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The Burdens They Carry: How Black College Students Resist and Internalize Received Messages about Race and Racism

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The Burdens They Carry:

How Black College Students Resist and Internalize Received Messages about Race and Racism

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Abstract

At predominantly white institutions, black college students' understandings of their campus climate are complicated by their experiences of racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue. In addition to navigating discriminatory encounters with peers, faculty and staff, black college students must contend with systemic inequality. Although prevalent research notes that positive racial socialization practices can prepare young people to think about, address and cope with racism, few studies have qualitatively explored black college students' perceptions of their socialization, and particularly, whether or not they were adequately prepared to experience and conceptualize racism in college. My thesis addresses these gaps by considering how black college students come into consciousness about racism through racial socialization, how effective they perceive their socialization history to be, how socialization informs their responses to racism and how their sociopolitical development manifests through their perceptions of their extracurricular involvements on campus as activism. Relying on racial socialization theory (Lesane-Brown 2006) and sociopolitical development theory (Watts 2003; Anyiwo et al. 2017; Freire 2000), my research questions are: How have black college students' racial socialization histories affected their sociopolitical development? What is the role of sociopolitical development in governing how black college students perceive and respond to racism on their predominantly white campuses? This phenomenological study analyzes in-depth interviews with ten students at Swarthmore College and Bryn Mawr College to explore the messages students received about race and racism during childhood and to identify how those messages prepared or did not prepare them to experience racism in college. The majority of participants describe feeling unprepared; the processes by which they prepared *themselves* (through education and activism) are critical to understanding how they construct meaning of Blackness, resistance, and liberation at their PWIs.

Keywords: racial socialization, sociopolitical development, black college students

Acknowledgements

Reaching this final product was a long and draining process. I had been formulating my original idea for my thesis since my sophomore summer and was very discouraged to discover that I could not possibly complete the project over the course of one year. However, in undertaking a subset of the data, I grew to love the topic I selected. With less than two months remaining to write, I prayed over my thesis, I cried over my thesis, I stressed over my thesis and I poured into my thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisors, Drs. Daniel Laurison and Joseph Nelson, for guiding and supporting me through this process even as I hit writer's block and could not produce for weeks at a time. I thank my dear friends for the brainstorming sessions, the study breaks, the hugs and the reminders that I would finish on time. I thank my partner for making this year so much easier for me. I thank my peers in the Sociology and Educational Studies departments for unending encouragement. I thank Tinuke Akintayo '18 for spending long days dedicated to thesis writing in Parrish Parlors. Lastly, I would like to thank each one of the ten students who volunteered their time, emotions, stories and energy to this product. I could not have completed this thesis without any one of you. Thank you for your labor, thank you for your work, thank you for your friendship and thank you for your courage.

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Introduction

"Confronting chronic emotional pain in black life is the terrain of political resistance we must

now explore, the new revolutionary frontier—" bell hooks

On March 3rd, 2016, Jake New published an article in *Inside Higher Ed* titled, "A

Counselor Who Looks Like You." In it, he describes how students of color attending universities

across the country mobilized to demand the hires of therapists of color to their respective

counseling centers' permanent staff (New 2016). Due to the realities of racial violence that these

students experience on their campuses, New reports, students prefer to be supported by an

ethnically matched therapist. New's article highlights the meaning of this call; the lack of

therapists of color at these institutions suggests an additional limitation of universities' emphasis

on "diversity and inclusion." It is thus useful when analyzing institutions' stated commitments to

the goal of promoting equity on their campuses to explore the ways their missions meet or fail to

meet students' needs. Additionally, the article suggests that students of color assume that

ethnically matched therapists provide culturally competent therapy; therefore, they contextualize

this need by relaying the significance of having access to therapists who understand how and

why institutional racism is woven into the fabric of students' daily lives. Students of color need

therapists who approach treatment with the knowledge that their clients' experiences of trauma

and stress cannot be healed without this systemic level of analysis. Inspired by the article's

findings, I posed a more general inquiry: How do black students, in particular, want to be better

supported by their institutions? How does the perceived need for ethnically matched therapists

illustrate how black young adults understand their social positioning? To respond to these

questions, I began to research the specific race-based challenges that black students encounter

while in college, as well as their varying emotional responses. Black students' experiences at

elite, predominantly white institutions are complicated by racial microaggressions, racial battle

fatigue, and at times, culture shock (Torres 2009; Solorzano et al. 2000; Smith, Allen and Danley

2007). The combination of discriminatory on-campus encounters with students, faculty and staff

and knowledge of the racial climate outside of their institutions increases their fear and

vulnerability. These schooling environments symbolize and reproduce the capitalist, white

supremacist structure of the United States at large; black students thus contend with the reality of

belonging and forced un-belonging in multiple spaces.

The level of access that students have to social media also determines how they come

into consciousness about the world in which they live. Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr have

played a significant role in circulating the news to millennials (Eagan et al. 2016). Importantly,

black college students gain access to information about what is happening to other black people

around the world primarily through this medium. Upon learning about the killing of Michael

Brown in 2015, black people (including college students) reacted publicly through social media

campaigns (#IfTheyGunnedMeDown) and participation in Black Lives Matter protests (Stampler

2014). College students reacted with similar motions, creating spaces on campus for discussing

their own vulnerabilities to violent death and publishing their discourse online (Atkinson 2014).

Social media might be further explored as a critical factor impacting black college students'

sociopolitical development, especially in response to race-based stressors. Simultaneously, social

media can have an adverse effect. Recently, videos of these homicides have been made

accessible on social media: the footage of Philando Castile's police-perpetrated death in 2016

caused significant distress among black viewers, triggering PTSD-like symptoms (Downs 2016).

On college campuses, it is therefore essential that black students receive institutional,

administrative and social support as they navigate these experiences. However, the aggressions

they face within their colleges may affect their willingness to seek help and emotional support.

My research interests thus developed from a deep concern for the emotional well-being

of my peer group. Through community service and organizing, I learned that the boundless

nature of traumatic exposure for black people *across* socioeconomic backgrounds deserves more

nuanced attention from researchers. As a sociology and educational studies major, I yearned to

understand how young black people gauge the role of racism in shaping their exposures to

familial stress, race-based trauma and community violence. As a psychology minor, I was

simultaneously interested in micro-level questions of coping and meaning construction

processes. Beginning in 2016, I pursued these inquiries through summer research experiences.

During my sophomore year, I served as a research assistant for Dr. Riana Anderson's "Engaging,

Managing, and Bonding through Race" (EMBRace) therapeutic intervention. EMBRace was

designed to explore how African American parents in Philadelphia communicate with their

adolescent children about race and racism, to facilitate this dialogue in therapeutic pairs and to

provide them with strategies to better cope with their daily realities. My research experience

generated my interest in racial socialization as an influential factor in determining how black

children come into consciousness about racism. The process of analyzing that dataset and

conducting focus groups with some of the parent-child dyads also inspired me to begin thinking

about how parents transmit messages about mental health and illness to their children and how

these messages inform their coping with racial and nonracial stressors. Importantly, EMBRace is

one of the first interventions to gauge how black children *receive* and *perceive* their

socialization. Additionally, the intervention addresses how systemic racism impacts black

people's mental health, buttressing scholarly calls for the American Psychological Association

(APA) to identify race-based trauma as a cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Williams 2013). Though working for EMBRace deepened my understanding of the link between racial socialization and race-based trauma, I wanted to explore this topic beyond the psychological lens. I remained interested in exploring black youths' narratives, but as I began thinking more sociologically during my junior year, I started to wonder how my population of interest *perceives racism, explains racism,* and *whether or not they recognize their situation within the racial order as the primary or sole cause* of their experiences.

Based on preliminary thesis research I conducted in a Methods course during my junior fall, I noted how clearly the six people I interviewed described the connections between racism, structural inequality and their experiences of discrimination. I wondered how transparent that connection would be for non-race-based encounters, such as familial stress or community violence. During the summer of 2017, I conducted interdisciplinary research with Dr. Jocelyn Smith Lee at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. My project investigated how young black men who had lost one or more peers to homicide (i.e. homicide survivors) began to construct meaning about their own vulnerabilities to violent death. Although a variety of factors are examined within our collaborative paper, I was most compelled by the psychological concept of *attributional type.* I coded 40 interviews to gauge whether most homicide survivors explained the causes of their friends' homicides dispositionally (i.e. caused by individual choices or circumstances), systemically (i.e. caused by systemic inequality), or by relying on a combination of both. The research indicated that the structural nature of racism is less clear when homicide survivors perceive the experience (in this case, violent death) as having occurred dispositionally-

-because of wrongdoing by the victim or because of the randomness of violence in their city (misfortune).

Both of these summer opportunities influenced my original idea for my thesis. Using both survey data and in-depth interviews, I planned to present an interdisciplinary perspective on the nuanced ways in which racial hierarchy creates and reproduces a series of potentially traumatic experiences for black college students completing their undergraduate degrees at elite Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Pennsylvania. By focusing not only on race-based trauma, but also on salient life stressors that black students may have undergone prior to college or during their undergraduate career, I wanted to explore a diverse array of their coping mechanisms (e.g. activism, seeking support from social networks, attending counseling), investigate how they perceive resultant psychological outcomes, and how they, as minoritized groups at their institutions, construct meaning of their experiences. Due to results from my summer research, I was particularly interested in the following meaning construction processes: attributional type (how black college students explain the causes of their stressors), perceived control (how much agency they have over what happens to them) and labeling (whether participants choose to label their experiences as "traumatic"). Combined with their socialization histories and current coping strategies, I assumed that examining these specific meaning construction processes would enable me to gauge whether or not participants link their lived traumatic experiences as black people to their social positions in a racial hierarchy.

After surveying 133 black-identifying students and interviewing 10, I realized in late January that my original goals for my thesis were not supported by the amount of time I had to produce it. I was attempting to explore too many distinct topics, assuming that I would be able to synthesize them as a "new" theory; this theory sought to define the different pathways by which

socialization informs students' meaning construction processes about potentially traumatic

events they experienced in adolescence and in college. I realize now that each of these topics

could serve as theses within themselves. If given more time and resources, I hope to revisit this

idea in the future. Tasked with re-envisioning my thesis with two months to write, I decided to

save the quantitative data for later analysis when I have access to more resources to effectively

use Stata software.

Working with the ten interviews, I narrowed my topic to explore my interests in racial

socialization, sociopolitical development and emotional responses to racism. After re-reading the

interviews and selectively coding for these three topics, I realized that I could tell a story about

how black students' childhood home and school environments prepared or did not prepare them

to think about race and experience racism. Firstly, levels of preparedness appear to impact how

black students conceptualize racism and Blackness in college and how they choose to navigate

their emotional responses to discriminatory encounters. Part of this choice also involves

sociopolitical development--a concept used in this thesis to particularly examine how

participants' understandings of racism affect their perceptions of their work as "activism."

Interviewees' emotional responses are also important to understand: how do they navigate

experiences of racial stress in college? How do they make meaning of the work they do on

campus to address inequality? My research questions therefore became: How have black college

students' racial socialization histories affected their sociopolitical development? What is the role

of sociopolitical development in governing how black college students perceive and respond to

racism on their predominantly white campuses?

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the literature on each of the topics explored: racial

socialization processes and outcomes for youth and college students, and sociopolitical

development within black young adults. Importantly, the literature review does not outline any one causal relationship between these variables. Rather, we can see racial socialization and sociopolitical development as factors constantly interacting with and informing one another throughout the course of black peoples' lives. However, due to the lack of qualitative research on these topics, extant literature has not sufficiently interrogated the perceived effectiveness of racial socialization processes. Because I am interested in one segment of my participants' lives (their college years), my methods center questions of how their socialization histories affect their present meaning-making and how their current socialization at their institutions simultaneously affects their view of their pasts.

Chapter 2 describes the qualitative methods used to gather and interpret the data.

Chapter 3 introduces racial socialization *histories* as the primary concept of interest. The messages that participants received from their home and school environments (particularly at home, with their parental figure or figures) about race and racism contribute heavily to their understanding of their social position (sociopolitical development). Further, I will argue that the prevalence of two specific types of socialization (cultural pride and preparation for bias) among participants reveals that both types affect how they feel about their Blackness, both individually and in relation to a larger black community. The understanding of Blackness that develops over time simultaneously informs how participants process experiences of racial discrimination during their childhoods and adolescence. In this chapter, I promote a deeper examination of the ways racial socialization and racial discrimination interact to shape black children's worldviews. These worldviews cannot be analyzed without inquiring about children's emotional responses, which are complexly intertwined with their internalization of or resistance to the messages they received. Participant interviews also demonstrate that feeling prepared by their parents and

schools to experience and think about racism do not necessarily translate to their college

contexts: thus, I argue that understanding how black students felt prepared or unprepared while

attending their institutions illuminates the effectiveness of the types of messages their support

systems transmit to them.

Chapter 4 surveys participants' current racial stressors and probes how their working

understandings of racism changed while attending their respective institutions. Participants

analyze how their racial socialization history (particularly the messages they received about

cultural pride and preparation for bias) melded or clashed with the socialization they are

experiencing as college students. Importantly, this chapter focalizes participants' emotional

responses, not only to their experiences of racism in college, but also to the process by which

they came into consciousness about racism as a system governing their lives. Because prevalent

research has not yet explored how black young adults feel about and perceive the effectiveness

of their socialization, this study contributes qualitative data to assess how useful these messages

are (and which messages are most effective) across time and place.

Chapter 5 explores how participants' reflections on their preparedness (or lack thereof)

occurs alongside sociopolitical development. Sociopolitical development is defined as the

process by which students come into consciousness about racism, oppression and their social

location within a racial hierarchy. I explore sociopolitical development as a *response* to racial

discrimination and marginalization across the life course. Alongside participants' understandings

of racism, their meaning making of their engagement with activism during college serves as an

indicator of sociopolitical development. Chapter 5 outlines three ways that interviewees think

about activism: those who internalize one definition of activism (focusing on boycotting and

protesting) invalidate their own work as "real" activism or avoid it because of the emotional tolls

that work necessitates and the lack of resources they have on campus to process those emotions. Other participants have adopted a definition of activism more inclusive of other types of engagement and they immerse themselves in their work as a result. These three meaning construction categories have various consequences for participants; the ways they internalize or resist their socialization history (around race, racism *and* activism) informs their self-concept and sense of agency. The chapter also reveals social support as the primary method students use to cope, considering the positive and even liberatory effects of developing a strong bond with other black students even when participants felt unprepared for experiencing racism by their parents and schools. However, the emotional impacts of unpreparedness remain significant, as they negatively affect the ways students feel about their present agency and their future orientations.

The conclusion meditates on how this data presents a valuable resource for families, communities, researchers and schools when deciding how best to improve support systems for black college students at predominantly white institutions. Researchers have not yet explored the concepts I introduce in this thesis; I expand upon how my contributions enhance existing theories of racial socialization and sociopolitical development in black people's lives.

Chapter 1:

Literature Review

In this thesis, I use racial socialization theory (Lesane-Brown 2006) and sociopolitical development theory (Watts 2003; Freire 2000; Anyiwo et al. 2017) to connect the messages that black youth receive about race and racism to the ways they come into consciousness about oppression, particularly in the aftermath of discriminatory encounters. Importantly, my thesis addresses the critical gaps in the extant body of work through the following contributions: 1) this study is one of the first to *qualitatively* explore racial socialization processes in general; 2) the methodology rejects the assumption that young people are passive recipients of socialization by prompting participants to reflect on and critique their socialization histories; and 3) the findings uniquely examine the factors that contribute to students' feelings of unpreparedness, thus filling a scholarly need for more research on the effectiveness of certain racial socialization practices. While also pinpointing what is not yet known, this literature review expands upon useful concepts within each theory to identify existing information about how these processes work within black families and to establish how they operate specifically for black college students attending elite, predominantly white institutions. Though some of the articles cited have researched African American populations specifically (racial socialization, Lesane-Brown 2006), I will also review articles on ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al. 2006) because my thesis examines the narratives of black people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Racial Socialization Processes

Socialization is the ecological process through which people continuously learn about the norms, values, customs, and expectations of their context. Because individuals, groups and

institutions (e.g. parents, families, schools, churches, neighborhoods) guide socialization, the messages that they transmit and internalize vary as a function of racial stratification (Beale-Spencer et al. 1997). Black parents share different types of messages in attempts to shape their children's racial identities as well as to prepare and protect them from the likelihood of experiencing violence and discrimination (Coard and Sellers 2005; Brown and Lesane-Brown 2006). Ethnic socialization centers on transmitting "ethnic group values, history, beliefs, and customs" whereas "African American racial socialization focuses more on messages of racial barriers and cultural pride" (Grills et al. 2015; Hughes 2006). The integration of the two, deemed ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes 2006), indicates that black parents play a significant role in educating their children about what it means to be black, how to interact with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and how to cope with and respond to discriminatory experiences (Coard and Sellers 2005).

I will be utilizing the concept of race socialization (RS) in this thesis. Race socialization, or racial socialization, is defined as follows:

> "The process by which specific verbal and nonverbal messages (e.g., modeling of behavior and exposure to different contexts and objects) [are] transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity" (Lesane-Brown 2006:403).

Importantly, the *intents* of RS messages do not always align with their *verbal and nonverbal expression*: children understand inadvertent cues (e.g. overhearing conversations, observing parents' behaviors) that nevertheless relay messages to them about their parents' beliefs (Lesane-

Brown 2006). Thus, the outcomes of racial socialization depend on how the child perceives the messages reported to them (Lesane-Brown 2006:420). Using quantitative methods, prevalent racial socialization scholarship explores this empirical domain of *content*, or the types of messages parents transmit to children about race, more vastly than the prevalence and frequency of these messages.

Content. The types of messages that African American parents transmit to their children vary, based on sociodemographic factors (e.g. parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, and region of residence, immigration status; Lesane-Brown 2006), ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Afro-Latinx, Caribbean, African; Roopnarine et al. 2013), the centrality of race in their lives (Sellers et al. 1998; Hughes 2003), and their appraisals of the racial climate during which their children are entering adolescence and young adulthood (Brown and Lesane-Brown 2006). Parents frame the content of their messages depending on their perceptions of the problems that their children experience or will experience.

Despite families' diverse contexts, Hughes (2006) describes the prevalence of four distinct types of socialization within black families. *Cultural socialization,* often likened to enculturation, is a parental practice that teaches children about their racial/ethnic heritage and history. These messages, intended to promote cultural customs and pride among black children, prevail as the most common content (Hughes and Chen 1997; Phinney and Chavira 2010). Secondly, *preparation for bias* occurs often among African American parent-child dyads: parents educate their children about discrimination and prepare them to respond to and cope with upcoming experiences. Similarly, though messages characterized as *promotion of mistrust* do not contain strategies or advice for coping, they insinuate a mistrust or wariness of other racial groups when teaching children about barriers to their success. African American parents also

demonstrate *egalitarian* training, in which they emphasize hard work, self-acceptance and

equality rather than deeming racism a barrier to success. Though color-blind perspectives are less

common in African American families, they are grouped within egalitarian messaging. These

four categories best capture other scholars' work: similar to Hughes, Bowman and Howard

(1985) identified racial pride, self-development (success), racial barrier orientations (knowledge

of inequality and coping) and egalitarianism as the recurring content of racial socialization

messages. When these messages were delivered in a proactive manner (before youth experienced

discriminatory encounters), they positively impacted upward mobility and academic achievement

(Bowman and Howard 1985). At times, parents may deliberately refrain from transmitting

messages about race to their children--a content theme identified as "silence about race" (Hughes

2006). Possible reasons for this silence include: parents' fears that discussing race will provoke

bitterness and depression in their children, their emphasis on egalitarianism, their beliefs in a

post-racial society and parents' internalization of anti-black sentiments (Lesane 2002; Thornton

et al. 1990).

Of the factors I listed that affect content, I will expand upon research about the latter two:

the centrality of race in black parents' lives and their appraisals of the racial climate in which

their children develop. Parents' identities and own socialization histories affect how, when and

why they discuss certain topics with their children (i.e. *prevalence*). Research has determined

that African American parents are more likely to prepare their children for bias if race is central

to their identity and if they believe that their racial group is subject to discrimination (Hughes

2003). For example, using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al. 1997),

Cooper et al. (2015) found that both race centrality and perceived discrimination increased

African American fathers' transmission of preparatory warnings. Conversely, black parents

demonstrating low race salience transmit messages more often about egalitarianism and developing an individual sense of self-worth (White-Johnson, Ford, and Sellers 2010). Additionally, parents' understandings of racism and social change across their life course affect what they tell their black children. Across generations, parents explain prejudice (and more specifically, the message that white people are prejudiced) to their children (Brown and Lesane-Brown 2006:211). In the aftermath of racialized events, such as the police-perpetrated killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, African American parents employed various RS strategies to communicate their expectations about how their children might respond, particularly during the protests (Threlfall 2016). Four content categories emerged from this unique qualitative study: parents educated their children about systemic racism (with the goal of informing them that Ferguson was not an isolated event), taught their sons protective strategies and reminded them of their "intrinsic worth", transmitted egalitarian messages about individual achievement, and finally, at times differentiated their children from those engaging in protest. (267) In this study, parents' fears, levels of race centrality and appraisals of the time period all informed the content of their socialization.

Prevalence and Frequency. Prevalence research examines whether messages about race and racism are transmitted by African American parents and whether their children have received those messages. Studies using samples from the National Study of Black Americans discovered that 79% of African American adults indicate having discussed race and race relations with their parents and 85% recall having discussed race with another family member (Sanders Thompson 1994); 63.6% of parents remember the content of the messages they transmitted to their children (Thornton et. al. 1990). Thus, most parents are likely to transmit racial socialization messages to their children, but black parents differ as to *why* and *when* they

discuss race-related topics. The combination of sociodemographic factors (e.g. parental

education, neighborhood environment), racial attitudes, and interracial contact (between white

and black people) affect the content of parental racial socialization messages (Thornton 1997).

Married parents are more likely than single parents to socialize their children about race, mothers

are more likely than fathers, older parents are more likely than younger parents, and higher

educated parents are more likely than less educated parents (Thornton et al. 1990). Thornton,

Chatters, Taylor and Allen provide three categories of racial socialization messages that connect

prevalence to content. For example, "minority experience messages" that generalize minority

status are most likely to be transmitted by black people who live in close proximity to other

black people. Black people who are less likely to have graduated from high school transmit

egalitarian messages and "black cultural experience messages", while "mainstream experience

messages" about hard work and achievement are most likely to be transmitted by upper-middle

class blacks living in suburban environments (Thornton 1997). Additionally, parental messages

increase with the child's age, girls are generally taught about achievement and racial pride and

boys receive messages about masculinity, barriers to achievement and danger (Bowman and

Howard 1985; Thomas and Speight 1999; Hughes et al. 2006; Caughy, Nettles, and Lima 2010).

Prevalence and content research report positive and negative outcomes for youth

receiving these messages but have yet to determine how youth perceive the effectiveness of each

message and its applicability throughout the course of their lives.

Outcomes of Positive RS Practices. Positive racial socialization practices, and specific

types of content (e.g. cultural socialization) yield positive developmental outcomes for African

American youth, including high academic achievement, behavioral growth, familial accord, and

psychosocial well-being (Lesane-Brown 2006; Hughes et. al. 2009; Grills et. al. 2015). Cultural

socialization is associated with academic achievement, as cultural pride instills value in adolescents (Hughes et al. 2009). Cultural pride combats anti-black sentiments and increases youths' resistance to negative stereotypes, especially those about their potential to succeed in school. (121) These findings echo studies that demonstrate that stereotype threat maintains negative consequences for academic outcomes (Mendoza Denton et al. 2002; Steele and Aronson 1995). Hughes et al. (2009) indicate that cultural socialization influences positive parenting, which fosters academic engagement in schools; this work implies that cultural pride is necessary for African American youth to excel. Conversely, preparation for bias exhibits more complex results: these messages can both increase and decrease self-esteem, antisocial behavior and academic achievement; the ways in which parents relay these messages matter for how their children perceive racism. Refuting conclusions that preparatory messages are "inherently protective" (Hughes and Chen 1999), the negative consequences associated with preparation for bias suggest that black children are subjected to increased vulnerability once they become aware of discrimination: though these consequences may be unintended, they undermine children's self-esteem (Hughes et al. 2009).

Outcomes for College Students. With regard to older African American populations such as undergraduate and graduate students, much of the debate surrounding racial socialization relates the content of the messages to psychosocial outcomes. Racial socialization manifests differently for African American college students in that by this stage in the life cycle, they have likely been receiving race-based messages (both from within their families and from external social networks) throughout the course of childhood and adolescence. Research about college students explicitly refers to the outcomes of RS processes and explores how African American young adults have internalized or resisted these messages, particularly surrounding cultural

socialization and preparation for bias. These messages protect against expected developmental

consequences such as increased aggression, the formation of an "anti-self" concept, depressive

symptomatology, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Banerjee et al. 2015; Brown,

Rosnick and Segrist 2016). In relation to increased aggression, criminal behavior, and offense

trends amongst students, perceived discrimination has been shown to increase students' offense

risks and neither preparation for bias nor cultural socialization have significant effects on

delinquency (Jones and Greene 2015). However, sociologists note that while preparation for bias

does decrease the effects of discrimination, hostile views, and depression, it is optimally

accompanied by cultural socialization and authoritative parenting (Burt et. al. 2012:669; Harding

2009).

The discrepancy between outcomes from cultural socialization and preparation for bias

practices appear in other studies. Concerned with the effects of racial bias in mediating black

students' experiences in college, Brown, Rosnick, and Segrist (2016) test the links between

college students' gendered experiences of internalized racial oppression and their internal or

external academic locus of control in higher education. Awareness of oppression produces a

disproportionate external locus of control, where students hold systemic inequalities responsible

for their stressors. Though an external locus of control informs the development of critical

consciousness, it simultaneously works to undermine agency and academic achievement

amongst African American college students more so than white students and among men more

so than women (Brown et al. 2016:7). Importantly, the researchers discovered that the

relationship between internalized oppression and an academic locus of control is only

statistically significant for college men due to negative stereotypes that depict African American

men as unintelligent and athletic, whereas women's experiences rather relate to beauty standards, a problematic issue that remains uncorrelated with academic outcomes (Brown et. al. 2016:16).

The development of an external locus of control in response to preparation for bias messaging therefore can yield negative effects, including the promotion of "fatalism and a sense of helplessness, as they believe that they have little to no power to change their environment" (Brown et. al. 2011:261). Whereas an internal locus of control enables students to exercise a certain amount of agency in confronting racism in academia, preparation for bias messages actually obstruct this agency formation. Although messages emphasizing cultural pride protect against anger and depression for black youth who experience personal discrimination, neither pride nor awareness protect against their feelings of helplessness, anger, and sadness when confronting institutional barriers (Jones and Greene 2015); parental transmission of colorblindness exhibits the same pattern (Barr and Neville 2008; 2013). In this way, racial socialization must begin to include positive preparation for various forms of discrimination (Saleem and Lambert 2015).

For African American college students, positive racial socialization outcomes occur when their parents transmit these messages to provide emotional and career-related support. To prepare for the workforce, African American college students must have an awareness of the existing racist structure and the discriminatory practices to which they might fall prey, as racism affects their ability to secure and maintain gainful employment. Previous studies have identified both the positive and negative effects of youths' knowledge about employment discrimination, while holding that parental emotional support (about cross-racial relationships) and verbal encouragement (ethnic socialization, cultural embeddedness) help to offset their anxieties (Blackmon and Thomas 2014). Conversely, a similar study did not find a relationship between

parental racial socialization practices and college students' increased self-esteem, thus becoming the one isolated study to disrupt trends in the dominant literature (Causey, Livingston, and High 2015). However, these scholars only utilized preparation for bias messaging in their methodology, finding that a decreased sense of self-esteem emerged amongst the students. This result is unsurprising, given the wealth of research on detrimental psychosocial effects stemming from students' awareness of discrimination. Had the researchers included cultural pride messages in their adopted Likert scales, they might have discovered a result aligned with the literature. In testing African American college students' resilience while coping with racism, hierarchical moderated regression (HMR) analyses demonstrate that overall, positive RS practices moderate the link between discriminatory experiences and resilience (Brown et. al. 2011).

Racial socialization research in the last decade has concluded that this process benefits African American youths' development. Further analysis complexifies this blanket statement: to properly understand the advantages and potential disadvantages of specific types of messaging, one must consider the relationship between content, frequency and developmental implications. With respect to academic achievement and behavioral growth, different messages can result in positive and negative outcomes. Though these quantitative studies have begun to fill critical gaps in racial socialization research, scholars have not yet reviewed how effective the process is. Precedent articles measure *how often* racial socialization occurs from parent to child but have yet to determine a scale of *how "well"* youth receive these messages. This could possibly be explained by the lack of a universal definition and measurement for racial socialization (Lesane-Brown 2006); racial socialization is by no means a uniform process and adapts given each individual family's needs and experiences. Additionally, few scholars have used qualitative methods to ask young people how they feel about the messages they received or to describe how

those messages worked or did not work to prepare or protect them during college. Considering these limitations, my thesis explores black college students' understandings of how the content of parental messages affected their preparedness to encounter racism in college as well as their overall psychological functioning and sociopolitical development.

Sociopolitical Development

I define sociopolitical development as the life course process by which people learn about their own social positioning in a racial hierarchy, conceptualize liberation, and acquire the tools necessary to resist oppression. Sociopolitical development theory (Freire 2000; Watts 2003; Anyiwo et al. 2017) facilitates my understanding of how black college students come into consciousness about oppression and inequality and respond to racism on their predominantly white campuses. I am primarily interested in how students explore their racial and ethnic identities when separated from their parents' influence, how their present socialization at their institutions affects the ways they (re)consider what it means to be black and how they construct meaning of their race-based experiences through political or politicized action. This section of the literature review identifies key facets of this theory that highlight the connections between consciousness (Freire 2000), racial identity development, and action (activism).

Paolo Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides relevant conceptualizations of liberation and oppression, solidarity, and *conscientizacao* (conscientization) that are all incorporated within sociopolitical development theory (SPD). Racial identity is intricately webbed within SPD (Watts 2003) and the sociocultural factors that influence it (Anyiwo et al. 2017). Therefore, these combined concepts clarify my investigation of how, alongside experiences of racial discrimination, trauma and stress, racial socialization and sociopolitical

development both affirm and complexify black students' racial identity development. Black college students attending elite, predominantly white institutions undergo significant stressors (e.g. macroaggressions) that result in depression and low self-esteem (Helm 2013). Their experiences with discrimination on their campuses often impact their racial identity development through a *racial awakening;* personal experiences and observations spark increased awareness about what it means to be black, socially and politically (Neville and Cross 2017). Freire (2000) proposes that the oppressed are best able to understand the conditions in which they live. Though this understanding increases their vulnerability to suffering, it also empowers them to conceptualize liberation and its necessity.

Freire holds that the "humanistic and historical task" of the oppressed is to liberate themselves and their oppressors. (44) However--consistent with prevalent racial socialization research on the benefits of a strengthened internal locus of control--in order for the oppressed to achieve liberation, they must "perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no escape, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. (49) Oppression is a violent undertaking. Existing in the absence of humanization and love, this violence often leads to internalized racism. Thus, to liberate is to humanize and to love. Anti-capitalist values predicate successful liberation, as the oppressor's possessive consciousness permits violence. Resisting colonization also involves acquiring an objective, critical awareness of oppression; this shared understanding of history necessitates rebellion. The "conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation" results from "their own conscientizacao." (67) Conscientizacao, importantly, cannot occur without solidarity--a "radical posture" that requires humanization and active allyship. (49) Reflection and action, in tandem, therefore enable oppressed peoples to develop their own pedagogies. The libertarian, co-intentional education that Freire promotes

empowerment through ensuring that the oppressed become "masters of their thinking" and develop a critical consciousness that propels them to act against domination. (124)

Applying Freire's models of critical reflection, motivation and action, critical consciousness (CC) is similarly conceptualized as marginalized children's ability to perceive and acquire knowledge about oppression, understand how systems of inequality govern their daily lives, and perceive their capacity to affect change (Diemer et al. 2016). Social justice youth development (SJYD) interventions consider young people as agents for social change, enhancing their sense of efficacy and motivating them towards a sociopolitical vision (Ginwright and Cammarota 2002). By fostering community around students' shared social identities, these interventions maintain positive developmental and psychological outcomes for youth: on self-, social-, and global awareness levels, adolescents demonstrated cultural pride, positive self-regard, feelings of purpose, empathy, and optimism regarding social change (Ginwright and Cammarota 2002:94). Because most CC interventions focus on raising collective consciousness, individual outcomes require further clarification. Levels of CC vary, depending on the types of marginalization young people experience, and their awareness that they may hold some privileged identities simultaneous to their marginalized ones; more privileged people develop CC in response to the oppression of others and become dedicated allies (Diemer et al. 2016:219). In one study examining black and Latino college students' participation in the BlackLivesMatter (BLM) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) movements, researchers found that although both black and Latino students reported more involvement in BLM than DACA, black and Latino students' prior political activism and experiences with racial/ethnic microaggressions predicted their respective involvement in both movements (Hope, Keels and Durkee 2016).

These findings indicate that personal experience, a sense of shared oppression and levels of critical consciousness directly impact student participation.

Combining empowerment with social action, sociopolitical development (SPD) theory "emphasizes an understanding of the cultural and political forces that shape [the status of African Americans] in society" (Watts, Williams, and Jagers 2003). Moving beyond empowerment interventions, SPD theory encourages not only resisting oppression, but also reimagining what a just society could look like and exploring how to establish one. Similar to models for racial identity development (Cross 1978; Want et al. 2004; Sellers et al. 1998; Plummer 1995), Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil (1999) introduce the five stages of sociopolitical development: at the *acritical* stage, African Americans reflect a "Just World" belief; at the *adaptive* stage, they notice inequality but believe it to be immutable; at the *precritical* stage, they question adaptation when complacency "gives way to concerns about inequality." During the final two stages, the *critical* stage and *liberation* stage, African Americans learn more about oppression, and become frequently involved in social change efforts. Activism is centered as a key feature of sociopolitical development: they conceptualize an activist as someone who "acts strategically with others, on the basis of shared values, to create a more just society." (186) With this definition, both reformist (changing how society operates) and revolutionary (creating new societies or institutions on the basis of alternative principles) methods comprise activism. When involved in activist endeavors, different transactions (e.g. events, influences, attitudes, insights) shape future actions and thinking, and increase the likelihood of engaging specifically in future activism.

Sociopolitical development shifts between the different temporal contexts of upbringing, adolescence, and early adulthood. These transactional and ecological models proposed by SPD

researchers depict SPD as a "cumulative effect of many transactions over time that increase

sociopolitical understanding (insight and ideology) and the capacity for effective action

(liberation behavior)." (192) Importantly, SPD must be contextualized for black youth across

identity groups. Sociocultural factors (e.g. experiences with racial discrimination, racial

socialization, and racial identity) inform black youths' sociopolitical development. While

experiences of racism and discrimination prompt youth to begin questioning their social

environments and engaging in political action, the messages that they receive (particularly

surrounding preparation for bias and cultural socialization) simultaneously influence how they

respond to discrimination and understand their experiences (Anyiwo et al. 2017). When African

American youth "draw upon their [understandings of] racial identity," they develop a critical

consciousness that connects their socialization to their experiences (Anyiwo et al. 2017:3). The

cultivation of a strong national and international black identity strengthens their knowledge of

interconnected oppressions and can facilitate their participation in global social movements

(Anyiwo et al. 2017:4). Other social identity factors, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation

(Anyiwo et al. 2017) and religion (Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil 1999) affect black youths'

understandings of systemic oppression, intersectionality and subsequent responses (e.g. activism,

emotional responses, psychological functioning).

Expanding upon Anyiwo et al.'s work, my thesis relies on qualitative data to examine the

ways black college students form connections between their racial socialization histories, their

experiences with racial discrimination, their current understandings of race and racism and their

sociopolitical development.

Chapter 2:

Methodology

The present study utilizes qualitative data to respond to the following research questions: How have black college students' racial socialization histories affected their sociopolitical development? What is the role of sociopolitical development in governing how black college students perceive of and respond to racism on their predominantly white campuses?

Methods

Data Collection

This thesis details how socialization histories impact black undergraduates' meaning construction processes about their sociopolitical development. Specifically, I analyze how black undergraduate students attending two private, elite liberal arts institutions in Pennsylvania currently comprehend their experiences of discrimination, given the messages they have received and internalized about race, discrimination and their ability to enact social change. I recruited participants from Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) because of my interest in black students' perceptions of the racial discrimination they face on their campuses. This intentionality of participant selection enabled me to understand the relevance of collegiate socialization to subjective understandings of the challenges black students have endured.

Interview Protocol. In designing my interview protocol, I primarily relied on phenomenological methods for in-depth analysis of participants' narratives. Phenomenology is defined as rooted in "an epistemology that inextricably links subjective and objective insofar as the primary focus is on the way individuals subjectively assign meaning to the objects of their

consciousness" (Daly 2007:94). As an inductive qualitative method "concerned with taken-for-granted aspects of everyday reality," phenomenology seeks to understand "the way people are geared into their everyday lifeworlds (*lebenswelt*)" specifically in relation to a phenomenon of interest (Daly 2007:96). A *taken-for-granted reality* can be understood as the shared meanings that comprise our everyday consciousness and form "common sense." By examining the ways in which socialization history differentiates black students' perceptions of race and racism, I use phenomenology to nuance "critical consciousness" development. This method thus facilitates the use of qualitative data to explore the perceived effectiveness racial socialization.

Phenomenology is shaped by multiple theoretical concepts. In the present study, I draw upon the key theories of *taken-for-granted reality, intersubjectivity* and *gearing into the world* to explain meaning construction processes, and *typifications* to inform my focus on socialization histories. *Intersubjectivity* builds upon taken-for-granted reality, arguing that "for everyday life to be taken for granted and somewhat predictable, it must be embedded in a system of shared meanings…a common, shared social reality" (Daly 2007:96). However, we are not passive recipients of these shared meanings; *gearing into the world* enables us to mold and transform our meaning constructions of our experiences. In alignment with the predictability of the lifeworld, the theory of *typifications* argues that "our ability to explain and integrate new experiences is based on our ability to typify from past experiences as a means of knowing what to expect with new ones" (Daly 2007:97). This theory can thus be applied to research the impact of socialization on black college students' current understanding of their Blackness and their overall social location within a racial hierarchy. With the goal of understanding how participants identify and elucidate their typified world, phenomenology and its affiliated method of in-depth

interviewing thus contribute the lens through which I began to understand my participants' life histories and lived experiences.

Rooted in these key phenomenological theories, my interview protocol applies an adapted life history approach (Hagemaster 1992) to locate each participant's micro-level experiences within macro-level structures (*See Appendix 1 for interview protocol*). The first half of the interviews, centered on detailing socialization history, required that participants reflect on their typified worlds by providing examples of the messages they received about race, racism and mental health from their ecological contexts (e.g. caretakers, friends, schooling environments, the media and, if applicable, religious environment). In this set of questions, intersubjectivity manifests in the common threads within their socialization histories. Participants gear into their lifeworlds when asked to describe the psychosocial impacts of some of these experiences of racial discrimination and expand upon whether or not they believed they were prepared by their parents and K-12 schooling environments to experience racism during college. After having been offered an opportunity to take a break or to check in, participants were transitioned into the second half of the interview, which, in addition to detailing present experiences of trauma and stress, focused more explicitly on how they currently respond to and cope with racism and discrimination on campus. The semi-structured nature of the interview protocol allowed me to further probe participants to explain their meaning construction process. For example, in most interviews, we explored how participants' typified socialization histories around racial identity may have affected their ideas about activism, and specifically "what counts" as activism. The selected questions aligned with key theories of phenomenological approaches, thus grounding the interview in *taken-for-granted reality, intersubjectivity, gearing into the world,* and

typifications as frameworks for increased understanding of participants' narratives and life course experiences.

Interview Process. Upon completing a short introductory survey that I distributed widely to recruit participants, respondents were asked whether they would be interested in participating in an interview at an on-campus location of their choice. Interviews were expected to endure for at least 45 minutes. Interested parties were then directed to the final page, where they were prompted to input their preferred mode of contact. However, due to the unclear phrasing of the question, many participants did not detail the specifics of their contact information, but rather provided their preferred mode of contact as "email" or "cell phone." Because I could not match these responses to participants' identities, I selected ten interviewees from interested participants who provided their email address or phone number.

After signing consent forms and selecting pseudonyms, the interviews ultimately averaged a length of 1.5 hours *(See Appendix 1.1 for interview materials given to the participant)*. To fully connect with each participant's narrative, I chose not to take notes while I audio recorded the interviews. Immediately following each participant's exit, I prepared a two to three-page case review to provide a general summary of the interview, bullet points of emergent themes, descriptions of the participant's adolescent socialization history and current messages, details about their experiences of discrimination and a list of both adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms employed throughout the life course (*See Appendix 2 for case review template)*. Because my data analysis is informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach, I also relied on Strauss's (1987) instructions for memo writing to record the process of conducting a grounded theory study. During the interview conduction stage, I wrote a variety of: a) observational memos, describing what I had seen, heard, felt and experienced while

interviewing; b) operational memos, reminding myself of new questions to ask in upcoming interviews based on emergent themes in previous ones; and c) reflexive memos, exploring how my own positionality (race, class, gender identity, socialization history) impacted my own experience during the interviews and underscored any potential biases that emerged. The practice of writing reflexive memos after every two or three interviews deepened my engagement with the qualitative process. By reflecting on my own life experiences, I became aware of the timing and frequency of arising affect during interviews and could better understand how my social positioning as a black middle-class person who has experienced significant trauma impacted my identification with my participants' narratives.

Interviewee Demographics. Nine of the selected ten interviewees attended Swarthmore College. I also interviewed one student from Bryn Mawr College. Table 1.1 below displays interviewee demographics by institution, class year, field of study, race, ethnicity and gender.

Table 1.1. Interviewee Demographics

Participant ID	Pseudonym	Institution	Class Year	Field of Study	Ethnicity	Gender Identity
P01	**Sebastian**	Swarthmore College	2019	Social Sciences and STEM	African American	Man
P02	**Amina**	Swarthmore College	2018	STEM	African and African American	Woman
P03	**Teresa**	Swarthmore College	2020	Social Sciences	African American	Woman
P04	**Dave**	Swarthmore College	2018	Social Sciences	African American and	Man

					Caribbean	
P05	**Mark**	Swarthmore College	2018	STEM	African American, African, Latinx	Man
P06	**Melissa**	Swarthmore College	2020	Social Sciences and Humanities	African American	Woman
P07	**Lynn D.**	Swarthmore College	2019	Social Sciences	African American	Woman
P08	**Bobby**	Swarthmore College	2019	Social Sciences	African American	Man
P09	**Simone**	Swarthmore College	2018	Humanities	African American and Caribbean	Nonbinary
P10	**Izzy**	Swarthmore College	2020	Social Sciences	African and African American	Man

In sum, five of the interviewees identified as men, four identified as women, and one is nonbinary. While eight of the interviewees identified as black, two interviewees were multiracial. Six interviewees noted a Caribbean or African ethnicity in addition to African American, while four interviewees solely described themselves as African American. Interviewees pursued a diverse range of academic majors, with three within Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, two within the Humanities, and six within the Social Sciences. Two interviewees pursued majors across fields.

Data Analyses

I completed all ten interviews by November 1st, 2017. Interviews lasting approximately

one hour were then transcribed using Trint manual software. Longer interviews were outsourced to Rev Transcription. During data analysis, I was concerned primarily with the "interpretive process…between the researcher and the researched… by which theory is meaningfully constructed" (Daly 2007:107). Becoming intimately familiar with the data garnered within me a deep respect for the nuances within my participants' experiences and facilitated the process of addressing my initial biases to open the data to emergent categories (Blumer 1969:182). Moreover, complementing grounded theory's emphasis on inductive and deductive reasoning, I utilized abductive reasoning, linking theory with observation and interpretation to consider how my literature review might generate insights into my data. This method thus enabled me to gather data, code interviews and interpret participant narratives--such that I could ultimately identify similarities and incongruences within the data and begin to develop key themes, categories and insights about nuance.

Participant interviews were coded in Dedoose mixed-methods software. Using the Diamond Model of Analysis, I began by openly coding interviews (i.e. creating labels alongside line-by-line analysis of transcripts). This process gave way to fracturing the data: from numerous textual memos that outlined emerging themes, broad categories were developed to explore general concepts. I later returned to the data to code *axially*--a process that entails analyzing one category of codes at a time to form sub-categories and explicitly investigate the relationships between emergent variables. In the final stage of preliminary analysis, data were coded *selectively* to address the specific research questions of the present study, identifying quotes that best captured participant narratives about their meaning construction processes. This three-stage process allowed me to fully understand the participants' individual and collective narratives and

provided necessary insight into their meaning-making processes of factors involved in their

navigation of multiple experiences of racial trauma and stress.

To facilitate this triadic coding process, I used the Rigorous and Accelerated Data

Reduction (RADaR) multi-phase process (Watkins 2017) to pinpoint the most relevant

participant quotes within each code. My adaption of the RADaR technique involved generating

code reports from Dedoose to input into an all-inclusive Google Sheets table. Ultimately, the

Phase 1 table held 5 sheets of coded data, with one sheet revealing all the excerpts for a specific

code. I then examined every excerpt to identify the parts most relevant to the questions; while

key portions of the excerpts were highlighted yellow, irrelevant sentences were color-changed to

grey but were not yet deleted. During Phase 1, I individually identified sub-codes and formed

observations about the relevance of each excerpt. My notes and insights were recorded in two

columns beside the coded excerpts. In Phase 2 of the adapted process, I compared my Google

sheets to a coding process done two weeks later, and subsequently worked to achieve consensus

between my two interpretations. Once consensus was determined, irrelevant portions of each

excerpt were deleted, thus producing shorter, more concise data tables. Two phases of the

RADaR technique sufficed for my data; I subsequently conducted a focused data analysis of the

finalized excerpts for significant findings.

Chapter 3:

"I wasn't equipped to go and be an activist for myself."

Racial socialization studies emphasize the impact of frequent race-based messaging on black children's identity development. The literature demonstrates that the four content areas of racial socialization (cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism) differentially affect black children's psychological well-being, sense of agency, racial identity development and competency (Hughes et al. 2006; 2009). Cultural socialization refers to messages promoting cultural pride and historical knowledge, preparation for bias attempts to prepare children to cope with and respond to racism, mistrust messages designate which racial groups children should and should not trust and egalitarianism promotes the equality of all human beings without discussing systemic inequality. Though ecological contexts diversify the types of messages that children receive, research suggests that proactive cultural socialization, in particular, heightens black youths' sense of pride, academic achievement and self-efficacy (Bowman and Howard 1985). Preparation for bias, however, can either increase or decrease agency (Brown et al. 2016) and self-esteem (Hughes et al. 2009). In general, content research suggests that talking about race in conjunction with preparing children to experience discrimination results in the most positive development outcomes (Grills et al. 2012). However, little is known in socialization scholarship about how black college students *perceive* the messages they received during childhood once they arrive at their predominantly white, elite institutions and what they do with the new information they receive about race and racism. Transitioning into PWIs presents a new and sometimes unfamiliar challenge to black college students (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). Focusing specifically on socialization occurring in

the home and in schools, the first half of Chapter 3 describes participants' *racial socialization histories*--or, their re-telling of the messages they received about race and racism during adolescence--and their meaning construction of those messages. The second half of this chapter explores the *perceived effectiveness* of their racial socialization history--or, how students believe their homes and schools prepared or did not prepare them to understand their Blackness and to experience discrimination at their institutions.

The messages that participants received from their home and school environments (particularly at home, with their parental figure or figures) about race and racism mold their understandings of their Blackness. Though participants mention receiving messages promoting distrust of others and egalitarianism, cultural socialization and preparation for bias prevail in all of their narratives. Both types of content affect how they feel about their Blackness, both as individuals and in community with their peers. Interviewees detail how these understandings developed alongside the socialization they experienced in and out of their homes and influence their processing of racial discrimination during childhood and adolescence. Before illuminating their experiences with specific messages (distrust, egalitarianism, cultural socialization, preparation for bias), I will begin by addressing how specific encounters with discrimination prodded interviewees to think about their Blackness and what it meant to be a black child.

Discrimination and Black Childhood. Three students recall some of their early experiences with discrimination, noting that they felt uncomfortable during these encounters even if they could not name the interaction as discriminatory at the time. These childhood experiences primarily manifested in interviewees witnessing or overhearing an encounter that involved their parents (indirect socialization, Lesane-Brown 2006), and developing their own perceptions in the aftermath. Two biracial students, Simone and Lynn D., express that their

physical features subjected them to microaggressions early in their childhood. Though Simone, a senior at Bryn Mawr College, recalls that they "looked nothing like" their white mother, they felt uncomfortable when they were questioned in public by strangers. They provide examples of strangers asking their mother if "these kids" were "hers," and feeling uncomfortable around white family members who clearly questioned their racial ambiguity. Lynn D., a junior at Swarthmore, faced similar experiences. When she was a child, she did not remember her mother (who is white) seriously talking to her about Blackness and biraciality:

> I can't remember my mom ever really talking about us being black, other than sometimes she would laugh about times when she would go to my older sister's school, and they would be like, "Is that really your mom?" She would laugh about things like that. She'd be like, "Yeah, I have black children." She didn't really talk about oppression, or the kinds of systematic things that a lot of other black students or kids get talked to about.

Because her mother did not often explain these interactions, Lynn D. also picked up on discrimination primarily through strangers' commentary. A lot of the messaging she received was colorist and fetishized biraciality:

> I'd hear from a lot of people like, "Your daughters are so beautiful, because they're mixed," and mixed was this exotic word. Like we're light skinned and we're beautiful, things like that. My sister has green eyes. Me and my younger sister have brown eyes, but it was like, "She has such pretty eyes," blah, blah, blah, like, "light brown skin, light eyes, like that's the dream." Or, people always commenting on my hair, like my hair specifically because my hair [is] less kinky than my sisters'. They'd be like, "Your hair's so soft. Your hair's so long. It grows so well." Things like that. Like, "Oh, I could take

care of your hair." Things like that. While my sisters would get the messages like, "You

need to perm your hair. It's so..."

Because Lynn D. and Simone were both raised by single white mothers, they recall struggling to

define their racial identities without access to preparatory messages or explanations of

discrimination. Both students relied on memories of their feelings during those encounters to

distinguish between strangers' compliments and discriminatory sentiments. The discomfort that

Simone and Lynn D. mention suggests that part of coming into consciousness about racism and

discrimination for young people entails that they trust their feelings, particularly if they haven't

received explicit messages and definitions to describe their experiences.

Students recognize that their direct and indirect experiences of discrimination affected

what they learned about black childhood, in general. Sebastian, a junior at Swarthmore College,

discusses witnessing his mother struggle with discrimination in her workplace; she could only

"complain about how hard she'd been working and how she felt like she wasn't treated as well as

she could have been" to her family, because she was not provided with time to process at work.

Sebastian remembers her "talking to a coworker" with "smiles"; "she's very civil, she's very

kind." Ultimately, Sebastian became angry because his mother was not given equal pay and once

returned home in tears after being "cursed out" by a coworker. As a child, he understood that he

did not have the agency to change her experiences and recalls feeling very conflicted: his anger

would not "change" what his mother encountered. Moreover, just as students express wanting to

protect their parents from discrimination, they identify a need to be protected as well. Simone

began to understand that black childhood also involved vulnerability to (hyper)sexualization and

premature adultification:

I was sexualized very, very young by adults, and my whole family was very cognizant of

it... There's a way black children are aged at such a fast pace. My mom really tried, and

my whole family really tried to keep it to a minimum, but you can only do so much.

Simone acknowledges the role of race and racism in shaping their childhood. Similar to

Sebastian, they simultaneously construct meaning of this adultification by reflecting on their lack

of agency. In their reflections, participants understand black childhood as a powerless and

vulnerable time period in their lives; adverse experiences further subdue their agency. Mark, a

senior at Swarthmore, specifically expresses how having an awareness of discrimination but

lacking the power to avert it shapes black childhood:

Because the kids were aware--People were aware that they were being discriminated

against. You walk into a store and a person follows you around the store when you're

eight. You know that people are watching you. But you don't really know why and you

don't really know how to articulate it so I think in a lot of times and in a lot of my friend

groups it was more like, "We're together."

Childhood solidarity, for Mark, was his sole option for protection and processing. Participants'

decreased internal loci of control demonstrates that they learn early on in life that racism governs

their daily lives and encounters--both discriminatory and nondiscriminatory. The messages that

they receive about racism and whiteness thus become critical in shaping their sociopolitical

development. Interviewees reflect on the ways in which promotion of mistrust, egalitarianism,

cultural socialization and preparation for bias impacted their perceptions of their Blackness and

their analyses of racism.

Promotion of Mistrust. Four interviewees describe having received messages from their parents about distrusting others, and white people in particular. Importantly, these narratives do not solely reflect parental prejudice as much as they depict parents' fears for how their children might be targeted, for how their children might be treated differently than their white peers, and for the preservation of their black identity. Black children, then, connect their parents' promotion of mistrust to their own experiences of racial discrimination, understanding that they cannot participate in the same activities as white children due to their subjection to race-based risks. Narratives from Swarthmore students Mark and Izzy best exemplify how their parents' concerns inform their conceptualizations of racism. Mark, a senior, explores how his parents addressed the topics of racism and whether or not to trust white people differently:

> [Mom is] not as militant about it. It's more of emotion for her. She doesn't understand why people do the things they do, and she says it's very unjust. She would just say that "Yeah it is out there and it's very bad." But that's as far as she would go. My dad would say, "Yes it's out there. Never trust them. You can work with them, you can be friends with them, but never think that they're on your side. You are a target."

Continuing to reflect, Mark notes that he disagreed with his father's appraisal. Mark has "shown him that [he has] been able to have white friends and not become a white person inside." Believing that his father's messages resulted from his fear that his son was "going to be influenced" by his white friends and "do things because they were doing them," Mark establishes that his father was primarily concerned with both protecting his black identity and protecting his well-being. Mark remembers the speeches that his father would provide after he returned from a friend's house:

Every time I went to my friend's house, I would come home, and he'd be like... The meaning was, "Don't do what he's doing just because he's doing it. Don't follow him. Make him follow you." I just remember that every time I would go. And it was like, "What? He's a little kid. Little kids do not understand." And I understand that my dad was trying to warn me of the things that the kid was doing that the kid was not aware of. Because even if the kid isn't aware of racism, he might be aware that he might be able to talk to me differently because of the color of my skin, and I might just go along with it because that's the way the rest of the world acts. You know. And so, I think he was trying to defend me from that. But we didn't have that problem, so it was weird to experience that.

Though Mark did not experience the possibilities that his father feared, his father's warnings communicated that he is likely to encounter racism because "that's how the rest of the world acts." Mark's understanding that his father attempted to defend him from harm appears in other participant interviews. Izzy's mother also promoted mistrust, but emphasized her son's own accountability by teaching him that can't "fuck up" because of his race:

So, I had a white girlfriend in tenth grade. That was my first girlfriend. My mom was like, "You can't stay out late with this girl because if something goes down, it's your ass that they're taking." Like, "They're not taking her ass. They're taking yours. If the cops see you and they just don't like the sight of you together, you're the one that's getting shot. Not her. They're going to make sure she's okay. They're not going to make sure you're okay. They're going to attack you. If people don't like seeing you together, they're going to attack you."

By ensuring that Izzy understood the possibilities for harm, his mother both promoted mistrust and prepared him for the bias he could have experienced with interracial dating. Izzy therefore began to learn more about racism through his mother's explanation of how he could be treated differently and targeted due to his race and gender. Amina, a senior at Swarthmore College, received similar messages from her mother, but distinguished the negative messages she heard about white people from the positive actions she witnessed:

> [Mom] always said white people were bad. But she always counted on white people to get her to her jobs, to be able to help her and her jobs situation. But she always was like "white people are bad," "white people are terrible people." And I agree with her: [There are] white people who are terrible people but not all white people.

Her mother, an immigrant from Mali, "never ever told [her] why white people were so bad." Rather, she expressed that "they don't know our culture." If Amina befriended another white peer, she received the message that she would "lose [her] parents" and her "heritage." However, because Amina noticed white people helping her mother, she learned to avoid essentialism while understanding how they perpetuate racism. Her reflection shows that black children do not always internalize the messages they receive and instead nuance their own understandings based on other sources of evidence.

In racial socialization processes, promotion of mistrust prevails as the common source of *othering* language or messaging. My interviews suggest that in ethnic-racial socialization processes, black parents also transmit othering messages to define Blackness for their children, distinguishing African Americans from one another or African Americans from other black ethnic groups. The resultant anti-black sentiments that emerge from these characterizations informs the way students begin to think about their own identities in relation to those of their

black peers. Melissa, a sophomore, discusses how the women in her family transmitted negative

messages about black men, in particular, after exiting traumatic relationships:

> Sometimes they would--this didn't happen often--but sometimes they would refer to
>
> people who the news shows what it shows. They would refer to people doing bad things
>
> or causing a ruckus or whatever it is as, "That's always what N-words do," you know? So
>
> that didn't happen super often, but it still has happened. I would say that my family
>
> members didn't always talk about their Blackness in a negative way and I don't think they
>
> ever associated themselves with the negative stereotypes. So that's where that split
>
> happens, where it's like there are these stereotypes and there are these people who I
>
> would think are ghetto.

The impact of these messages influenced Melissa to unlearn this dichotomization of African

Americans in line with racist stereotypes. Amina's mother attempted to transmit similar

messages by distinguishing African Americans from Africans:

> And there's this thing where she is just like, "They are not good people." I don't even
>
> understand it because the way that you get treated in society is the same way that they
>
> gon' get treated in society. She's been socialized to think that way too. And I mean, we all
>
> have been, but she is like, "Black people are not good. I don't trust them. They're not
>
> smart, they're lazy."And my dad kind of says the same thing a little bit. I'm just like,
>
> "y'all..." I don't say anything because the more and more I get educated in college, the
>
> more and more I get silent at home. Because the more and more I learn about things, the
>
> more and more it goes against everything that they stand for.

Now, as a college student, Amina wants to have conversations with her parents about their anti-black prejudice but finds it difficult to engage in dialogue. She understands how the media's portrayal of black Americans has socialized her and her parents to adopt anti-black perspectives; while Amina has unlearned this messaging, she recognizes the power of these narratives through their remaining hold on her parents. Amina's narrative embodies the nuances of socialization processes, demonstrating that just as black children do not always internalize their parents' messages, they balance their wish for more dialogue with their various struggles attempting to socialize their parents.

Egalitarianism and Silence about Race. None of my participants recalled having never been spoken to about race and racism. However, they report being equally disadvantaged to black children whose parents never discussed race or racism because of their parents' minimal and infrequent discussions of the topic. Bobby, Lynn D., and Amina evidence that for black children whose parents do not frequently talk to them about race and racism, the content of the few messages they receive become more important and more salient. Lynn D., a junior, states that she received implicit messages about race from her mother and explicit messages from other members of her family, other white members of her family, her mothers' friends, hairdressers and strangers. Though her mother was "very supportive" of her Blackness, Lynn D. identifies only a few specific moments when she learned about racism from her mother:

> Well actually, she did sometimes say some things like, "Oh, you know that person got convicted because they're black," like she would say things like that. One time my older sister was with two of her white friends in a store, and they were all shoplifting, but my older sister was the one that they came to. I remember this time in middle school I went to a store with two or three of my white friends. When we were all standing together they

came up to me, the store manager came up to me, a white man. I was with the rest of my

friends, but he was talking to me and he was like, "You guys need to get out of this store.

I'm not here to babysit you." My mom said, "You know he just came up to you because

you're black, and because you have piercings and dyed hair. He doesn't trust you." That's

some of the things that I would get, but the conversation really wouldn't go beyond that

most of the time.

Lynn's emphasis on her mother's responses suggests that the content of her mother's messages

was very important to her--she remembers every word. Lynn divulges that the "conversation

really wouldn't go beyond" those responses, hence framing her socialization history as reactive

rather than proactive. Reactive socialization does not result in the same positive developmental

outcomes as proactive messaging (Bowman and Howard 1985) -- a finding which could affect

students' feelings of preparedness later on in life. Negative messages about race are similarly

detrimental. Amina did not receive messages about cultural pride; the only "thing that came up

about race" for her mother were her discriminatory encounters. She remembers hearing her

mother talk about how she felt counting her coins at the grocery store in front of white cashiers:

> She was like "they always be looking at me like I'm stupid like African woman." "white
>
> people are always looking at us like sideways. Always thinking that we dumb." So that
>
> was one of the things which I always heard when she was talking about race.

Research suggests that cultural pride negates anti-Blackness and heightens resistance to

stereotypes (Hughes et al. 2009). Receiving only negative messages about race and racism

diminished Amina's self-confidence and ability to vociferate her concerns.

Conversely, the combination of low race salience and egalitarian messaging in his

household empowered Bobby, a junior at Swarthmore, to challenge his parents' worldview:

> I think my parents definitely lived in the age of colorblindness because I saw that they
>
> brought us up not to really see it [race]. So, I mean, they would bring their white
>
> coworkers around our house, we went to white schools, my church was black...so it was
>
> always Sundays with black folk. Listening to gospel music, watched John Wayne movies
>
> growing up, that's just issues in itself. You talk about the treatment of Native Americans,
>
> but ... I mean, there was ... Nobody talks about race. I learned about it a lot because I read
>
> a lot about it, and so as I got older, I got more vocal, [and] we had more issues just
>
> because of the conversation.

Bobby's independent learning process conflicted with his parents' socialization: coming to his

own understanding of racism and introducing those concerns to his parents frame his

sociopolitical development. Amina and Bobby's narratives demonstrate additional outcomes of

silence and egalitarianism underexplored in the literature: these messaging types can result in

decreased or increased agency, depending on how the child perceives their relationship with their

parent and their own levels of race centrality developed outside of the parent-child socialization

dyad.

Cultural Socialization. Eight interviewees described experiencing cultural socialization

during their childhood. Two facets of cultural socialization impacted students' perceptions of

their Blackness: messages about their ethnicities (ethnic socialization) and about cultural pride

(Afrocentrism). Participants described how the process of defining their ethnicities affirmed or

complicated their racial identity development and feelings of community. Sebastian states that

while he "would definitely talk about Blackness and what did it mean to be black" with his parents, his isolating experiences as one of the only African American students at his high school fostered an internal conflict between belonging and un-belonging, where his Blackness was constantly questioned. This feeling of un-belonging ultimately infiltrated his experience at home: he grapples with recalling how his parents did not commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day nor Kwanzaa, but they displayed African art in the home and were "proud to acknowledge their roots." Sebastian deems this selectivity "ironic, because they don't know what their roots are exactly." He feels constrained by his socialization:

> And when I ask them about it it's like, "We don't know. How could we possibly know?" So I just stopped asking a long time ago. Because I don't know what my roots are exactly. So, for example when I got an invite from someone when I first came to Swarthmore to join SASA [Swarthmore African Students Association] ...I cannot join SASA because literally I can't claim I'm Nigerian. I can't claim I'm Ghanaian. I can't claim I'm Ugandan. I can't do that. It would just be uncomfortable for me to do so. All I've known throughout my entire life is I'm African American and that's it. But it's not like something in the household ... they always talked about the negative aspects about being black but not necessarily the positive ones. That's what I remember from it.

Because Sebastian's parents relayed negative messages about what it meant to be African American more often than they relayed positive ones, he describes how not being able to claim African (alternative) identity affected his self-concept; the cultural pride messages that he received related to African identities only, and thus deflated his sense of self worth. His conflicts surrounding un-belonging intensified alongside the microaggressions he faced during high school. Having access to messages about cultural pride (and feeling able to identify with those

messages) affects positive identity development. Although Melissa, a sophomore, also faced microaggressions during high school, she attended a predominantly black elementary school and lived in black neighborhoods. In high school, she had access to African American history courses--a requirement she says influenced her identification with the term "black" as opposed to African American as well as her interest in political issues affecting black people:

> I just say I'm black now because of lessons we learned about the Black Arts Movement in the 60s, which was really intriguing to me as someone who's really interested in writings and stuff. We did this whole thing about it and we talked about Nikki Giovanni and The Revolution Will Not Be Televised and things like that. It was really cool, and I learned that the Black Arts Movement used 'black' to be more inclusive, and *Black is Beautiful* and that stuff. So, I started using that term more after a class in tenth grade. So, I think after that, I became more interested in current black issues. Also, I think a lot was happening in the media or that the media was showing between junior year and now that got me to thinking more about it, specifically with police brutality.

Melissa constructed positive meanings about her ethnicity, primarily because she gathered affirming information about Blackness from multiple sources--Sebastian did not have access to these same structures. Melissa depicts the importance of learning about African American culture in her addition that after having taken that course, she "became more interested in current black issues." Access to positive portrayals thus appears to inform identity *and* sociopolitical development. However, it is simultaneously important for black children to feel welcomed and accepted by their similarly identified peers. Coming from a multiethnic background, Mark states that he "chose" how to identify himself. Because he speaks Spanish, and one of his schools was predominantly Mexican, he was "recognized and welcomed into that group as a Mexican."

Because of this experience, he constructs meaning about race and ethnicity as "more of what culture and what values you choose to subscribe to... not how you look." The combined impact of acceptance, information and agency leads to the establishment and maintenance of cultural pride in ethnic socialization processes. Dave, a senior at Swarthmore, discusses how his "baseline for life is so anti-white, on different levels." He attributes his Jamaican heritage to the Afrocentric values he developed during childhood, like "not fucking with prescription meds, [using] holistic medicine, [not eating] pork or beef..." He received this socialization through homeschooling: his mother ensured that "for every history lesson that I could have gotten from a white side, I got the black side of that history lesson." Dave recalls celebrating Kwanzaa and participating in traditional holiday plays with excitement; he recognizes that he "came up from the roots." His socialization was "not even just being black, it's just no being white":

> Nothing was white, none of the books were white. I was reading all, watching all--if it wasn't animated--there were not going to be no white people on the screen. Also, I didn't know what white people were either. I didn't know *how black I was.* That was why I didn't know what white people were. I was extremely sheltered, I didn't know what the world looked like. I didn't know that I was that black, I just thought I was like that. When I went out there I just didn't question things that much. I was confident, and I was able to do what I was supposed to do.

Dave's final comments demonstrate that when cultural socialization in educational settings is grounded in Afrocentrism, interviewees show race centrality, agency and strong identification with their Blackness. Reflecting on his socialization during school, Mark laments the lack of race centrality, noting that "for the most part, most of the black students I spent time with were not having the same types of conversations with their parents" because of "poverty and bad

education." He recognizes that "a lot of the black students that [he] was spending time with were like, 'Yeah there's racism' but they couldn't articulate it well." Mark's socialization "was implicit and what was implied was that we are together, and we are a group and we're the ingroup and the white kids are the outgroup." His schooling experiences differed from those of his younger brothers'. Though they all attended predominantly black schools until high school, Mark's younger brothers received an Afrocentric education at a private institution--an education that Mark perceives as critical to their identity development:

> The entire curriculum is based off of African history and it doesn't conform with anything. That's the reason it's private. It didn't conform with any of the teaching standards that the normal education system implements onto schools. Everything they learn is through the lens of African history, which is really so much more about black history than I do. How many great black people can you call up off the top of your head? Probably like 10. They can call a hundred. Two hundred. They know things. They're smart. And I really appreciate that because it allows you to see things in everyday life that were invented by black people. That were influenced by black people. And it gives you a sense of power, of belonging.

Mark's description of how centering Blackness in children's daily lives promotes power and belonging buttresses research on social justice youth development and Freire's theory of conscientizacao: for marginalized youth, understanding that life (and the inequalities they experience within it) is not immutable provides the first step to changing it (Ginwright and Cammarota 2002; Freire 2000). However, these narratives introduce the concern of access: Who gets to access social justice youth development? How do private Afrocentric educational opportunities, like those Mark's brothers accessed, reproduce inequality? Melissa's and Mark's

interviews facilitate the development of this question. Melissa describes her elementary school as

"predominantly black and a little Afrocentric." When prompted to discuss her socialization

during that time period, she highlights the difference between the school's intent and its

expression:

> So, it was weird how I grew up in this environment where I was meant to be proud of
>
> Blackness, but at the time, it was more like ancestry focused and not my Blackness.
>
> Because it's more like, "These are your ancestors," and we had this program called Bright
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> Lights, which was for students who were doing well academically and if you were a
>
> Bright Light, you were assigned an ancestor. So, mine was Mahalia Jackson. So, I would
>
> read up about her and my brother's--he's two years younger than me--His was Thurgood
>
> Marshall. So, it's like these are people who look like you who have done really incredible
>
> things and they share a history with you... But the Bright Lights thing was only for high
>
> achieving students, right? So, it wasn't necessarily out there for everyone.

Even within the same school, only high achieving students accessed the Bright Lights program

where they could learn more about their ancestors and enhance their cultural pride. Similarly, in

Mark's elementary school, he and his black peers "talked about guns and video games, not 'the

man.' "Most students aren't thinking about that kind of stuff," he expresses. These interviews

insinuate the potential danger of low race salience in homes and schools. When black parents do

not instill cultural pride or, like in Sebastian's socialization experience, focus their discussions

on the "negative" parts of being black, and when their schools do not provide curricula that

encourages them to explore their identities, black children become more vulnerable to low self-

esteem, academic achievement, antisocial behavior and internalizing anti-black sentiments. Each

of these outcomes diminish the possibility of developing a strong future orientation and positive sociopolitical development.

Preparation from Schools. In collaboration with parents, black children's schooling environments must also prepare them to think about and respond to racism. In her recount of her socialization history, Lynn D. states that she learned the most about racism from her friend, whose Nigerian background informed her understanding of how racism operates globally. When reflecting on what her elementary and middle schools taught her about racism, Lynn states that "it was all the standard" -- she learned about slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, Obama's election, "now everything's cool." Her schools transmitted post-racial messaging that conflicted with the lessons she learned from her friend:

> I learned more about race from her. I think just sort of different things about racism. She kind of taught me about Emmett Till, and lynching, and things like that. More than what I had learned from class, especially since in elementary school they didn't really talk about the actual violence. It was just like, "People were put on a boat, and sent to the United States to work without pay," things like that. "And it was bad. It was really bad, but we're not going to talk about it anymore."

Lynn's high school education also failed to accurately reflect the racist underpinnings of the United States. She states that "people would talk about racism, but only in the context of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement." Conversations did not extend "beyond that" until her junior and senior year of high school. When police violence flooded social media and television, "it was sort of hard [for teachers] not to address it." During George Zimmerman's highly publicized

trial, Lynn D. remembers feeling "really hurt by it," not realizing that "it's something that had happened in the past." Reflecting on Zimmerman's acquittal, Lynn says:

> That made no sense to me, because up to that point I was like, "If there's evidence, you get convicted," but then that's when I learned that when there's evidence you might not get convicted. I knew that from the Emmett till case, specifically. It was like the people didn't get convicted, and then two months later they said that they did it in a magazine and got paid for the interview. I knew that, but now seeing that contemporarily I was like, "There are black lawyers, but this is happening? Like segregation is 'over' but a person can be let free for something that they did." Then I was pissed off, and that sort of radicalized me a little bit more.

Lynn D.'s ultimate radicalization by her anger implies that her parents and educational environments did not adequately prepare her to understand Zimmerman's acquittal. The next section of this chapter will explore more deeply how black parents and schools did not succeed in preparing their children to conceptualize and experience racism in college and the implications of that unpreparedness for their racial identity development.

As demonstrated in the first half of this chapter, racial socialization history heavily affects the ways black college students construct meaning of the messages they currently receive about race and racism. I argue that the ways black students negotiate racism at their institutions is also influenced by the *perceived effectiveness* of their racial socialization history and their shared meaning making of institutional racism that have shaped their socio-political development in predominantly white spaces. Concerned primarily with the factors that inform students' sociopolitical development, I asked my participants to describe how their understandings of

racism changed over time alongside their experiences of racial discrimination. Did the messages that they received from their parents and schooling environments actually prepare them for their encounters with racism in college? If not, how did they simultaneously understand new messages about Blackness and grapple with their discriminatory experiences? In order to determine the effectiveness of their parents' racial socialization practices, the second half of this chapter illuminates black students' perceptions of whether or not they were adequately prepared to experience, define, and respond to the racism they experienced on their predominantly white campuses.

Preparation for Bias

When asked about their racial and ethnic socialization history, nine out of ten interviewees mentioned receiving messages from their parents about bias. Concurring with prevalent literature, this finding demonstrates that most black students grow up with not only an understanding of their vulnerability to experiencing discrimination, but also an expectation that those encounters will occur. The only interviewee who did not indicate having received preparatory messages was Dave, a senior at Swarthmore who was raised in a predominantly black area of Atlanta. For Dave, this upbringing enabled him to center Blackness and black people in his everyday life, such that he analyzed his worldview through the lens of colorblindness. He notes that "there was no room for racial trauma, racial anything." His parents did not socialize him around bias and preparing to experience it, but rather around having and maintaining cultural pride. Dave recalls that "the only racial thing" present in his childhood was "being proud. Being racially proud of being black, it was literally only that." While seven other participants also received messages about cultural pride and were ethnically socialized, Dave's

narrative is unique in that those messages did not occur tangentially to preparatory warnings or in tandem with whiteness.

Though the majority of participants received preparatory warnings and messages about cultural pride, only three revealed that they felt adequately prepared by their parents to experience racism in college. This section explores interviewees' perceptions of the factors that influenced their unpreparedness (e.g. timing and content of socialization, parents' social literacy, and educational preparation), and seeks to define what adequate preparation looked like for them. As evidenced in the first section of this chapter, the messages that black parents relay to their children about race and racism (and how often they relay them) matter for positive identity development. Preparation for bias, the specific type of socialization in question, occurs differently for each parent-child dyad, depending on the parent's definition(s) of racism and the meaning they attribute to those definitions. My thesis suggests that in their aim to prepare their children for discriminatory encounters, the parent extrapolates from their own lived and vicarious experiences, as well as what they know about racism (social literacy; to be discussed in the following section). I argue that parents' lived experiences and perceptions of racism sometimes differ from those of their children and fosters an impasse in understanding between the two parties. Thus, the preparation for bias that the child experiences may not always serve its intended function.

Timing and Content of Preparation for Bias. Black parents, both unintentionally and intentionally, make decisions about how to prepare their children for racism, what to say when they converse with their children about this topic, and when to appropriately relay these messages. Interviewees stated that some of the factors critical to their perceived preparedness was the timing and content of those messages received from their parents.

At times, students felt unprepared because their parents waited until college to disclose some of their own experiences with discrimination; interviewees surmise that earlier timing would have helped them cope and problem-solve in the aftermath of a discriminatory experience and would have assured them that their parents were able to empathize. Simone, a senior at Bryn Mawr College, suggests that this delay in time prevented them from understanding how to advocate for themself when they began to experience race-based trauma and stress:

> My family's waiting until now to tell me their experiences. They're telling me because I'm experiencing them, and they feel compelled to empathize and share, 'You're not alone.' I wish I had an understanding that it [racial trauma] could happen to prepare, because I went in [*blind*]. When I'm saying blind, [I mean] I didn't have the words to reach out. Not having the words to talk to somebody and seeking help. Specifically, like, "I need a therapist who's going to understand these things," the way that my mom's like, "We need to go see a dermatologist that specializes in people of color because I don't want anybody to bleach your skin and you have a different composition than somebody who looks like me."

In stating that they "didn't have the words to reach out," Simone implies that having an earlier understanding of the emotional repercussions of discrimination could have facilitated their understanding of their need for a therapist of color. For Simone, earlier preparation may have prepared them to connect their need for a dermatologist of color to their need for a therapist of color; though their mother indicated that considering the racial background or specialization of their dermatologist could prevent skin damage from occurring, she did not discuss racial or ethnic matching in relation to support for processing racism. Mark, a senior at Swarthmore College, similarly describes how his parents' preparatory warnings were useful within black

communities but were no longer applicable once he attended a predominantly white high school. When asked whether his father spoke to him about racism at that time, he recalls moments during high school when he felt unprepared by his father's earlier messages. Specifically, Mark was most hurt by memories of his white friends saying that they didn't "think of [him] as black" because he did not exemplify black stereotypes. These microaggressions caught Mark by surprise. He claims that "it's different when people do things unintentionally that are that aggressive and violent." The ways his friends "put [him] in a box" of expectations "invalidates a lot of the relationship" they had previously built. Mark had difficulty grappling with these conversations, as he was "prepared for the cops to search [him] and pat [him] down," but he "wasn't prepared for [his] friends to hurt [him] like that." In this way, Mark depicts the importance of being prepared for the different ways racism manifests, across racial communities.

Bobby, a junior at Swarthmore, also provides insight into how the timing of the preparatory messages he received impacted him. Differing from Mark and Simone's reactions, Bobby experienced his preparation after he had already come into consciousness about racism:

I felt like they were a little more passive, they didn't really talk about it. Actually, this past summer me and my pops got into a really heated discussion about them preparing us for life, and we just have different views of how we would prepare, or how they prepared their kid versus how I would. I mean, we never really had any explicit conversations, and by the time that they were ready to have those conversations ... In ninth grade when I started catching the bus to school and stuff like that, I had already known. I had already been reading about issues since fourth grade, documentaries, so I already knew the status in which I lived, especially living in Portland.

Because his parents did not make space for those conversations to happen until later in Bobby's life, he "had already known" about racism and was able to identify how it operated in his everyday life. Compared to Mark and Simone, Bobby explores how he emotionally equipped himself to understand racism in his predominantly white community--an independent preparation that has shaped and informed his emotional reactions to racism today. This independence, in tandem with his early encounters with violence, "saved [his] life" and "grew [him] up quick." With respect to his understanding of racism and the emotions connected to it, he reveals:

> My consciousness is so much higher than people. I've been reading about this stuff for a while, so when Trayvon Martin was shot, or Mike Brown was shot and the way that the trials happened, it wasn't new to me. I already read about sharecroppers, lynchings ... This is not a new system, and so I'm less emotional when it comes to that.

> Mark, on the other hand, reflects on the emotional consequences of this unpreparedness, adding:

> And even at that age I didn't know that it [microaggressions] was inappropriate but I knew I didn't like it. So, it was more like a discomfort that is hard to express. I don't know if I really talked to people about it often. I would talk to my siblings every once in a while and we would just talk shit. I wasn't very well equipped to just go and be an activist for myself.

Mark's final comment introduces the challenge of forced self-advocacy, to which several other interviewees relate. Unpreparedness manifests not only in timing but also in content. More than half of the interviewees explain how the messages their parents relayed about racism, in particular, were not sufficient to prepare them for their college experiences. Simultaneously, they

understand that their parents did the best they could within their circumstances. Izzy, a

sophomore, discloses that while he "did a lot of the preparation [himself]," he believes that his

parents "always tried to instill a sense of self in [him]." However, Izzy nuances this conclusion,

explaining the importance of his ability to self-advocate:

> Part of the problem with it and why it [socialization] didn't do the whole job for me is
>
> because their sense of myself was never going to be as strong as my own sense of myself
>
> that I have to develop for myself.

Similar to Bobby, Izzy's forced self-advocacy resulted in his development of a strong sense of

self. Bobby also attempts to explain the reasons behind his parent's silence, understanding the

mediating role of their different life experiences in his preparatory experience. Retelling how his

parents showed him the *Roots* documentary in his adolescence (but he had already read the story

in the fourth grade), Bobby surmises:

> So, they didn't really prepare me and it's probably because we had different experiences
>
> growing up. I mean, they lived in the south in the 60s, 70s, 80s, they moved to Portland
>
> in the 90s in the age of colorblindness so in their eyes it had gotten better, but then me
>
> being the person who read and can put his vocal context, it's like, then it got worse. Way
>
> worse. You guys were just the ones that made it out, which is lucky for you guys, but
>
> then also looking at where my dad grew up... They experienced the same thing that a lot
>
> of my homies are experiencing. He just made it on the other side of the tracks when he
>
> got to Portland.

In his discussion of how his perception of racism differs from that of his parents, Bobby also

estimates why they didn't begin to prepare him for bias until adolescence and names their beliefs

(in egalitarianism and colorblindness) as additional factors influencing his unpreparedness: Bobby recognizes that his parents' lives and backgrounds inform the way they think about and view racism. Now, when he tries to converse with them, he receives the message that him and his siblings did not have to experience the same struggles with segregation that his parents did. For this reason, Bobby states, his parents believe that their family "made it." They "had done what they were supposed to do in the aspect of black parents: You do more than what your parents could do more for you, and you just keep pushing and that's gonna fix it through the generations." Bobby underscores these divergent beliefs in his explanation of how his parents' socialization differs from his own:

> I like to learn about new things. I can learn about different religions, I like to question my religion through the learning of others, but that's not what black people do. They kinda just take what was taught, don't ask questions and keep their head down, and that's the old Negro sense of "Be a good Negro." "Don't cause trouble." And I respect them because that's the society they grew up in.

Although Bobby's perception of racism clashes with his parents' analysis, he understands that their *social literacy* impacted the content of the messages he received and continues to respect them though he disagrees.

Ethnic Socialization and Parents' Social Literacy. Of my interviewees, four self-identified as first- or second-generation Americans (immigrants and children of immigrants from African or Caribbean countries). In agreement with previous research, this sub-group primarily received messages from their parents about the importance of their ethnic identities and countries of origin (Rong and Fitchett 2009). Due to their characterizations of "model blacks" or "triple

disadvantage" (Rong and Brown 2002), black immigrant parents transmit messages about how black children should act, what they should believe, and how they must respond to people of other ethnic backgrounds (Hall 2012). While the students I interviewed noted the role of ethnic socialization in increasing their cultural pride, they simultaneously acknowledged its limits in preparing them to experience racism in the United States: their parents did not often discuss or explain racism to their children, partly due to the levels of access they had to this information, and partly due to their own perceptions of race in the U.S. as compared to their home countries. Recognizing the importance of communicating about racism and Blackness is a concept my interviewees call "social literacy."

Amina, a senior at Swarthmore College, attributes unpreparedness to her parents' lack of social literacy. Her parents "were in a box" and did not discuss with her the reasons for the media's portrayal of black people's untimely deaths, in particular. Amina's parents were primarily concerned with money, an issue that "made them kind of oblivious to the things that are happening around society." Having to support family members in Mali distracted her parents from news in America and, as a result, they did not "mention it" to her. Similarly, Izzy describes how "tough" it was to learn about racism because of his mother's lack of social literacy:

> My mother on the other hand, I don't believe she's as socially literate. She's not going to be there talking to you for an hour about how rampant anti-Blackness is in any particular community, you know? But she does recognize. She will be like, "They did that because that's person's black." Again, like I said, she won't really talk about it a lot. It's not something that she'll focus a lot of energy on or a lot of time in. I think she recognizes that it's very tiring.

While in college, Izzy learned more about racism and nuances this conclusion by demonstrating

that even having one parent who he defines as "socially literate" did not necessarily translate into

effective messaging:

> Like my pops is pretty, pretty, pretty literate in certain ways, but just he has a whole
>
> bunch of ideas that cloud the usefulness of that kind of social literacy. So, he himself will
>
> express a lot of racist ideas and prejudiced ideas on his own where it's like well, you
>
> know a lot of shit, but you also have a lot of ideas that I can't put a whole lot of stake in.

This quote demonstrates that over time, as Izzy developed independent ideas about race and

racism, his father's messages became less compelling; what he had learned about racism from

his father contrasted and conflicted with his current conceptions of racism, creating an

intellectual chasm between himself and his parent. The "social literacy" that Izzy's father

exemplified did not resemble that of which he discovered while at Swarthmore. Importantly, this

moment of disagreement complicates Izzy's analysis of his unpreparedness; he felt unprepared to

experience and conceptualize racism due to his competing ideas--and seemingly competing

worldview--with his father. For Amina and Izzy, and later Simone and Mark, their examination

of whether or not they were prepared for bias was heavily informed by their parents' immigrant

backgrounds. These students always understood that their parents' worldviews would one day

deviate from their own; first and second-generation Americans simultaneously imagine race and

racism through the lens of their parents' stories (and sometimes, their own observations) of their

homelands, and their own encounters in the United States (Hall 2012). Thus, although Izzy

describes his unpreparedness, he acknowledges the reasons for his parents' commentaries:

Where we from, everybody black. Like everybody's black. What are you being anti-black for if everybody's black? How are you going to be anti-black? So, it's very different coming here and people start treating you like garbage. That's another thing they always said was, "Back in Nigeria, we get treated way better." Yeah, and, "We come from places where people respect us."

Understanding the differences in treatment did, however, prepare Izzy to feel strongly connected to his Blackness and to his culture. He remembers a positive ethnic socialization history, relating that his father would always tell him to "remember [his] last name...and what [it] means." Izzy continues to call forth this history in his father's voice: "'Remember that in Nigeria, when you talk, people will listen. When you walk, people will watch you. Everyone wants to be you.'" Simone also speaks to the importance of receiving these messages from their father, who migrated from Barbados. As stated earlier in Chapter 3, Simone was raised in predominantly black and Caribbean communities where they felt immense pride in their racial background. However, upon further reflection, they note that these messages simultaneously unprepared them by reinforcing a "statehood and state dominance" that "is inherently violent to anybody who exhibits it." Like Izzy, Simone comes to recognize the problematics in some of their father's worldviews:

There's just a sense of being untouchable that my family had exhibited, my dad's side…. My dad would say like, "You know you're Bajan, you can do anything." Which now they're saying, "You're black, you can do anything." That was never the word that was put in, it was like, "No you're, again, Bajan first, black second."

Simone's father's messages, promoting a hierarchy between their ethnic and racial identities, instilled in Simone a sense of ethnic pride, but simultaneously unprepared them for understanding what race is and how racism operates. Early in their interview, Simone states that they also received a similar message from their mom, who is white. Although their mother "never tried to tell [Simone and their brother] that [they] were white," they "didn't necessarily get the message that [they were] black." As Simone grew older and began to identify with Blackness, these childhood messages failed to attune them to "how pervasive [racism] is." They speak to the difficulty they experienced in beginning to identify with their Blackness below:

> Even now that I'm thinking about it, having to seek affirmation for somebody and constantly have a mirror to know that I'm real, and existing, and I have to have my image affirmed is wild, and that's what race is. It's a checks and balance system based on the visual, which is my thesis and research, but it's just really scary to know how young it starts.

Simone's narratives, along with those of Izzy and Amina, demonstrate the promises and difficulties associated with learning about racism as a first- or second-generation American. All three participants did not feel adequately prepared by their parents, whose lack of social literacy shielded them from understanding the realities of racism until their college years.

Educational Preparation. While most racial socialization literature explores the relationship between the parent and the child, socialization in other spheres is equally important to consider (Dotterer, McHale and Crouter 2009). Children receive input from their schools, mosques, neighborhoods, extended families, extra- and co-curricular activities, and many other sources of influence. Because children are most temporally engaged in schools, for the purpose

of this thesis, I will only also consider the role of formal education in preparing participants to experience bias and learn about racism.

Though their schools served as sites for racial discrimination and microaggressions, most interviewees describe feeling unprepared by their formal education for the experiences they faced prior to and during college. Melissa, a sophomore at Swarthmore College, attended a predominantly white magnet school throughout middle and high school. There, she experienced microaggressions from her peers, but was not equipped to label them as such. However, once she began to take history courses, she independently made "connections between the things that are happening now and the things that happened in the 60s [and] in the 1800s." Though this educational development informed her of the systemic nature of racism, Melissa calls into question the effectiveness of this preparation because she could not and still cannot "be in and have those [microaggressive] encounters with people" where she explains "why what they're saying is wrong."

Similarly, though Amina has experienced microaggressions, she states that she learned the most about racism in college courses. She notes that aside from "interactions with people", her "readings and video watching" stimulated her sociological thought:

> ..Foucault and Bourdieu and all these different people and you kind of see it being complemented with things as happening in the media. Things that are happening around the world... how people aren't getting the adequate care and need that they need.

The combination of her coursework and encounters with discrimination informed her consciousness. She poignantly recalls the moment when this turning point crystallized, saying that "In this day and age you're just always confronted with some sort of traumatic incident that

happened to some black person or are happening to people of color around the world and you kind of realize like, 'wow these bodies don't mean much to [the] society that they partake in.'"

Attending Swarthmore provided Amina with the opportunity to learn about "how bodies are being taken from this world...Broken down because they don't adhere to the society and the societal norms." Like Melissa, Amina formed the connective tissue between black history and her own experiences. Lynn D., a junior at Swarthmore College, relates a similar experience in coursework; she "was forced to learn about the history mostly through the acts of violence, because that's the history that's lifted up in black history... The explicit violence is what jumps out at people." Interestingly, each student's educational preparation focused on the webbed relationship between violence and inequality; only at this juncture in their coursework were they beginning to connect their life stories with historical evidence. The implications of this preparation enabled Amina and Melissa to better comprehend racial inequality, but had an additional effect on Lynn:

> It prepared me in a way that I knew that my history was important, and I knew that my black identity was something that I can claim, but I think the main thing was that it, like all those experiences taught me that there's a whole community that has felt similar things.

Lynn D.'s exposure to coursework that delved into violence against black bodies affirmed her identity, taught her "history that [she] wouldn't have known otherwise" and empowered her to build community. When she arrived at Swarthmore, she "knew going in that [she] could walk into the BCC [Black Cultural Center] and meet someone who's experienced racism, and we experience racism in a lot of similar ways." While this preparation establishes community and

equips black students to think about and discuss racism, their educational experiences did not prepare them to address racism in confrontations. Melissa states that while she was "prepared to do the mental work and to have the conversations with people who don't make me feel unsafe," she "freezes up" in "positions where [she] feels unsafe." Students remain unprepared to navigate harmful experiences with racism both in and outside of school. How their parents equip them with tools to manage these encounters remains unclear; Chapter 5 will explore their emotional responses to racism and implications for their institutions to provide substantial support.

What these three students' narratives suggest is that school (and particularly, schooling at Swarthmore) offered them new access to information about their racial histories, information that they did not receive at home and, like Lynn D. said, wouldn't have had access to otherwise. However, each student discussed feeling connected to racism most when they were informed of the violence faced by their communities, linking historical trauma to their sociopolitical development. This begs the questions: As black students learn more about racism, how do they react? How does their preparedness for bias impact how they respond emotionally to the violence they experience, both directly and vicariously? In the next chapter, I will expand upon what the commonality of this experience means for participants' current perceptions of their racial identities, and the different ways they respond to the information they have received about racism.

Chapter 4:

"I didn't start getting racially conscious until…"

Although Chapter 3 identifies the importance of preparedness for students' emotional well-being and college success, preparedness is not the only socializing factor influencing these outcomes. This chapter provides insight into participants' current understandings of Blackness in a highly racialized context. Drawing from their experiences both in and out of the classroom, I explore what students know about race and racism in the present day. To understand how attending these predominantly white, liberal arts institutions affects students' sociopolitical development--especially after having been relatively unprepared by their parents and schools--, I focus on narratives that identify how this information was learned either in or because of their collegiate environments. It is important to note that sociopolitical development does not occur in a vacuum; socialization is constantly informing and changing people's perceptions of what they know. Instead of erasing the messages they had previously received from their parents and schools, interviewees come into consciousness about race and racism in an environment that creates opportunities for the contestation or affirmation of these messages, and simultaneously allows them to develop their own understandings. Findings demonstrate that these opportunities for growth have not solely manifested as a result of experiences with racial discrimination, and these experiences are not always violent; students also learn about Blackness and racism through their experiences of solidarity.

Each of the themes to be further examined respond to the question of what students know now about being black in America. The first theme probes three students' connections between solidarity and struggle: for Sebastian, Melissa, and Lynn D., being black involves a constant

dialectic between building a strong, unified community in response to and because of shared oppression. This finding is particularly important for Melissa and Lynn D., who described being prepared by their previous schooling environments to understand racism through violence perpetrated against black people, and unprepared to address it. The second theme delves into how my interviewees came into consciousness about racism while in college, and specifically identifies the new information they have received about oppression and Blackness. Corresponding with these narratives, the final theme analyzes what students know about the nature of oppression and how they grapple with this knowledge in tandem with the messages they had received earlier on in life.

Solidarity and struggle. Swarthmore students Sebastian (2019), Melissa (2020), and Lynn D. (2019) assess how their working definitions of racism affect their understandings of Blackness. All three participants link Blackness to struggle, and struggle to racial solidarity. They conceptualize oppression as a systemic reality that subjects black people to violence; in this commonality, they find solidarity and resilience. Lynn D. highlights this theme of solidarity by explaining how racism has informed her understanding of what it means to be black:

> I think in general it's made me feel a lot more comfortable in my Blackness. I don't necessarily know how to describe that except it's ... Okay, this metaphor kind of makes sense to me, but it's like when you're looking at the clouds with someone and you're like, "Oh, do you see that that looks like a bunny." They're like, "No, I see a light bulb." But it's like being with a person and you're like, "Do you see that bunny?" And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, I see the bunny." It's kind of like that. We see racism, we experience it, but we're like, "Did you catch that?" And we're like, "Yeah, yeah!" Like this is something we both felt, and it's nothing that we can control."

Her comments suggest that experiencing racism has both provided opportunities for black peers to affirm one another in the validity of their hurt and to support each other in the aftermath of recognizing that racism is "nothing that we can control." Moreover, Lynn D. now frames her relationship to her Blackness as one of comfortability. As was described earlier in Chapter 2, Lynn previously experienced difficulty identifying with her Blackness at the same time as she began to determine what it meant for her to be biracial. Until she began to learn about black history in school, Lynn struggled to feel connected to her Blackness. Realizing that the microaggressions she faced--from comments about her hair, to being asked to check off the 'white' categorical box at a blood drive in college--were not unique to her facilitated her comfortability. Later, she explains how learning about racism enabled her to form the connection between a shared struggle and solidarity:

> Yeah, so it's made me feel more comfortable because I know that other people experience it [racism], and it's something that I'm proud of. Like, I'm proud for me and my community being able to *triumph* over these struggles. I'm using the sarcastic language because it's like this whole thing, but yeah, it's like a unifying thing, and it's also a burden, but it's a burden because it's made a burden, but I'm proud. I'm proud to be black now more than I was before, and I think learning about racism had a lot to do with that.

For Lynn, solidarity not only emerges from having similar encounters with racism, but also from understanding how racism is systemic. She evidences this nuanced conclusion in her comment about knowing that racism is a burden "because it's made a burden", as well as her earlier statement that her and her peers acknowledge their lack of control over these experiences. More importantly, this lack of control does not equate to powerlessness. Speaking to the role of resilience in developing a positive orientation to Blackness, Lynn D. states that she finds pride

and comfort in the ability of her community to "triumph" in response to racism. It is both the

reality of the struggle and the ability to overcome it that drives this comfortability. Sebastian

comes to a similar conclusion in response to the question of what he's learned about being black:

> I feel like being black is an everyday struggle in a sort of way. Not like it's ... sometimes
>
> struggle is a bad word. It invokes images of pain and suffering. But I feel like there's a
>
> meaning in the struggle…. What makes me black is I come from a race of people (...)
>
> who have literally gone through so much and yet still they rise. I came ... my great
>
> grandparents were slaves. My grandparents had to deal with so much even before the
>
> civil rights movement.

Both students reflect on black peoples' resilience as a primary factor influencing their connection

to their racial and ethnic identities. While Lynn describes this knowledge as having helped her

become more comfortable identifying with Blackness, Sebastian states that what makes him

black in the first place is this intergenerational transmission of resilience. Blackness is defined as

resilience (resistance), or through the commonality of resilience, for both students. Sebastian's

particular upbringing informs his meaning construction. Until he arrived at Swarthmore, he had

not had many black peers. Though he understood racism through the narratives of his parents and

grandparents, he did not experience solidarity until he befriended black students in college. His

knowledge of race and racism thus developed through his encounters in college:

> Lastly, what my friends go through on this campus. Especially black women, LGBTQ
>
> black people, non-binary black people, what I see them go through. Especially black men
>
> too on this campus. Because they go through some issues. Talking about their mental
>
> health is looked down upon. When I see the black people at this campus--what they go

through--it makes me think, "Wow. I'm a part of a race that goes and struggles on a daily

basis, but it gets turned into solidarity from being with other black people."

Attending Swarthmore, and interacting with other black students, clarified Sebastian's analysis

of resilience; he perceives this intergenerational strength manifested amongst his peers and is

able to define Blackness as the ability to transform struggles into solidarity.

However, solidarity looks different for each of the students I interviewed. Two additional

factors nuance their feelings of connectedness and their definitions of Blackness: participating in

the black community and their divergent perceptions of "struggle." Firstly, although being

exposed to other young black people in college seems to have impacted participants' meaning-

making around Blackness, developing strong friendships with their peers further enhances their

feelings of racial connectedness. Melissa discusses the difference between feeling proud of her

Blackness in predominantly white schools, particularly after learning about her history, and

feeling connected to her community:

> So, I think that I'm still learning to feel--as much as I know about it and I'm proud of my
>
> Blackness--I'm still learning to actually feel a part of it. Just because the people I hang
>
> out with are, like I said before, non-black people of color. So sometimes when I do go to
>
> SASS [Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society] meetings or events where it's mostly
>
> black, I do sometimes feel awkward. I mean, I'm awkward in general, but I feel doubly
>
> awkward because I'm like I don't see these people as much as I want to. So, I don't always
>
> feel like part of the community. But one thing is that now that I'm on the board position
>
> of SASS, it's actually helped me a lot to feel more a part of the black community here at
>
> Swarthmore.

Melissa's narrative highlights an important distinction between pride and belonging:

understanding one's history does not always result in feelings of belonging and solidarity.

Another alternative story is that of Mark's: in our discussion about how he navigates

holding certain privileges and identifying with Blackness, he provides insight into how

connecting Blackness with struggle (e.g. racial trauma and other violence) can be problematic:

> A while back I slowly begun to realize that having experienced those terrible things
>
> makes you more emotionally mature younger but it's not a leg up. You know? It's not an
>
> advantage (chuckles). You're definitely suffering. You know that you know how to deal
>
> with that now in the future. Yes. But you're also going to deal with depression and, like,
>
> survivor's guilt. You know? All these other very big issues like anxiety that other people
>
> don't even have to consider. So, you learn things the hard way, so you know them now.
>
> But that doesn't mean that I would prefer to learn the hard way all the time. And the fact
>
> that I'm privileged and have been able to avoid a lot of those really hard lessons makes
>
> me very thankful and very happy because like I don't understand... I'm struggling to just
>
> be me. You know? I couldn't deal with more baggage.

While Lynn D. and Sebastian describe feeling empowered by the ability of black people

(ancestors and peers) to triumph through racism and other traumatic experiences, Mark adds that

it is important to acknowledge the amount of suffering inherent in these experiences. He feels

"thankful and happy" to have been afforded the privilege of attending Swarthmore; although he

notes grappling with depression, anxiety and survivor's guilt, he does not feel empowered by the

"baggage" of having to cope with additional traumatic encounters. When Mark says, "I'm

struggling to just be me," he recognizes the nature of oppression in how it forces black people to

navigate compounded difficulties across the life course. To Mark, struggle, and black people's ability to thrive in spite of it, is not a "leg up." His statement creates room for various understandings of oppression.

The relationship between Blackness and oppression. Interviewees' narratives demonstrate how their experiences during college affected their knowledge of racism and Blackness. In particular, students noted that these experiences clarified the relationship between Blackness and oppression; during their interviews, half of the interviewees spoke in detail about how attending college, and their experiences in college, have informed them about the ways their bodies are treated, policed, and surveilled. Moving from students' narratives of oppression to their calls for resistance, this section will explore their various meaning construction processes. Though having received different messages about race and racism during childhood and having come to college from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, Dave, Bobby, Simone, Teresa and Izzy all explain racism through a systemic lens and connect these definitions to their own social locations. Bobby states that though he did not learn much more than he already knew, he "realized that racism is only a small aspect in the dynamics of power and domination in this world that we live in." In his interview, Bobby relates that he began to understand racism in elementary school, and his knowledge developed as he witnessed the gentrification of his hometown. Using gentrification as an example, Bobby describes how oppression works in segregated areas:

> We're all pushed [out] because of gentrification, which is systemic, into some type of area in poverty. I can't even put the blame on them because it is animal nature or human nature. The survival of the fittest. Who survives, who doesn't. The strong survive... And we're all pushed into these areas of poverty ruled on a capitalist society.

Bobby's life course exposure to gentrification has produced an understanding of oppression

rooted in capitalist desires: his quote outlines his definition of the reasons for and outcomes of

gentrification. He continues to use his working understanding of oppression to explore the

relationship between capitalism and his status as a student at Swarthmore:

> Any opportunity you get will be off of the oppression...of others. And we have this
>
> institution. I'm here. Someone else can't be because it's at their expense. So, it just
>
> perpetuates violence. It creates violence. If we get violence done to us, we don't know
>
> how to release that energy, so we release it on whoever's around us. And it's *us* because
>
> we're all in one area.

Bobby notes that being at Swarthmore has privileged him and simultaneously made him

complicit in furthering the violence perpetrated by capitalism. This sentiment is shared amongst

his peers: Teresa indicates that she struggles with exploring racism on her campus because "the

more that [she] understands that [her] school is a place that promotes racism, the more that [she]

understands that [she] promotes racism, that [she's] complicit in it."

At Swarthmore and in his hometown, Bobby explains that marginalized people have no

choice but to release violent "energy," "on whoever's around us." His final sentence indicates

that he has learned to communicate the expansive nature of oppression--gentrification and

geographic isolation, across environments, have forced marginalized people to perpetrate

violence onto one another. Izzy explores this same conclusion by expanding upon how his

socialization in college enabled him to understand domestic violence in black heterosexual

relationships differently than he did before arriving at Swarthmore. Reflecting on his

adolescence, Izzy states that domestic violence, particularly in dynamics where darker skinner

black women were the victims, was normalized in his hometown. It wasn't until he arrived in

college and began to learn more about oppression that he began to question the stereotypes and

tropes he had internalized during his youth. He expresses that one familiar societal message

demonizes black men without providing them opportunities for restoration:

> Another trope was: not only is it normal in society for black men to exhibit this toxic
>
> behavior, but for some reason, it is so expected of black men to. I feel like part of that is
>
> very harmful because it's like, if you can't expect black men to do better, then what does
>
> that say?

During his freshman year of college, a close friend of Izzy's was abused by her partner; this

encounter became public knowledge within the black student community. He explains that this

experience heavily impacted his understanding of how society doesn't "worry about black

women" and simultaneously invalidates the harm done to them:

> Sometimes it feels like people would feel more bad for the person who was harmed if
>
> they're white or light-skinned. Some people would feel like it was more automatically
>
> wrong or more shocking maybe is the thing or something like that. Like maybe it's just
>
> not as shocking that it happened to a dark skinned-femme or a dark-skinned woman. So
>
> that's like, why? So, taking the time in college to step back and analyze, why when I
>
> imagine these different scenarios do I imagine it this way? It's because this is how I've
>
> seen it happen. This is how I've seen it play out in the past.

Taking courses in Black Studies and working in the Black Cultural Center empowered Izzy to

see how stereotypes and tropes "definitely play into the way [he] thinks about every situation

that occurs." Thus, the opportunities he has accessed in college have also allowed him to reflect

on the effect of never having seen a "healthy relationship between a black man and woman"

depicted in the media and during his childhood. Without invalidating his friend's harm, Izzy

explains how the reality of systemic oppression has also created narratives that harm black men:

> So, if the idea is like, "Oh, yeah," but people can imagine a perfectly healthy, non-
>
> harmful, non-threatening, non-intimidating white man, but a black man, no, no, no...
>
> They're most likely probably really intimidating, most likely probably abusive and hurtful
>
> and whatnot. You know what I'm saying? So that's really dangerous because I feel like
>
> that plays into part of the ideas around black masculinity. You gotta be tough. You gotta
>
> be real mad gangsta. You got to be thuggin hard and you have to be hurtful and abusive
>
> at a lot of times and that's part of who you are because that's all people tell you you can
>
> do.

Becoming literate about racism in college created opportunities for Izzy to perceive the nuances

in the violent situations he has witnessed. Like Bobby, having the language to describe the

structural mechanisms by which violence occurs in black communities became important

because it inspired him to begin asking more questions of his friends, of his college, and of his

community. Bobby was motivated to begin studying sociology because of these same questions.

He desired to explore the relationship between black men and women, using these dynamics to

better understand how racism operates:

> Fanon said the oppressed takes the worst characteristics of the oppressor. So, for me
>
> when it came to racism, racism used to control my life but now it's a frame in which I can
>
> view my life. I'm this black man versus the white man, I'm a black man versus the black
>
> woman. How do I perpetuate her oppression if I do take the worst characteristics? In all

my experiences and relations with black women, what do I do that continues their oppression? I can't be over here screaming, "Free me, free me, free me," while I'm oppressing others, and then I expect the same for black women to think that. They can't be out here [screaming] to white women, "Free me, free me, free me," and then be over here dehumanizing black men.

These interviews suggest that the experience of coming into consciousness about racism through learning about or witnessing violence (both perpetrated by and against black people) can facilitate black students' understandings of inequality. While at Swarthmore, Dave took a year off to study back in Atlanta at Morehouse College. Though he had begun learning about racism through discriminatory experiences in high school, he did not become conscious of inequality and how it operates through within black communities until college. Moreover, though he grew up close to Morehouse, Dave's childhood was sheltered such that he did not begin to recognize how racial inequality created "the hood" until he returned:

> I actually grew up about a seven-minute, five-minute drive from Morehouse. While I was at Morehouse it was literally like I was at home. Ooh, I really got to taste Atlanta then. That's when I really was like, "Oh shit, this is what the world is really like." I talked to one of my friends and he told me two of my friends got shot on this little street back there. That was the first time I ever known somebody who had gotten shot. I was like, that shit hit me a little differently. Morehouse is the place that connected me to those places. The thing is, I would have been connected to it earlier, but I was just homeschooled before. Had I been in school in Atlanta, that shit happens all the time. My neighborhood was the ... I lived in it, but because I didn't go to school in it. I really didn't

get to see it. But then being older when I went to school in it, then I got to see it again. I was like, "Oh shit."

Again, witnessing or experiencing violence seems to have opened a pathway for black students to begin thinking about and conceptualizing racism. Dave was particularly moved by the shootings of his peers because he had not previously been exposed to gun violence during his childhood. Recognizing how young black men are disproportionately victimized in areas of chronic risk, he begins to perceive his city through a lens of systematic disadvantage. School, and Morehouse in particular, became the prime site for this socialization.

Interactions between Socialization History and New Information. Students also learned about oppression through the different ways they were infantilized, policed, and surveilled at their institutions. Comparing his experiences at his respective schools, Dave states that he "didn't start getting racially conscious" until he "made that whole transition from being at Exeter, coming to Swarthmore, and then going to Morehouse and coming back to Swarthmore." Though he experienced discrimination at Swarthmore, Dave understood that attending an elite, predominantly white institution afforded him many privileges and resources, citing examples of hosting funded parties in school buildings without harsh consequences. While at Morehouse, he was "almost kicked out" and "sent to the Atlanta City Court" for attempting to engage in similar leisure activities. He compares his freedom at Swarthmore to his infantilization at Morehouse, saying that he "didn't actually get to understand what it meant to be black, a black boy in America until [he] went to Morehouse and saw the way people really treated black boys." To Dave, "race at Morehouse set a precedent" of "policing black boys because black boys don't know what they're doing." At the same time, moving from Exeter to Swarthmore to Morehouse

exposed Dave to the different effects of resources (and access to resources) on his ability to

achieve academic success:

> Me being black, literally people weren't even ready for me to be the person that I was on
>
> Morehouse's campus because they didn't know how to ... My SAT score was so high for
>
> them. They were like, "Oh shit that's crazy." There wouldn't have been room for me to
>
> push forward. I would have had to make that room myself. I think I developed a lot of
>
> frustration with that. I think that's where I developed frustration for the black condition in
>
> America, and just what being black is. I didn't really get to see what being black was
>
> institutionally until being at Morehouse.

Dave's "frustration" stems from his recognition that he would not have access to the same

caliber of education that he received at Swarthmore; specifically, due to the lack of funding

Morehouse receives for these resources. He continues to explain how this inequality affects black

students' college choices:

> That's why even to this day I tell people, unless they're going to a really shitty school, if
>
> you have a choice between going to a school like Swarthmore and a HBCU, come to
>
> Swarthmore, which sucks. As far as resources is just what it comes down to. You just
>
> actually get more from coming here than you do going there. I just really came into full
>
> face with that issue. What it is to be black in America.

Though he was unprepared by his parents' heavy focus on cultural pride and minimal preparation

for bias, Dave has learned that being black in America subjects him to an array of difficulties that

he would not have had to experience otherwise. He feels frustrated with capitalism for

disadvantaging a school that services his cultural needs. Dave recalls watching Morehouse

ceremonies and saying, "Damn, this really is like black Harvard here. This really is the top of the

top of black education right here." But because he acknowledges that black people "just

generally as a group of people don't have money," Morehouse will never provide him with the

same resources as elite, predominantly white institutions. The role of capitalism thus determines

his quality of education and his daily treatment at HBCUs.

Teresa, Simone and Mark similarly reflect on how racism manifests on their campuses,

and how learning more about racism has simultaneously frustrated them and moved them to re-

center Blackness in resistance. As a leader in the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society,

Teresa describes how she has interfaced with and learned more about racism on her campus

through responding to racist student publications. She indicates that her "perception of race has

evolved a lot coming here," and in her leadership role in particular:

> Racism on this campus has just really made me think, and especially with SASS, has just
>
> really made me think whatever happens, black people are just going to experience it
>
> worse. The low-income black people are just going to have a harder time. The non-male
>
> identifying black people are just going to have a harder time. The queer black people are
>
> just going to have a harder time. It's just really made me really hate racism so much.

To frame her discussion on what she has learned about racism at Swarthmore, Teresa compares

her childhood experiences of discrimination to her current encounters. When she was younger,

Teresa began to develop ideas how black people perpetuate anti-Blackness in their communities.

She recalls a discriminatory experience when another black peer "came up behind [her], rubbed

his arm against [her] and said, 'Ouch!'" For Teresa, this moment solidified her understanding on

anti-Blackness when she saw "so many people erupt in laughter, especially a black man who

probably has black family members." However, coming to Swarthmore, she states that she hasn't

encountered this form of anti-black discrimination from her peers. The discrimination is "very

more sinister and very quieter because there definitely are black men here who are just extremely

complacent in promoting misogyny on black women." The discrimination differs from that she

experienced during childhood primarily because of its nature:

> But I feel like here, it's a lot harder to talk about because of political correctness, which is
>
> something that I hate. It's just something that's just so heavily valued here. It's very
>
> systemic and methodical in the sense that policing how black people protest, doesn't
>
> sound like that big of a deal. *Like it's literally like a Gazette article* [student publication].
>
> *"It's literally just a kid. It's fine. He's racist, but it's fine. Why are you getting so mad over*
>
> *this?"*

Teresa refers to the reactions she received from her peers after speaking out against a 2017

student publication that deemed Colin Kaepernick's silent kneeling protest as "ineffectual."[1]

Teresa deems their complicity in policing how black people protest as emblematic of the type of

discrimination inherent in political correctness valued at Swarthmore. She continues identifying

the ways in which racism is "systemic and methodical" on campus, explaining:

> It's very systemic and methodical in the sense that a lot of the people who go here, even
>
> though they may say, "I care about black people," hold so many beliefs that are toxic to
>
> black people. When they become senators, when they become doctors, when they

---

[1] "Kaepernick's Well-Intentioned but Ineffectual Protest – The Daily Gazette," accessed April 1, 2018, https://daily.swarthmore.edu/2017/09/28/colin-kaepernicks-well-intentioned-but-ineffectual-protest/.

become engineers, when they become ... The people who are going to have all the wealth

and power and influence, it's really scary to me knowing that people don't view these

things that are clearly racist, that are clearly reminiscent of past racial discrimination, that

are now reappearing. Have never disappeared in our modern-day society. The fact that

people aren't able to connect impacts of racism, with the actual impact of racism because

of how you can be really, really far away from these communities.

Teresa's narrative depicts the danger, both present and impeding, of political correctness and

complacency in predominantly white, liberal environments. However, she notes that while she

has begun to "hate racism," she feels that there are opportunities to have constructive

conversations--more so than were available at her previous schools. In the predominantly white

high schools she attended, the "few black people that were there felt very connected to the

community even though there was racism. People were more likely to just be like, 'Oh, that's just

how things are.'" Teresa finds that at Swarthmore, students are more willing to mobilize, to

refuse to accept the status quo. With the resources she now has access to, and the "knowledge

[she's] acquired," Teresa hopes her hatred for racism "can be a constructive hate to dismantle."

Simone's hatred for racism intensified in college, when they began to confront some of

the same neo-liberal challenges that Teresa identified. As they learned more about racism at

Bryn Mawr, Simone found it very difficult to establish their intersectional identity in a context of

"enforced surveillance and control":

It kind of makes me mad when people try to separate feminism from racist experiences,

or anti-woman experiences, because it's been not, like I can definitely empathize. Even

for me to feel compelled to separate when I experience something as a woman instead of

a black woman, it's just too much. That process of organizing my identity is as racist in itself. I think any enforced surveillance and control is racist to me because Blackness is boundless, and it's supposed to be untouchable. We did not have systems like that before.

Whereas Teresa's struggle stems from her attempt to resist white complacency on campus, Simone's anger is rooted in their desire to exist outside of the white imagination; Simone's message that "Blackness is boundless" demonstrates their resistance framework. Later in their interview, Simone declares that their biracial background and current schooling environment allowed them to develop "close relationships with white people" and, as a result, to learn not to fear them. Their resistance to whiteness is possible because they do not display this fear, which Simone recognizes is a privilege:

> I think part of it's because I've had such close relationships with white people where it's like, "You're not scary." Even now it's like, "No, you're not the monster that's underneath my bed." I'm trying to process if that's a privilege as well. Because it's hard, because if you are socialized in white spaces you're taught that it's not a privilege, and yet having access to whiteness and the codes of whiteness is. It's like is that not the same thing?

Mark describes having reached a similar conclusion, stating that he no longer views white people and whiteness as scary. His emotional responses to racism differ from those of his younger siblings, who he describes as "more militant" than he is. Mark attributes his younger brothers' responses, in particular, to the ways society has confined their options. His brothers react to racism out of fear, due to the fact that they "don't have space" yet to be themselves and are still "tethered to their environment" so that they "have nowhere to go" when their "environment is violent towards them." Because Mark has "grown into" himself, he can "go inside," and "smile."

For Mark, this permission emerged during adulthood, when he began to have independent "experiences with white people":

> You have to go through being wronged for a long time to realize that you're going to be OK and then go back and look at what it was that made them [white people] wrong you. And realize that it's their insecurity and it's their weakness and it's not you. And once you realize that it's kind of funny. It's like when white people follow me around the store, I'm like, "All right. I'm bout to finesse everything then!" Because like they're scared of you. They think of you as a threat. And yeah I'm a threat! Like I'm an educated young black man. I'm graduating from Swarthmore with an engineering degree. Like, you can't fuck with me. You really can't. There's nothing that Joe, sixty-two-year-old plumber is going to say that's going to ruin my day. And he knows it. And so, I can smile at him and be like, OK, you want to be racist. You can be racist.

Mark's meaning construction process is indicative of a similar resistance framework posited by Simone. Both students define themselves outside of whiteness, describing fear as the primary emotion prohibiting others from being able to access this framework. Cultural pride, and specifically, centering Blackness, serves as a protective factor equipping young black people to not only cope with and respond to racism, but also to develop a strong positive orientation towards themselves and other black folk. In college, Simone has developed friends with other black peers, who were not raised in predominantly black environments. They describe how their friends struggle, coping with the weight of racism and colorism perpetrated by white peers. Simone questions how whiteness is centered at their college:

It's tough and it's hard because I just want to be pro-black...I'm like, "What? You don't even have to check with white people, we don't have to talk about them." That's sometimes where I'm at, like why? Why do they have to constantly be the marker? Some people who haven't grown up in spaces like that, which could even be in their families, that's not what the thought process is, but there's never been a *stop-at-white* installed for me.

The messages Simone received about cultural pride prepared them to develop a strong connection to their ethnic background and a confidence interacting with and confronting white people. However, they were most prepared to implement a *black*-centered framework for resistance in college, when they began to learn more about racism and made connections between oppression and their discriminatory experiences; in short, the new information they received allowed them to identify more explicitly with Blackness, in conjunction with Bajan-ness and biraciality.

Exploring the new information that black young adults receive is important to understanding sociopolitical development, or, how they come into consciousness about racism, racial hierarchy, and their situation within it. This section has established that attending elite, predominantly white colleges offered opportunities for interviewees to define Blackness independent of *and* in addition to the preparatory/pride messages they did or did not receive from their parents. All participants have identified the role of structural inequality in governing their daily experiences, both during adolescence and presently, in college. Although their meaning constructions vary, they highlight the importance of having access to information about racism. My interviewees noted that having more information has led them to explore an array of possibilities for how they think about and act upon race-based encounters. The next chapter will

explore how participants' understandings of racism inform their perceptions of what they do, or plan to do, with this new information they have received. I measure sociopolitical development through investigating how socialization impacts whether black students consider their extracurricular involvements on campus as activism, and if not, what their meaning constructions mean for their sense of agency and control. Participant responses, and emotional orientations, demonstrate that conceptualizing activism is a central component to their sociopolitical development.

Chapter 5:

"You're constantly fighting" – What it means to "do the work"

This chapter investigates student activism as an indicator of sociopolitical development. Specifically, I question what students perceive to count as activism, as an outcome of racial socialization history (i.e. what students do with the information they have gathered about racism from childhood, and the information with which they have interacted while in college). Activism is traditionally defined as taking action to affect social, political, economic and/or environmental change (Permanent Culture Now). African American activism is particularly defined as "action aimed to decrease and/or eradicate racism and its negative effects and to improve the everyday lives of African Americans and the African American community as a whole" (Szymanski 2012:344). Although protest and direct, confrontational action dominate social thought as activism, activism manifests in various forms, such as but not limited to educating others about inequality, informed voting, and individual, meaningful commitments to advocacy-oriented groups (Szymanski 2012:334). I chose activism as this outcome variable because research notes that, alongside financing their education, the primary challenge that students from marginalized backgrounds face during college is demonstrating a commitment to political and civic engagement (Eagan et al. 2015).

Complicating the singular narrative of positive civic development outcomes and leadership potential (Chambers and Phelps 1994; Anderson 2015) black students at PWIs also feel pressured to, or responsible for, engaging in loud, frontline activism while in college (Felix 2017) and to prove that their work is not performative (Rogers 2017). Studies published by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the University of California, Los Angeles reported

that as of 2015, and especially after the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, black students are

the most likely to report a "very good chance" of participating in student protests while in

college (16%); since 2014, they experienced the greatest increase with a 5.5 percentage-point

jump (Eagan et al. 2015). Moreover, of the 40 percent of first year students surveyed who

believe it is "essential" or "very important" to become community leaders and the 60 percent

who are committed to "improving their understanding of other countries and cultures," "two-

thirds of black students, more than half of Latino students, and about 45 percent of Native

American and Asian students rated this goal as "very important" or "essential," versus just over a

third of white" students (Green 2016; New 2016). In addition to student excitement and

anticipation, however, the burdens of activism and a lack of substantial social and emotional

support can lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, and suicidal ideation--especially for queer

students of color (Vaccaro and Mena 2011). Additionally, while high political activism protects

against the stress of race-based encounters for Latinx students, higher levels of activism increase

stress and anxiety for black students (Hope et al. 2018). In order to cope with these stressors,

black students have emphasized the importance of black-only spaces for social support (Macías

2015), relying on the aid of similarly identified therapists or culturally sensitive therapy (Turner

2017), and other reflective strategies (Szymanski 2012).

Alongside parental racial socialization, socialization among peers also impacts

sociopolitical development--measured in this thesis by the ways students think about activism

and their responses to racism (Gordon and Taft 2010). In this chapter, I seek to understand how

my interviewees perceive the responsibility to engage in activism, how their definitions of

activism inform their work, how their work informs their responses to racism and how they

contend with the emotional tolls associated with racism in general and activism in particular. I

have identified three ways that students engage with the topic of activism on their campuses: they invalidate the co-curricular work they do as "real" activism, avoid engaging to protect their emotional wellbeing, or immerse themselves in activist work--meaning construction about what their work personally means differs within and among the categories. For participants who invalidate, considering the actions that "count" as activism emerges as a prominent theme. The first section of this chapter will thus highlight the different definitions that black students apply to activism, and how these definitions affect their perceptions of their own engagement. I will then explore avoidance responses, which particularly emphasize students' relationships with their institutions and their expectations of the different outcomes of organizing. The final section will examine how students who define their work as activism illuminate the factors that influence their work. The socialization that participants receive from parents, schools and peers, around race, racism and activism, affect how they consider each of these different facets in their sociopolitical development.

Invalidating Their Work. Amina and Melissa demonstrate invalidation by separating the work they do on campus from their definitions of activism. For both students, activism denotes a vocal action, or participation in a protest or demonstration. Activism means publicly "taking a stance" about the issues they care about. In response to the question of engagement, Amina states that although she has attended organized events on campus, she "wishes [she] participated in activism." Without further prompting, she expresses feeling conflicted about her engagement:

> I wish that I was more active in being more vocal about certain issues. But that's just... I feel like that's not me sometimes, you know. I will be vocal if I need to be vocal. But if I know that there are people ahead of me who are already taking this stance and being very vocal about it, I will be behind them for sure, but I won't be one of the vocal ones. I won't

be one of the loudest ones out there. But if need be, I will take that stance. Like I won't

shy down from that role and I think that that kind of gives in to my extrovert and introvert

senses. My personality.

Amina suggests that though her introversion does not align with her expectations of activists to

be vocal, her extrovert sense allows her to "take that [vocal] stance" if necessary. She continues,

expressing that she tries "to get involved in ways that don't put the attention on [her] because

[she] doesn't like attention." This linear construction between personality type and activism

functions to encompass some types of work as activism but not others. Melissa, a sophomore,

exhibits a similar linkage by stating that she has never been "the one to attend demonstrations."

Like Amina, she explains that she prefers one-on-one or small group interactions:

> There have definitely been conversations about the crap that's happening on campus that I
>
> want to spread the word out about and tell my friends who aren't--a lot of them aren't
>
> black, but they are other POC-- and I tell them stuff. I'm like, "This is happening, and this
>
> is wrong," and I feel safe with them.

Both students have identified who counts as an activist and do not include themselves in that

definition. Amina indicates that she prefers to support her friends, usually extroverts, who

engage in her definition of activism. While Amina's reasoning is rooted in her expectations

about which students can serve this role, Melissa's also includes her fear of the repercussions of

peaceful protesting. She states that she "was just worried about safety and stuff because of the

historical knowledge of peaceful protesters and what they encounter." When she was in high

school, she could not attend the "walkouts about the budget situation" in her city because she

"was too worried." This anxiety "makes it hard for [her] to do the more explicit kind of activist

work." She retreats to the personality construction, continuing. "I'm more of the sharing articles

on Facebook, writing poetry, having conversations with my friends at lunch kind of person."

At the same time that Melissa and Amina describe their definitions of activism, they

admit to feeling guilt around their decisions to engage less publicly. Melissa relays that though

she is on the executive board of a student affinity group, she has not "participated in [the activist

portion of the organization] as much as [she] should have." She hasn't "been at the forefront of

the [newspaper] boycott" and hasn't "done organizing of it." Melissa expresses discomfort in

what she perceives to be a supposed contradiction between her role on the executive board and

her decisions to avoid protests, boycotts and demonstrations. Later in Amina's interview, I asked

her if she considers her involvement on another executive board as activism. She responds that in

some ways she does, and in others, she remains conflicted:

> I think it is. I think it provides support for women of color to get together and think and
>
> talk about all issues that they can't talk about in other spaces. It gives them platform to be
>
> themselves. And I think that's important. And my mentorship aspect of it is to connect
>
> women of color together, to connect women of color with other women of color. So that
>
> there's greater support networks to provide the mental support that you need. The
>
> physical support that you need, the spiritual support that you need. And I think that is in
>
> itself activism. But sometimes I don't think it is. I feel like we're always taught to think
>
> that this activism has to be vocal, has to be loud, has to be out there. You know you have
>
> to take a stance and for everyone to see that this is who you are. You're very apologetic
>
> about it. I just feel like sometimes I don't fit that you know. You won't know my stance
>
> because I'm not vocal about it, you know? And I feel like that's the way I think that
>
> activism is, you know.

Importantly, Amina describes how she and other black students are socialized to believe in a uniform definition of activism: that it "has to be vocal, has to be loud, has to be out there," and that its purpose is "for everyone to see that this is who you are." Although some students may not agree with this definition, these interviews suggest that socialization maintains a powerful influence. Amina and Melissa both indicate feeling guilty; they internalize the expectations that activism must include assuming a public stance, that the work must be vocal, and that they must engage in it. The resultant internal conflict leads to an invalidation of the work they do--for Melissa, her poetry and information sharing, for Amina, her commitment to her mentorship program.

These experiences beg the questions: where does this socialization originate? What are black students taught about what it means to be an activist, and how they must embody this role on their campuses? Amina and Melissa's narratives illuminate a distinction between how they personally feel about their work on campus and how they are made to feel, due to the messages they have received about their roles. The impact of these internalized expectations demonstrates that my interviewees are uniquely situated. The pressure they feel to publicly identify their political stances implies an expectation that black students must justify their commitment to their racial group through action. The larger implication is that black students attending predominantly white institutions do not have access to the privilege of individualism: they contend with the pressure to represent their group as well as come to consensus about what messages their work disseminates to the larger community. These definitions of activism, and the accompanying guilt associated with being unable to identify with those definitions, do not provide space for interviewees to feel affirmed and validated in their individual endeavors. This particular type of socialization may be connected to the messages that students have received about racism while in

college. Chapters 3 and 4 reveals that Amina and Melissa learned the most about racism and

inequality through education, and particularly while at Swarthmore. Their collective

consciousness has developed primarily through conversations about race and racism with

similarly identified friends and in classes. I posit that both feeling unprepared to conceptualize

racism in college and the new messages they receive about what it means to be a black student at

their institutions increase pressure for black students to succumb to pressures to get politically

involved in specific ways. Amina's statement about engaging in activism for "everyone to see

that this is who you are" buttresses this conclusion; regardless of how they truly feel about the

extent to which they are extracurricularly involved, students feel that their racial identities

collude with the visibility of their politicization. This theme of invalidation speaks to the undue

burden that black students are forced to assume with regard to advocacy, both from within their

racial community and outside of it. Interviewees' statements show that they bear the emotional

consequences of performing allyship and leadership; the additive effect of invalidation is an

increased sense of isolation and un-belonging on their campuses. Presenting vocal,

demonstrative activism as the only socially validated way for black students to show that they

care about their racial group and about addressing inequality harms their relationship to their

identity overall.

   Avoiding Activism. Interviewees also grapple with the messages they receive about their

expected role by avoiding activism altogether. *Avoidance* indicates students' decisions to

disengage from activism as they have defined it--frontline, vocal actions--and to address

inequality through alternative routes. Simone and Mark comment on the emotional toll that they

have experienced or expected activism to take. Their experiences with the concept differ: Simone

engaged in demonstrative work for their first two years at Bryn Mawr and decided to stop,

whereas Mark has never chosen to engage. Melissa notes that her main concern in attending or organizing rallies and protests is safety; for this reason, she struggles to identify alternative spaces where her work will be valued and affirmed as "true activism." This section explores these three students' decisions to avoid the vocal, public form of activism they have identified, and later describes how their conceptions are also connected to their responses to racism in general.

Mark and Simone discuss the weight of their experiences with racism, examining how those encounters have shaped their avoidance of activist endeavors at the moment. Mark, a senior, decided not to publicly demonstrate during his time at Swarthmore. His reasoning is reflective; he understands that his emotional responses to racism could be destructive rather than constructive, both for himself and for others:

> I'm afraid and I do not want to deal with situations that make me so emotional. Because I don't trust myself... I don't think I can be a good helper for anyone until I'm good myself. And I'm not good yet. So, I need to make sure that I'm good before I start trying to solve other people's problems. So that's the reason why I'm not an activist for all these different things. Because I mean Swat's campus is problematic as fuck. I think we can agree on that. But I can't have those conversations with people in my environment because I might just start hitting people. Like if one of my teammates said something, I would just ruin our relationship and I would lose so much more than I would gain. And I know that about myself. So, I try to participate in those conversations but in a very specific way.

Mark's decision to avoid activism is two-fold: it is primarily protective, as he desires to prevent himself from experiencing unnecessary pain due to racism, and from harming his relationships with others in athletics circles who may perpetuate this violence. Later in his interview, Mark

describes how his social and academic environments at Swarthmore have been predominantly white: he has never had a black professor and is often one of the only black students in his classes and on his athletic team. In counseling, he has struggled to relate his experiences to his white therapist and finds frustration with the absence of a black therapist at the counseling center. Due to the dearth of resources for him to process, Mark must resort to protecting himself through this means. Secondarily, he acknowledges that in order to be an activist, he must process his own emotions around racism so that he might be equipped to support others. In relaying that he chooses to "participate in those conversations but in a very specific way," Mark demonstrates that his avoidance is grounded in intentional self-reflection. He acknowledges the pressure for black students to engage in activism, decrying its necessity:

> It's not on the student to be their own activist. You can't expect a child to say, "Hey mom, that's domestic violence, like, you're abusing me emotionally. You're dehumanizing me." You can't say that. It's not the child's job. That's not the student's job. That's the organization's job to make sure it's a safe place for everyone. And there is no stretch of the imagination where that's not true. That's just an objectively true fact. I believe in that strongly and I think that that should be done. Because it's not a safe space for people of color.

Mark situates his avoidance of activism in systemic inequalities perpetuated by his institution. His experience differs from those of other interviewees in that his athletic team and academic discipline do not offer opportunities for him to process his experiences in safe spaces that are not dominated by whiteness. Due to this marginalization, Mark explains the complexity of maintaining relationships with white people while experiencing race-based stress and emphasizes the institution's responsibility to mitigate the pressure that ensues. Simone, a senior, also

describes how their decision to avoid activism facilitates their healing and mental health in lieu

of processing resources. In the following exchange, they explore how learning more about

racism through discriminatory encounters at Bryn Mawr affected their wellbeing:

> I have experienced racism in college, from walking around and asking if I go here, why
>
> am I late to work, asking me where I work in a dining hall, getting blatant threats from
>
> the KKK for being on campus. Because when I came in, that was when we were handling
>
> the two students who had hung the confederate flag and had written the Mason-Dixon
>
> line into their room. I was heavily involved in a lot of organizing and anti-institutional
>
> protests for the first two years. What have I learned? That [racism] is fixed with money,
>
> that whiteness is not limited to Europe and the West, and Blackness is not limited to the
>
> diaspora...which has been so important in understanding how pervasive racism is,
>
> because when there are no white people, how does it work? Then I don't know the answer
>
> to fix it. There's no legislature, there's no ... I mean I guess there is, but that in some ways
>
> is a band-aid because then they find a new way to do it, because it is still exploiting black
>
> labor and bodies.
>
> Lydia: How does that make you feel?
>
> Simone: Tired and like I don't want kids.

Though Simone and Mark identify different experiences with activism, their reasons for avoiding

are inherently protective of their wellbeing. Simone feels "tired" in the aftermath of combating

racism on their campus for two years, but also from developing an understanding that racism

manifests beyond experiences with discrimination. When their close friend from a nearby

institution was recently killed, Simone struggled to find support from their mother, whose

limited understanding of systemic inequality prohibited her from fully understanding the weight

of the homicide on Simone. Simone recalls how their friend had gone to school for journalism, to

change the ways the "news would portray black people. Then [he] was just gone." They describe

how the randomness of his killing led them to understand how systemic racism operates and

begin to question the effectiveness of their organizing and field of study:

> He was going back [to school] that day. Literally on the way to the airport, filling up gas,
> and it hit him. How is it like, even when you leave your neighborhood--He's from
> Chicago I think. I don't know what part of Chicago and I don't want to say anything that
> would skew it--You get out and it's still... you're faced with the consequences of racism.
> That haunts me every day. It's tough for me to remain focused [on schoolwork and
> activism] because it's like I know that this shit isn't really going to change much of the
> violence that I could experience, so why do it sometimes? I know the power of visual
> culture but that sometimes makes me just feel so useless. I should have done english or
> something that, I don't know, feels more grounded in a productive reality than art history
> does. Art history specifically, not art. This shit drives me insane.

Melissa feels a similar frustration, questioning their desire to affect change through education.

She often asks of teaching: "What is that actually doing?" A systemic understanding of the ways

racial hierarchy governs every aspect of black people's lives thus contributes to the exhaustion

and ineffectiveness these students feel. Simone developed a close relationship with a black

therapist at Bryn Mawr while they were organizing but found themselves without processing

resources when this therapist left the institution. Without emotional support, they haven't

"processed any of [their experiences with racism and trauma]" fully. Simone states that they

"think [they have] processed them in the sense [they] can talk about it" but if they "sit alone with

each one and really journal then [they're] a wreck." Simone's avoidance is thus signified by a

recognition that their increased consciousness about racism results in decreased self-efficacy and

a weakened internal locus of control:

> It's just weird to think of all the little things that have made you to be the person who you
> are. Now I'm like, "Wow, that was so fucked up. How did you let yourself think that the
> world wouldn't believe that you were a monster?" For so long I said, "It's not because I'm
> black." I internalized all the blame for things I was doing individually that were wrong.
> Now it's like, know you're operating within a larger system, which is real, but sometimes
> that system becomes odd and it's just such an unknown omnipresent force where
> admitting that that's the reason why [racism exists] doesn't give me any control, and I
> can't do that. I just get so panicked thinking about that because there are already
> psychological things that are out of my control, so I can't also succeed to somebody
> telling me that this is the entirety of my worth. Even though I love being black, you
> know? It has nothing to do with me hating being black. It's just I want to be able to say
> that this is mine.

In reflecting on their transition from organizing during their junior year, Simone further

examines how feeling as though their activism has high stakes impacts their mental health. They

state that along with acknowledging the different ways they experience their Blackness, they

understand that black students and activists are "trying to un-write history every day." In critical

conversations where students grapple with affecting change, it feels as though "this is one

moment where it will change the energy of the world forever or have to give weight to that." For

Simone, their PTSD sometimes causes them to "lose track of that focus and energy to push

forward." The emotional burdens of racism and the work necessary to confront campus violence

motivated my interviewees to focus on prioritizing their mental health. For Mark and Simone, avoidance does not mean complete disengagement. Rather, these decisions are grounded in forced self-care in recognition of the scarcity of effective resources accessible to them.

Participants note that they continue to do the work through other routes, and to re-envision what activism means and looks like. For Mark, doing the work means graduating from Swarthmore and obtaining gainful employment. Because Mark is "good at math" and "likes electrical circuits," he works on "sustainability and system organization" to ensure his success. However, he recognizes that his avoidance does not result in healing. In order to fulfill his "need to apply [himself] to the things [he] cares about," he must begin to process some of the stressful experiences he has undergone:

> So, the challenge is really forcing myself to think about it when I have time. And the way that I do that is I try to participate in activities that will develop me in emotional and spiritual ways. Because those things force you to look at yourself. I'm trying to do the Watson next year because being by myself is going to force me to think about that stuff...I think that's how I cope…. But it's not easy. It's not easy. It's very difficult.

Reflectiveness is central to Mark's survival and affects his perception of his ability to contribute to justice-oriented work. While Mark does not view his activities as activism, Melissa attempts to redefine what activism means for her. The distinction between invalidation and avoidance is that Melissa internalizes the expectation that she must engage in "activism" in order to advocate, whereas Mark's same definition of activism is not central to his self-identification or necessary for him to feel validated in his current work. Whereas Mark and Simone have constructed meaning of their avoidance as beneficial to sustaining them, Melissa feels compelled to justify it.

Melissa states that because her anxieties make it hard for her to protest, write statements, and have difficult one-on-one conversations with people, she must identify a form of activism that validates her preferences:

> My form of activism is artistic. So, a lot of my poems will talk about issues of race, religion, the intersectionality between those two things and violence. That's what a lot of my poems are about, especially the ones I wrote in Swarthmore, and I think that activism is more than just--not saying that protesting isn't really necessary and really needed--but that it's more than that also...I'm on the board of OASiS [student group for artists] and the board is completely all women of color and we do artists of color for everything. So even that is a form of pushing against the narrative of what does it mean to be a poet and who is actually in the canon of poetry and who deserves to be praised, you know? So that kind of stuff is also a form of activism I think. So, I'm more the behind-the-scenes side than I am the forefront.

At the same time as she widens the circle of inclusion for varying forms of activism, Melissa's language limits her poetry to a "form of activism" rather than activism itself. She recognizes the complexities in her definition of activism as solely encompassing vocal, forefront actions as she continues to justify the inclusion of her work and career goals:

> Sometimes I do have more than one-on-one conversations. So, if my friends don't know, issues that are happening in Philly for example. I told them so much about Philadelphia education than they do learn in *Intro to Ed*. Then I'm like, "This is messed up. This is what happened in my school and we got this because we're this." I can go on rants for days. So, it's like conversations. That's a form of activism. And I think even if you are a

black teacher teaching at a black school and telling people more about Blackness that's
not represented in the white curriculum, or even if you're a black teacher at a mostly
white school and letting people know what's actually up with black experiences and stuff,
that's still a form of activism.

Throughout her interview, Melissa's frequent reflectiveness about redefining activism
illuminates how black students might struggle to meet an invisible criterion that dictates their
expected commitment to advocacy and reform: if students receive and accept the message that
being black at PWIs involves assuming a public and vocal stance against inequality, then any
retreat from engaging in activism threatens the authenticity of their racial identity. Although
Mark and Simone's narratives identify that they also have received such messages about
activism and what it entails, they do not demonstrate the same conflict that Melissa and Amina
experience. The differences in response indicate that avoiding activism out of necessity rather
than preference arms Simone and Mark with a defense that Melissa and Amina cannot utilize if
ever questioned about the strength of their commitment. Another possible explanation for this
discrepancy is that this research does not fully examine how their commitments to racial justice
have been verbally and nonverbally contested, and the degree to which they have been socialized
to internalize these expectations.

However, the different ways in which Amina, Simone, Mark and Melissa construct
meaning of their invalidation and avoidance of the definition of activism they have all accepted
(protesting, demonstrations, rallying) do suggest nuances in their internalization of this
socialization. Like Amina, Melissa's fluctuation between invalidation and justification implies
that although she believes in the value of her work, the expressed messages that she has received
about what actions count as activism complicate her affirmations: in line with the *perceived*

expectation that she engage in activism, she desires to demonstrate a commitment to racial justice to any audience that has the *perceived power* to validate or invalidate her Blackness. The ways students are racially socialized, then, impacts the ways they accommodate to or resist the expectation that they politically engage. Importantly, once students make the decision to engage, racial socialization also informs their approaches to engagement and their own expectations about their ability to foster meaningful change. This section thus implies that, for black college students, preparation for bias (whether the socialization comes through the parent, school or peer) must include preparation for responding to bias on their elite, predominantly white campuses. Access to consistent and nuanced conversations about the internal and external expectations that affect black students may protect against invalidating responses, particularly if students believe that their decisions to engage or not to engage have no inherent, linear meaning about their ability to identify with their racial group. This preparation may also provide avoidant students with processing resources to increase confidence and self-efficacy. These interviews exhibit the importance of positive and effective racial socialization practices in ensuring that students engaging in activism feel validated, affirmed and supported throughout their endeavors.

Immersion in Activism. "The student-voice movement is mobilizing around the sense that students are ignored as active agents of their own destiny." - Andrew Brennan, *StudentVoice* (cited in Anderson 2015).

Interviewees who welcome the activist label to describe their on-campus work describe accepting various definitions of activism, including protesting and organizing. Bobby, Lynn D., and Izzy share their conceptions of activism and identify how and why their work is meaningful to them. Bobby, a junior at Swarthmore, explicitly states that activism has "many different forms for different people" and "changes depending on the situation in which you're acting out

against." When asked what forms it has held for him, he provides a diversity of examples in line with the literature:

> It has had a lot. Sometimes just being a loud voice. I speak out against the teachers in class. That's a form of activism. "You're teaching wrong stuff. You're wrong. Abraham Lincoln was not a good guy. He did not free the slaves because he wanted to." That's activism. Spreading the truth. More concretely starting a BSU at my old campus and putting in work actions. [Asking] how are we gonna take care of these football players because y'all brought them out here and y'all ain't helping them out. Calling people out. So, I think activism is multifunctional. Has many faces and for each person [it] wears a different face. As of right now I don't think there's any wrong types of activism, but there's always better types of activism.

Bobby's meaning construction of activism, and the ways it expands upon that of other interviewees, suggests that adopting a more fluid conception of activism can create room for further analysis: he is able to distinguish between types of activism because he has already accepted that the work can take various forms. In Chapters 3 and 4, Bobby discusses how learning about racism independently facilitated his entry into adulthood; he understood racism before his parents were ready to converse with him about the topic. Consequently, Bobby learned about activism and organizing from an early age. In college, he has engaged in different forms of activism and can now analyze his conceptualizations of it. He critiques passive forms, noting that social media demonstrates how "it's a trend right now to be upset about things." This anger can lead to action, but more often, he cautions, people "'like' a post, they type and share and that's the extent of their activism." For Bobby, these actions are not bad because they can serve the function of educating, but he questions:

But then does your learning turn into action or do you just become now what I like to call an 'internet bystander'? It's not like in the 60s where you were there watching it happen and just stood there. Now you have the whole internet access to see it happening just by clicking on it, but you're still living your life.

Bobby outlines the difference between activism and performative allyship (Rogers 2017). His analysis illuminates the problems with adopting a single definition of activism and provides an example of a common message that might cause students like Amina or Melissa to invalidate their own work. Melissa previously speaks to her propensity to share articles on Facebook but qualifies this statement by expanding upon all of the other routes she takes to affect change. Her fear is that her action of only sharing an article through social media might be regarded or critiqued as performative. The interaction between these two interviews warrants more research on how peers' messaging influences black students' internalization of expectations to engage. Being labeled or identified as an "internet bystander" subtracts from the perceived validity of participants' consciousness about racism and racial identity at large. Lynn D., a junior at Swarthmore, engages with this complexity. She identifies her work as activism while simultaneously stating that she does not conduct "formal organizing" (e.g. planning protests):

> I'm not the person who will write an article about something that happens in the news, or forms of racism around campus. I'm not that kind of activist, for various reasons, but I'm the person who supports causes. Like I'll sign the petitions, I'll go to the protests. I'm vocal, share articles. I read a lot. I listen a lot, but that's the main thing.

Her vocality, in conjunction with support and educational endeavors, align with both the common definition of activism and the more inclusive one. By considering the validity of her

work, Lynn D. also exemplifies how welcoming various definitions can lead to self-affirmation.

She states that she does a lot of organizing around "being low income, specifically low income

and first gen in college." Though she does not prefer formal organizing, her work is meaningful

to her:

> And to me that [organizing] means making people aware, making students like me aware
>
> that there is a gap, and telling people when you see that you have to work 10 times harder
>
> than your peer to get something, that's a thing that a lot of us experience. Things like that.
>
> So, I like reaching out to people, and talking to prospective students about what that's
>
> like. I'll go to conferences and make myself present in those communities, so I can be a
>
> part of that.

Lynn D.'s activism requires proactive, interpersonal communication and spreading awareness

about the causes she explores. Importantly, Lynn D. discusses how her activism can be depicted

as a form of socialization, creating space for other students and mentees to similarly identify with

her and her work. This cause, and the accompanying mentorship role, gives her a "sense of

purpose" and empowers her to affect change for the most vulnerable groups:

> For me, I think what it mainly means is knowing that my voice and sharing myself with
>
> others will maybe somehow for at least one person make them feel less bad than I did
>
> when I was going through something similar. If I'm talking to my little sister, who's
>
> finishing her last year of high school now, and she'll be like, "You know, my teacher
>
> came up to me and said some weird stuff about my braids." I'd be like, "Yeah, that's what
>
> white people do sometimes." It's meaningful to have those talks. I'll be like, "Tina" --my
>
> little sister--"Tina, you're going to have to deal with these different types of things when

you are applying to college," and things like that. To me it means being the person that I would've needed at that stage in my life.

Lynn depicts the importance of racial socialization and preparatory messages in particular. Her activism is informed by her racial socialization history; in saying that she strives to be the person she needed when she was younger, she identifies the ways preparation for bias facilitates black students' experiences in higher education. Similar to Bobby, starting with a more inclusive definition of activism allows Lynn to reflect on her preparedness and begin to view herself as an agent in preparing others. Izzy, a sophomore, perceives his activism in a like manner. As a leader in the African Students' Association, Izzy works to ensure "that people know that there's a support system for them and that we can be there for them and we can all be there for each other." He contributes to peer socialization by "letting [peers] know that we recognize their identities, that [he] recognizes their identity, especially in a space that generally doesn't, but even within Swarthmore's black community, that doesn't really recognize an African identity as much as it should and doesn't pay attention to an African identity." In this role, Izzy promotes cultural pride, a particular message that strengthens black youths' positive identity development. Like Lynn D., Izzy identifies a preparatory motivation behind his activism:

> The reason I do all that stuff is because I feel like it's hard enough being here and being in the minority and being constantly reminded that this place wasn't made for you. This state wasn't made for you. This country wasn't made for you. It wasn't made for you to benefit. It wasn't made for you to do well and there's constantly, constantly, constantly factors that are out here that work directly against you in your identity and everything like that.

Social support and peer-led racial socialization can work to empower students to empower one another. Although Lynn D. and Izzy recall not having been adequately prepared by their parents to experience bias upon arriving at Swarthmore, their narratives demonstrate that their current socialization has prepared them enough to feel equipped to transmit alternative, empowering messages to their peers. *Unpreparedness, then, cannot be perceived as a fixed hindrance to black college students' racial identity development processes.* These interviewees resisted the messages they received and developed new narratives that strengthen their self-concepts and align with their perceptions of their context. Black students' ability to compile the information they received about race and racism during adolescence and measure their socialization histories against or in tandem with their current experience displays their ability to resist all forms of oppression through all forms of activism. Bobby, Lynn D., and Izzy resonate with activism in its purpose and function, not necessarily its definitions. These meaning construction processes demonstrate that they are constantly reevaluating the messages they have received; key concepts of critical consciousness theory (Freire 2000), reflection and critical examination promote positive identity development and radical identity development. Social support prevailed as the primary coping mechanism used by all ten participants. In addition to providing emotional sustenance, social support can foster radical, collective consciousness within black student communities.

A Note on Unpreparedness

Although the last section of this chapter cautions against analyzing unpreparedness through a fixed lens by providing examples of student resistance to the inadequate or irrelevant messages they previously received, I wish to further explore how feeling unprepared for bias can also lead to adverse outcomes. Students' emotional responses to racism affect how they feel

about their racial and ethnic identities and how they understand their ability to resist oppression. This note describes Amina's, Simone's, and Sebastian's responses to different race-based encounters in order to emphasize the importance of providing adequate processing resources for students. Though social support can help protect against the stress and anxiety associated with racism, interviewees (e.g. Mark) recognize that institutions must ultimately be held accountable for ensuring the safety and protection of their black students. Even with access to a support network of black peers, these three participants note feeling unprepared to cope with and respond to racism on their campuses.

Amina, a senior at Swarthmore, discusses how the institution's sanction of problematic campus publications contributed to her feeling "disrespected and unsafe in the way that I could talk to people about these issues." The specific article in question (referenced in Chapter 3), written by a nonblack student of color, argued that Colin Kaepernick's silent protest in 2017 was ineffectual. Previously having noted that she has experienced racism both as an individual and as a member of a larger black community, Amina felt "attacked and disrespected", particularly by the institution's support of the publication, as though she could not speak "on issues that pertain to our bodies." She explains her frustration as a response to feeling trapped, not only as a result of this particular publication but because of her unpreparedness to experience racism at Swarthmore:

> I felt like... how else are we supposed to protest? How else are we supposed to demand justice for our people, for people of color if we can't-- if we have to be-- if we--like how? I don't understand. **There's just no way for us to be**..to get the justice that we need without being loud. How do you do that silent? How do you do it silent? And that ties into the fact that I know for a fact that there are Trump supporters on this damn campus.

Like I know for a fact there are. The day it happened I felt angry at every person. Like I

was pointing out people like "I bet your ass voted for Trump. I bet your ass voted for

Trump." You know? And I was just like... you kind of have this shield. At Swarthmore,

you think that everybody is liberal. You're blindsided with this thing. But in the corner,

once you remove that shield, you see that there's different political demographics, you

know? It feels like you're stuck, you're suffocating in this place. You're constantly

fighting.

Amina identifies the dangers in believing in Swarthmore's reputation as a liberal hub. She was

not prepared to experience such intense marginalization, such that she does not feel like she can

simply exist without having to defend her right to do so. With increased access to courses that

allowed her to begin to conceptualize racism, Amina was weaponized with the knowledge but

simultaneously felt unprotected. Her countless narratives of exclusion and racial violence

illuminate how institutions continue to enable black students' marginalization. I argue that, for

Amina, the only substantial change that emerged from her present racial socialization is her

ability to now name what is happening to her as subjugation. Understanding the operations of

inequality, and connecting it to one's institution, can result in perpetuating more harm if black

students are not adequately supported, and especially if they do not believe in the authenticity of

their institution's commitment to this support.

Simone and Sebastian relate that their experiences with and understandings of racism on

and off of their campuses stunt their sense of possibility and heighten their attunement to the

dangers that have yet to come. In discussing their experience having had their braids pulled by

one of their employers this past summer, Simone reveals that they "couldn't even think about

raising a black child." They reflect on conversations that they've had with their mentor about

protecting black children from not only the blatant but also the insidious, unintended messaging that they might internalize about their Blackness:

> My mentor just had a baby and usually in our time together it's run over, and we just talk about our personal lives, not our academic work, which is great. We just talked a lot about subtle imagery that is anti-black--where it's going to be detrimental to their black experience-- that slips in. It could be one sentence from Jim from *The Office* that could be racist, right? You just hear it and you don't pick up on it at first, but it's the fact that this baby is just hearing things and it's brain is already processing and learning to listen and see who is going to say certain things, that sends her into a panic. I just want to lock all the doors and never leave, and never let him out of my sight, that I, right now, I couldn't even imagine doing. Nevertheless, I feel like I would never be able to support a kid in the way that I feel like they need to be supported. I would have to either move out of the country, which again, it's not like you escape anything, or be Jay-Z and Beyoncé-level rich, which I'm not going to get being an academic.

Simone and their mentor are forced to think carefully about the consequences of bringing a black child into the world, due to their social locations. The combined impact of worrying about one's own safety and that of their children presents an undue burden, particularly for black women. Because Simone was raised by a white mother, who, although she tried her best to protect them and to provide them with support, did not adequately prepare them for the racial stress they would endure in adulthood, Simone bears the onus of following their own preparatory compass. Simone feels most comfortable speaking with black women about their fears and encounters. Without access to a black therapist on campus, Simone "smokes so much" to cope with the race-based stress they undergo on a daily basis.

After having an adverse encounter with two Public Safety officers on his campus, Sebastian recalls feeling triggered and angry by the experience. Having grown up in a predominantly white community, his racial identity development necessitated contending with numerous micro- and macro-aggressions. When he arrived at Swarthmore and identified a support network of black students, he felt comforted in his Blackness for the first time. Sebastian's experience with these officers, who asked him if he was a student and demanded that he reveal his identification, thrust him back into a space of fear and unbelonging:

> I was so angry at the time. Because I was like, "Wow, I've been here [at Swarthmore]." I was definitely there long enough that they should have seen who I was, right? So, for them to ask me if I was a student, they're basically insinuating that I shouldn't be there in that space. I was just happy I had my ID at the time.

Sebastian identifies the fear he felt in that moment, recalling a similar scene from a Netflix show:

> In *Dear White People,* there's a scene where the black students were at this party and the cops roll through because Sam's boyfriend at the time was playing the fool and called the police because he saw an argument going on between Reggie, who is a black man, and this one white student. And then the police come ask Reggie what he's doing here if he's a student here. And then Reggie was like, "Yeah, I'm a student here." And then the police officer said, "Let's see some ID." Reggie was very shocked and offended. I felt like Reggie in that moment... I felt harassed at that moment. After they left, I just felt so dirty. The same way Reggie felt after what he dealt with. Not to that degree of course though, 'cause I've never had a gun pulled on me. **But I just wonder: If I didn't have my ID at the time, what would they have done?**

Amina, Sebastian and Simone implicate their institutions in perpetuating inequalities that disproportionately subject them and their peers to racial trauma and stress. Even when black college students feel prepared by their parents and K-12 schools to name racism and resist oppression through various means, their experiences at their undergraduate institutions force them to labor (emotionally, mentally, physically and economically) for academic success and attempt to depreciate their capacity for resistance.

Conclusion

"Living as we do in a white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal context that can best exploit us

when we lack a firm grounding in self and identity (knowledge of who we are and where we

have come from), choosing "wellness" is an act of political resistance. Before many of us can

effectively sustain engagement in organized resistance struggle, in black liberation movement,

we need to undergo a process of self-recovery that can heal individual wounds that may prevent

us from functioning fully." - bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*

Of the ten students I interviewed for this thesis, all ten acknowledge that structural inequalities

prevent them from accessing resources to process their experiences of race-based trauma and

stress. Seven interviewees informed me that, in addition to cultural competency trainings for

administrators and professors at their institutions, they require a black therapist in order to begin

or continue their healing work (New 2016). Although having a racially matched therapist may

not be as effective as having a racially conscious and competent therapist (Ruglass et al. 2014),

black clients with high racial consciousness attitudes are more likely value and favor therapists

who *both* look like them and share similar attitudes (Want, Parham, Baker and Sherman 2004).

My interviewees' expectations of what a racially matched therapist might provide are telling: all

ten students express that the support systems currently offered by their schools do not and cannot

meet their specific needs.

Phenomenological research contests *taken-for-granted realities*--the shared meanings that

form "common sense" --in order to nuance how we perceive of and experience the social world.

This methodological approach cautions against cursory acceptance of these shared meanings

(*intersubjectivity*). As active agents in shaping the social world, we must *gear into the world* to

understand and transform our meaning constructions of our experiences. I chose phenomenology

to analyze my qualitative data, primarily because these concepts transport the subtleties in black

college students' experiences with racism from the margins of research to the center. It is a

taken-for-granted reality that black students attending predominantly white institutions struggle

to balance their academics with their subjection to racial violence; only recently has research

begun to examine their emotional responses to their context. Moreover, studies demonstrate that

Americans across racial groups have internalized the falsehood that black people feel less pain

than other groups; this pain perception bias is actualized in disparate health outcomes for black

people, and thus can be perceived as a shared meaning grounded in racial inequality (Hoffman et

al. 2016; Trawalter, Hoffman and Waytz 2012; Trawalter and Hoffman 2015). Consequently,

institutions and health providers do not empathize with black people's experiences of pain

(Brown 2017) --a phenomena called the racial empathy gap (Silverstein 2013). White supremacy

dehumanizes black people so insidiously that the racial empathy gap and pain perception bias

exist deeply embedded in American consciousness and the racial order. For this reason,

phenomenology offers a useful lens through which I argue that institutions and individuals must

pay increased attention to black college students' emotional responses to their discriminatory

experiences and their awareness of the impacts of systemic inequality on their daily lives.

In response to the absence of qualitative research on the perceived effectiveness of racial

socialization, the ten narratives presented in this thesis examine how black college students'

internalization of or resistance to the messages they have received about race and racism shape

their sociopolitical development, feelings of control and self-efficacy, and overall psychosocial

well-being. Specific messages contribute to negative outcomes, like low self-esteem and a

weakened internal locus of control, for black students. These results add to existing quantitative

findings by asserting that parents, peers and schools must no longer take for granted black

college students' pain by responding to their expressed individual and institutional needs.

Interviewees navigate their institutions differently, depending on their racial socialization

histories and current meaning construction processes. In addition to identifying the ways specific

racial socialization processes facilitate and hinder sociopolitical development, this conclusion

identifies three key factors that researchers and stakeholders might consider in analyzing the

effectiveness of preparation for bias, in particular. Finally, I consider the implications of the ways

students invalidate, avoid, or immerse themselves in activism, and the mediating role of social

support and mentorship in mitigating stress and informing their sociopolitical and developmental

outcomes on campus.

Outcomes of Racial Socialization Processes. I introduce the concept of racial

socialization histories, or, the messages that students received about race and racism during

childhood and adolescence, as a primary factor informing students' responses to their present

socialization during college, and their perceptions of how prepared they were to experience bias.

This concept is rooted in the phenomenological theory of *typifications,* which argues that "our

ability to explain and integrate new experiences is based on our ability to typify from past

experiences as a means of knowing what to expect with new ones." Interviewees' narratives

generally align with prevalent racial socialization scholarship, but also identify new gradations in

their experiences that are worthy of deeper exploration and explication.

Cultural Socialization. Students' recollections of their racial socialization histories in

Chapter 3 and their analysis of how that history has affected them in Chapter 4, agree that

cultural socialization results in high academic achievement and engagement, increases resistance

to anti-blackness and negative stereotypes, and instills value in black adolescents. Access to positive portrayals about black people, across ethnic backgrounds, informs identity *and* sociopolitical development. Cultural pride, and specifically, the centering of Blackness, protects black young people by equipping them with tools to not only cope with and respond to racism, but also to develop a strong positive orientation towards themselves and other black people in their communities. However, interviewees note that it is simultaneously important for black young people to feel welcomed and accepted by their similarly identified peers; for some, expressing cultural pride did not necessarily result in feelings of connectedness with their black peers in college. Students express that feeling connected to a network of black people validates and affirms their belonging at their institutions, if not their identification with their race and ethnicities in general.

Promotion of Mistrust and Egalitarianism. Though these two content areas are not heavily focused on in the thesis (the focus is cultural socialization and preparation for bias), these messages have complicated interviewees' racial identity development and their feelings of preparedness for encountering bias later in life. Four participants reveal the messages they received from their parents about distrusting white people. In racial socialization literature, promotion of mistrust functions to inform children of how whiteness and white supremacy may challenge their future success; in this way, these messages insinuate that other racial groups with perceived economic power, and white people in particular, must not be trusted. The interviews deepen our understanding of promotion of mistrust: students' stories do not solely indicate parental prejudices, but more often they identify black parents' fears for how their child might be treated, how their child might be unfairly targeted, or how their child might succumb to pressures to internalize whiteness. When discussing non-white groups, my interviewees suggest black

parents also transmit promotion of mistrust messages to define Blackness for their children, distinguishing African Americans from each other (e.g. dichotomizing the "good" black people from the "N-words"), or African Americans from other black ethnic groups (e.g. dichotomizing the "hard-working immigrants" from the bad, lazy African Americans). The consequence of these messages is interviewees' internalization of anti-black sentiments rooted in stereotypes. The characterizations they learn to accept inform the way they think about their own identities and treat other black peers. Because cultural pride is expected to heighten resistance to stereotypes, receiving promotion of mistrust messages in conjunction may contradict this effect, and receiving promotion of mistrust messages in isolation may abate it altogether. For example, receiving only negative messages about race and racism from her mother diminished Amina's self-confidence and her perceived ability to voice any dissent. When she began taking courses at Swarthmore that challenged these existing conceptions, she revealed that the "more and more I get educated in college, the more and more I get silent at home. Because the more and more I learn about things, the more and more it goes against everything that they [her parents] stand for." Amina's narrative demonstrates that children do not always internalize their parents' messages for a fixed period of time, and that socialization is subject to change.

Although none of my participants recalled complete silence about race and racism in their households, they did report feeling unprepared and disadvantaged by their parents' low race salience, or minimal openness to discussing these topics and infrequent conversation. As a result, black children whose parents do not frequently talk to them about race and racism indicate that their parents' messages held more weight when these conversations do occur. The parents' messages become even more salient and critical in determining what children internalize and what they resist to: I argue that students who encountered low race salience in their households

demonstrate resistance less frequently because they clung for so long to their parents' words.

Additional implications of silence and egalitarianism include: these content types can result in

decreased or increased agency, depending on how the child perceives the quality of or dynamic

between themselves and their parent(s), their own levels of race centrality or salience that they

were able to develop outside of the parent-child socialization dyad. These qualifications remain

underexplored in racial socialization literature and warrant more attention to avoid

generalizations. Overall, low race salience presents a potential danger for black students' identity

development in their homes and schools. The combined effect of silence or unbalanced focus of

anti-blackness in homes and schools decrease self-esteem and academic achievement, and often

result in antisocial behavior and internalization. As stated in Chapter 3, each of these outcomes

diminish the possibility of black students developing a strong future orientation and experiencing

positive and meaningful sociopolitical development.

Preparation for Bias. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate how an external locus of control can

help develop students' critical consciousness, as they learn more about the systemic nature of

racism. In line with the cautions presented in the literature review, a strong external locus of

control can undermine black college students' sense of agency in controlling their life outcomes

(Hughes et al. 2009). For example, in these chapters, the participants who evidenced decreased

internal loci of control indicate having learned during childhood and adolescence to construct

meaning of inequality as large and insurmountable. In agreement with scholarship that addresses

the limitations of messages emphasizing cultural pride and awareness, I also discovered in

Chapter 5 that neither pride nor awareness messages actually protect students from feelings of

helplessness, depression and anger when confronting structural inequalities (Jones and Greene

2015). Though participants felt more agentic upon learning about racism through social science

coursework, their knowledge of how their institutions support and perpetuate inequality counteract the potential of a strengthened internal locus of control. Chapters 4 and 5 address the ensuing questions: If this is the case, how can we ever measure how well black parents prepare their children to encounter bias? More importantly, does preparation for bias matter at all if young black people will continue to experience vulnerability to depression and helplessness, if they will continue to question their agency?

In response, I argue that Jones and Greene's study provides a useful example of how detracting from black youths' emotional responses does not serve them in their healing. My interviewees present a need for institutional responsiveness to their "adverse" emotional reactions; feeling helpless, sad, depressed and angry in the face of systemic oppression must be considered *normal* reactions to inequality until they are pathologized. I propose that increased attention paid to these responses creates space for young black students to feel validated in their vulnerability, an allowance that is particularly formative for black men (Harrison 2015). Students' descriptions of their feelings about subjugation and experiences of depression must incite institutions to provide culturally responsive psychosocial resources (Miller, Rote, and Keith 2013). It is therefore *more important* to study the effectiveness of preparation for bias messaging: because of the range of outcomes that emerge from the frequency of preparatory messages, researchers must also review how competent the process is, or, how "well" youth receive these messages.

Perceived Effectiveness of Preparation for Bias

In exploring students' perceptions of how well their racial socialization history prepared them for conceptualizing and experiencing racism during college, my thesis introduces three

factors that may inform the development of an efficacy scale: the timing of preparatory

messages, the applicability of content across contexts, and the social literacy of the person

transmitting these messages. In the interviews, we primarily center on parents' social literacies. I

argue that black students contend with racism at their institutions differently, contingent on the

perceived effectiveness of their racial socialization history in molding their sociopolitical

development in predominantly white spaces. In Chapter 4, I inquire: Did the messages that

participants received from their parents and schooling environments actually prepare them for

their encounters with racism in college? If not, how did they simultaneously understand new

messages about Blackness and grapple with their discriminatory experiences?

Findings reveal that though the majority of participants received preparatory warnings

and messages about cultural pride, only three students indicate having felt adequately prepared

by their parents to experience racism in college. Interviews note that parents extrapolate from

their own lived and vicarious experiences with racism, and the totality of the information they

know about racism, in order to prepare their children for discriminatory encounters. Because

parents' lived experiences and appraisals of racism across historical time have the potential to

differ from those of their children (Brown and Lesane-Brown 2006), I argue that *though*

interviewees acknowledge their parents' efforts, unclear communication about where parents'

messages are originating and why creates an impasse in understanding between the two parties.

The preparation for bias that the child experiences may not always serve the parents' intended

function as a result.

My interviewees provide three measures of the effectiveness of their parents' preparatory

messages. Each of these measures suggest the importance of frequent and intentional

communication between the parent and child about their experiences with racism and their

perceptions of their racial and ethnic identities. Firstly, the timing of their parents' preparatory

warnings has affected black college students' feelings of preparedness in college. In Chapter 3, I

state that earlier timing would have helped interviewees cope and problem-solve in the aftermath

of a discriminatory experience and would have assured them that their parents were able to

empathize. For other interviewees like Bobby, the first preparatory conversation came years too

late. When black children and parents are not gauging one another's experiences and

worldviews, the lack of communication facilitates the impasse. Secondly, students point to

needing the content of parental messages to apply across contexts. For example, Mark's father

transmitted preparatory messages that were useful when he lived and attended school in

predominantly black communities, but no longer applied once he enrolled in a predominantly

white high school, and later, at Swarthmore. His father relied on promotion of mistrust messages

to prepare him, which did not equip Mark to engage in difficult conversations with white

schoolmates and friends. As a result, participants describe feeling challenged and forced to

advocate for themselves because they were not prepared for their parents' teachings to flounder

in other scenarios. This theme suggests that participants felt (and feel) a deep yearning to discuss

racism in general with their parents, not only in response to an adverse situation or in proactive

preparation for a few, carefully selected scenarios. Lastly, interviewees discuss how their

parents' social literacy, or lack thereof, did not prepare them well to understand the systemic

nature of racism, in particular. This final theme presents some complexities because many of the

students indicating this challenge attributed their parents' lack of social literacy to their

immigrant backgrounds: racism in their home countries is simply not comparable to racism in the

United States context. In response to this concern, I argue that black children must also exercise

their own agency in introducing these conversations to their parent. While they cannot control

their parents' responses or willingness to engage, they can begin to ask questions and start discussion; socialization is a dyadic process (Peck et al. 2014). I encourage future research to utilize these themes to identify a scale that determines the effectiveness of this preparatory process.

Participants' comments about preparation for bias also yield implications for schools to better prepare them. In agreement with prevalence research, interviewees from single-parent households, with lower educated parents, and from low-income backgrounds were less likely to receive racial socialization (Thornton et al. 1990). In neighborhood schools, then, interviewees relay that though their peers also understood that discriminatory encounters did not feel affirming, they were not having socialization conversations with their parents. The lack of opportunities to discuss race with peers, combined with the lack of opportunities to engage with racism in the curricula, left the majority of participants feeling unprepared to tackle these challenges in college. In collaboration with parents, black children's schooling environments must also prepare them to think about and respond to racism. Students remain unprepared to navigate harmful experiences with racism both in and outside of school. How their parents equip them with tools to manage these encounters remains unclear. Importantly, all participants provided systemic-level definitions of racism; although their meaning constructions vary, they stress the importance of having access to information about racism at earlier stages in life.

Compellingly, Chapter 3 indicates that, prior to college, some individuals felt connected to their race most in school, when they learned of the violence to which black people were historically subjected. I posit that the process by which black young people link historical trauma to their current racial identification influences their sociopolitical development. Other studies might consider examining this finding in detail: what does it mean that black students feel most

connected to their Blackness when learning about violence? In the present study, I utilized this

finding to explore how students react upon learning more about racism in general. While

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the impact of preparation for bias on students' responses to racism,

Chapter 5 examines how participants' current understandings of racism shape their perceptions

of what they do, or plan to do, with the new information they have received. I measure

sociopolitical development through investigating how socialization impacts whether black

students consider their work as activism, and how they view their ability to affect change as a

consequence.

Nuances of Sociopolitical Development Measures

Chapter 3 includes important contributions suggesting that sociopolitical development

does not occur in a vacuum. My interviewees come into consciousness about race and racism by

contesting or affirming the messages they received prior to attending college. This opportunity

allows them to develop their own understandings, that may or may not align with the different

messages that they received in their homes and schools. I incorporate in Chapter 3 an analysis of

sociopolitical development as having emerged through black students' experiences of racial

solidarity; students do not solely come into consciousness as a result of personal experiences

with racial discrimination, and if they have, these experiences are not always violent. For

example, Lynn D. comments that racism is a burden "because it's made a burden," and her and

her peers find strength and solidarity from their collective acknowledgment of their lack of

control over these experiences. This conclusion is emblematic of Anyiwo et al.'s argument that

when African American youth "draw upon their [understandings of] racial identity," they

develop a critical consciousness that connects their socialization to their experiences (Anyiwo et

al. 2017:3). Additionally, my interviewees identify how accessing positive sociopolitical

development opportunities--like attending private schools centered on Afrocentrism--is

indicative of class inequality. Interviewees affirm the value of Afrocentric education, stating that

it promotes power and belonging, in alignment with social justice youth development theory

(Ginwright and Cammarota 2002). In Chapter 3, I call into question the equity of these resources

for researchers to undertake: Who gets to access social justice youth development? How do

private Afrocentric educational opportunities, like those Mark's brothers accessed, reproduce

inequality? The implication of Mark and Melissa's narratives suggests that only students who

have had access to private education, or to high achieving status, access information about

systemic inequality and resources that promote empowerment and agency. The most

marginalized black populations, then, do not receive the same opportunities to develop

sociopolitically.

Relying on critical consciousness concepts and Anyiwo et al.'s (2017) theoretical

contributions about the role of sociocultural influences, Chapter 5 identifies how the messages

that students receive about Blackness and racism affect their feelings about engaging in political

action. In particular, I examine how students internalize or resist messages that pressure them to

become politically involved in college, solely to perform racial solidarity or to justify their racial

identification. Key considerations include: What are black students taught about what it means to

be an activist, and how they must embody this role on their campuses? Chapter 5 identifies three

processes by which students construct meaning of their work: invalidating, avoiding, and

immersing. Invalidation reflects participants' insecurities about whether their work "counts" as

activism and attempts to widen the circle of inclusion within the definition they have

internalized. Students who internalize have also indicated feeling unprepared to conceptualize

racism in college: the connection between these challenges increases pressure for black students

to get politically involved in specific ways--through loud, vocal, frontline boycotts and protests. The impact of invalidation suggests that students feel that the validity of their racial identities collude with the visibility of their politicization. Avoiding responses, however, result from interviewees' desire to protect themselves from the emotional toll that the work requires. The primary difference between the two types of meaning construction is the supposed usefulness of defending their disengagement due to necessity rather than to preference. The present study is limited in its exploration of this conflict: studies must gauge whether black students' commitments to racial justice have been verbally and nonverbally contested, and what the verbal socialization around activism looks like and means to them. I note in Chapter 5 that these interviews exhibit the importance of validation, affirmation and support for students doing any type of extracurricular work on their campuses. Interviewees demonstrating immersion differ from their counterparts in that they adopt more flexible definitions of activism: all three interviewees are involved in affinity groups, or have been in the past, and identify their mentorship and facilitating roles as activism. Employing reflective techniques (Freire 2000), these interviewees resisted the messages they received in order to identify new, more affirming and contextualized narratives that strengthen their self-concepts. These meaning construction processes demonstrate that they are constantly reevaluating the messages they have received. Importantly, this chapter states that "social support and peer-led racial socialization can work to empower students to empower one another." Students' levels of unpreparedness before arriving at Swarthmore can be altered by developing collective consciousness with their similarly identified peers.

Concluding Thoughts: Addressing Emotional Responses to Racism

In reflecting on how they were unprepared to experience racism at their institutions,

several interviewees recall believing that Swarthmore College and Bryn Mawr College were

"liberal hubs," where their ideas might be contested but never their identities, or their very

existence. Part of the emotional toll that black students at predominantly white, elite institutions

bear is the betrayal that accompanies their most salient experiences of institutionally supported

and perpetuated racism, and interpersonal experiences of discrimination, on their campuses. In

examining the work institutions must do to fulfill the promises that their mission statements and

recruitment agents provide students of color in general and black students from queer and low-

income backgrounds in particular, they must confront the legacy of inequality that they benefit

from and promote. In Chapter 5, Izzy stated very poignantly that the reason he mentors and leads

and facilitates is because he desires to promote a counter-narrative to the messaging that black

students already receive at their institution: that "this place wasn't made for you." Black

students, though capable of revolution, should not have to bear the emotional burdens of carrying

their communities through trauma and un-belonging. Like Mark stresses, the responsibility is the

institution's. Providing access to processing resources is only a start--the goal must always rest

in destroying the systems of inequality that precipitate and perpetuate these traumatic encounters

in the first place.

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Research Study: *The Black Body Remembers: The Impact of Socialization on Black College Students' Perceptions of Race-Based Trauma and Community Violence*

Principal Investigator and Emergency Contact: (name, address, phone and email)

Lydia George-Koku '18

500 College Ave, Swarthmore, PA, 19081

443.921.5146 (mobile)

lkoku1@swarthmore.edu

Thesis Interview Protocol--Fall 2017

Consent Form:

Do you have any questions or concerns about the consent form?

Introduction and Opportunity for Questions

Thank you so much for taking my survey and indicating additional interest in participating in an interview! My goals for this conversation today are to talk in depth about some of your survey responses. I am particularly interested in the societal messages you received about racism and mental health growing up in comparison to the societal messages you receive now, at your institution. I am also curious about how you have begun to construct meaning of the experiences of racial trauma and community violence that you indicated in your survey. For your recollection, I have provided a copy of your survey responses for you to return to when we reach that portion of the interview.

Most importantly, I would like to better understand what these stressful experiences mean to you, how they have impacted your life, and how you're currently coping. We will take a break midway through the interview. If you are feeling like you need a break before I offer one, please let me know. There is a chance you may become emotional during the interview and that's completely normal. You have full freedom and permission to express them in this space, free of judgment. You also have the right to refuse to answer a question or ask me for clarification. If you ever feel like you want to stop the recording, we can take a break to process your emotions.

As noted in the consent form, your responses will remain anonymous. If I present this data at conferences or workshops, I will use the fake name of your choosing. We'll choose your pseudonym at the start of the interview today.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about my project or your participation in it?

Warming Up

1. How are you feeling today?

2. What name would you like me to refer to you as in my thesis and in any presentation that I give?

3. Do you need anything before we begin?

Adolescent Socialization and Experiences

1. When you were young, what messages, if any, did you receive about mental health/illness from your caretakers?

2. What messages did you receive about mental health and illness in your schooling environment?

a.   How do you define mental health?

b.   Did you or anyone you know ever utilize formal or informal mental health services? What were your thoughts about this experience?

3. In what ways did you experience racial discrimination growing up?

a.   What happened?

b.   What led you to believe that it was an experience of racial discrimination?

4. What did your caretakers show and tell you about race and racism?

> **PROBE:** *They might have told you about racism through explicit conversations, but "showing and telling" could also be through media, through the decorations they chose to put in the home, through trips you took, etc.*

a.   What did you learn about being Black in the U.S. growing up? Who taught you the most about race growing up? What is your earliest childhood memory related to race?

b.   What did it mean to be Black to you? Or, what did it mean to have a Black identity?

5. What did you learn about racism from your friends? In what ways did you and your friends encounter racial discrimination, especially in school? What did you think about those messages? How did you feel about the messages you received?

6. How were prepared or unprepared to experience racism and discrimination growing up? How were you prepared or unprepared to cope with your experiences?

7. How do you think you were prepared or unprepared to experience the stressful experiences that you noted in your survey when you were an adolescent? How did you think of those experiences when you were younger?

Opportunity for Check-In/Break

How are you feeling so far?

Would you like to take a short break? We can also continue if you feel comfortable.

Adulthood Socialization and Experiences

1. What is racism? What have you learned about racism in college?

a.   Tell me about a time when you experienced racism in college. What happened? What did you do? Or, how did you respond?

b.   In your view, what made this event an experience of racism?

c.   How has racism informed your understanding of what it means to be Black?

2. In your survey, you noted that you have personally experienced _____ (differs by interviewee).

How do you cope with these experiences in your everyday life? What do you do to take care of yourself?

a.   Do you participate in any sort of organizing/activism around the causes you care about? Why or why not? What does your work mean to you?

b.   Where do you turn for support?

c.   Do you have access to mental health services? If so, where is it/are they? Do you utilize them? For what? Why or why not?

d.   What have been your experiences with mental health services? What works well/what does not work so well?

e.   What are sources of support in your life with respect to coping with these stressful experiences?

3. In your life today, where do you encounter messages about what it means to be Black in America? What have these messages communicated to you about being Black? How do you think these messages have impacted you in your life?

<u>Debriefing and Resources-- -GROUNDING EXERCISES.</u>

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. We talked about a lot of really

sensitive information today and I want to check-in with you to see how you're doing? It

is normal to feel tired or overwhelmed after such a personal conversation. What can you

do to take care of yourself tonight and in the days to come? Who can you talk to and gain

support from?

Offer resources (paper sheet): CAPS, CAPS on-call

Appendix 1.1. Consent Form--Fall 2017

Title of the Research Study: *The [Black] Body Remembers: The Impact of Socialization on Black College Students' Perceptions of Race-based Trauma and Community Violence*

Principal Investigator and Emergency Contact: (name, address, phone and email)

Lydia George-Koku '18

500 College Ave, Swarthmore, PA, 19081

443.921.5146 (mobile)

lkoku1@swarthmore.edu

You are being asked to take part in a ~45-minute interview (longer or shorter) for a Swarthmore student's thesis. Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate or not to participate there will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Before you make a decision, you must read this consent from, which will inform you of the purpose of the interview and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. You do not have to make a decision now; you can take the consent document home and share it with friends, and/or family. If you do not understand what you are reading, do not sign it. Please ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in this form, or read the form to you. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you.

What is the purpose of the interview and what will I be doing?

The purpose of the interview is to gauge the socialization histories of 15 Black students at Swarthmore College, Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, and the University of Pennsylvania and to identify the ways they currently cope with experiences of racial trauma and general stress/trauma. Because you indicated that you would like to be interviewed during the survey process, you will be asked to partake in

a ~45-minute interview at an on-campus location of your choice. I thank you in advance for your participation.

If you consent to participate, you will meet with one interviewer, one time, and respond to a series of questions about racial/mental health socialization messages you received during childhood, messages you currently receive, and how you cope with stress or trauma you might have experienced or currently experience. You may find answering some of the questions upsetting, but we expect that this would not be different from the kinds of things you discuss with family or friends. **You may skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may end the interview at any time**.

The interview will be **audio recorded and transcribed.**

How will confidentiality be maintained, and my privacy be protected?

I will do my best to make sure that the personal information obtained during the course of this interview will be kept private. The information you will share with us if you participate in this study will be kept completely confidential to the full extent of the law. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file on my computer and only I will be able to see the survey or the interview you participated in. No one at Swarthmore College will be able to see your interview or even know whether you participated in this study. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed, the list linking your names to study numbers will be destroyed. Study findings will be presented only in summary form and your name would not be used in any report, thus guarding your identity.

Risks and Benefits

I do not foresee any risks involved with your participation in the interview.

You do not give up your legal rights by signing this form.

For emotional support, you may speak to me off-record at any point during the interview. You may also seek professional counseling at your on-campus Counseling Service. CAPS 24-7 on call number is available (610-328-7768)

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding your participation in this interview or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you should speak with the **Principal Investigator** listed on page one of this form.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of my department at Swarthmore College:

Professor Lee Smithey

Sociology and Anthropology

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore PA, USA

610-690-2064

lsmithe1@swarthmore.edu

By signing below, you are certifying that you are at least 18 years old and agree to be interviewed.

Signature _____ Date _____

Agreement to be Audio-Recorded:

I would like to record this interview. I will store the recording in a password-protected file on my computer (or phone) and will destroy any identifying information when my research is complete. If you do not agree to be recorded, I will simply write notes. By signing below, you are agreeing to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature _____ Date _____

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

Appendix 2: Case Review Template

PSEUDO:

      INSTITUTION:

      CLASS YEAR:

      INTERVIEW DATE AND TIME:

      LOCATION:

      INTERVIEW LENGTH:

GENERAL SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

KEY THEMES:

ADOLESCENT SOCIALIZATION HISTORY:

ADOLESCENT RACE-BASED TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES:

MEANING-MAKING OF TRAUMA/STRESS DURING ADOLESCENCE:

Naming matters. Note any hesitance toward naming their experiences as trauma.

CURRENT SOCIALIZATION AROUND RACE AND MENTAL HEALTH:

RECENT RACE-BASED EXPERIENCES:

MEANING-MAKING OF TRAUMA/STRESS DURING ADULTHOOD:

Attributions, coping, outcomes

COPING MECHANISMS ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Note maladaptive or adaptive coping strategies.

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