Check for updates

Article

Journal of Black Studies
1–25
© The Author(s) 2024
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/00219347241233772
journals.sagepub.com/home/jbs

Rage In (and Out) the Cage: Black Students' Negotiation of Safety

Ashley J. Carpenter[1], Tita Feraud-King[2], Taylor Lewis[3], Kat J. Stephens-Peace[4], Pempho Chinkondenji[5], Emmanuela Stanislaus[6], and Chrystal George Mwangi[7]

Abstract

This study explored the dynamic nature of 42 Black undergraduate and graduate students' senses of safety as it relates to their college campuses due to the shifting vulnerabilities exposed in the current political and societal climate. We sought to make meaning of the pervasive threat to Black students' safety related to their campus, which is linked to and transcends physical proximity to the campus. This line of inquiry offers the chance to construct a more dynamic understanding of safety than traditionally defined by institutions, which creates avenues for more thoughtful and equitable practice. In this work, we explore (1) how anti-Blackness informs student identities and (2) strategies used to protect against white rage on and off campus. Our findings and analytical approach provide new ways to theorize and strategize policies and practices to ensure Black students' safety.

[1]Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, USA
[2]College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, USA
[3]University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
[4]Oakland University, Rochester, MI
[5]University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, USA
[6]Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA
[7]George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Ashley J. Carpenter, Appalachian State University, 151 College St, ASU Box 32086, Boone, NC 28608-0001, USA.
Email: Carpenteraj4@appstate.edu

Plain Language Summary
Scholars have proposed various ways to help Black students feel safe on their college campuses; however, there are still racist systems that exist both on and off campus, which hinder their sense of safety. This paper explores some of these strategies and how they can be improved. While there are existing models that discuss campus safety, they fail to consider the unique experiences of Black students and do not address racial issues. The research involved interviewing 42 Black undergraduate and graduate students across America to understand how they navigate and maintain a sense of safety on campus. To understand the participant's experiences, interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform and lasted 60 to 90 min. Our findings explore (1) how anti-Blackness informs student identities and (2) strategies used to protect against white rage on and off campus.

Keywords
White rage, safety, Black identity, campus policing

Introduction

Traditional understandings of campus safety have included aspects of campus policing, sexual assault and harassment, and crime (Stamps & Mastro, 2020). However, within this study, we argue that how a student defines safety and feel safe is inevitably connected to their social identities and the systems that serve to oppress and/or privilege them. This study troubled the notion of campus safety for Black collegians, particularly noting the evolution of the definition within the 2020 resurgence of national media coverage on anti-Black police brutality and the lasting impact of the Covid-19 pandemic—often coined as dual pandemics (Carpenter et al., 2022). Because of the ongoing impact of the dual pandemics, we find it essential to resituate and specifically racialize the notions of safety for Black students to explore how their physical and psychological experiences manifest on college campuses. As research explores Black students' varied experiences on PWIs [predominately white institutions] (Ohito & Brown, 2021), our work is very timely in the era of anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in higher education. From the repeal of Affirmative Action, the implementation of at least 40 bills, and seven laws of anti-DEI legislation across the country to the overall

decline of enrollment for all institutions (Bushaw & Garner, 2023), it is even more challenging for Black students to navigate these spaces of white rage.

White Rage

Using Anderson's (2016) work we situate white rage as:

> "not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies, it wreaks havoc subtly. . . It's not the Klan. White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power. It can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively" (Anderson, 2016, p. 3).

These policies that undermine Black student achievement and advancement are examples of white rage, and are often created to sanction the violence that accompanies white rage to seem legitimate—which became ever present during the dual pandemics. And as the dual pandemics provided a collective national awareness of the pervasive anti-Blackness—the beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviors of individuals and institutions that devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people (Dumas, 2016)—Black students were redefining what entities of their life they could exist in safely, including their campus environments. Therefore, we were brought to this work to uncover the dynamic nature of 42 Black undergraduate and graduate students' senses of safety as it relates to their college campus and the shifting vulnerabilities exposed in the current political and societal climate. We are guided by the following questions:

- How does the sociopolitical climate impact how Black students navigate society and campus in relation to safety?
- How do Black students perceive anti-Blackness impacting their embodiment of Black identity?

Our study is informed by the adapted socioecological framework of school safety (ASFSS) and Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit). Through utilizing the BlackCrit and ASFSS theoretical framework, our research interrogates and challenges traditional notions of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that do not adequately address structural and cultural forms of racism and fail to sufficiently examine the experiences of Black students (Dumas & ross, 2016). There is sparse literature and an absence of theoretical models that explore students' perceptions of safety (*see* Braaten et al., 2022; Schafer et al., 2018) and the enactment of policies through a racialized lens. Our

analytical approach creates room for new forms of theorizing and unique lenses for higher education institutions to strategize ways of improving policy and practice to ensure their students feel safe. Consequently, it was important for this study to synthesize and formulate a comprehensive understanding of student safety that holistically examines students' experiences, including their racial identities. Ultimately, through this work, we were able to have a deeper understanding of (1) how anti-Blackness informs student identities and (2) strategies used to protect against white rage on and off campus.

Black Students' Perceptions and Experiences of (Un)Safety

In this study, race is viewed as a social construct that refers to the shared meanings, values, and cultural practices that contribute to the perceptions and reactions of those inside and outside particular racial groups (Milner, 2007; Solórzano et al., 2000). We find it important to contextualize race as our campuses are becoming increasingly racially diverse. And the more Black students on campus, the higher the perceived racial tension among students (Hurtado, 1992; Schafer et al., 2018). More racially diverse campuses have a higher potential for ethnoviolence (Fenske & Gordon, 1998). Ethnoviolence describes an act or attempted act motivated by group prejudice and intended to cause physical or psychological injury (Maffini & Dillard, 2022). Retaliatory hate crimes occur when white people defend "white spaces" in an attempt to preserve their "territory" (Stotzer & Hossellman, 2012, p. 28)—which is also known as white rage. White rage is the detrimental, discriminatory, dangerous effects of various legislative, social, and political measures on Black communities since slavery (Anderson, 2016). Institutions' misrecognition leads to Black students' distrust of them to follow up and address hate crimes on campus, so they are often underreported, further normalizing campus ethnoviolence and these unsafe environments (Stotzer & Hossellman, 2012).

Can Campus Police Keep Black Students Safe?

Black students are more likely to be policed through formal structures (i.e., campus police) or informal structures (e.g., student, faculty, staff). For example, Smith et al. (2020) found that Black college students feel "out of place" or "fitting the description" of an illegitimate member of the campus community (p. 1196). Therefore, Black students are viewed as perpetual outsiders who are either unfit for rigorous academic pursuits or undeserving of a place in higher education (Corbin et al., 2018; Dizon, 2023; Patton, 2016; Smith et

al., 2020). Notably, while Black students are only 6% of the student body across America, they account for up to 40% of officer-initiated police stops on campus (Cole, 2022). Campus police departments were created to protect (white) property and, as a result, enact anti-Black violence. Campus police departments were formed to protect the campus from “Black crime” as both Black residents and students “encroached” in universities’ neighborhoods (Chase & Suriel, 2020, p. 23). Since the formation of university and city police partnerships, Black student activism has been disrupted through state-sanctioned violence to siege campus control. Black students are hyper-surveilled and treated as suspects who must be ready to present student identification at all times and are often victims of police brutality (Chase & Suriel, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

ASFSS

The ASFSS was developed by Lacoe (2015) in their research on perceptions of the safety of Black and Brown youth in K-12 schools. Within this framework, interactions with peers, teachers, staff, administration, and school police directly impact youth’s “perceptions of racial tension and/or harmony in a school” (Lacoe, 2015, p. 144). These school actors are nested within (and impact) the school environment and culture of safety and comprised of theoretical work surrounding youth development (Bronfenbrenner, 2004), educational resilience (Connell et al., 1994), bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2011), and school safety in an international context (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2009). While ASFSS was developed for youth in K-12 schools, we find its layering and connectedness of society, local community, and school environment to inform perceptions of safety relevant to our study and adaptable to the higher education and graduate level context.

Scholarship has shown that Black students are harmed by institutional racism in schools (i.e., discriminatory policies and practices, incongruence of their culture in the classroom, and peer/instructor discrimination) that regularly threaten Black students’ safety (Juvonen et al., 2006; Lacoe, 2015). One of the challenges is that many of these traditional safety models and frameworks do not account for how racism impacts the outcomes of Black students in schools. For example, Cohen et al.’s (2009) school climate model for safety—one of the most cited scholars in the field—discusses student safety through physical and social-emotional safety. As it is important to understand physical safety factors (i.e., protection from violence and physical harm) and social-emotional safety (i.e., being comfortable expressing

emotions in the classroom), their scholarship does not explicitly examine the external factors that impact Black students. This framework advocates for tenets of "fairness," "tolerance," and "equal treatment" (Cohen et al., 2009); however, it references "evaded racism" which is a "superficial approach to reform that centers whiteness rather than improve the educational opportunities for students of color" (Kohli et al., 2017, p. 186). Scholars like Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) mention diversity (i.e., SES, sexuality, gender, age) when conceptualizing their safety framework, the explicit tenet of race is missing. Often, when race was discussed or utilized within their frameworks, it was under the guise of interpersonal situations (i.e., bullying) and not factors that holistically examined the system notions of anti-Blackness—which limits the impact of racism to individual level and not a larger systemic issue.

BlackCrit

Although ASFSS provides a framing for safety in educational spaces, we layer in a BlackCrit as a metatheory or worldview to elucidate how power, privilege, and anti-blackness impact (un)safe campus spaces for Black collegians. BlackCrit is a critical theorization of Blackness that "confronts the specificity of anti-Blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 416). BlackCrit does not have explicit tenets, but Dumas and ross (2016) articulate several framings and assumptions that guide its theorization, "anti-Blackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life" and focuses not solely on racism, but "a broader antagonistic relationship between Blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" (p. 429). BlackCrit gives voice to how anti-Blackness enables university and societal practices, policies, and actions that result in Black students' suffering and coping mechanisms for survival.

Intentionally situating the ASFSS framework within BlackCrit was critical to the study, as we found that many safety frameworks use colorblind assessments that obscure the holistic experiences of Black students needs within their schools (see Cohen et al., 2009; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). As presented throughout the literature, the deficit notions and stereotypes of Black students and discriminatory policies and practices (Ohito & Brown, 2021; Pirtle et al., 2024) demonstrate a link between how campus climate threatens Black students' safety. Not explicitly embedding race within safety

frameworks does not account for the ways that institutional racism and anti-Blackness threaten the safety and overall outcomes of Black students on their campuses.

Methods

As a research team collective, our qualitative methodology considered the impact of social identities on Black students' perceptions and experiences, whereas amplifying Black student voices was influential in the study's design (Dumas & ross, 2016). We employed qualitative inquiry and analysis in the current study as it allowed for us to collaboratively interpret Black students' "experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24).

Study Recruitment and Sample

We recruited a sample of participants who: (a) identified and were perceived racially as Black, (b) were 18 years of age or older, (c) were currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program, and (d) completed at least one academic year of college in the United States. As we acknowledge that Black racial identity is not a monolith, we deliberately recruited participants who identified and were perceived as Black; this included bi-racial, multi-racial, mono-racial, African, African diaspora, and foreign-born students within our sample. As some self-identified Black people experience an incongruence of how their Blackness is perceived versus how they identify due to our dichotomous system of racial socialization, it was important that our participants felt a sense of alignment within these notions of their identity (Davenport, 2016; Khanna, 2010).

Participants were targeted via recruitment emails distributed to predominantly Black-serving campus organizations (i.e., National Society of Black Engineers and Black Graduate Student Associations), social media networks (i.e., X/Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram), and broader academic mailing lists (i.e., Black Studies, Higher Education, and Engineering programs). We also used snowball sampling, as we recruited Black people in our networks and asked participants to pass information to theirs (Emerson, 2015). The recruitment flyer invited students to take an online survey ($n = 92$ respondents) from August 2020 through February 2021. This process yielded 42 interview participants (see Table 1 for participant demographics). As a token of gratitude for our participant's time and labor, they received a $20 Amazon gift card incentive.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Table.

Pseudonym	Undergrad/Graduate	Campus location/Institution type	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Abby	Grad	Mid-Atlantic/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Alex	Grad	South/PWI	Black/Nigerian	Cisgender man
Aliyah	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Amari	Grad	Northeast/PWI	Black/Uganda	Cisgender woman
Amber	Grad	Northeast/Ivy League	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Angela	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Anita	Grad	West/PWI	Mixed-Race/African American & Mexican	Cisgender woman
Brianna	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Cassandra	Grad	Northeast/PWI	Black/Nigerian	Cisgender Woman
Chantel	Grad	South/PWI	Mixed Race/African American & European	Cisgender woman
Christine	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Chrystal	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Deja	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
DeVonna	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Ebony	Grad	Mid-Atlantic/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Ghislaine	Grad	South/PWI	Black/Uganda	Cisgender woman
Glenda	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Greer	Undergrad	Mid-Atlantic/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Imani	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Jada	Grad	South/PWI	Mixed Race/African American & European	Cisgender woman
James	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender Man
Jenny	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Jessica	Undergrad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Gender Queer/Non-binary
Jocelyn	Grad	South/PWI	Black/Virgin Islands	Cisgender woman

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Pseudonym	Undergrad/Graduate	Campus location/Institution type	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Jordan	Grad	South/PWI	Black/ Ethiopian	Cisgender Man
Justin	Undergrad	East/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender man
Kathy	Undergrad	West/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Kelly	Grad	Midwest/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender man
Kennedy	Grad	Northeast/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender man
Kiara	Grad	South/Med School	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Lisa	Undergrad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Miranda	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Maurice	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender man
Max	Grad	South/PWI	Black/Curaçao	Trans* man
Melissa	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Michelle	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Rachel	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Ramona	Grad	South / HBCU	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Raquel	Grad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Raven	Undergrad	South/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Ruby	Grad	East/PWI	Black/Cameroon	Cisgender man
Timetria	Grad	East/PWI	Black/African American	Cisgender woman
Victoria	Undergrad	South/PWI	Mixed Race/Nigerian & European	Cisgender woman

Data Collection

After completing an initial demographic survey, participants were invited to participate in a 60–90-min interview via Zoom. The interviews explored themes of Black perceptions and identity, political climate, police brutality, Covid-19, racial justice movements, and perceptions of anti-Black racism and discrimination in higher education. Interviews utilized a semi-structured protocol, including questions like: “How do you define Blackness?” and “What, if anything, would you like to see happen (or have seen happen) on your campus regarding their response to anti-Black police brutality?” All interviews were recorded and transcribed professionally, with pseudonyms maintaining confidentiality.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, we used a combination of inductive, deductive, and focused coding approaches to structure our analysis using the qualitative software NVivo+. Deductive coding was our first cycle, which included 20 deductive codes reflecting concepts from our interview protocol and the BlackCrit frameworks (Dumas & ross, 2016; Lacoe, 2015). Some of these codes included: Anti-Black Racism, Race and Academic Achievement, and Manifestations of Unsafety. We created a codebook that included our deductive codes’ definitions to ensure analysis consistency across our research team. Subsequently, we performed a cross-node analysis by examining the emergent common themes across interviews. Through this process, we identified an emergent theme, which became the focus of this manuscript, on Black students’ perceptions and sense of safety. Moving into our second inductive coding round, we focused on participants’ definitions and constructions of the notion of safety—using the AFSS framework and safety literature. This analytic approach allowed us to engage the theoretical framework and literature while remaining open to new and emerging themes. Lastly, we used focused coding to explore the most frequent or significant codes from the inductive codes generated from our memos (Saldaña, 2016). Focused coding also allowed us to compare codes across all participant interviews for comparability and transferability of the data (Gonzalez, 2016).

Team Positionality and Trustworthiness

This research team ($n=7$) is comprised of diverse Black faculty ($n=2$), graduate students ($n=4$), and an education practitioner ($n=1$) from institutions across the United States. As a team, we acknowledge that our Blackness is

not a monolith, and our backgrounds and experiences inform our positionalities and engagement with the world. Therefore, in correspondence with the literature and our own experiences, we knew that our members would have experienced similar racialized issues on their campuses as our participants. We had biweekly research meetings to discuss our positionalities (particularly around constructing our Blackness), which assisted our reflexive process (Sankofa, 2023). These research team meetings also served as a necessary space for Black community and healing as we unpacked the anti-Black racial trauma that many of our participants narrated during interviews and what we read in transcripts during data analysis. Having diverse intersecting identities allowed the data to be filtered through multiple perspectives, aligning with investigator triangulation. We offered feedback to one another as we developed drafts of the findings, engaged in discussions regarding emerging themes, and provided data-based evidence to support interpretations. Finally, we used thick descriptions wherever possible to ensure that the reader could clearly evaluate the connections between a participant's experience, our interpretations of that experience, and the broader conclusions we reached. After each interview, each member completed a post-interview memo to reflect on the experience and begin the initial analysis process.

Findings

This study explored how 42 Black undergraduate and graduate students made meaning and defined their understanding and experiences of safety on and off campus. ASFSS and BlackCrit frameworks addressed students' experiences through a liberatory frame to determine (1) how anti-Blackness informs student identities and their (2) strategies used to protect against white rage on and off campus.

Anti-Blackness and Identity Formation

Anti-Blackness was evident in the ideologies and institutionalized spaces our students engaged in, which inevitably impacted their perceptions of their own racial identity. Jada, a graduate student attending a PWI in the South, talked about the importance of being hyperaware and careful for "simply living while Black." She continued, "my perception of my race has been heightened. It's been highlighted and reinforced in my brain that I need to be careful, and that I am Black, no matter what. I am always perceived as Black." Understanding these heightened perceptions of Black identity was important in this study, particularly noting the presumed dichotomy of racial identities.

Ghislaine, a Ugandan-native graduate student at a Southern PWI, discussed how anti-Blackness presumes that Blackness is monolithic:

> I feel like Black people and Blackness are seen perceived as a monolithic identity. And so, the nuances of being Black in the U.S. are not honored. It's like "black" vs. "white"—opposite of something. So, in the broader U.S. society, I would say that [being Black is] seen as something that is not to be desired. Something that is to be ashamed of, or something that's to be afraid to live in or be a part of. It's almost like you shouldn't be proud to be Black. And while anti-Blackness, discrimination and racism are global—it is important to understand the difference in Black communities.

While some researchers discuss that Black immigrants navigate racism more "successfully" due to the protective nature of their immigrant identity (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), others indicate that these students also feel the negative implications of racism, similar to Ghislaine (Feraud-King & Mwangi, 2022). Miranda, a Muslim STEM graduate student in the South, also discussed the intersections of her Black identity, "like for one, my Black skin—and for two, being Muslim American; because there is a narrative that's attached to that. And the spaces I go into, I've walked across campus, and people stare. . . there's high tensions. There's definitely a lot of stereotypes that are also attached to me automatically before I even open my mouth." Miranda experiences anti-Blackness through an Islamophobia and anti-Muslim lens, which is also part of a broader oppressive system within a global context (i.e., the historical relationship of Muslims and Christians and the anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration), which impacts how she constructs and perceives her intersectional identities.

For many students, these systemically imbalanced and oppressive power dynamics impacted how they talked about their identities. Justin, an undergraduate student on the East Coast, also reflected on these power dynamics, "people who just have so much more power than you, power that's given to them, not necessarily their power, have so much influence on things. Even the way I view myself is through their lens. . . it's weird." He continued discussing the impact of the evolution of structural anti-Blackness on his identity,

> Obviously, the definition of Black has changed, but this racism stuff hasn't. It's embedded in everything. . . policies, school systems, everything. It's thinking that a racist cop killing a Black man is just a "one-off" and not understanding that it's not just on one individual but a whole system. Yet, we still continue fighting and educating. . . like that hasn't changed. And that's my definition of being Black, the constant strength and growth.

Even though many of our students enacted resilience through horrific acts of violence and domestic terrorism, we see that their Black identity is situated in a consequential, complex, and contested space (Sefa Dei, 2017).

Jenny, a graduate student attending a southern PWI, discussed these conflicted tensions she had with her Black identity. For Jenny, the messages surrounding anti-Blackness and whiteness were pertinent:

> White supremacy tells me to limit myself. It's not actually what I feel. It's like I internalized it. Global anti-blackness isn't just enacted in a certain way. But also, being Black isn't just one certain way. Every Black person gets to decide what that looks like for them. And I'm trying to understand what my Black identity means for me outside of what a white lens and whiteness has told me. I think being socialized with certain stereotypes and certain narratives about what is Black. I think we receive messages about "how to be white" or have a "closer proximity to whiteness." Even for me, this is a lifelong process I am trying to unlearn and un-work.

This unlearning process within structures of anti-Blackness was, unfortunately, a challenge for many participants due to negative projections of their identities through news, media, and other cultural messages within our sociopolitical climate. Notably, the development of a positive racial self-identity is found to be a protective factor against internalizing racism and navigating racism and anti-Blackness (García-Louis & Cortes, 2023).

Black Pride "Co-Existing" With Anti-Blackness. While many students discussed the challenge of systemic racism and anti-Blackness influencing their identities, they also addressed the reclamation of Black pride—an essential tenet of the BlackCrit framework used within the study. Like Jenny and Kennedy, Michelle, a Southern graduate student, was rediscovering her strength within Black identity. She reflected:

> A lot of society is built on Black and African-American culture and people, and that just shows our strength even more. Over the past few years, I've been more conscious about how and what I'm learning about myself. What media I feed I listened to, and really taking the time to do more self-care and learn about where I come from and what I identify as. But I will say there is a history of resilience, persistence, and strength through the misunderstanding and marginalization. We are being used for all these great things that benefit others, with nothing in return.

Jessica, a gender-queer undergraduate student from the South, talked about how "Blackness was twofold" noting our contributions, "I think we've gotten

to a point in American history where folks do recognize the creative contributions of Black people to the culture. I think, even the most racist people, talk about how we contribute. But I think that Blackness in the U.S. is still see as the bottom of the barrel. You know, everybody wants our rhythm, but not our blues."

Abby, an MBA student attending a PWI in the Mid-Atlantic region, discussed Black fortitude throughout time. "I wasn't born yet, but I would say that we have maintained aggression since the 1960s and 70s. We continue to learn and evolve as a people." These students highlight the powerful impact of Black people throughout various social, political, historical, and economic movements. Yet, as these students talked about being strong and resilient to navigate their various ecosystems, this tenacity and grit would not be necessary to survive if our sociopolitical climate were not racially hostile and combative.

Protecting Against White Rage

As the students discussed how their experiences with anti-Blackness impacted their perceptions of their Black identity, they also talked about how unsafe they felt in these raging white spaces. According to Anderson (2016), "white rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly" (p. 3). Participants in this study furthered Anderson's examination by highlighting the covert and overt forms of violence that manifested in university policies, classroom practices, curricula, social engagements, and many other university activities. To protect themselves from such forms of oppression, participants discussed multileveled approaches to confronting legacies of systemic racism by pushing back and resisting forms of supremacy at the individual, community, and institutional levels.

"Protect and Serve" is Purely Subjective. Participants described several instances of institutionalized anti-Blackness and the tangible strategies they implemented to safeguard against others and for themselves. Amari, a Ugandan grad student in the Northeast, discussed how she had been pulled over by campus police twice and kept her license within reach. She said, "I just know if the police stop me, I keep my hand on the steering wheel and just say "yes sir" to everything." Even though Amari indicated that she hated engaging in these "respectability politics," it was a way to ensure her physical safety by "abiding by the rules." Using respectability politics as a metric for safekeeping had students engage in self-editing to downplay or reject stereotypes of their identities (Lane, 2019).

James, a STEM graduate student in the South also discussed his clothing choices as a safekeeping strategy, "I only wear campus gear with my school logo. That way [campus police] know I'm a student." Unfortunately, these students felt that they must change their appearance or how they engaged on campus not to be perceived as a threat, particularly to campus police. Amber, an Engineering Ph.D. student, also engaged in a similar strategy on her Ivy League campus:

> If I'm not wearing something that says [current Ivy League] or [undergraduate Ivy League], then I probably just look like another Black person. So, what assumptions are [the police] going to make about me? Or will wearing [Ivy League] hoodie even helped me if I had an interaction with the police, because there have been students on campus at [current Ivy League] and [undergraduate Ivy League] who have had negative experiences with police. So, I just feel like, I can never feel safe when it comes to police.

For these participants, campus police were not there to serve as safe-keepers, but as an entity, they must comfort and ease. Glenn and Johnson (2012) talk about how Black students may find themselves disassociating or mirroring to separate themselves from harmful tropes when engaging with the police. This process involves attempts to blend in with the dominant culture by consciously avoiding stereotypical behavior when in the presence of white people. Even though these students recognize and trouble the notions of respectability politics, they intentionally use it as a strategy to keep safe on their campuses.

Jocelyn is from the Virgin Islands, and while attending graduate school in the South, she became more conservative in her outreach to her local police department, "I probably won't call them because I don't know how they would react. I don't trust them. I don't trust the police." And as Amber talked about the internal conflict of changing her attire at her Ivy League, she also echoed these notions of distrust of police:

> If someone tried to break into my home, do I feel safe calling the police for help. Knowing that they've arrived at people's homes and killed them when they were the ones asking them for help? Like not really, I don't want to. It makes me feel like it's up to me to protect myself, and that I don't really have police to rely on. And maybe that's not fair to the entire police system, but that's just how I feel about it.

Glenda, a graduate student attending a Midwestern PWI, also talked about this feeling of mistrust due to the experiences of systemic white rage, "it's just a lack of trust in law enforcement, which I feel is pervasive through the Black community, though. I don't want to speak for the Black community,

but we have been conditioned not to trust law enforcement. And with the frequency of these events popping up every day for the last several years, it's just created an even increased lack of trust with law enforcement. Just no accountability." In understanding the policy implications of white rage, the law often shields police officers from accountability. This reinforces policing that harms Black people—whereas Black people, who are 12.5% of the national population, represent 33% of people arrested for nonfatal violent crimes (Brown & Lloyd, 2023). This reciprocal nature of accountability for police officers from Glenda is important due to her previous role in law enforcement. She reflected on her experiences,

> When are we going to get to a point where it's not okay for you to use your gun and badge to kill? What's interesting for me, is that I worked in law enforcement for a little bit about 15 or 16 years ago. And we would talk about how guys who were police officers would be two different individuals. So, somebody before would come in and swipe their badge and become a different person.

These narratives are important in considering how Black people are navigating anti-Blackness and policies that situate white rage. Utilizing Glenda's narratives, we understand that some agree that having Black police officers may assist the distrust that Black communities may feel toward the police (Pittaro, 2023). However, we know that Black officers also murder Black people like Tyre Nichols. Again, resituating police brutality is not just about individual racists but a part of a dangerous anti-Black system. Resulting in our participants refusing to engage with police in order to feel safe, even in unsafe or dangerous scenarios.

Collectivity Against Rage. For other students, their emotional safekeeping centered on Black collectivity. Greer, an undergrad student attending her local PWI in the Mid-Atlantic region, indicated that collective activism and selective engagement is a powerful strategy that decenters anti-Blackness,

> I think the small changes that have to happen is within organizations and people speaking out more. And the promotion of having those hard conversations has empowered us to speak out against [anti-Blackness]. And not just protest and march, but being very intentional about where we spend our money, who we engage with, how we engage with others. Being much more intentional about what we allow in our space, and what type of activities we're going to participate in.

Anita also discussed the importance of empowering the Black community through economic and social gain. As a self-identified "Blaxican" (Black and

Mexican descent) from the West Coast, she also talked about the importance of the "Black dollar":

> I do appreciate that there is a stir right now to buy "Black-owned," and that makes me really happy. I do not believe in capitalism, but I believe that while we are living in under capitalism and operating within capitalism, it's important to make sure that we're uplifting the small businesses because it's their livelihood. And I see some white people who are also "buying Black" too. It's important for everyone to understand our cause. But even more important for Black people to be more together during this time.

In agreement with Anita's thinking, for every dollar spent on Black-owned businesses, the economic effect feels like a five-dollar investment, as that dollar gets recycled in the Black community (Kolade, 2023). For many of our students, including Ruby, this collectivity amongst Black people was "empowering. I feel much stronger because I feel like Black people are uniting. And I feel like I have such a support system. I feel much more empowered to speak out against injustices." As a Cameroonian graduate student in the South, Ruby echoed the importance of community collectivity. He continued, "I think of the FUBU [clothing brand] 'for us, by us' *laughs.* Because it really is up to us." In this study, students identified ways to position themselves to counter white rage that occurs when Black people gain social power, utilizing foundational tenets of BlackCrit and ASFSS rooted in community. This community and solidarity is a vessel of liberation from racial oppression and a key to global Black collectivity. As these students discussed the struggles of their shared identities, as many shared, that is not the only facet of their collectivity—but the preservation of joy, empowerment, and pride.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that Black students were not situating their experiences within a desire for inclusion and belonging, which are often the constructs colleges and universities use to describe initiatives to improve the experiences of racially marginalized students (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Strayhorn, 2019). Instead, the Black students in our study used a very different baseline of need—they wanted physical, mental, and emotional protection within their educational spaces and experiences (MacIsaac & MacKay, 2018; Maffini & Dillard, 2022). Participants described strategies for avoiding anti-Black violence on their campuses or being perceived as a threat due to their race, such as wearing attire with their university logo or not driving/driving only at certain times. However, these efforts at respectability politics

took a toll on students in restricting and shrinking themselves as a protective measure, which they knew was not guaranteed to work and appeared to contribute to racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2020). Yet it is important to note that while these assimilation practices have usually been enacted by people of color in order to gain access to white culture, our students did so in order to not die at the hands of the police. For many of these students, their Black pride and resilience was not just about surviving difficult situations, but an intentional act of defiance and resistance to systemic oppression.

Our findings demonstrate how Black students navigate the negative perceptions and treatments due to this anti-Blackness is, unfortunately, a skill that they have needed to hone on their campuses and in the U.S. racial climate. The AFSS framework leads us to center the importance of universities situating any anti-racist work within the local community environment, policy arena, and socio-historical context that universities operate within (Lacoe, 2015). Our findings also show that students' experiences with anti-Blackness intersect with other marginalities and multiple forms of oppression experienced via gender, sexuality, nativity/nationality, ethnicity, religion, and other social locations. Thus, we argue that anti-Blackness is not a singular form of oppression and must be resisted at the multiple and nuanced pain points at which diverse Black students experience suffering (Dumas & ross, 2016). As anti-Blackness and the threat to Black (student) lives have not been treated as a crisis in higher education, it does not disallow Black people within these spaces to continue to hope, be joyful, and imagine.

Implications

As several models address the navigation of student safety on and off campus, many of them do not racialize or consider the racial experiences of students within their models (*see* Cohen et al., 2009; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). Colorblind frameworks cannot comprehensively analyze Black students' experiences, nor can they account for the insidious and multifaceted ways that institutional racism regularly threatens the safety and outcomes of Black students in school. When colorblind frameworks are used to inform instruments for assessing school safety, the experiences of Black students can become obscured in ways that leave gaps in our understanding of Black students' outcomes and needs. Adopting a safety framework that explicitly addresses Black students would be the best way to meet their needs while navigating anti-Blackness, which has never been created before. Future research examining the safety experiences of Black students should also include the academic, social, and psychological reactions to campus safety issues, which would also be fruitful in shaping prevention and intervention programing. And as there is data to show that there is over-policing in schools

(see Dizon, 2023), we see the importance of developing a relationship between police and higher education institutions that engage with Black students. Campus and local police can partner with Black student organizations and provide trainings on protecting themselves against instances of rage. For example, there could be workshops specifically for Black students when they are harassed and accosted by law enforcement officers. Or intervention trainings for the community on how to intervene when Black students are harassed and accosted by law enforcement officers, which pushes against these tropes of lip service to actionable steps that support Black communities. Efforts like these could collaboratively develop officer-student-based protocols that mitigate many colorblind policies.

Limitations

Although this study achieved its outlined objectives surrounding the research questions, there are some limitations associated with the work. We tried to recruit diverse participants; however, most of our sample consisted of cisgender graduate women. In acknowledging this phenomenon, we extend the findings to address the needs of Black graduate students while understanding the implications of Black women on campuses, particularly noting that there are more women enrolled in higher education programs than men, including in the Black community. This is particularly important as there are distinct differences in how women enact safety precautions and assess threatening situations than men (Logan & Walker, 2021). It is also important to note that our participants attended various institution types (e.g., Ivy Leagues, PWIs, MSIs) across geographical locations, which could also impact how they engaged with their campuses and their conceptualizations of safety. Yet, we must acknowledge the anti-Black rhetoric among all these institution types (Darrington, 2023; Pirtle et al., 2024). Additionally, the sample included undergraduate and graduate students from various professional degree programs (i.e., Ph.D., MB.A., M.A.) and fields (i.e., STEM, humanities, education). As it is important to recognize the differences within these fields and degree stages, we view this as a highlight to show some of the ubiquitous themes based on race, as many students discussed instances they encountered throughout their complete academic trajectory. Although this research is not necessarily generalizable, we hope that scholars have insight into how students navigate anti-Blackness on their campuses and within society.

Conclusion

From historical exclusionary practices to contemporary racist policies (i.e., white rage), broader societal anti-Black violence and racial justice

movements have blurred the lines between the U.S. and the campus racial climate (George Mwangi et al., 2018). Students within this study, were seeing police brutality and hyper-surveillance of Black bodies, among other forms of anti-Blackness, reflected on national news and in nuanced ways on their college campuses. Ultimately, they did not view their campuses as a place of refuge from the anti-Blackness of broader society or as a place where they could be authentically in their Blackness, but as a mirror of anti-Blackness in broader society. As some participants expressed concern that campus police were not there to protect Black people but to protect the campus from Black people. Their concerns are not unfounded as Black students comprise 40% of officer-initiated stops on college campuses (Cole, 2022), and historically, campus police departments were often explicitly and/or implicitly developed to protect the campus from crime that could seep in from surrounding local [read Black] towns (Chase & Suriel, 2020). Without a critical examination of the enforcement practices of police and acknowledgment of their history of racism, anti-Blackness, and white rage will continue to reproduce an environment based on law and order rather than safety and joy.

Acknowledgments

We thank the Black students that participated in our study for sharing their voices and providing the necessary insight into issues that need to be explored.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Ashley J. Carpenter https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5594-9537

References

Anderson, C. (2016). *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. Bloomsbury.

Braaten, C. N., Tsai, L. C.-F., & Vaughn, M. S. (2022). Student perceptions of campus safety: Testing the vulnerability and disorder models. *Security Journal*, *35*(1), 59–81. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-020-00263-1

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2004). Ecological models of human development. In M. Gauvain & M. Cole (Eds.), *Readings on the development of Children* (4th ed., pp. 3–9). Macmillan.

Brown, M. C., & Lloyd, C. (2023). *Black Americans less confident, satisfied with local police*. Gallup.com. https://news.gallup.com/poll/511064/black-americans-less-confident-satisfied-local-police.aspx

Bushaw, E., & Garner, E. (2023). *State Anti-DEI Initiatives explained*. Perkins Coie. https://www.perkinscoie.com/en/news-insights/state-anti-dei-initiatives-explained.html

Carpenter, A. J., Stephens-Peace, K. J., Feraud-King, P., Lewis, T., Chinkondenji, P., Ohiri, K., & Mwangi, C. G. (2022). Impact that transcends proximity: Black college students traversing multiple pandemics. *Journal of Negro Education*, *91*(3), 366–380.

Chase, R. T., & Suriel, Y. (2020). *Black lives matter on campus—Universities must rethink reliance on campus policing and prison labor*. African American Intellectual History Society. https://www.aaihs.org/black-lives-matter-on-campus-universities-must-rethink-reliance-on-campus-policing-and-prison-labor/

Cohen, J., Mccabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, *111*(1), 180–213.

Cole, E. R. (2022). *The campus color line: College presidents and the struggle for Black Freedom*. Princeton University Press.

Connell, J. P., Spencer, M. B., & Aber, J. L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in African-American youth: Context, self, action, and outcomes in school. *Child Development*, *65*, 493–506.

Corbin, N. A., Smith, W. A., & Garcia, J. R. (2018). Trapped between justified anger and being the strong Black woman: Black college women coping with racial battle fatigue at historically and predominantly White institutions. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *31*, 626–643.

Darrington, P. (2023). *What good are HBCUs if they mirror the anti-blackness of the US?*. Prism. https://prismreports.org/2023/02/27/what-good-are-hbcus-mirroring-anti-blackness/

Davenport, L. D. (2016). The role of gender, class, and religion in biracial Americans' racial labeling decisions. *American Sociological Review*, *81*, 57–84.

Dizon, J. P. M. (2023). Protecting the university, policing race: A case study of campus policing. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *16*(4), 410–424.

Dumas, M. J. (2016). Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse. *Theory Into Practice*, *55*(1), 11–19.

Dumas, M. J., & ross, K. M. (2016). "Be real Black for me" Imagining BlackCrit in education. *Urban Education*, *51*(4), 415–442. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085916628611

Emerson, R. W. (2015). Convenience sampling, random sampling, and snowball sampling: How does sampling affect the validity of research? *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *109*(2), 164–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482x1510900215

Faircloth, B. S., & Hamm, J. V. (2005). Sense of belonging among high school students representing 4 ethnic groups. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *34*(4), 293–309.

Fenske, R. H., & Gordon, L. (1998). Reducing racial and ethnic hate crimes on campus: The need for community. In A. M. Hoffman, J. H. Schuh, & R. H. Fenske (Eds.), *Violence on campus: Defining the problems, strategies for action* (pp. 123–148). Aspen.

Feraud-King, P., & Mwangi, C. G. (2022). “I don’t feel oppressed at all”: Foreign-born black college men’s perceptions of U.S. racism. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *13*(2), 1–16.

García-Louis, C., & Cortes, K. L. (2023). Rejecting black and rejected back: Afrolatinx college students’ experiences with anti-AfroLatinidad. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *22*(1), 182–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2020.1731692

George Mwangi, C. A., Thelamour, B., Ezeofor, I., & Carpenter, A. (2018). “Black elephant in the room”: Black students contextualizing campus racial climate within US racial climate. *Journal of College Student Development*, *59*(4), 456–474. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0042

Glenn, C. L., & Johnson, D. L. (2012). “What they see as acceptable:” A co-cultural theoretical analysis of Black male students at a predominantly white institution. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *23*(4), 351–368.

Gonzalez, M. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative research: A review. *The Qualitative Report*, *1*(8), 15–46.

Hurtado, S. (1992). The campus racial climate: Contexts of conflict. *Journal of Higher Education*, *63*(5), 539–569.

Juvonen, J., Nishina, A., & Graham, S. (2006). Ethnic diversity and perceptions of safety in urban middle schools. *Psychological Science*, *17*(5), 393–400. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01718.x

Khanna, N. (2010). “If you’re half Black, you’re just Black”: Reflected appraisals and the persistence of the one-drop rule. *Sociological Quarterly*, *51*, 96–121.

Khoury-Kassabri, M., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2009). Middle Eastern adolescents’ perpetration of school violence against peers and teachers: A cross-cultural and ecological analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *24*, 159–182.

Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The “new racism” of K–12 schools: Centering critical research on racism. *Review of Research in Education*, *41*(1), 182–202.

Kolade, S. (2023). *The power of the Black Dollar is still strong* . Word In Black. https://wordinblack.com/2023/02/the-power-of-the-black-dollar-is-still-strong/

Kutsyuruba, B., Klinger, D. A., & Hussain, A. (2015). Relationships among school climate, school safety, and student achievement and well-being: A review of the literature. *Review of Education*, *3*(2), 103–135.

Lacoe, J. R. (2015). Unequally safe: The race gap in school safety. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *13*(2), 143–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204014532659

Lane, N. (2019). Being ratchet: Undoing the politics of respectability in Black Queer Space. In *The Black Queer work of ratchet*, (pp. 67–90). Springer International Publishing.

Logan, T. K., & Walker, R. (2021). The gender safety gap: Examining the impact of victimization history, perceived risk, and personal control. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(1-2), 603–631. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517729405

MacIsaac, J., & MacKay, M. (2018). Quit playing it safe: Taking a restorative approach to campus safety and belonging. *The International Journal of Restorative Justice*, *1*(3), 445–449. https://doi.org/10.5553/ijrj/258908912018001003010

Maffini, C. S., & Dillard, K. C. (2022). Safe & sound? Perceptions of campus safety for black college students. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *25*(1), 2–17.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Wiley.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(7), 388–400.

Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *29*(2), 155–188.

Ohito, E. O., & Brown, K. D. (2021). Feeling safe from the storm of anti-blackness: Black affective networks and the IM/possibility of safe classroom spaces in predominantly white institutions. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *51*(1), 135–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2020.1843966

Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education*, *51*(3), 315–342.

Pirtle, W. N., Brock, B., Aldonza, N., Leke, K., & Edge, D. (2024). "I didn't know what anti-blackness was until I got here": The unmet needs of black students at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Urban Education*, *59*, 330–357. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859211044948

Pittaro, M. (2023). *Are Black cops always better for Black communities?. Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-crime-and-justice-doctor/202302/are-black-cops-always-better-for-black-communities

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Sankofa, N. (2023). Critical method of document analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *26*, 745–757. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2113664

Schafer, J. A., Lee, C., Burruss, G. W., & Giblin, M. J. (2018). College student perceptions of campus safety initiatives. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *29*(4), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403416631804

Sefa Dei, G. J. (2017). [Re]framing Blackness and Black solidarities through anti-colonial and decolonial prisms: An introduction. In G. J. Sefa Dei (Ed.), *Reframing Blackness and Black solidarities through anti-colonial and decolonial prisms. Critical Studies in Education* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–30). Springer.

Smith, W. A., David, R., & Stanton, G. S. (2020). Racial battle fatigue: The long-term effects of racial microaggressions on African American boys and men. In R. Majors, K. Carberry, & T. S. Ransaw (Eds.), *The international handbook of black community mental health* (pp. 83–92). Emerald Publishing. https://doi-org.proxy006.nclive.org/10.1108/978-1-83909-964-920201006

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: *The experiences of African American college students. Journal of Negro Education*, *69*, 60–73.

Stamps, D., & Mastro, D. (2020). The problem with protests: Emotional effects of race-related news media. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *97*(3), 617–643. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019891433

Stotzer, R. L., & Hossellman, E. (2012). Hate crimes on campus: racial/ethnic diversity and campus safety. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *27*(4), 644–661. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511423249

Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. Routledge.

Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2011). Expanding the social-ecological framework of bullying among youth. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (2nd ed., pp. 3–10). Routledge.

Author Biographies

Ashley J. Carpenter, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education program at Appalachian State University. Her research areas include investigating the historical and legal ramifications of higher education, as well as exploring institutionalized systems, policies, and cultural environments that preclude or promote the success of racially minoritized students.

Tita Feraud-King, PhD, is the Director of the Office of Justice, Equity, Belonging, and Identity at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. Her area of research centers around higher education's lack of inclusion and access for students and staff of marginalized identities and the intersection of marginalized identities.

Taylor Lewis is a doctoral student in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan. His research interests include campus safety for marginalized students, intersectional praxis and analyses in higher education, as well as life making, resistance, and freedom dreaming among marginalized students.

Kat J. Stephens-Peace, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education Leadership at Oakland University. Her research interests include Black graduate students living with disabilities, neurodivergence, and academic ableism across higher education, and Black immigrant and international student identity.

Pempho Chinkondenji, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Educational Foundations and Research at the University of North Dakota. She is a comparative and international education scholar whose research interests lie at the intersections of education, gender, race, in-school pregnancy/student motherhood, global migration, and forced displacement.

Emmanuela Stanislaus, PhD, is the founder of Dr. Emmanuela Consulting. Prior to starting Dr. Emmanuela Consulting, she spent over 17 years in higher education administration with progressive professional experience within large research I institutions. Her research centers on the experiences of Black college women; campus climate; first-generation students; and examining intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Chrystal George Mwang, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Higher Education program at George Mason University. Her research areas include the college access and success of minoritized students, (in)equity in higher education internationalization practices, and African & African Diaspora populations in higher education.