

White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate

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In this conceptual paper, Diane Gusa highlights the salience of race by scrutinizing the culture of Whiteness within predominately White institutions of higher education. Using existing research in higher education retention literature, Gusa examines embedded White cultural ideology in the cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge that are taken for granted as the norm at institutions of higher education. Drawing on marginalization and discrimination experiences of African American undergraduates to illustrate the performance of White mainstream ideology, Gusa names this embedded ideology White institutional presence (WIP) and assigns it four attributes: White ascendancy, monoculturalism, White estrangement, and White blindness.

President Obama's election signifies a "momentous milestone in the history of America's most persistent domestic problem"—racism (Pettigrew, 2009, p. 290). Some media commentators and academics, as well as many Whites, believe the United States has made comprehensive progress in civil rights for minorities (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Kluegel, 1990) and deem this election as confirmation that the United States is now postracial (Wingfield & Feagin, 2010). This perception is advanced by the growing number of middle-class Black professionals (Allen & Farley, 1986) and an increasing number of Black elected officials (Sigelman, 1997). Though there have been significant racial changes in society, systemic, substantial, and racialized oppression has been sustained (Feagin, 2006). Systemic racism, with racial hierarchy at its heart (Wingfield & Feagin, 2010), is revealed by housing segregation (Zhao, Onrich, & Yinger, 2005), inequitable opportunities in education (Walters, 2001), employment (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003; Pager & Shepard, 2008), and high rates of African American and Hispanic incarceration (Mauer, 2006; Pettigrew, 2008).

Harvard Educational Review Vol. 80 No. 4 Winter 2010
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Guess (2006) labels this systemic racism “racism by consequences”—a racism that has historically evolved and presently operates at society’s macro level. She contends that even as individual racial prejudice declines, structural racist patterns persist and are attributable to the inertia of U.S. institutional cultures and practices.

The denial of racism ignores the continual reality of racial hostility and discrimination. The Federal Bureau of Investigation found that schools and colleges, the third most common setting for racial bias hate crimes, constitute 12.5 percent of the 4,704 reported offenses in 2008 (Criminal Justice Information Service Division, 2009). Post-Obama election reports included Black students at Appalachian State College proclaiming increased harassment in their residence halls (Mitchell, 2008); North Carolina State had “Shoot Obama” graffiti written on campus walls; a professor at the University of Alabama reported that a poster of the first family was defaced with racial slurs and death threats (Washington, 2008). And, finally, through the guise of humor and free speech, “ghetto parties”¹ have been reported nationwide over the past decade (King & Leonard, 2007). These incidents highlight the need for predominately White institutions (PWIs) to bear in mind that their populace often mirrors racial interaction in society at large (Sue, 2004).

Studies have reported racial discrimination as a major cause for the high attrition rate of Black students matriculating at predominately White colleges and universities (Stovall, 2005).

Yet “research on African-American students has provided few solutions to the problems of retention and the doors of higher education continue to revolve for this population” (Harvey-Smith, 2002, p. 5). Overall, research has shown that African Americans experience their campuses more negatively than White students (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Miller, Anderson, Cannon, Perez, & Moore, 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Watson et al., 2002). For example, the absence of a multiplicity of cultural viewpoints relevant to minority students can adversely affect their learning, development, and identification with their institution (Gaither, 2005).

Today’s PWIs do not have to be explicitly racist to create a hostile environment. Instead, unexamined historically situated White cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge allow these institutions to remain racialized. Soja (1989) maintains that human cultural spaces, imbued with ideology and power, obscure social consequences. One such consequence of an unexamined racialized environment is that PWIs become alienating spaces of hegemonic power. When Whites neglect to identify the ways in which White ideological homogenizing practices sustain the structure of domination and oppression, they allow institutional policies and practices to be seen as unproblematic or inevitable and thereby perpetuate hostile racial climates.

Scholars have operationalized campus racial climate using various measures, including perceptions of racial tension, experiences with prejudice and discrimination, and perceptions of disparate treatment for racial groups (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003). In this article, I focus on African American undergraduates, as canaries in the mines² (Guinier & Torres, 2002), to illuminate the consequences of situated White academic beliefs, procedures, and traditions on social and academic life at PWIs. Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) defined racial discrimination of African Americans as “the socially organized set of practices that deny African-Americans the dignity, opportunities, spaces, time, position, and rewards the nation offers White Americans” (p. 7). Within empirical studies, African American undergraduates have described marginalization within PWIs (Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Levister, 2001) and “chilly climates” (Hall & Sandler, 1982)—racialized spaces that devalue, marginalize, and hinder their full participation (Ancis et al., 2000; Miller et al., 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003; Watson et al., 2002; Whitmire, 2004).

Racial discrimination takes various forms and intensities. In a study of one southern PWI (n = 103) and one midwestern PWI (n = 153), 75 percent of African American students reported at least one racial discriminatory experience over a year’s time associated with questioning their academic competency (Cooke, 2002). Another study’s participants articulated that issues of racism and prejudice are “frequently imbedded in the culture of the university, whether it is in the school newspaper, in classes, or at social and Greek affiliated functions” (Thompson, 2000, p. 135). Further, it has been shown that many academically successful Blacks drop out of college because of feelings of disconnection or lack of support from their institution (Black, 2004). As one Black male undergraduate shared, “The [PWI educational] system was designed for what they call the majority to excel . . . it’s not blatantly against [minorities] but it doesn’t facilitate the advancement of minorities” (Wallace & Bell, 1999, p. 310). These statements illustrate how the life experiences of Black and White undergraduates from the same PWI campuses are not mirror images.

The intertwined social, political, and economic milieu of each African American creates a heterogeneous Black college population. As such, the social and academic impact of a predominately White chilly climate on African American students will vary. It is essential that predominately White institutions interested in addressing African American attrition due to chilly or hostile campus climates realize how marginalization and discrimination are the outcomes of White mainstream ideology (Whiteness) and White privilege. These sources of hostile or chilly campus climates are what I name White institutional presence (WIP). Building, in part, on the work of Anderson, Rourke, Archer, and Garrison (2001) on teacher presence in online education, I conceive of WIP as

customary ideologies and practices rooted in the institution's design and the organization of its environment and activities. WIP, as a construct, names the racialized influences on discourses between and among students, between student and teachers, and between students and academic resources. Just as an online teacher cannot be seen, but his or her presence affects the academic discourse, the presence of Whiteness and privilege within policies and practices may go unseen. Nevertheless, it detrimentally shapes students' social and academic experiences.

Conceptual Foundations

I propose WIP as a framework that can enhance understanding of embedded ideologies of Whiteness and provide a meaningful guide for institutional reflection. I posit four attributes of WIP: White ascendancy, monoculturalism, White blindness, and White estrangement. I constructed this framework based on a close study of the literature on retention in higher education. Since I view PWIs as products of human decisions where Whiteness is positioned as normative and its educational practices as neutral, I used critical race theory (CRT) and the worldview of Whiteness and White privilege as conceptual lenses. I employed an iterative process that involved collecting and analyzing published and unpublished data in the higher education retention literature. I searched three databases, PsychINFO, EBSCO Academic Search Premier, and Digital Dissertation, using the key words *African American*, *Blacks*, *college*, *higher education*, *predominately White institutions*, *chilly climate*, *diversity*, and *retention*. This enabled me to gather narratives and other data (e.g., poetry, surveys, and focus group studies) from multiple studies covering a range of participants, institutions, and geographic locations. I coded for concrete manifestations of racial performance of Whiteness and analyzed each category, developing its properties in an iterative fashion. I continued to examine the literature and select data until nothing new about the concept was being said. The four elements of WIP emerged through a dialectic process between the data and my subjective-creative interpretations.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory in education is a framework of perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transfigure those structural and cultural facets of education that preserve subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT recognizes what Asante (1998) referred to as a form of communal subjectivity of European culture. CRT considers racism as endemic to U.S. life (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993), asserting that structural racial privilege is preserved through the practice of Whiteness (Lipsitz, 2005; Pierce, 2003). An oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges dominant normative standards of meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportu-

nity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Aligning with the purpose of CRT, I seek to unearth the entrenched patterns of Whiteness and privilege that dominate social and academic relationships in PWIs.

Worldview of Whiteness

Worldview is an ideological-philosophical infrastructure of cultures cultivated from a shared geography and history that “determines and reflects the normal-natural and normative ways of functioning” (Kambon, 2004, p. 79) and gives a culture its unique psychosocial identity and distinctiveness (Kambon, 1992) from which people construe reality (Baldwin, Brown, & Hopkins, 1992). As Hitchcock (2002) writes, “We learn our culture in situ, as part of our living experience . . . and we develop an understanding, generally an unconscious one, of things like norms, social roles, characteristics of different groups, social status, and power” (p. 41). In this way, each cultural group develops its own worldview system (Kambon, 2004). Though racial groupings, such as European Americans or African Americans, are heterogeneous, being that race itself is a dynamic and multifaceted composition (Morris, 2007), research has revealed underlying cultural commonalities within each group that can be understood as distinctive worldviews (Anderson, 1988; Kambon, 2004; Kelsey & Ranson, 1996). However, rather than looking at worldviews as dichotomous realities, it is more useful to view these cultural characteristics as continuums.

I argue that the dominant worldview in the United States is Whiteness. Whiteness is not based on complexion; rather it is a socially informed ontological and epistemological orientation (Leonardo, 2002; Owen & Jones, 2000; Swartz, 2009), reflecting what one does rather than something one has (Ahmed, 2007). Each individual’s worldview is cultivated through his or her own situated historicity and social contexts. Historically, from the inception of the United States as a nation, the dominance of European culture produced an Anglo-Saxon core society rooted in and identified with English language and customs (Aguirre, Jr., 2003). Therefore to be an “American” was associated with a range of northern European (particularly English) cultural practices. Also, through the act of racializing themselves as White and, thus, others as Black, red, yellow, and brown (Hitchcock, 2002), Whites decided who was similar and different as well as how resources were owned and distributed. These “imposed identities,” imbued with meanings of attributes, qualities, and worth, were vital to the preliminary formation of racial categories (Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 24). Therefore, Whiteness is not only a cultural location but a sociological and political construct of power that allows Whites to assert superiority over those who are not White. According to Feagin (2006), the “major and terrible invention” of the White race (p. 15), with its Whiteness ideology, solidified European American thinking on racialization with an either/or framework that creates and measures racial differences and power.

Historically, individualism, self-reliance, and independence were all essential principles for prosperity in the American frontier society of the 1800s and

1900s (Weaver, 1999). American individualism intertwined with the capitalist ideology of property, profit, and competition (Ralston, Holt, Terupstra, & Kai-Cheng, 2008) during the American westward expansion (Greene, 2008). In fact, a Marxist assertion is that individualism strengthened in the United States primarily owing to its support of capitalism (Greene, 2008). To the Euro-American people, individualism meant equal potential (Brooks, Lewis, & Warren, 1973), where the “land of opportunity” provided autonomous individuals “pathways to wealth, success, status, and the like” (Greene, 2008, p. 122). Thus, it is through individualism that people were independent and achieved self-reliance, positioning progress and achievement as dominant motivations in American culture.

The United States’s dominant ideology of meritocracy (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002)—equality in opportunity but not necessarily in outcome—is another cornerstone of mainstream American cultural ideology. Social status, adjusted from the rigid European closed class structure, developed in an open class system of individualistic attributions and competition. Opportunities of the American frontier, along with an open class system, made it feasible for White men with the wherewithal and drive to accumulate property (Gabriel, 1974). This “ideology of self-willed wealth” (Greene, 2008, p. 126) considers wealth as a measure of an individual’s success and worth (Hitchcock, 1994). Thus, in the United States, meritocracy and individualism legitimize the hierarchical and disproportionate concentration of White wealth and power³ in American society.

Students within higher education institutions bring a diversity of identities and worldviews. The problem within higher education is not differing worldviews or ideologies but, rather, the domination of one over others. According to Young (1990), the assumption of a “homogenous public” is oppressive because the dominant group’s experiences and culture are established as the norm, thus immobilizing or diminishing other social groups. Huber and Form (1973) assert that an ideology is dominant when it embodies the perspective of those “groups which have the most of what there is to get” (p. 2). Domination does not mean complete control; rather, it is the ability to set the terms by which other groups and classes must operate (Domhoff, 2000). Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006) investigated the social, educational, and occupational backgrounds of those who occupied the highest positions in the largest banks and corporations, as well as of the appointees to the president’s cabinet, members of Congress, and leadership groups—those who “had the most of what there was to get.” Several general patterns emerged. Though the power elite⁴ showed diversity, its core group consisted of wealthy, White, Christian males who predominately sustain the Eurocentric ideologies of “meritorious individualism” (O’Sullivan See, 1986), competition, materialism, and “ideology of self-willed wealth” (Greene, 2008) in the organizations they control (Domhoff, 2000). Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006) observed that newcomers who diversify the power elite are socialized into the elite’s values and find “ways to

signal that they were willing to join the game as it has always been played” (p. 7). Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) state, “The White race is like a private club, which grants privileges to certain people in return for obedience to its rules” (pp. 35–36).

White Privilege

White privilege, a synonym for White supremacy (Wildman, 2005), is a system that confers “unsought racial dominance on [Whites] from birth” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 18). It is inextricably interlocked with Whiteness in that “White privilege is the conferred dominance of Whiteness” (Logan, 2002, p. 30). This interlocking privileged dominance may take an active form, such as overt racism (McIntosh, 1988) or an embedded, systemic form that, along with the White ideology of meritocracy and individualism, can lead to the failure of many Whites to detect bestowed privileges. Another reason many Whites do not perceive their privilege is because they do not appraise their circumstances in reference to minorities; rather, they restrict their situational assessment to other Whites (Johnson, 2005). Thus, due to the socioeconomic diversity found in the White collective, White privilege is further rendered invisible.

White privilege is conferred through a “complex system of relationships among individuals, groups, and systems” (Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001, p. 269). One privileging practice many Whites enact is conceptualizing race as simply not being White (McIntosh, 1988). This White racelessness is a privileged location (Logan, 2002, p. 114) of safety that eludes race-related economic, social, and emotional costs suffered by people of color (Lewis, 2004). For example, structural institutionalized discriminatory practices in the housing market (e.g., mortgage redlining, racialized “steering”) expose residential segregation as a social cost for not being White (Massey & Denton, 1993; Meyer, 2000; Munnell, Tootell, Browne, & McEneaney, 1996; Turner & Skidmore, 2001; Zhao et al., 2005). High levels of minority residential segregation are associated with schools that are, on average, deeply unequal⁵ (Orfield, 2001), high rates of poverty (Peterson & Krivo, 1999), and negative health outcomes, including infant mortality, adult mortality, homicide, and higher estimated pollution-related health risks (Bullard, 1993; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007; Hart, Kunitz, Sell, & Mukamel, 1998; Jackson, Anderson, Johnson, & Sorlie, 2000; Morello-Frosch & Jesdale, 2006; Peterson & Krivo, 1999; Tillett, 2006). Thus, the cost of not being White, of not being rooted in historic and contemporary inequities and systems of White privilege, can be simultaneously biological, psychological, and social (Belgrave & Allison, 2006).

White privilege also includes the accruing of material and social advantage. Advantages of Whiteness provide increased access to institutions that provide vital economic opportunities, such as college credentials (Vargas, 1998). For example, legacy admissions use White sociohistorical inheritance criteria that give preferentiality to Whites who long have had access to higher education

over those racialized others who have had a history of exclusion (Alexander, 2005). On a larger scale, the pervasive use of standardized tests, including SAT, GRE, and the LSAT tests to interpret students' intelligence and acceptability, is another example. The higher scores on these standardized tests are construed as meritorious achievement, as opposed to an outcome of "accumulated social, economic, and political privileges" (Feagin et al., 1996, pp. 152–153). Thus, as Moore (2005) maintains, the testing and admissions processes obscure White privileges through the language of test objectivity.

Another aspect of White privilege emerges from the ideology that normal social and academic behavior is that which corresponds to White standards of decorum (Baldwin, 1990; Headley, 2004). Chambers (1997) explains that norms for people of color are evaluated aversely with Whiteness's dominant societal standards. Equity scholars have coined the term "deficit model" to describe the ways in which nondominant groups are assessed as deficient in comparison to the White collective (powell, 2000). Thus, mainstream Whites are privileged in that they are not required to concede or exchange a part of themselves (Logan, 2002), have their U.S. citizenship questioned (Grimes, 2002), or have their culture viewed through deficit framing. Blacks, however, can only become "normal" by living in the roles of the dominant culture (Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Yancy, 2004). For this reason, a term like "integration" in higher education can easily misrepresent conformance to a dominant culture as academic success (Tanaka, 2002).

Thus, campus diversity is not an admissions issue only; it is also "an issue implicating broader institutional policy" (Liu, 1998, p. 439). Moos (2003) asserts, "Given the power of environments and the tyranny of the majority, we need to focus more attention on how to nurture individuals who are in the minority" (p. 8). Naming the attributes of White institutional presence will enable administrators and faculty to further address relational problems, which are embedded in a system of Whiteness and have been too long cloaked by a mask of normalcy.

White Institutional Presence

Conform, conform, digest the norm

If not, weather the storm

—*Mon!que Wright (2010)*

My conceptualization of White institutional presence emerged initially from my personal observations and reflections of racism within a historically White college. WIP focuses on the White normative messages and practices that are exchanged within the academic milieu. When these messages and practices remain subtle, nebulous, and unnamed, they potentially harm the well-being, self-esteem, and academic success of those who do not share the norms of White culture. WIP, therefore, is a way of looking at and thinking about

White decisions and behaviors in predominantly White institutions. WIP is the institutionalized fusion of White worldview, White supremacy, and White privilege, and the manifestation of WIP can be categorized into four intricately linked attributes: *White ascendancy*, *monoculturalism*, *White blindness*, and *White estrangement*.

White Ascendancy

I propose that the primary attribute of WIP is White ascendancy. White ascendancy refers to thinking and behavior that arise from White mainstream authority and advantage, which in turn are generated from Whiteness's historical position of power and domination. The composition of White ascendancy includes a sense of superiority, a sense of entitlement, domination over racial discourse, and White victimization.

Superiority is the belief that one's ideas, knowledge, values, societal roles and norms, and understanding of history are universally and exclusively correct. White, middle-, and upper-class students, who likely received a great deal of time, attention, and resources in their elementary and secondary school upbringing, may assume that they have superior skills and a greater right to be in college than do students of color. White students who operate with the view of superiority will impugn the "racialized others" for their unwillingness, reluctance, or failure to "whiten" their social practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2004) and see students of color as less deserving or not as competent. As a result, White students are less likely to study or work with minorities, leading to further exclusion and marginalization (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005).

These beliefs lead to White entitlement: a sense of ownership White people may assume over a space, believing it ought to reflect White ideologies and maintain White superiority. Entitlement is sustained and reproduced by subscribing to a meritocratic ideology that situates the justification of academic inequalities in individual differences in effort, talent, and deservingness. This standpoint of entitlement is a psychological outcome of White privilege and is a form of racism acted out on U.S. college campuses (Neville et al., 2001). White students, if they have an inflated sense of superiority, may feel that their individual merit entitles them to access and college success (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). These beliefs can also be reflected in feelings of entitlement in classroom power, discussion time, grade expectation, and faculty support. As a result, African Americans—experiencing "less air time in classes," "not being invited to join student work groups and teams," and "less academic comfort"—develop a sense that they are not appreciated as full members in their institution (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 94).

White ascendancy beliefs are also exemplified by White students who declare authority over racial discourse. These students might question diversity requirements, but not math, science, or history requirements (Brayboy, 2003), and the scholarship or authority of professors of color (Chesler et al., 2005; Logan, 2002; Stanley, 2006). For example, Leonardo (2004) found

that White students subverted a structural study of racism with personalistic concerns over how they are perceived as White individuals. Schnick (2002), interviewing participants from a multicultural course, observed that when the “facts” presented in the class depicted an unflattering image of Whites, these facts were challenged or not taken seriously, becoming only the “opinion” of a person of color, or “underwent reframing to be consistent with [White] pre-conceptions” (p. 182). Whites may also react with hostility and justify their actions because they were provoked in “uncalled-for situations we were placed into” (p. 109). Another White student expressed his hostility in the school newspaper:

I am concerned that students who enroll in what they think is a course in political science and government know they are really signing up for a course in racial sensitivity. Perhaps a fair approach would be [the] creation of a department for these professors and be open and honest about their intent. This way students [sic] would not be ambushed. I realize this sounds [sic] terribly insensitive, but grant me [the] latitude of diversity of thought you expect for yourself (Stanley, 2006, p. 710).

Schnick (2002) suggests that justification of an emotional response followed by the rejection of the course and/or instructor illustrates how White participants declare authority and superiority over racial discourse. As one White participant articulated, “We didn’t like her because we felt she didn’t like us . . . We challenged what she had to say. We didn’t accept everything she said word for word. We spoke our minds and I don’t think she liked that” (Schnick, 2002, p. 113). The justification, “She didn’t like us,” veiled students’ racialized negative responses to the course content being presented by a professor of color. White students also have the opportunity to “anonymously insult their professors and express their racist biases and fear” in the public forum of course evaluations (Green, 2005, p. 38).

White ascendancy also incorporates White victimization: “Black progress means White loss” (powell, 2005, p. 23). Aguirre and Messineo (1997) suggest that White students view minority students as being illegitimate participants in higher education, believing that Whites are unfairly losing ground to Blacks through affirmative action. These Whites, who feel reduced by multiculturalism, victimized by affirmative action, and personally attacked in discussions of racism when White entitlement is disrupted, may respond with an array of negative interracial interactions that may be nonverbal in nature, such as when a White teacher or student ignores a student of color in the classroom. A Latina participant shares this narrative of an incident of micro-insult within her classroom:

There were a Black woman and White woman who wrote on the same topic. The class could ask either of them a question. The Black woman would start talking about the topic yet everyone would direct their questions to the White student. The Black woman was upset, but no one noticed, and she got up and left the

class early. No one noticed and no one said anything (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000, p. 80).

I propose that White ascendancy beliefs lead people to ignore people of color and their abilities just as this Black woman was ignored by her classmates, her abilities and capacities brushed aside, her emotional distress disregarded, and her exit unnoticed. This devaluing of one African American's thoughts, emotional distress, and final exit was a subtle insult directed toward her as an African American. It is subtle in the sense that it was latent to White students, concealed in their Eurocentric frame of reference; however, it was apparent both to the African American student who experienced it and the Latina student who reported the incident.

White ascendancy—through which Whites feel superior, where they perceive their entitlement is threatened, and where they feel the White spaces of a campus support their racialized views—creates a hostile environment for African Americans. D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) asked African American students to estimate the general frequency with which they encountered verbal prejudice and indicate if they had ever experienced blatant forms of prejudice (threats, violence, or property damage). They found that 89 percent of their participants reported having heard disparaging comments about African Americans “occasionally” to “frequently.” In addition, they found that 59 percent of students reported being verbally insulted personally and that 36 percent reported experiencing incidents involving threats or violence while at college. In a more recent study (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003), African American participants ($n = 51$) at a northeastern university kept a daily journal for two weeks. The participants reported an average of one race-related event every other week⁶ and that all perpetrators except for one were European Americans. The two most common events were stares (36%) and verbal expressions (24%) that included racial slurs, insensitive comments, and racial stereotyping. White students who exhibit White ascendancy behaviors justify their rights to express their biased views regardless of the racial consequences. These verbal indignities, whether intentional or not, communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults, are “stressful and exhausting” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, p. 554), and can bear negatively on their academic abilities or cause an individual to withdraw (Steele, 1997). This can combine with the meritocratic ideology in which low grades are viewed as solely the students' responsibility. This “personalization of educational failure” (Sefa Dei, 2003, p. 225) ignores how the institution, through its practices, attitudes, beliefs, and power, can downgrade students and label them as not up to standard or accomplished, seeing failure or poor grades as only outcomes of a student's deficiencies (Bensimón, 2007).

Monoculturalism

The second attribute of WIP, monoculturalism, is the expectation that all individuals conform to one “scholarly” worldview, which stems from the aforemen-

tioned beliefs in the superiority and normalcy of White culture. According to Schiele (1994), the philosophical base of higher education in the United States is ethnocentric and exclusive. While White ascendancy reflects social behavior, monoculturalism reflects organizational behavior that cuts across all facets of institutional practices and policies (e.g., conducting research and teaching) and has profound ramifications for the perceptions of the world and knowledge dissemination (Christian, 2002).

The dominant White worldview overlooks “its own modes of socio-epistemological constructivity” (Yancy, 2004, p. 10). An epistemological framework identifies what knowledge is, how to assess it, what has greater value, and who possesses it. Different perceptions and cognitions are not deemed uniformly valuable in education. With a White worldview of objective, rational, linear thinking, knowledge production has historically honored quantifiable data over qualitative data (Kambon, 2004). Therefore, a White monocultural paradigm endorses White structures of knowledge, which in turn embraces rationality and scientific evaluation standards and disallows different worldviews’ epistemologies, ideas, and practices (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). As a result of a White monocultural frame of reference, retention policy and decision making are determined by results of quantitative research methodology that generalizes rather than enumerates diverse counterstories (Stanley, 2010).

Monoculturalism affects institutional practices and beliefs whose effects can filter down to the individual student.

We sat there in silence
Thoughts raced, raged.
With a quick slip of the tongue and no pretense
He asked me to remove the soul, the voice that fills the page

Cross this out, this is awkward.
What do you mean here?
My dear
Begin again
Please remove the bones, flesh, and spirit from your possessions
Please subtract the incoherent nonsense that you created.
That essence,
Does not belong here

(Wright, 2010, p. 164)

This student’s poem exemplifies that when policy initiatives, course content, research practices, research methods, and teaching pedagogy are structured through White ideology—leading to a monocultural approach—White canonical dogma, relationships, and worldviews are edified and, inversely, the “bones, flesh, and spirit” of another worldview are considered not appropriate, scholarly, or in good form. This worldview is “White-washed” and mutated.

In this way, PWIs, the gatekeepers of mainstream knowledge, ultimately privilege the voices and perspectives of predominantly Western thinkers and practices and marginalize the voices and perspectives of those considered non-White (Patton et al., 2007). As a result of Eurocentric views of scholarship, alternative racial and ethnic perspectives are rarely found in required course readings.

I use the term *encapsulated brain* to describe the outgrowth of White values that emphasize separateness, uniqueness, and survival of the fittest (Baldwin, 1985; 1990), which are the foundations of mainstream pedagogical and classroom management approaches. These approaches reveal White values of separating and meriting cognitive processes above affective processes. The viewpoint of the encapsulated brain restricts affective reflection; thus, students are expected to eliminate their emotions in the pursuit of objective scholarship. Emphasis of cognitive processes over affective knowing reinforces instructional competency in subject matter only (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) and not competency in addressing students' social realities and different learning styles in the classroom. It is the Eurocentric ontological view of separateness (Baldwin, 1985; Kambon, 2004) that places the onus of learning solely on the individual student and considers the "weeding out," or survival-of-the-fittest ideology to be an acceptable approach to assessment practices. Finally, within an objective, rational classroom environment, emphasis is placed on the hierarchical teaching of the "knower": the expert professor who, or authoritative text that, disregards or diminishes students' experiences.

Monocultural values are also embedded in the built environment of PWIs. Clarke (2005) reminds us that "the material world is itself constructed—given meaning(s)—by us, by those who we study, and is what we study" (p. 7). Since people respond to their settings, the appearance of the landscape and the people and the things in it are all-important (Sack, 1997). Costello (2001) suggests that ignoring the physical structure of a space is a mistake because a school's built environment is one form of a hidden curriculum in higher education and an important aspect of the learning that takes place within that environment. A task force at the University of Illinois (Diversity Initiatives Planning Committee, 2002) suggests evaluating the diversity of physical structures, their aesthetics, and spaces on campus for their impact on promoting or degenerating inclusiveness for a diverse student body. Visually, as an African American walks through the halls of the Ivory Tower,⁷ the pictures, statues, texts, and even the names on the buildings usually reflect the historic White legacy of PWIs (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, & Nadal, 2007). One Black student stated, "Everything is so White: concerts, musicians, activities, [and] . . . student government" (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). This student is reacting to monoculturalism's exclusiveness. According to Sue and associates (2007), African Americans' racial identities can "be minimized or made insignificant through the sheer exclusion of decorations or literature that represents various racial groups" (p. 274). Thus, the relationship that people have with their

natural and/or built environment may partially undergird their sense of fitting in. Additionally, the lack of a critical mass of African Americans, or being in a sea of White faces, is a consequential physical element within PWIs. As one student states, "A lot of times I feel out of place, because you see all White faces. You know I am the only fly in the buttermilk" (Davis, Pias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, & Thomas, 2004, p. 429).

White Blindness

White blindness, another attribute of WIP, is a racial ideology that obscures and protects White identity and White privilege. It is based on the principle of color blindness, which positions equality in an ideology wherein the race of a person is and ought to be immaterial to any decision-making process. Arising in the 1960s, the radically progressive aspiration of color blindness meant abolishing the color-coded laws of southern apartheid. However, it has evolved from an idea for engendering equality to an ideology that the race of a person is, and ought to be, immaterial. Because color blindness contends that "everyone is the same," race becomes an illegitimate subject for conversations or policy discourse, thus serving to reify social hierarchies and maintain the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Bonilla-Silva (2006) found that most contemporary Whites (n = 451) believed in the ideology of color blindness and relied on its various elements to articulate their views on racial matters. Because of color blindness in White ideology, it is not surprising that Blacks and Whites have polar views on issues about the significance of discrimination in America. For that reason, minorities' protestations about experiencing discrimination in housing and labor markets, stores, restaurants, higher education, and other social settings are interpreted as "excuses" by Whiteness ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This lack of public legitimacy of racism and its ongoing harm has merely plunged racism deeper, insinuating it in the ideology of color blindness, where Whiteness becomes further invisible and unmarked.

White blindness is apparent in institutional curricular decisions, such as faculty deciding on classroom texts without a critical eye for deficit messages embedded in those texts. Textbooks play a central role in college curriculum, and students approach textbooks as "neutral purveyors of accurate, factual information and not socially constructed, ideologically driven material" (Clawson, 2002, p. 353). Clawson (2002) analyzed the portrayal of poverty in introductory college economics textbooks and found that these texts portrayed poor people, and particularly welfare recipients, as Black far out of proportion to their actual representation among the demographic poor. Conversely, all illustrative pictures of recipients of Social Security, "the most popular social welfare in the U.S." (p. 357), were White faces. As a result, a false picture of the face of poverty was created. Poverty was portrayed as only a Black/White issue, with an overwhelming majority of Blacks living on a public dole and with other demographics being invisible. Similar patterns were found in American government textbooks (Clawson & Kegler, 2000). Thus, race coding of col-

lege texts, read by Whites uncritically, is often overlooked by White students and White professors. Even if unconsciously overlooked by Whites, these texts still implicitly communicate racialized messages to both students and faculty, which do not escape the awareness of African American students.

I contend that White blindness is also exhibited in policy decision making where minority races are noticed but White racial behavior is not considered. Iverson (2005) analyzed twenty-one diversity action plans in U.S. higher education to understand how these documents framed diversity. Throughout these documents, the focus was on the underrepresented populations' needs, challenges, and inability to remain safe. The discourse within the documents focused on minorities' exposure to harassment and discrimination and how the institutions can develop strategies to help these minorities to feel safe. Iverson found little attention to the source of this chilly climate. As a consequence, the meaning, nature, and social relations of the PWIs, or White behavior, which generated the harassment, discrimination, and acts of hate, were not addressed.

White blindness arises from the failure to recognize White racial identity and ideology. It is the failure to understand that what Whites say and do can be perceived as biased, prejudiced, or discriminatory (Ogbu, 2003). White blindness ignores the fact that White, like Black, is also a political-social construction category and disregards White responsibilities on a multicultural campus. I contend that White blindness will maintain WIP, not because of overt racist desires but, rather, because of White oversight and erroneous understanding of their racialized campus. Conversely, to acknowledge Whiteness is not to perpetuate it, but it is the first step in uprooting it.

White Estrangement

WIP is sustained and perpetuated through White estrangement, through the distancing of Whites physically and socially from people of color. Achieving structural diversity within higher education by itself does not bring about heterogeneous interactions. Social-racial isolation of Whites underpins their alienated relationships with African Americans (Feagin, 2006). Jones (2002) avers that "racial/ethnic separations—in neighborhoods, in elementary and secondary schools, and on college campuses—produce and reinforce both cultural ignorance and interpersonal awkwardness" (p. 81). Largely, Whites do not construe their social isolation and segregation from Blacks as something racial. Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2007), in a study of White college students ($n = 410$) at three universities, examined Whites' interpretations of racial segregation and isolation. A full 67.7 percent of the students stated that on a daily basis the five people they interacted with the most were not Black. Interviewing 10 percent of their participant pool, only four out of forty-one resided in neighborhoods with significant African American or other minority presence. These participants saw not associating interracially as "natural" and "unintentional." Only three of the forty-one students had Black friends

while growing up. This early segregation and isolation continues in college. Ellis (2004) found that on a campus where the student body was comprised of 77 percent people of color, White students had little contact with individuals of other races in their home communities or on campus. White students said racial/ethnic differences were not an issue and that too much importance was placed on difference.

As lifelong segregated White students cross the threshold into a more diverse college setting, they lack the understandings and tools to navigate this more multicultural environment. Many, because of their predominately White home communities and de facto school segregation, lack precollege contact with different races and ethnicities (Chesler, Peet, & Sevig, 2003). This can contribute to racial ignorance, reliance on stereotypes, tension, and avoidance of those who are different (Spanierman, Oh, Poteat, Hund, McClair, & Beer, 2008). St. John and Heald-Moore (1995) found that Whites expressed higher levels of fear when encountering African Americans compared to encountering other Whites. Another factor leading to White anxiety is fear of behaving in a manner that may be construed as racist. In one study, African Americans reported rude or awkward interpersonal encounters with Whites in 15 percent of reported racial incidents (Swim et al., 2003), such as Whites' avoidance in seating areas or in the streets. White awkwardness, ignorance, and denial impede cross-racial dialogue. In a sample of seventy-five undergraduates of color, Lewis, Chesler, and Forman (2000) reported that these students perceived that Whites knew little, if anything, about the histories or cultures of people of color. The participants recounted White students' discomfort and awkwardness in their presence. As one Black female participant shared, "When talking about issues of race, White students want to feel good and hold your hand, and don't want to see color and want to be unified. They want us to be White and not have to deal with us being Black" (Lewis et al., 2000, p. 82).

Thus, White students—in a diverse community for the first time and unsure how to initiate cross-racial or cross-cultural friendships—may not instigate interaction (Tatum, 1997/2003), may self-segregate, and may not seek out cultural immersion experiences (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005). In other words, students will not naturally learn about or interact with their peers by simple contact (Chang, Chang, & Ledesma, 2005; Harper & Antonio, 2008). If higher education is to address White estrangement, which impedes cross-racial dialogue, it must examine the quality of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships on campuses.

Conclusion

Dr. Maurice Bryan (2007), associate vice provost for diversity and equity at University at Kansas, contends that "diversity is about welcoming the challenge of engaging with difference, about our willingness to have our lives impacted by ideas, people, values, or lifestyles that run counter to our comfort zone"

(p. 6). Higher education leaders need to be prepared to work with culturally different students and help create learning environments that encourage respect and intercultural understanding (López, 2003). According to Ben-simón (2007), focusing on practitioner knowledge and institutional practices will engender an enhanced possibility for racial equity.

Just as many sociologists routinely fail to explain race effects in their findings as outcomes of racism or racial stratification (Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2001), many educational researchers look at the Black/White retention gap in higher education as a racialized outcome but not the result of structural racism or Whiteness. Conversely, WIP, which unpacks the dimensions of White mainstream institutional culture, takes into account structural policies and practices. Thus, by using the WIP framework, practitioners and administrators can bring to light subtle and blatant consequences of White ascendancy, monoculturalism, White blindness, and White estrangement. To address chilly climates in higher education, institutions must craft solutions that target these root causes. This essay asks administrators and faculty to consider the need to “reevaluate structures of knowledge, cultural patterns of relationships, and organizing principles of institutional life” (Pewewardy & Frey, 2002, p. 78) by reflecting on the norms and values that arise from the dominant White worldview. Since institutional culture is deeply embedded and multilayered, this process must investigate all layers with key stakeholders.

Fully investigating these layers may require a cultural audit (Whitt, 1993). Quayle, Tambascia, and Talesh (2009) suggest a multipronged method to assess racial/ethnic minority students’ engagement in the classroom:

1. Develop an understanding of what minority engagement entails by conducting focus group interviews that examine how they engage in the classroom.
2. Develop a campuswide assessment that reviews representative documents to determine the culture being advocated and add campus climate questions in course evaluations.
3. Focus on disciplines where engagement of racial/ethnic minority students is low, collect data within these areas to identify challenges, and share critical assessment data within disciplines and across campus.

Here, I call for an institutional praxis that would reflect on and address the structural forces present in the ordinary, day-to-day interactions among students, between students and faculty/administrators, and between students and institutional policies and practices. I agree with Milem (2003) who, building on the work of Gurin (1999) and Chang (2000), argues that institutions need to focus on three dimensions of diversity: (1) structural (numerical representation); (2) programmatic (diversity-related initiatives, such as cultural awareness workshops, ethnic studies courses, etc.); and (3) social (socializing across race and discussing racial/ethnic issues).

To tackle the salience of race relations on campus climate, one must also address the needs of White students within this multicultural community. Sallee, Logan, Sims, and Harrington (2009) propose curricular and cocurricular activities for White students to encourage them to examine and develop their own racial/ethnic identities, recognize White privilege, and understand other cultures. These researchers suggest offering White racial identity development and race relations courses (which would examine the social problems behind race relations), establishing cross-cultural speaker series and “Days of Dialogue” (following the model created by the City of Los Angeles), building racially/ethnically balanced classroom curriculum and pedagogy, and developing a racial justice alliance under the umbrella of Multicultural Student Services to promote White involvement in multicultural activities across campus.

In addressing the sources of chilly campus climates, White institutional presence illustrates the relevance of race in contemporary higher education. Institutions of higher education must move forward with intentionality (Harper & Quaye, 2009) regarding policy and practice on their campuses. Tackling a noninclusive chilly campus climate is not simply about developing a checklist of embellishments. Rather, it requires rigorous work of informed critical introspection that sees one’s performance of Whiteness, as well as sees the performance of Whiteness in the practice of others. As core assumptions of WIP are uncovered and critically examined through multiple worldviews viable solutions can be determined and implemented, fostering emotional safety, trust, belonging, empowerment, and integration.

Notes

1. A ghetto party is a type of costume party where White students use raced artifacts and act in ways they perceive inner city Blacks or Latinos would act (Nunn, 2008).
2. Years ago, miners often carried a canary into the mine with them. The canary’s different respiratory system would collapse from toxic gases long before humans were affected, thus alerting the miners to danger.
3. In the United States wealth is concentrated in the top 10 percent of the population, which holds 80 percent to 90 percent of stocks, bonds, trust funds, and business equity and over 75 percent of nonhome real estate (Domhoff, 2005).
4. The term “power” elite was coined by C. Wright Mills in 1956.
5. Education Trust–West (2005) found a funding gap of between \$573 (CA) and \$2,615 (NY) per student between high- and low-minority high schools.
6. In the D’Augelli and Hershberger (1993) study, 35 percent of participants did not report any events, 55 percent reported one or two incidents, and 10 percent reported three to seven incidents.
7. Even the common expression “Ivory Tower” connotes Whiteness.

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