LEAD community. I specifically drew on Shore and colleagues' (2011) framework for inclusion that defines inclusion as the simultaneous ability to feel a sense of belonging and to be your unique self. Highlighting examples in which students from Phase I did not feel as strong of a sense of belonging to the LEAD community, I explained it is incumbent for all LEAD participants to create an environment that allows for inclusivity in the LEAD community, both in relation to belonging and creating a climate that allowed LEAD participants to be their unique selves. My session was supplemented by a student-led session that, in part, emphasized the importance of inclusion at LEAD. Further, in their formal and informal addresses to the third LEAD cohort, LEAD faculty and administrators frequently emphasized the importance of inclusion in the LEAD community.

The addition of my session and the other programmatic elements that emphasized inclusion presented an opportunity to see how a new class of LEAD participants would experience LEAD in light of these changes. In turn, I invited students who attended my session to take a two-wave survey. In the first wave, participants took the racial identity centrality sub-instrument of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al. 1997) to establish a baseline measure of their students' identity centrality upon arrival at LEAD and Millington. In the second wave, administered at the end of their first year, participants took the racial identity centrality sub-instrument of the MIBI again, as well as a belonging instrument to measure participants' feelings of belonging to the LEAD community (Bollen and Hoyle 1990; Hurtado and Carter 1997). All survey instruments were asked using a seven-point Likert-style scale from "Strongly disagree" to Strongly agree."

Of the roughly 60 students who attended my session, 44 took the initial survey instrument. Thirty-two of these 44 students completed the second wave of the survey at the end of the academic year. Students who completed both waves of the survey were entered into a raffle for one of two new iPads.

I conducted two analyses on the quantitative data generated from the survey: (1) a two-tailed t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant change in my respondents' racial identity centrality from T₁ to T₂, and (2) one-way ANOVA tests to determine if changes in identity centrality (categories of increase in identity centrality, no change in identity centrality, and decrease in identity centrality) were associated with feelings of belonging to the LEAD community.¹⁰

Students who took both survey waves were also invited to participate in a 45- to 60-minute interview with me in which they would be asked the same questions described in Phase I of my research. Of the 32 students who took both waves of the survey, 10 students scheduled an interview with me. These interviews were conducted via Zoom due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Students who completed an interview received a \$10 Starbucks gift certificate. I suspect that participation in the interview portion of my study was stunted given complications associated with COVID-19 and the rapid transition to virtual learning that occurred at Millington. Interviews were analyzed using the same coding process outlined in Phase I of this research, and my positionality as a researcher described in Phase I of this research also applies to Phase II.

¹⁰ The second wave of the survey also included items on belonging to the Millington community broadly.

Limitations

As with Phase I of this research, the primary limitations of this phase of research in relation to generalizability, both at LEAD and to HWCUs more generally. Additionally, given the small sample size of my quantitative data, findings from my quantitative analyses should be treated directionally. I use the quantitative data to inform and frame analyses of the qualitative data, rather than to make direct inferences.

Findings

There was not a statistically significant difference between survey respondents' racial identity centrality at the start of LEAD ($M = 5.13$, $SD=1.40$) and at the end of their first year ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(62) = .19$, $p = .85$. There was, however, variance in the direction in which individual respondents' racial identity centrality changed from time 1 to time 2; 10 of the 32 respondents' racial identity centrality scores increased, six stayed the same, and 16 decreased (see Table 1).

As would intuitively be expected, respondents whose racial identity centrality decreased started with higher average levels of racial identity centrality (5.52 compared to 5.39 for those who had no change in racial identity centrality and 4.33 for those who increased in racial identity centrality). Further, there was less variance in racial identity centrality at T_2 than at T_1 .

Survey respondents expressed strong feelings of belonging to LEAD ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.20$). One-way ANOVA tests revealed that the 10 respondents whose racial identity centrality increased had an average racial identity centrality of 6.00 ($SD = 1.23$), the six respondents whose racial identity centrality did not change had an average racial identity centrality of 6.50 ($SD = .71$), and the 16 respondents whose racial identity centrality decreased had an average racial

identity centrality of 5.77 (SD = 1.27). Feelings of belonging to LEAD by a change in identity centrality category was, therefore, insignificant, $F(2,29) = .77, p = .48$.

Although there was not a statistically significant relationship in my sample between identity centrality at T₁ and T₂ or the relationship between change in identity centrality and in feelings of belonging to LEAD, there was variance in the *direction* in which racial identity centrality changed for respondents in my sample. The qualitative data I collected shed light on how and why this was the case.

Table 2. Change in Racial Identity Centrality and Feelings of Belonging to LEAD

	Overall	Increase in ID Centrality	No Change in ID Centrality	Decrease in ID Centrality
Number of Respondents (n)	32	10	6	16
Women	34%	30%	17%	44%
ID Centrality Change Mean	-.05	.80	-	-.60
ID Centrality Change SD	.71	.48	-	.34
ID Centrality T1 Mean	5.12	4.33	5.39	5.52
ID Centrality T1 SD	1.40	1.05	1.04	1.02
ID Centrality T2 Mean	5.07	5.13	5.49	4.92
ID Centrality T2 SD	1.07	.93	1.04	1.03
LEAD Belonging Mean	5.97	6.00	6.50	5.77
LEAD Belonging SD	1.20	1.23	.71	1.27

Experiences of Safety Irrespective of Prior Exposure to Same-race Peers

In the qualitative data of Phase II, informants, irrespective of their prior experiences with Black peers, expressed that LEAD provided a sense of safety at Millington. Nadia, who attended a high school with a large Black population and whose score for sense of belonging to LEAD was 7.00, expressed a strong sense of belonging with her LEAD peers. “I receive a lot of comfort [from LEAD]...[LEAD] also gave me fun. It was just a whole bunch of fun. That whole week...

I'm not a 'get up early' type person, but I was ready. Me and my roommate [were] ready to get up."

Whereas several participants in Phase I of this research who had little exposure to Black peers in high school or community contexts did not feel as strong of a sense of belonging in the LEAD community, informants in Phase II emphasized how students of various backgrounds were welcomed to the LEAD community. For example, Liana, who attended a high school with a large number of Black students and whose score for sense of belonging to LEAD was 7.00, stated:

I think some of the ways that we make friends [is to] share the same or similar experiences. And someone who's not Black can't necessarily relate to issues that happen in the Black community, issues that Black people face in the United States and in the world as a whole. And I think for someone who maybe came from somewhere where there weren't a lot of Black people, may want to finally have that opportunity to connect with Black people and with the Black community. And so, I definitely think [LEAD] is the best idea ever.

Gail, who attended a large suburban high school in which she was one of fewer than a handful of Black students and whose score for sense of belonging to LEAD was 6.00 expressed similar sentiments as Liana:

In the first week of LEAD, I felt very, I don't know, I was out of place, but I felt that that could have also just been me going to college and just being uncomfortable being at a totally different environment. But then as I started attending [LEAD] dinners and going to the LEAD talks and different things like that, I started feeling a lot more willing to talk to people and communicate with people and have people see me, if that makes sense.

Several students attributed the focus on inclusion in LEAD's programs as the reason by which students with different experiences prior to Millington felt a sense of belonging with the LEAD community. For example, when I asked Jason, who attended a predominantly-Black high

school and experienced high levels of belonging to LEAD (his score for sense of belonging to LEAD was 7.00) about his experience in the pre-orientation portion of the LEAD program, Jason responded:

There was a student-led question and answer session and there wasn't really any faculty there... And we asked so many questions, and a lot of them focused on there are so many different ways to live life in so many different lifestyles. You have all these different people. None of us are the same, but we all have similarities. And, and it just, that moment in particular, I'll never forget because everyone had a question that they felt was, "Oh, well, I shouldn't ask that question. They already know." But then as more people raised their hand, as more people spoke out, it was like, Oh, this is different. This is college. I haven't done this before. Like this is something crazy and I have the right to ask a question because I'm lost right now. And they were giving great feedback, great answers to these students who were just amazed and babies of the college life. It was such a beautiful, what was it, an hour or two, such a beautiful hour.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Interview Informants

Pseudo-nym	Woman	% HS Population Black	Racial ID Centrality T1 (1 to 7 scale)	Racial ID Centrality T2 (1 to 7 scale)	Change in Racial ID Centrality	Belonging to LEAD Community (1 to 7 scale)
Liana	1	40 to 49%	6.67	6.00	-0.67	7.00
Wesley	0	30 to 39%	6.00	6.00	0.00	7.00
Jason	0	70 to 79%	5.33	5.33	0.00	7.00
Dale	0	20 to 29%	5.33	5.00	-0.33	7.00
Marcus	0	0 to 9%	4.67	6.00	1.33	5.33
Nadia	1	40 to 49%	4.67	5.67	1.00	7.00
Simone	1	50 to 59%	4.67	5.33	0.67	7.00
Gail	1	0 to 9%	4.67	4.33	-0.33	6.00
James	0	10 to 19%	3.33	3.67	0.33	4.00
Samuel	0	--	3.33	3.33	0.00	5.67

Increases in Identity Centrality Allow for Greater Belonging

All of the informants with whom I spoke who attended predominantly-Black high schools or were socialized in predominantly-Black neighborhoods expressed great pride and regard for their racial identity. For example, Dale, whose neighborhood was predominantly-Black stated:

I feel like just being an African-American male in United States, there's a lot of things holding me back. Physically and mentally there's a lot of things that I won't be shown as much as the average White male or female. So, it definitely has drawbacks, but being an African-American male, I also see it as a stepping stone or a time to inspire other young African-American kids to go further than what society wants you to do.

For Dale, and other informants who had significant prior exposure to Black peers in both Phase I and Phase II of this research, Black identity was a point of pride (Dale's T₁ racial identity centrality was 5.33), which made the transition to the LEAD community a welcome one before being exposed to the broader Millington community.

Like with my informants in Phase I, however, several informants in Phase II mentioned they had trepidation in attending LEAD as they did not have much exposure to Black students during their high school years. Simone, who attended a predominantly-White high school and whose T₁ racial identity centrality was slightly low (4.33) compared to other informants in my sample stated:

I think I've said this like 10 million times to people, I've never felt like I've belonged within the Black community because I feel like whenever I'm hanging out with Black people, I'm acting too White or if I'm hanging out with White people, I'm acting too Black. And of course, it's just stereotypes, but it's always been like a tug and pull because I haven't completely 100% felt like I've belonged within a community until I got to LEAD, because there were so many different ranges of dynamics and personalities within the LEAD community, which I love.

By T₂, Simone's racial identity centrality had increased to 5.33.

Similarly, Marcus, who had a negative regard for his Black identity prior to enrolling in college mentioned several ways that LEAD has influenced how he perceives his racial identity:

[My Black identity] wasn't always something I [felt] like I should be proud of, to be honest, being [from] a predominantly-White area. I would definitely say there [were] times when I was younger, probably about seven or eight years old, where I wished I wasn't Black. It wasn't something that I thought was to be proud of...I

think that viewing that less as a disability and more as an opportunity, [and LEAD] has honestly changed everything

Marcus' racial identity centrality increased by 1.33 points from 4.67 to 6.00 between T₁ and T₂.

Even for informants whose racial identity centrality remained relatively low at T₂, their perceptions of their racial identity were more positive after attending LEAD. For example, James, a biracial student (Black and White) who attended a predominantly-White high school and whose racial identity centrality increased from 3.33 to 3.67 between T₁ and T₂ explained:

[LEAD] has definitely made me feel way better about myself and who I am. The fact that I am mixed. Beforehand, I would just have... I mean, I still have racial identity crisis, every week, but I'd have it like every day, literally every day. It's definitely made me feel better about who I am and the Black side of me... That's a part of who I am. It's made me prouder of all of me and I'm really happy about that.

Discussion

The qualitative data from Phase II provided further insights about the relationship between LEAD participants' perceptions of their racial identity and belonging at Millington, and revealed that LEAD provided a sense of safety on campus that allowed for a greater sense of belonging to the broader Millington community. Further, as seen in the cases of Simone and Marcus, LEAD was able to instill greater racial identity centrality and regard among participants whose prior experience with Black peers was limited. This marked an improvement in outcomes in my sample between the two phases that suggests when inclusivity within RSEP communities is emphasized, students, irrespective of their backgrounds and prior experiences, can feel a strong sense of belonging to their same-race peers.

General Discussion: Practical Implications

To foster a shared group identity among co-ethnoracial group members, administrators must keep in mind that participants in RSEPs are at different stages of ethnoracial identity development, and may conceive their ethnoracial identities with different degrees of centrality and regard. Both of these factors will impact the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging with their co-ethnoracial peers. In turn, for RSEPs to be experienced positively by all students, a thin line must be walked: RSEP programming must foster community cohesion among co-ethnoracial peers while being inclusive of the different ways that participants have experienced their ethnoracial identities.

To walk this thin line, administrators should keep two considerations in mind. First, it is important to acknowledge that minoritized students' backgrounds within racial identities are not monolithic; students' specific backgrounds and experiences play an important role in how they will experience the transition to an RSEP and the institution more broadly. Second, administrators and student affairs professionals should be realistic that such interventions are short-term interventions that serve as stop-gaps for broader campus issues that need to be addressed. One of the more striking elements of my time at Millington is the effort that they put into supporting Black students. They were cognizant that Millington was not a safe space for Black students, and LEAD was designed as only one of several institutional-level interventions to support Black students' success, and to address the root causes of feelings of non-belonging that many Black (and other minoritized students) experience. In turn, administrators and faculty must spend as much, if not more time, addressing the issues of microaggressions and outright racism that make the broader campus community unsafe for many students.

Conclusion

In our ongoing work to understand belonging and the variables that influence belonging for minoritized students, it is important to keep in mind that not all minoritized students share the same backgrounds and experiences as their co-ethnoracial group members, or experience ethnoracial identity development processes similarly. To support the ability for all minoritized students to feel a sense of belonging and experience inclusion in not only broader campus communities, but also among formally created groups that are designed to support them, administrators and student affairs professionals must consider the diversity of identity and experiences of students who share ethnoracial identities.

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