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# Back to Our Roots: Revolutionizing Black Greek Letter Organizations to Dismantle Racism in Higher Education

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West Chester University  
Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs  
THESIS



Back to Our Roots:  
Revolutionizing Black Greek Letter Organizations to  
Dismantle Racism in Higher Education  
Ashley Lyles  
May 2020

Back to Our Roots: Revolutionizing Black Greek Letter Organizations to  
Dismantle Racism in Higher Education

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies  
West Chester University  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Master of Science  
By  
Ashley M. Lyles  
May 2020

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of my wonderful family and friends that have supported me on this journey. I especially want to acknowledge my grandfather, Poppy. Thank you for your never-ending wisdom, humor, and love. May you rest in eternal peace.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all of the amazing faculty and staff that have supported me throughout these past two years. Having the support and mentorship of Dr. Tammy James changed my life for the better. I am so honored and thankful to have had the ability to work under her this past year. The work that she is doing has inspired me to pursue my passions in higher education, and I could not have done this without her. Dr. Orkideh Mohajeri opened my eyes to opportunities that did not even know were possible in this field. She reignited my passion for education and showed me that I can create my own path in life. Her compassion and wisdom are inspiring and getting to know her these past two years has been nothing short of a blessing. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jackie Hodes for being the life coach, guidance counselor and mentor that I didn't even know I needed. Dr. Hodes has this superpower where she is able to make big problems seem small and manageable. Her flexibility, level-headedness, and kind heart have taught me valuable lessons that I will take with me wherever I go. She is the matriarch of HEPSA, and we are all so lucky to have her. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Jason Wozniak for introducing me to theories that have completely changed my perspective on the world, and Dr. Dana Morrison for being the best thesis advisor that I could ask for. Thank you to everyone that made this journey special. I hope this thesis makes you all proud.

## Abstract

Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) started appearing across college campuses in the early 1900s at a time when racism was widely spread and accepted in society and institutions of higher education. Over time, BGLOs that existed at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) were forced to assimilate to the norms of the dominant culture as a way to mitigate the acts of racial bias and discrimination that these organizations were often subjected to. Throughout generations, BGLOs have continued to be deculturized and therefore have moved further away from their intended purpose of fighting racial inequality and promoting racial uplift. This thesis seeks to analyze how and why BGLOs are continuing to struggle in the fight for racial equity and justify how the history of these organizations gives them the ability to effectively do racial justice work on college campuses. My proposed intervention centers the experiences of Black students and provides institutions of higher education with a method to integrate antiracist practices throughout all divisions of the university.

*Keywords:* Deculturalization; Assimilation; Antiracism; Neoliberalism; Black student activism; Black greek life

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>A Preview into the Past.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Understanding our History.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Challenging Whiteness.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Shaping My Concern.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Why This Matters .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>Chapter 2 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Thematic Concern.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Conceptual Frameworks.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Philosophies of Education.....	8
Theoretical Frameworks .....	8
Historical Contexts.....	9
<i>ACPA/NASPA Competencies .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Definition of Terms .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<b>Chapter 3 .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>My Philosophical Positionality.....</i>	<i>15</i>
Humanizing Education.....	16
Creating Democracy in Education .....	19
Antiracism in Higher Education .....	20
<i>Historical Context of BGLOs.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Unique and Relevant Factors .....</i>	<i>29</i>
The Impact of Neoliberalism and Identity Politics on BGLOs.....	29
Concerns of Neoliberalism .....	30
The Fight for Recognition.....	32
Reification of Identity .....	35
Refocusing on Redistribution .....	36
<i>Theorizing a Path Forward .....</i>	<i>39</i>
Higher Education as an Ideological State Apparatus.....	39
BGLOs as a Method of Counter Conduct.....	40
BGLOs as Student Activists .....	42
BGLOs as Tempered Radicals.....	45
<i>Reflecting on My Journey .....</i>	<i>48</i>
<b>Chapter 4 .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>Program Inspiration .....</i>	<i>51</i>

<i>Introduction</i> .....	53
<i>Intervention: RACE – Raising Awareness on Cultural Equity aka “The Racers”</i> .....	54
<i>Theoretical Frameworks</i> .....	55
A Democratic Intervention .....	55
Rejecting “the banking model”.....	56
Collaborative Teaching.....	57
Antiracist Teachings .....	59
<i>RACE – Raising Awareness on Cultural Equity aka “The Racers”</i> .....	60
<i>Program Goals</i> .....	60
<i>Program Objectives</i> .....	61
<i>Learning Outcomes for Racers Retreat</i> .....	61
<i>Recruitment</i> .....	61
<i>Retreat Event Details</i> .....	62
<i>Retreat Sample Program Outline</i> .....	63
<i>Retreat Challenges</i> .....	64
<i>Staffing Challenges</i> .....	65
<i>Challenges with BGLOs</i> .....	66
<i>Budget and Funding</i> .....	68
<i>Faculty and Staff Workshops</i> .....	68
Sample Workshop Topics.....	68
A Guide to Critical Advising of BGLOs .....	68
Democracy and Diversity in the Classroom .....	69
Cultivating Solidarity and Meaningful Collaboration with Identity Centers and the Humanities.....	70
How Our Values Should Inform Your Practice .....	71
<i>Incentives for Faculty and Staff</i> .....	72
<i>Racers Bi-Weekly Meeting Details</i> .....	74
<i>Concluding Thoughts</i> .....	74
<b>Chapter 5</b> .....	<b>76</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	76
<i>Leadership and The Racers</i> .....	77
Breaking Organizational Chains .....	77
A Critical Approach to Leadership.....	79
<i>Assessment and Evaluation in The Racers</i> .....	80
Introduction.....	80
Action Research .....	81
Breaking the Silence through Journaling and Storytelling.....	82



Pre/Post Surveys as Direct Measures of Learning .....	84
<i>Limitations</i> .....	86
Emotional Labor .....	86
Institutional Type and Size .....	87
Struggling to Survive .....	87
Culturally Competent Advisors .....	88
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	89
<b>References</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix A:</b> .....	<b>97</b>
<b>Appendix B:</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>Appendix C:</b> .....	<b>103</b>
<b>Appendix D:</b> .....	<b>105</b>

## **Chapter 1**

### **A Preview into the Past**

As a senior in college, I felt like I had a number of accomplishments under my belt and had successfully established a positive reputation for myself on campus. I had taken on leadership roles in various organizations, I had won significant awards, and overcame adversity in my personal life that ultimately shaped me to become a better leader. Although I felt accomplished in my undergraduate career, joining an elite sorority was the last thing I wanted to conquer before I graduated. During the fall of my senior year, I was a Resident Assistant and had picked up a minor in French. I knew that I would be in school for an additional semester and thought I should make the best use of my extra time and dedicate myself to a cause that I was always passionate about. Throughout my involvement in my other organizations, I came across two young motivated Black women that modeled exactly who I strived to be. They were confident, strong minded, independent, and absolutely beautiful. I got to build genuine friendships with these women, and they grew to be some of the best people that I had ever met during my undergraduate career. Their support and influence inspired me to strive for membership in an organization that I longed to be a part of. These women are what sparked my interest in joining the first Black collegiate sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

### **Understanding our History**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated is the first Black collegiate sorority founded in 1908 and incorporated in 1913. Our organization belongs to the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) or more endearingly called the Divine Nine (D9). Under the umbrella of the NPHC, there are nine historically Black fraternities and sororities that form this governing

council with the mission of, “unanimity of thought and action as far as possible in the conduct of Greek letter collegiate fraternities and sororities, and to consider problems of mutual interest to its member organizations” (“Our History,” n.d., para. 4). The unanimity of thought and action was originally derived from Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs) needing to come together to fight the injustices and mistreatment of people of color during the time our organizations were established. One of the first missions of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated was to fight injustice by promoting social advocacy. In the early 1900s, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated “promoted Negro culture and encouraged social action through presentation of Negro artists and social justice advocates, including elocutionist Nathaniel Guy, Hull House founder Jane Addams, and U. S. Congressman Martin Madden (1908-1915). They also established the first organizational scholarship at Howard University (1914)” (“History”, n.d.). In the 1920s the sorority, “worked to dispel notions that Negroes were unfit for certain professions, and guided Negroes in avoiding career mistakes (1923) while pushing the anti-lynching legislation in 1921” (“History,” n.d.).

All of the organizations under the NPHC were founded as a way for Black people and other underrepresented minority groups to have the ability to belong to an organization where they were free to express themselves and be seen as fully human in a time full of racial injustice. Joining this organization as an undergraduate student meant that I also got to be a part of this fight and carry out the mission and foundation that my founders and ancestors paved for me. From the beginning, I was excited about getting involved in the community to raise awareness about social issues, and while my organization did do some amazing work, there were also plenty of unfavorable experiences that shifted my view and motivated me to write this thesis.

## **Challenging Whiteness**

What I failed to understand when joining my sorority was that although our organization existed to support Black people, our mission would ultimately be infringed upon given that our organization was situated inside of a predominantly White institution. While I will detail this more in other chapters, it became clear that my organization would be limited because institutions of higher education are institutions of Whiteness. They were built on the bodies of indigenous peoples and through the work of slave labor. Institutions of higher education are inherently built upon the oppression and colonization of black and brown bodies, which, in turn, has damaged the experiences of people of color still to this day. The entire reason that the NPHC even exists is because of the fact that there was a point in history where Black people were not permitted to integrate into White student serving organizations, and while we may not be living in those times anymore, there are still a number of effects that trickle down to all of the BGLOs and multicultural organizations that exist on college campuses today.

When I reflect on my experiences in my organization, I think about the times that we were treated unequally and unfairly compared to some of the other organizations on campus. There were inequitable policies put in place that I did not even bother to question because I blindly accepted the fact that that is simply how things were run. I did not question why at all of the BGLO events there had to be security guards present, but that it was not a requirement for the historically White organizations on campus. I did not question why it was that we received sometimes tens of thousands of dollars less funding than some of the White organizations so that while they could afford to buy t-shirts for every occasion, we had members struggling to pay dues to stay active as a member. It did not even cross my mind to question why we had to fight every year to be able to have a step show on campus, why we could not have plots to represent

our organizations on campus, and why the office of fraternity and sorority life never hired a person of color or someone that was actually a member of the Divine Nine to advise our council.

Our organizations have such a rich and beautiful history filled with stories of social activism, fighting for equal rights, and establishing support and solidarity for communities across the world, but unfortunately the purpose of our trailblazing organizations was often hindered and our efforts were underappreciated and undervalued. Throughout this thesis, I want to prove that Black Greek Letter Organizations have the power and ability to get back to their roots of their origin purpose. BGLOs can still fight for equitable rights and condemn the inequitable treatment that they are often subjected to. My goal is to provide a blueprint for our illustrious organizations to revolutionize themselves into an unstoppable force on a mission to dismantle structural racism in institutions of higher education.

### **Shaping My Concern**

While assimilation into institutional Whiteness is the overarching reason that we are facing these continuous issues of inequity and racial injustice on campus, the problem also lies in the fact that BGLOs have accepted these ideals, and have allowed the assimilation and deculturalization to occur without ever questioning and challenging the ideologies that the institution reproduces. Historically, BGLOs have participated in large political movements, fought to change unjust legislation, and have overall committed themselves to effecting change through forming solidarities with one another. The problem is this history is rarely taught or celebrated on campus. Instead, we are expected to participate in the traditions of the Greek life community that do not allow any room to celebrate the differences in our history and culture. In my experience, I have seen way too many combinations of events that encompasses all of the organizations of campus White, Black, or otherwise (i.e., Greek Games, Greek Battle of the

Bands, Greek Dance-Offs, Greek Pageants, etc.). Forcing the members of BGLOs to participate in these types of events without acknowledging, integrating or encouraging us to celebrate our roots and what makes us unique, only reinforces the notion that our history does not matter and that the erasure of our culture is acceptable and expected.

BGLOs, over generations of integration into predominantly White institutions, have been deculturalized and expected to assimilate to the dominant ideology of higher education. In order to break the chains that the process of assimilation has confined them to, BGLOs need to be re-made aware of their history and ability to effect change through social movements and cultural solidarity. Throughout the chapters of this thesis, I will explore the impact of what I believe are the most detrimental factors hindering the ability for BGLOs to carry out their founding mission of fighting for social and racial equity. I will specifically explore the impact of neoliberalism, identity politics, and discuss the ways in which BGLOs can use their position inside of the university to fight for antiracist policies and procedures. My hope is that by the end of this thesis, it is clear how BGLOs can be revolutionary in transforming systems of higher education.

While restructuring the university from the inside out may sound overwhelmingly difficult and complex, this is a concept that has been explored by other scholars. Robin D.G. Kelley (2016) in his essay, *Black Study, Black Struggle*, describes this phenomenon when he explains how students can be *in* the university but not *of* the university, and I want to position BGLOs as an example for how to actualize this strategy to dismantle structural racism. I want to make clear that it is not enough to simply belong to these organizations. The students involved must be willing to fight whole-heartedly for the transformation in which they deserve. It is important to note that this level of social justice activism does not look the same for each student and there is a legitimate fear of job loss or retaliation for faculty, staff, and students of color who

are willing to speak up on the injustices that they face. In my intervention in Chapter 4, I will discuss the process of creating an advisory board banded together to fight these injustices and address strategies for cultivating meaningful alliances to help fight this battle.

### **Why This Matters**

This work in revolutionizing BGLOs, calling out racist structures, and breaking away from the confines of dominant ideologies matters to me, and should matter to those working in higher education and student affairs. It is our responsibility to advocate for students, and there is no denying that there is plenty of work to still be done in the fight for racial equity. Our institutions stand to serve *all* students, and if we are to make good on this promise then we have to integrate equitable policies at all levels of the institution. There is much to be done in the development and implementation of anti-racist practices, but I want readers to take this thesis as step one. See this proposed intervention as a way to begin to have the conversation about race in higher education and begin to implement the changes that should have been implemented decades ago. I urge readers to try to understand the rich history of BGLOs, even if they have no understanding of the operations of fraternities and sororities, and just try to understand why it matters to integrate and celebrate our beautiful history into institutions of higher education.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss my thematic concern as it relates to issues of higher education and the role of Black Greek Letter Organizations. I will then provide a preview of the conceptual frameworks and theories that I will be detailing in Chapter 3. Additionally, I will provide extensive definitions of terms so that the reader can easily understand and reference the concepts and acronyms that I will use throughout the remainder of this thesis. Lastly, I will discuss which ACPA/NASPA professional competencies intersect with my concern and intervention.

### **Thematic Concern**

Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs) have the opportunity to influence change on an institutional level by demonstrating how antiracist practices can be implemented throughout all areas of higher education. In order to be a model for change, BGLOs must first address the gaps within their own organizations. As it stands in today's society, BGLOs are heavily impacted by recognition and identity politics, as they have been assimilated into the new order of the university that perpetuates the neoliberal regime. Although these historical organizations are faced with a slew of hardships and inequities, they have the ability to reverse their current standing and transform into organizations that stand to dismantle structural racism at institutions of higher education.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Throughout this proposal I will discuss the major problems facing BGLOs as well as how I believe BGLOs should be reimagined and reformed to best carry out the core mission of all of the Divine Nine, to be trailblazers in the fight for social justice and antiracist practices



throughout college campuses across the United States. To do this, I will be drawing on the following conceptual foundations.

### ***Philosophies of Education***

My philosophies of education are based on the works on John Dewey's (1916) *Democracy of Education*, Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Ibram X. Kendi's (2019) *How to be an Antiracist*. Dewey (1916) demonstrates in his writings that all communication is educative, and experience and communication also contribute to democratic educational practices (p.5). Freire (1970) rejects the banking model of formal traditional education. Instead, he argues that education should be a liberatory practice that should change the oppressive systems negating our abilities to be fully human. Lastly, in Kendi's (2019) book, he takes readers through his personal journey of understanding racism and provides the reader with clear definitions and theories about what it means to be not just non-racist, but *antiracist*. In my Chapter 3, guided by these philosophies of education, I will express that if education is to be experiential, democratic, and liberatory, then it has to also be antiracist. Having an antiracist system of education means that all policies are made to address systems of oppression and dismantle racist structures that are in place. Throughout my work I will cast students Black Greek Letter Organizations as the ones to spearhead this revolution in education. I believe that education should be for all people, and that we should legitimize all forms of knowledge and ways of being in this world.

### ***Theoretical Frameworks***

I will be using Wendy Brown (2015) and David Harvey's (2005) work to explore how neoliberalism in institutions of higher education has trickled down to impact how students decide which organizations they join and for what reasons. This discussion will help to conceptualize

the basis for why BGLOs are in a current state of unrest and are unable to see the potential they have in enacting a social movement towards institutional change.

Next, Nancy Fraser's (2000), concepts around rethinking recognition will demonstrate how to mitigate disparities and address power inequalities within diverse organizations. Nancy Fraser (2000) discusses the overall goal of redistribution when she states, "properly conceived, struggles for recognition can aid the redistribution of power and wealth and can promote interaction and cooperation across gulfs of difference" (p. 109). Examining Fraser's model will well help to illustrate the pitfalls BGLOs have pertaining to identity politics and fighting for the redistribution of wealth and resources.

### *Historical Contexts*

The formation of BGLOs began one generation removed from slavery, but that does not mean that Black people did not face a daily struggle of racism and discrimination. I will explore the time and context in which BGLOs were formed, a historical moment when social inequalities and racial tensions were unavoidable in higher education and society more generally. As stated by Deborah Whaley (2008):

these organizations emerged in cultural and social opposition to the exclusively white Greek-letter organizations that were in existence. Their Greek letters and identity as Greek-letter societies, represented their social options available at the time (twentieth century), and allowed them to function in the eyes of what college administrators as legitimate and recognizable college organizations. (pp. 54-55)

Understanding where Black folks were historically situated in this time of racial unrest is pivotal in understanding the development of Black Greek Letter Organizations and how they helped

Black people to strive for social and educational advancement even in the most intolerant university climates.

### **ACPA/NASPA Competencies**

In proposing my intervention, it is key to make sure that the mission of the intervention aligns to the competencies outlined by ACPA/NASPA (2010). The first competency that I will address is the *Values, Philosophy, and History* competency area. This area involves the, “knowledge, skills, and dispositions that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one’s current practice” (p. 18). My intervention will address the need for student affairs professionals, especially those working in fraternity and sorority life, to connect the history of BGLOs to a program where students, staff, and faculty will learn and appreciate their history while also learning tactics to integrate equitable practices.

The *Leadership* competency area addresses, “both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 27). In my intervention, I will propose that a select number of students belonging to BGLOs will participate on an advisory board where they will go into the campus community and facilitate conversations with university staff and faculty about the history of their organizations and tangible steps to adopting antiracist practices throughout the various departments within the institution. Students will go through an in-depth training and be paid for their services. The idea is to form a leadership board where students not only have the ability to learn about their organizations, but also become leaders in the community with the intention to enact change.

Lastly, all of my work is rooted in the *Social Justice and Inclusion* competency area that, “creates learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to

address issues of oppression, privilege, and power” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 30). Ultimately the goal of this intervention is to provide steps to create small pockets of change within the institution of higher education that helps to dismantle the structures impacting racial minorities’ ability to be fully integrated into higher education. I want to propose that abiding by the founding mission and purpose of BGLOs will provide institutions of higher education with a blueprint of how to actualize the implementation of equitable and antiracist practices.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs)**- Referring to the nine historically Black fraternities and sororities that makeup the Divine Nine and the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

**Culturally Based Fraternal Organizations (CBFOs)**- Referring to any fraternity or sorority that identifies as historically Black, Latino/a, Multicultural, International or otherwise, and typically does not refer to organizations that identify as historically White.

**Divine Nine**- Comprised of the nine historically Black fraternities and sororities: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated (1906), Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (1908), Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated (1911), Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated (1911), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated (1913), Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated (1914), Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated (1920), Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated (1922), Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated (1963)

**National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)**- The governing organization of the nine African American fraternities and sororities, sometimes collectively referred to as the Divine Nine or “D9.” The National Pan-Hellenic Council was established in an era when Greek lettered organizations founded by African Americans were banned from being affiliated with Greek lettered organizations founded by White Americans (Gillon et al, 2019).

**Fraternity-** A groups of people associated or formally organized for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure: such as a **men's** student organizations formed chiefly for social purposes having secret rites and a name consisting of Greek letters, and/or a student organization for scholastic, professional, or extracurricular activities (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**Sorority-** A groups of people associated or formally organized for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure: such as a **women's** student organizations formed chiefly for social purposes having secret rites and a name consisting of Greek letters, and/or a student organization for scholastic, professional, or extracurricular activities (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**Chapter-** The distinguishing title of a specific Greek lettered organization that belongs to a campus/region. Ex. The **Alpha Zeta Chapter** of Alpha Beta Gamma Sorority, Inc. at XYZ University.

**Council-** The governing organization of which specific types of fraternities and sororities belong to. The governing organizations provide guidelines, regulations, standards and policies that all organizations under their council must abide by.

**Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)-** “A term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Caucasians account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment” (Woods, 2019).

**Historically Black College/University (HBCU)-** “Institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the Black community” (Woods, 2019).

**Antiracist-** “One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea” (Kendi, 2019, p.13). “One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are

equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity” (Kendi, 2019, p. 24).

**Racist ideas-** “Any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way. Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society” (Kendi, 2019, p. 20).

**Racist policies-** “Any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups” (Kendi, 2019, p. 18).

**Antiracist policies-** “Any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups” (Kendi, 2019, p.18).

**Inequality-** “Refers primarily to the condition of being unequal” (Grammatist, n.d.).

**Inequity-** “A close synonym of injustice and unfairness used in reference to disparities in rights or freedoms” (Grammatist, n.d.).

**Neoliberalism-** “A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 233).

**Deculturalization-** “The process by which an ethnic group is forced to abandon its language, culture, and customs. It is the destruction of the culture of a dominated group and its replacement by the culture of the dominating group” (Branch, 2012).

**Assimilation-** “The process in which a minority group or culture comes to resemble a dominant group or assume the values, behaviors, and beliefs of another group” (Spielberger, 2004).

**Identity politics-** “A tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics”

(Lexico, n.d.). “Identity politics, as a mode of categorizing, are closely connected to the ascription that some social groups are oppressed (such as women, ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities); that is, the claim that individuals belonging to those groups are, by virtue of their identity, more vulnerable to forms of oppression such as cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation of labor, marginalization, or powerlessness” (Heyes, 2016).

## Chapter 3

### My Philosophical Positionality

My philosophical positionality is centered around the theories presented by Paulo Freire (1970), John Dewey (1916), and Ibram X. Kendi (2019). These theories on the purpose of education highlight communication, democracy and experience as the center of educational learning as well as the necessity for education to be a humanizing process. These theories are people centered and disavow the notion that education should serve as a mechanism of professionalization. Instead, institutions of higher education should be creating an educational system that promotes unity and understanding between people.

While there needs to be a mutually agreed upon purpose of education, this purpose should highlight the human experience. Everyone should have a hand in determining what their educational experience looks like. If education serves to be humane and just, then education must also be antiracist. Antiracism in education would suggest that all racial groups are equal even in their apparent differences, and support that there is nothing inherently right or wrong in any racial group (Kendi, 2019). As a result, systems of higher education would reflect this equality within the policies that make up the institution. If institutions of higher education were antiracist, their policies would be all encompassing, and no racial group would have to question their place in the university or be fearful that their phenotype could threaten their existence. In this section, I will use these scholars to exemplify my personal philosophy on education of how members of Black Greek Letter Organizations should carry out this purpose of dismantling racism in institutions of higher education.



### ***Humanizing Education***

Education should be a place of mutual learning and understanding for students, faculty, and staff. Traditionally, universities have utilized what Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, refers to as “the banking concept” of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (p. 72). Freire continues to explain that education is suffering from a narration sickness wherein learning in the classroom becomes a performative act rather than transformative. In the banking concept of education that Freire condemns, education is viewed as, “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Constricting knowledge to only a process of depositing information and projecting perceived knowledge onto others, negates people’s ability to become fully human and prohibits education to flourish as a liberatory practice according to Freire. In order to develop into full human beings, education must serve as a space of inquiry. Freire (1970) states that, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the relentless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). Therefore, education must begin with a solution to the teacher-student banking concept of education and reconcile it so that both are simultaneously teachers and students (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

A key element in a favorable educative setting is the ability to develop one’s own critical consciousness through the process of inquiry. The banking model of education denies students the ability to develop this consciousness of the world because it instead requires them to be passive participants in the education that is being bestowed upon them. The banking concept of education serves to minimize students’ creative and transformative powers in preference of

serving the interest of the oppressors. According to Freire (1970), the role of the oppressors in education is to, “change the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them,” for those that can be easily led to adapt to their state of oppression can also be more easily dominated (p. 74).

When analyzing or critiquing the role of education, we do not often consider how our thoughts and experiences have been oppressed in the classroom or in other co- curricular experiences outside of direct classroom learning. We have been integrated into an educational system that withstands by minimizing individuals’ perspectives on the world and thus, forced to absorb the curriculum that has been created for us that has been deemed as valuable and educative. Throughout traditional education, we have been treated as marginals who need to be integrated into the education system to be considered civilized human beings. However, I believe that each of our experiences should be validated and examined in institutions of higher education. We all have different perspectives and life paths that should be explored and given the space to inquire about how those differences could allow for an educational process that leads to an overall transformation in the education system. Allowing the oppressors to continue to maneuver in this mis-educative fashion will lead to a continuation of the institutionalized racism, patriarchy, and overall oppression widely spread, accepted, and rarely critiqued at colleges and universities across the world.

Freire (1970) provides us with a model to understand that we are not marginalized at all, and in fact the solution is “not to “integrate” us into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that we can become “beings for ourselves” (Freire, 1970, p. 74). Doing this would, of course, undermine the oppressor’s agenda and allow for a critical awakening of our consciousness, otherwise known as our *conscientização*. When we talk about our critical

consciousness, we are referring to our ability to be *with* the world, not only *in* the world. The banking concept calls for individuals to be spectators of the world, and not recreators of the world. This means that human beings would not be perceived as conscious beings, but rather as humans that possess a conscious, someone with an empty mind ready to passively receive information (Freire, 1970, p. 75). Freire (1970) alternatively suggest that in order to eradicate this oppressive system of education we need humanist revolutionary educators. A humanist revolutionary educator's efforts will, "coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. Their efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them" (Freire, 1970, p. 75).

Ultimately, Freire's (1970) position of education is that communication and understanding between teacher and students is necessary in order to eliminate the oppressive banking concept of education that is traditionally present in formal learning experiences. In order to have an educative learning system, "the teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking" (Freire, 1970, p. 77). Through the process of communication, human life develops meaning and, "authentic liberation – the process of humanization – is not another deposit to be made in men" (p. 79).

Freire discusses liberation as a praxis, "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 79). Those committed to an authentic liberatory practice of education will reject the banking model, denounce the oppressor's agenda, and dedicate themselves to creating meaningful spaces that welcome open dialogue and support problem-posing discussion within the classroom setting. Education is about connection and

community, concepts that John Dewey (1916) would also support as means to a democratic and educational process.

### ***Creating Democracy in Education***

John Dewey in, *Democracy and Education* (1916), argues similarly to Paulo Freire (1970), that education cannot exist without communication. Dewey agrees that education should not consist only of formal transmission, which would create mis-educative experiences. Dewey speaks in depth about how, “society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication” (Dewey, 1916, p. 4). He continues in discussing the connections between the words common, community, and communication. He states that, “men live in a community in virtue of the things they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspiration, and knowledge (Dewey, 1916, p. 4). Dewey (1916) believes that communication will ensure participation in a common understanding, which will secure similar emotional and intellectual dispositions (p. 4).

What Dewey (1916) explains throughout his writing is that communication will help to form a community which is necessary for education to become democratic. According to Dewey (1916), “giving and taking of orders modifies action and results but does not of itself affect a sharing of purposes, a communication of interest” (p.4). Dewey’s (1916) position is that education should be a democratic ideal, and that education systems should create settings where we practice democracy, where they would then produce more democratic views, people, systems, etc. Dewey (1916) contends that in this democratic process of education there is a greater reliance upon recognition of mutual interests. This democratic model of education will not only

produce a freer interaction between social groups, but also create a change in social habit that will allow for the transformation of education, Dewey (1916) stands with Freire in that education should be about experiences, and that everyone deserves to have their opinions and perspectives accounted for in the formal educational process. In Dewey's (1916) model, democracy is more than just a form of government, it is the solution to create a communicative, social, learning process in which mutual ideas are shared and everyone matters equally. This coincides with Freire's (1970) proposal of eliminating the banking model of education where teachers deposit knowledge into students and instead promotes that notion that in order for education to be liberatory it therefore must also be democratic.

It is important to highlight that in Dewey's (1916) model of education a common goal must be identified in the group. He states, "each would have to know what the other was about and would have to have some way of keeping the other informed as to his own purpose and progress" (Dewey, 1916, p.4). Although there has to be a common goal for the purpose of education, if the goal is not achieved in a democratic way it would then be a mis-educative practice. Dewey (1916) defends that social life and experiences are identical with communication and that all communication is educative (p. 5). Utilizing both Freire's (1970) and Dewey's (1916) ideal models of education, and agreeing that education should be communicative and democratic, I would also propose that if this is to be true, then education must also be anti-racist.

### ***Antiracism in Higher Education***

Ibram X. Kendi (2019) is an award-winning author, and also a historian that teaches at American University. In his text, *How to be an Antiracist* (2019), he explores antiracism as a way to reignite the conversation about racism while giving the reader insight to his past and the

personal experiences that have helped to shape his perspective. Although Kendi (2019) does not explicitly state that his philosophy on antiracism is for the purpose of higher education, his theories can be applied in a multitude of arenas and used to examine how racism structures every part of our lives. A trailblazer in his field, I find Kendi's (2019) work to be relevant and necessary in reexamining how we can better systems of higher education. Kendi's concepts and analysis inform my philosophy of education by providing clear definitions and goals for how institutions of higher education should operate. His definitions serve as a guide to help underscore how institutions of higher education can implement new practices and policies and abate the racist structures on which they were built. Kendi's (2019) liberatory beliefs and initiatives directly coincide with the educational theories presented by Freire (1970) and Dewey (1916), making this text a perfect guide to more deeply examine my personal philosophy on education.

In order to understand Kendi's (2019) theories, it is important to first understand his definitions. At the beginning of the novel, Kendi (2019) discusses the problem with being simply "not racist". Most people assume that the opposite of racist is not racist, but Kendi (2019) is adamant about disbanding that concept. He explains his theory on racism in the following paragraph:

What's the problem with being "not racist"? It is a claim that signifies neutrality: "I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism." But there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of "racist" isn't "not racist." It is "anti-racist." What's the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an antiracist. One either allows

racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confront racial inequities, as an antiracist.

(Kendi, 2019, p. 9.)

Kendi's (2019) emphasis on how racism is located in the roots of power and policies is why his analysis is perfect to be integrated into institutions of higher education. His book directly addresses how the effect of racism inhibits our ability to be fully human, a concept that both Freire (1970) and Dewey (1916) describe as mis-educative experiences. If education stands to be humanizing, then that should inherently imply that education must also be antiracist. Any inequity present at institutions of higher education should be examined through an antiracist lens. Utilizing an antiracist approach to examine the universities problems will allow for an in-depth analysis of the root of the racist history in which most universities were conceived. Many institutions of higher education fall into the well-intended trap of trying to rewrite policies or add more diversity into the institution without actually taking the time to examine the history of the problem and how the issues of inequity came to exist in the first place. In this next section of this chapter, I will detail the rich history of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) and discuss how their history can put them in a position to address racial inequities on college campuses and be the leaders in the fight for transformation at institutions of higher education.

### **Historical Context of BGLOs**

This section serves to position Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) as trailblazers in the fight for racial equity throughout institutions of higher education. Their founding mission was to pave a way for Black students during an era where they were legally excluded from participating in a number of areas of campus life. Their strong ties to liberatory movements for Black students and other students of color provides them with deep historical roots, connections to past historical leaders, and a blueprint ingrained in their inception that gives them the know-

how to be able to do this work effectively. In order to understand how undergraduate members of BGLOs can help to fight racial inequities present on college campuses today, it is necessary to understand their history and why the mission of their work can help dismantle the racist structures inhibiting student's ability to be fully human.

Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) were formed in a time when social inequities and racial tensions were highly prevalent and unavoidable in society and consequently at institutions of higher education. "By 1860, in an era when slavery was just beginning to end in the North, but still a way of life in the South, only 28 Blacks had received baccalaureate degrees from Northern Colleges and universities" (Kimbrough, 1997, p. 229). Ramon DeMar Jenkins states in his study that, "Black fraternal organizations were created during a time in America when blacks experienced high levels of racial and social inequality via Jim Crow segregation" (2010, p. 226). Jim Crow laws heavily influenced the experiences of Black people in the United States and were a catalyst in the formation of BGLOs across the country. Analyzing the impact of Jim Crow laws as it pertains to BGLOs and over civil movements across the United States will help to develop a logical timeline of how BGLOs came to exist today.

*Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 is a famous case in which, "after the US Supreme Court handed down its decision, the separation of facilities for both blacks and whites became constitutional" (Jenkins, 2010, p. 277). The determination of this historic case thus developed Jim Crow laws across the North and South. "'Jim Crow' was a character portrayed by the black-face minstrel, Thomas 'Daddy' Rice, whose stage performances in the 1830s and 1840s typified many whites' view of African Americans throughout the nineteenth century" (Guffey, 2012, p. 41). Jim Crow laws were enacted in attempt to keep African Americans enslaved and subservient even after the abolishment of slavery. Jim Crow laws were widely accepted and practiced across



the United States and were perpetuated through signage, behaviors, and backed by legislation. Black people were segregated from the rest of society and had to follow a different set of rules in order to navigate life. There were dedicated areas where Blacks were permitted to drink, sit, eat and exist altogether creating a high tension and unsafe environment for Black people. The necessity for Black people to form a community was dire in the midst of this legalized segregation. In the North, after de facto segregation legalized Jim Crow in the States, “predominantly white institutions (PWIs) were not required to honor admission applications from African American students” (Jenkins, 2010). The African American students that therefore were permitted to attend PWIs faced a slew of racial barriers that impacted their ability to acclimate and succeed on campus.

We know that at this point in history there were few African American students that were able to attend an institution of higher education. Kimbrough explains that, “the sparsity of Black collegians warrants an assumption that there were no cocurricular activities for these men, especially with persons of the same race” (Kimbrough, 1997, p. 230). The conflicting position of young African American students to be trying to pursue an education in a hostile, dangerous, and often deadly learning environment created complicated social identities that impacted the way that these students saw themselves on their campuses. This adverse time in society directly reflected what was happening on college campuses and eventually led to minoritized students organizing for the purpose of social uplift.

W.E.B. DuBois, an intellectual in the Black community, introduced this concept of “double consciousness, also referred to a psychic duality and twoness, the manner in which African Americans see themselves as an American, and a Negro” (Jenkins, 2010). The connectedness of DuBois’ definition of double consciousness mixed with the realities of

legalized segregation practices launched the gathering and implementation of African American students, “developing and organizing different social clubs” as a way for them to entertain themselves (Jenkins, 2010). Members of these initial organizations were determined to assert themselves in a visible manner of which their white peers could not deny.

Black Greek Letter Organizations played a key role in getting Black students involved in campus life and overcoming systemic and institutionalized racism that fought to keep them indentured to the law. However, although BGLOs were crucial, they did not pioneer these methods of organizing. In Kevin Michael Foster’s (2008) analysis of Black Greeks, he offers that, “in the eighteenth and nineteenth century there were manifestations of black fraternal organizations that were not student organizations but were nonetheless precursors to today’s network of BGLO’s” (p.6). He continues in his article to give prominence to organizations like Prince Hall Masons, the Grand United Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria, and the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Sigma Pi Phi, and Order of the Elks. Although a number of these organizations have dismantled, at a point in time these organizations consisted of hundreds of thousands of members nationwide. Foster (2008) explains that, “In a society that took black inferiority as a given and black humanity as debatable, these associations acted in a counter hegemonic manner” (p. 6). Foster in his article emphasizes the impetus behind the formation of social movements between Black people. He demonstrates that these organizations were arguably modes of counter conduct that were constructed to refuse the political climate that was the Jim Crow era. It is my stance that this is what BGLOs should continue to carry out on campuses today.

Organizing as a people is engrained in the DNA of Black folks. In Theda Skocpol and Jennifer Lynn Oser’s (2004) *Organization Despite Adversity* they state, “Many studies of urban

and rural localities from the early 1800s through 1930s suggest the free African Americans always had a strong proclivity to form mutual assistance groups tied to particular churches, neighborhoods, or occupational groups” (p. 375). They continue in explaining that it is likely that some of these groups formed amongst slaves and continued once African Americans had some rights to organize. The early gatherings of Black people are not surprising considering the inhumane happenings of slavery and racism that were prevailing for generations. BGLOs serve as a nuanced way of organizing for a similar mission. The founders of BGLOs came together for racial uplift, social, and academic support. By examining the formation of these organizations in the midst of other social movements that were happening, it becomes undeniable the impact that these organizations had on African American students’ ability to organize and fight for a social cause. Black students had to create their own spaces to exist especially at Predominantly White Institutions. Ricky L. Jones (2004) from SUNY Press discusses in his book the fact that white Greek organizations would not allow for Black participation as a direct result of Jim Crow laws and social structures. Jones (2004) brings up an interesting point in his writing and briefly offers that it is unclear whether or not every member that wanted to join a BGLO wanted to join for political purposes. The facts of the situation are that regardless of motivation behind membership, it was absolutely necessary that Blacks form their own organizations. Jones (2004) also offers that identity politics played a role in the politicizing of BGLOs as activist groups across the United States. The fight to be seen and recognized is a power struggle that I would argue that undergraduate members of BGLOs are still wrestling with today. In another section, I will dissect the impact of a neoliberal society and how that shapes the practices and procedures in the current climate of BGLOs.

Ali D. Chambers (2014) also mentions the tensions of identity during the formation of BGLOs but addresses it from the prevalence of nationalism throughout the United States. Chambers (2014) defines nationalism as, “a desire by a large group of people (such as people who share the same culture, history, language, etc.) to form a separate and independent nation of their own” (p. 260). This view also encompasses the necessity to understand one's own relationship to the nation. She discusses the importance of nationalism throughout the formation of BGLOs because in 1865 when the American Civil War ended there was a new, “American consciousness which consolidated northern and southern attitudes into a unified identity” (2014). During this period in history was when BGLOs emerged as a social organization that reflected the attitudes the African Americans had toward nationalism and identity. Between the years 1906 and 1920 seven Black Greek Letter fraternities and sororities were founded at the collegiate level as a direct response to racism and, “the post-Reconstruction failure” of equality in American Society (2014). As a result, the BGLOs became a location for uplift and support of racial identity which gave students the space to collaborate and interpret the world's events for themselves. In an environment where Blacks were not fully freed from the chains and binds of slavery, they formed organizations that would continue to build throughout decades. Although BGLOs were not the first to create a movement to push forward the growth and integration of Black people, they certainly continued to build from the organizations that came before them in order to continue the fight in breaking down racist policies and practices that impacted them. The last BGLO to join the eight that were already formed was Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated in 1963, right in the thick of the civil rights movements. The formation of this last fraternity shows that these organizations were created with the purpose of building off of one another in continuing the fight for social justice, equality, and freedom.

Overall, Black Greek Letter Organizations were introduced during the Jim Crow era where segregation was a legalized practice across the United States and in institutions of higher education. Although there was a large majority of Black folks that were not permitted to receive a college degree, those that were privy to the experience of high education learning did not do so without facing an uproar and racial tensions and discriminatory practices in their everyday life. BGLOs became a way of protection and accountability with like-minded individuals that were goal oriented and focused on supporting one another in an environment where no one else would. Black people were constantly dehumanized and forming a collective as a means of overcoming adversity helped pave the way for many African American students that were to come after the original founder.

The history of BGLOs and the progress they have made in advancing Black students at institutions of higher education make them the perfect group to be able to continue to do this work. Their founding missions and the work that they have continued to do show that they have antiracist policies integrated throughout them. BGLOs have always been in the fight for liberation, and the humanization of all people. They carry out the purpose of what education should be which is creating space for all people and allowing for their experiences to be validated and racist policies to be eradicated in every area of the institution. These organizations stand for the humanization of the educational process which I believe to be a unique factor that these organizations possess over other student groups.

Although I believe that BGLOs have the necessary tools to continue advancing Black students in higher education, I would be ignorant to not address how BGLOs have been impacted by identity politics and the neoliberal order of the university. If BGLOs are going to be at the forefront of addressing and transforming the racial inequities present at institutions of higher

education, than they first have to fix the problems that currently exist within their own groups. In this next section, I will highlight the problems that I believe are negatively affecting the ability of BGLOs to be leaders in this liberatory movement of education. I then will propose an approach of how I believe we can address the problems moving forward and begin creating pockets of change at colleges and universities.

### **Unique and Relevant Factors**

#### ***The Impact of Neoliberalism and Identity Politics on BGLOs***

While Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) serve primarily social purposes, it would be foolish to ignore the political nature of these organizations, as well as the political climate of the greater society during the inception of BGLOs. I believe that we should classify BGLOs as social movements that brought together Black men and women across the United States for mutual uplift, but I recognize that in discussing these organizations we must address the identity politics present throughout their formation. In his book, *Black Haze*, Ricky L. Jones (2004) highlights the issue of identity politics in BGLOs when he says, “one could read the history of social movements as the story of efforts to bring social concerns into political contestation” (p. 21). The problem of identity politics is that addressing social concerns in a political manner, if not carefully constructed, can completely miss the point of the movement in the first place. Identity politics leads us into the fight of recognition and demanding more visibility instead of addressing the reasons why the inequities exist in the first place. Jones (2004) continues in his analysis by pointing out that while BGLOs were well aware of the racial hostility and effects that Jim Crow laws had on their ability to be involved at institutions of higher education, BGLOs could arguably be deemed as conservative in their approach to addressing these larger issues. The primary focus for these organizations was to integrate Blacks

into this mainstream culture, not break away from it (Jones, 2004). This process of wanting to integrate into the institution emphasizes the inherent struggle with identity politics and BGLOs on predominantly white campuses. The struggle of wanting to integrate into a system that was never created with the intention of including any minority still persists on college campuses today. I would like to reimagine the possibilities of BGLOs to face issues concerning recognition and redistribution and discuss how the neoliberal regime continues to have a negative impact on their ability to fully succeed.

### *Concerns of Neoliberalism*

Since the 1970s there has been a turn in political-economic practices that has made an impact on every aspect of human life. Neoliberalism has manifested not only as an ideology that influences that way we think and interpret the world, but also it has developed into a practice that has strategic enumerated outcomes on the way humans behave and their ability to interact with society. David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as, “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”, he continues in stating that, “it is the state’s role to create and preserve an institutional framework to appropriate these practices” (p. 233). This notion of the state having to appropriate the practices outlined by the neoliberal order fundamentally implies that institutions of higher education, that are meant to serve as a public good, will reinforce these ideals that are set forth. The problem with neoliberalism is that it is diminishing the need for true democratic citizenship and instead is promoting privatization and competition which have effects that trickle down to student clubs and organizations including fraternities and sororities.

According to Wendy Brown (2015) in her book, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, she explains in detail the ways in which neoliberalism impacts day to day life and decision making. She emphasizes the impact of neoliberalism when she explains that, "it formulates everything, everywhere, in terms of capital investment and appreciation, including and especially humans themselves" (Brown, 2015, p. 176). Brown (2015) continues in her writing to explain that human subjects are configuring their time as self-investing human capital meaning that humans are choosing to self-invest in ways that contribute to their appreciation by making decisions like, "education, dating, mating, creative and leisure activities in value-enhancing ways" (p. 177). This is important to note as it pertains to Black students obtaining membership within their fraternal organization because students are now joining these organizations for the best return on investment, instead of the reason why they were initially founded. While the initial purpose of BGLOs was to stand for the racial uplift and advancement of Black people, there have long been critiques about BGLOs being exclusively for the elitist class of Blacks. Matthew W. Hughey and Gregory S. Parks (2012) in their article, *Black Fraternal Organizations* refer to this elitist concept when they explain, "BGLOs were an integral part of what W. E. B. Du Bois fashioned as the Talented Tenth—the top 10 % of educated, upper-class, and motivated individuals who acquired the professional credentials, legitimated skills, and economic (as well as cultural) capital to assist the remaining 90 % of the race attain socioeconomic parity" (p. 598). These concepts of joining BGLOs in order to be "better than the rest" is a problem that has been reproduced throughout generations. Being aware that the impact of neoliberalism has long existed within the culture of BGLOs and has just modified over generations to fit the needs of the students is important in understanding why the problem of neoliberalism still exists today.



The neoliberal order rules the ways that students are choosing to get involved because the neoliberal ideology promotes human capital and having to be the most marketable version of oneself. This same ideology is impacting students' abilities to learn as they are no longer being encouraged to study for the sake of learning but are instead being trained for certain jobs that will only serve to reintegrate them into the same inequitable system. Brown (2015) reiterates that, "knowledge is not sought for the purposes apart from capital enhancement, whether that capital is human, corporate, or financial" (p. 177). This is significant because as Kathleen E. Gillon, Cameron C. Beatty, and Cristobal Salinas Jr. (2019) explain, "historically African Americans' aspirations to find activities in higher education to empower, uplift, and support them while receiving an education motivated them to create organizations for themselves" (p.11). They continue to explain the rich history of BGLOs during the development of the Jim Crow era, and instead of the current college students working to catapult the fight for redistribution, they are continuing to get caught up in this neoliberal regime that reaffirms the tension and distracts the student from breaking down the barriers that are identity politics. If young Black students continue to get involved in BGLOs for individual market gain, they miss the opportunity to critically question and problematize their existence within predominantly white institutions. There needs to be a reawakening in the order of these organizations, otherwise they run the risk of continuing to perpetuate the systematic racist practices that bleed through colleges and universities.

### ***The Fight for Recognition***

Due to the political climate in society during the origination of BGLOs, Black Students had no choice but to form their own organizations for mutual racial uplift. During this time, few Black students were admitted into universities and subsequently they were not allowed to join

white social organizations. Black students were quite literally fighting to be recognized on their campuses particularly at predominantly white institutions. Nancy Fraser (2000) identifies her concerns with identity politics and offers the beginnings of suggestions on how to transform this model of thinking. She offers that it is the, “neoliberal rhetorical assault on egalitarianism” that has forced this shift from redistribution to recognition when not long-ago social movements were boldly demanding an equitable share of resources and wealth (Fraser, 2000, p. 108). Fraser (2000) underlines the complexities of identity politics by explaining that the problem with the identity model is that we run the risk of displacing redistribution and also reifying group identities. Instead, Fraser (2000) offers that we view recognition as, “a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing on social actors”, she continues to explaining, “in the status model, politics of recognition is necessary, but it no longer reduced to a question of identity: rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest” (p. 113). It is important to consider that Fraser (2000) does acknowledge that there are recognition politics that represent emancipatory responses to serious injustices that cannot be solved only by redistribution. I believe this factor is the crux in which BGLOs typically find themselves stuck. In my opinion it can be argued that BGLOs were formed as an emancipatory response to racial injustice but have continued to struggle in the fight for redistribution. Understanding Fraser’s (2000) stance on recognition and redistribution and modeling her status model, I believe can help provide guidelines for BGLOs to begin restructuring and reaffirming their existence. Fraser (2000) agrees that the neoliberal order has promoted the shift to recognition politics and highlighting how BGLOs have fallen into the pitfalls of recognition will provide the context needed in order to address how to move forward.

BGLOs as well as any other Greek letter or social organization was created to help people to form bonds and create community. Given that there is a fundamental mission to connect with other people, it comes as no surprise that organizations like BGLOs have fallen into the identity model of politics of recognition. Fraser (2000) draws on the Hegelian idea that, “Identity is constructed dialogically, through a process of mutual recognition” (p. 109). The Hegelian approach allows for subjects to be seen as equal but also as separate. This almost exactly defines what BGLOs have been facing from the beginning as they were trying to be seen as equal to their white counterparts. Fraser (2000) makes clear that one of the main concerns with identity politics is the issue of identity reification. She elaborates on the effects of reification when she states, “stressing the need to elaborate and display an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective identity. It puts moral pressure on individual members to conform to a given group culture”, she continues later in the paragraph that, “the overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexities of people’s lives” (Fraser, 2000, p. 188).

This phenomenon that Fraser discusses happens repeatedly within BGLOs. The effect is that the members, or the in-group all conform to the same way of being which typically is shaped through the organization’s perceptions and stereotypes. For example, in a study of fraternities and sororities, Natalie T. J. Tindall, Marcia D. Hernandez, and Matthew W. Hughey (2011) discuss perceptions of the women belonging to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, the first historically Black sorority. In the study, a participant described their perceptions of the members of this organization by saying, “they are classy, rich and well-to-do, delicate, pretty, dainty, snobby, prissy, and light-skinned with long hair” (p. 41). Additionally, in describing women belonging to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, the second historically Black

sorority, participants said, “they are service-focused, involved, down-to earth women that are also tough, “ghetto,” and aggressive women who are prone to fight” (Tindall et al, 2011, p.42). These perceptions shape the in-group identity and the women belonging to these organizations spend a substantial amount of time affirming these stereotypes. There is a history within these organizations to only select the men and women that are willing to conform the organization’s perception. This process of conforming to the collective identity not only eliminates the ability for individuality, but also perpetuates negative group stereotyping that often stems for internalized self-hatred and white supremacist ideals.

### ***Reification of Identity***

Reification of identity has an undeniable impact on in-group identity, but it also plays a significant role on how people from the out-group perceive the members of BGLOs and underrepresented minorities as a whole. In a study conducted by Shaun Harper (2009) he examined how Black men in particular are ‘Niggered’ at predominantly white institutions. “Derived from the Latin word for the color black, Nigger had become a familiar insult to enslaved Africans prior to the mid-1800s. Although the word has multiple meanings, it is used most often derogatorily by White supremacist to stigmatize black folks” (Harper, 2009, p. 701). Harper (2009) offers this as the historical context and reasoning for his choice of language throughout his study. The study revealed that Black fraternity members and Black student athletes were most likely to be subjected to these sorts of misperceptions or niggering. Harper (2009) explains, “At PWIs, niggering is evidenced by the misperceptions that all Black men are the same and the inability of White persons on these campuses to recognize the different cultural backgrounds of Black male students” ( p.701). This was supported in their study when a participant, who was also a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, a historically

black fraternity, explains that he was constantly working to show that ‘Omega men weren’t a bunch of rowdy, violent Niggas’. These examples of reification of identity within BGLOs stresses the fact that fight for recognition is valid and necessary. I think anyone would agree that in these conditions it would be exceedingly difficult to fight for anything but being recognized and treated as fully human, however, I agree with Fraser (2000) in her proposal that recognition is insufficient as a means to address the politics of redistribution.

### ***Refocusing on Redistribution***

In moving forward, Fraser (2000) provides a status model to resolve issues of redistribution. In this proposed model, there is not a group-specific identity, but yet the status of the individual group members is centralized with the goal of seeing members as full partners in social interaction. Fraser (2000) illustrates this concept when she says, “to view recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effect on the relative standing of social actors” (p. 113). I argue that BGLOs have often been victims of misrecognition or, as explained by Fraser (2000), have been “denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem” (p. 114). The key aspect in this model is that she is addressing this as an institutional concern aimed at changing interaction-regulating values that infringe on a group’s ability to fully participate. No longer are we addressing the issues of identity, but rather we have shifted the focus to make institutional change. The inability to implement the necessary institutional change would be an outright violation of justice.

Although in my research I have yet to find an article that addresses redistribution for BGLOs specifically, I would propose that this shift take place in a multitude of levels. In my Chapter 4, I

propose an intervention that begins to address concerns of redistribution for BGLOs in institutions of higher education.

It is necessary to clarify that the redistribution does not solely depend on the restructuring of one department. I think Fraser (2000) would agree that the redistribution has to also come from an institutional level. An institution of higher education would have no choice but to examine the patterns of what is deemed culturally valuable in order to make space for all people and organizations to receive the same level of redistributed resources and also be considered valuable. Redistributing funds that disproportionately prohibit Black students from fully experiencing college life would have to be a priority in these conversations otherwise their rights to be full participants would be infringed upon. Although I believe that BGLOs should exist for the familial bond and racial uplift for which they were intended, I am aware of the duality of having to operate within the university in order to make changes at the university. No one should have to ever prove their value in any instance, however, working through Fraser's (2000) model calls for BGLOs to be integrated in a flawed system with a plan of restructuring from within.

Furthermore, if institutions of higher education were to deem all areas of the university as equally valuable, there would be no choice but to eliminate all social, political, and financial burdens weighing on specific groups of people. Fraser (2000) presents maldistribution when she argues, "for the status model, institutionalized patterns of cultural value are not the only obstacles to participatory parity. On the contrary, equal participation is also impeded when some sectors lack the necessary resources to interact with other peers" (p.116). The brief summary provided about how I would go about restructuring fraternity and sorority life departments would assist in alleviating barriers and providing equitable access to minoritized students. The access to resources surfaces in the conversation again when discussing money. The access to money

almost always means the access to better resources, and while I am aware of constant struggle in finding ways for the institution to support all areas, Fraser (2000) asserts that economics has to be considered if it is a factor that is restricting access into full participation of social life. Any violation and denial of access is a form of subordination and is therefore unjust. Ultimately, Fraser does an excellent job of marrying the separate but equally important aspects of recognition and redistribution. While recognition addresses identity and norms, redistribution focuses on resources and economics, and the status model provides a basis as to not encourage reification and displacement.

Nancy Fraser's status model and analysis on recognition and redistribution proved to be exceedingly helpful in employing a method to refocus the aims and ideals of BGLOs without losing the importance of their foundation and continued struggle. This work, while invigorating and innovative, is also extremely difficult to reimagine the interwoven complexities that take form when trying to reconfigure images of organizations that have existed for decades. I have also learned that gaining an understanding of how neoliberalism has shaped the reasons why people join and participate in certain activities helps to tell the story as to how and why identity politics is deeply ingrained within the order of BGLOs. It is my plan in future research to continue to debunk the need to abide by what the neoliberal order promotes and figure out ways in which we can work to dispel neoliberalism even if we have to work within the system. Ultimately, the necessity to continue to restructure BGLOs is prevalent and I will expand on this more in discussing my intervention. This restructuring that I speak of is not only the work of those victimized and oppressed, but yet it is the responsibility of the institution as well. Sara Ahmed (2012) declares that, "we need to ask how it is that institutions become *objects* of diversity and antiracist practice in the sense that recognizing the institutional nature becomes a

goal for practitioners” (p. 19). I affirm that institutions of higher education do need to stand on antiracist practices and BGLOs can continue to be the frontrunner in this fight for racial justice if they are able to strategically push past the crippling boundaries of identity politics.

### **Theorizing a Path Forward**

In the section above, I discuss how identity politics and the neoliberal order has had an impact on the ability of BGLOs to continue to advance their founding mission of creating access for Black students at Predominantly White Institutions. In this next section, I will discuss how institutions of higher education could be seen as what Althusser (1971) defines as Ideological State Apparatuses that reinforce dominant ideologies in society. I will use Michel Foucault’s (1977) definition of counter conduct to display how BGLOs could resist dominant modes of power. Lastly, I will draw on Robin D. G. Kelley’s (2016) work on Black student activism and fugitive study to address how BGLOs can position themselves to advance liberatory practices of higher education.

### ***Higher Education as an Ideological State Apparatus***

The university is what I believe Althusser (1971) would consider in Ideological State Apparatus, a place where dominant ideologies are reproduced. Althusser (1971) explains, “In our discussion of ideological state apparatuses and their practices, we said that each apparatus was the realization of an ideology, the unity of these regions being ensured by their subsumption under the state ideology. An ideology always exists in an apparatus and in the practice or practices of the apparatus” (p. 182). The university has long been a place to reproduce the oppressive practices and norms that are taking place in society. There were laws that discriminated against women and people of color from entering into the university, therefore it is no wonder that we are still working to break down patriarchal and racially unjust systems that the



university in which the university was built. When institutions of higher education did start accepting different people, they were met with a number of inequities because people believed that some people simply did not belong. These are the types of issues that historically Black Greek Letter Organizations have been working to unfold since their formation.

### ***BGLOs as a Method of Counter Conduct***

My goal in this next section is to position BGLOs as a method of counter conduct which Michel Foucault (1977) addresses in terms of, “redistributing, reversing, nullifying, and partially or totally discrediting” pastoral power (p.204). In his lecture at the College de France in 1977, Foucault speaks on the pastorate being a source of power that conducts the behavior of the people. In his lecture he examines the purpose of counter conduct and discusses the ways in which people can go against methods of power to be who they want to be and not what power tells them to be. He presents the idea of counter conduct as a method to refusing power stating that, “counter-conduct puts into question, works on, elaborates and erodes power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). The purpose of counter conduct is to produce a new way of production and overall being in the world. It creates something different than what power wants for people to be. Power reproduces dominant ideologies which continue to be reproduced in institutions of higher education and other ideological state apparatuses. When discussing systems of powers at institutions of higher education, I am specifically calling out the White, patriarchal, heteronormative and racist structures that the institutions were founded on that continue to be reproduced in the classroom, in policies, in student groups, amongst a number of other disparities. One of the ways that Foucault proposes as a method of counter conduct is the formation of communities as a method of collective refusal. I believe that Black Greek Letter

Organizations can be viewed as a method of counter conduct created to refuse the dominant ideologies that have been integrated throughout systems of higher education.

My mission is to be able to position members of Black Greek Letter Organizations to be at the forefront of continuing to fight for equitable practices and policies at the university. Throughout Chapter 4 I discuss the ways in which BGLOs could lead the charge of revolutionizing education through cultivating solidarity on campus. In my intervention, I demonstrate how Black Greek Letter Organizations were founded as a means of counter conduct and how they can use their position to fight racial injustice. Michel Foucault (1977) explains in his lecture how forming communities can be used as a way to “refuse submission to pastoral power” (p. 208). He continues to say, “more subtly, in the more learned groups, this endless and always recommended activity of the formation of communities depended upon important doctrinal problems” (Foucault, 1977, p. 208). Although fraternities and sororities may not have been going against the pastorate, I still think the formation of BGLOs acted as a method to form as a collective and join together during a time where discrimination and segregation based on race was allowed and expected. Black men and women decided to join together with the sole purpose of uplifting their race in a time where barely anyone else acknowledged their existence. They formed their own rituals, practices, bylaws, handshakes, calls, steps and strolls so that they could identify one another and distinguish one organization from the next similar to how by black families belonging to slave masters would identify themselves through special calls and hand signs. They were able to take their knowledge and lived experiences to create an entire new culture that would continue to make an impact on the lives of young Black college students for generations to come. These students were never in a position of power, but they used their place in the world to break down the barriers and create a space for themselves.

### ***BGLOs as Student Activists***

Robin D. G. Kelley (2016) discusses the act of creating space in the university through fugitive study. In his essay, “Black Study, Black Struggle” he analyzes how Black students can use their position and knowledge to operate *in* the university and not be *of* the university. In this essay he aims to, “draw attention to the tension between reform and revolution, between desiring to belong and rejecting the university as a cog in the neoliberal order” (Kelley, 2016, p. 153). He is positioning student activists at the forefront of these movements, and specifically is interested in addressing the “ideological fissures in their movement and what they might tell us about the character of contemporary Black movements” (Kelley, 2016, p.154). Kelley (2016) believes that Black students can be the leaders in dismantling structural racism, but they need not to succumb to their personal traumas as a method for political gain. Given that BGLOs were founded to be activist movements and have a strong political groundwork in their fight for liberation, I think they could be the group that does revolutionary work that Kelley (2016) emphasizes throughout his essay. Kelley (2016) understands that there is a long history of Black students being traumatized at institutions of higher education, but that that trauma cannot be what drives their political agenda. He states, “I argue that while trauma can be an entrance into activism, it is not in itself a destination and may even trick activists into adopting the language of the neoliberal institutions they are at pains to reject” (Kelley, 2016, p. 154). Kelley (2016) pushes for student activist to understand that while student demands for, “greater diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency training” meets the needs of the university being more hospitable for students, this perceived notion that education is supposed to be, “an enlightened space free of bias and prejudice is hindered by structural racism and patriarchy” ( p.156). Kelley (2016) expresses that “simply” adding darker faces, safer spaces, better training, and adding curriculum” is not

enough, and instead of fighting for mere integration and a “supportive educational environment” students should be fighting for a liberated education that that, “not only promotes but also models social and economic justice” ( p. 156).

Black Greek Letter Organizations have the potential to transform into a student activist group that can pioneer a revolution of calling out and breaking down the inequitable systems that prevent students from being fully human in higher education. In Kendi’s (2019) book he states that, “the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it” (p. 9). It is my hope that BGLOs can be the innovators at the undergraduate level that begin to facilitate these conversations about racism and other systems of oppression in education. Kelley (2016) states that the purpose of these activist groups is not always to “win” per se in terms of obtaining every demand that the group presents to university administration, but rather the purpose should be to, “unveil the university’s exploitative practices and its deeply embedded structures of racism, sexism, and class inequality” (p. 157). Kelley (2016) continues in explaining that this act of unveiling can be obtained through fugitive study. Fugitive study as Kelley (2016) describes is a means of Black studies that was founded specifically in opposition of Eurocentric university culture. Having emerged in a time of mass revolt, Black studies scholars developed institutional models *within* but largely independent *of* the academy and its agenda. Kelley (2016) utilizes Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s (2013) *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* to define what exactly these places of fugitive study serve to do. He states, “The undercommons is a fugitive network where a commitment to abolition and collectivity prevails over a university culture bent on creating socially isolated individuals whose academic skepticism and claims of objectivity leave the world as-it-is intact” (Kelley, 2016, p. 158). The purpose that the undercommons or places of fugitive study stand for directly coincide

with the original mission and purpose of BGLOs making them the ideal group to continue to carry out the fight for liberatory educational practices. BGLOs have the power to disband the mission of neoliberal university and work to, “disrupt the reproduction of our culture’s classed, racialized, nationalized, gendered, moneyed, and militarized stratifications” (Kelley, 2016, p. 158).

Overall, the university should be a place for refuge and place where community and experiences are validated. Higher education should be conducted through methods of democracy allowing for the humanization of its students, staff, and faculty members instead of trying to integrate its people into a cold and methodical process toward professionalization and homogeneity. Harney and Moten’s (2013) critique of the university emphasized that, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place for refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can” (p. 159). This critique underscores the necessity to be inside the university, gaining knowledge and utilizing its resources. Once inside, we can use the space the critique the knowledge imposed on us, liberate our minds to create and spread a new agenda that centers Black students and their experiences at the core. Centering Black students voices inherently means the development and implementation of anti-racist policies and practices. This is why it is extremely important that the students at the forefront of this mission, the members of BGLOs that are going to ignite these spaces of fugitive study, must have a set purpose in mind. It is easy to be appeased by university administrators and take the offers of creating “safe spaces” or hiring diverse faculty for example. These requests do not require the university to reassess the racist policies that have created “unsafe spaces” or hiring inequalities in the first place. Kelley (2016) explains that, “managing trauma does not require dismantling structural racism, which is

why university administrators focus on avoiding triggers rather than implementing zero-tolerance policies for racism” (p.162). We have to have a clear mission in mind that gets us to the root of the problem, “the historical, political, social, cultural ideological, material, economic root of oppression in order to understand its negation, the prospect of our liberation” (Kelley, 2016, p. 164). The most important part of BGLOs being at the foreground of creating these fugitive spaces is that they must lead this revolution with love. We have to, “love ourselves as Black *people*, and make love the motivation for making revolution”, we have to also be able to “envision a society where everyone is embraced, where there is no oppression, where every life is valued” (Kelley, 2016, p. 164). Having a clear vision, a strong foundation, and an unshakable purpose will provide BGLOs with the tools necessary to continue this movement toward a liberated educational system.

### ***BGLOs as Tempered Radicals***

In the analysis provided above I recognize that I am positioning undergraduate members of BGLOs to do a lot of work. At the end of the day, these are students with a number of responsibilities to the academics, other organizations, and overall management of their daily lives. Asking them to ignite an entire revolution to breakdown systems of oppression that have been in place centuries in the four to six years of their undergraduate careers seems outrageous and impossible. While I believe that BGLOs have the historical foundation and power needed to do this work, I do not expect them to do this completely on their own and I definitely do not expect them to do this work in just a few years! When I position BGLOs as being trailblazers in this fight for a liberated antiracist education, it is a process that I see happening overtime in small pockets of the university. BGLOs first have to address the powers that are impacting them to be able to do this work, and then they have to transform themselves and develop a process to

actually be able to execute this work. I instead am proposing what Deborah E. Meyerson (2003) has coined as a tempered radical approach to organizational change.

In her article in the Harvard Business Review, Meyerson (2003) defines the tempered radical as those that draw principally on a spectrum of incremental approaches, working quietly to challenge prevailing wisdom and gently provoke their organizational cultures to adapt (Meyerson, 2003). She discusses in her article that organizational change can either happen through drastic action or through evolutionary change. Evolutionary change allows for a gentle approach to change that is decentralized, and overtime produces a broad and lasting shift in culture (Meyerson, 2003). The purpose is to make small pockets of change by strategically producing disruptive acts that creates a small tear in the cultural norm of the organization. This continuation of small tears, if conducted properly, will eventually cause a major break in the culture and allow for a complete revolution that has quietly been grown from the insides of the organization. Similar to Kelley's (2016) approach, Meyerson (2003) highlights utilizing the structures and resources within the organization to build an agenda and call for a revolution outside of the organizations or university's agenda. There are four strategies that Meyerson describes as methods of tempered radicalism. She describes:

I call these *disruptive self-expression*, *verbal jujitsu*, *variable-term opportunism*, and *strategic alliance building*. Disruptive self-expression, in which an individual simply acts in a way that feels personally right but that others notice, is the most inconspicuous way to initiate change. Verbal jujitsu turns an insensitive statement, action, or behavior back on itself. Variable-term opportunists spot, create, and capitalize on short- and long-term opportunities for change. And with the help of strategic alliances, an individual can push through change with more force (Meyerson, 2003, p. 94).

Meyerson's blueprint of a tempered radical approach to affecting change provides specific guidelines and strategies that members of BGLOs can utilize to start the conversation about racism and other systems of oppression in institutions of higher education.

While I can see each of these strategies having a place in the agenda for BGLOs, I think what they should focus on is gaining those strategic allies to help move their agenda forward. This is a big task, and most people, in my experience, have no idea how to begin having a conversation about racism yet-alone racism at an institutional level. Colleges and universities do such an amazing job of promoting welcoming, diverse, and inclusive spaces that it is easy to believe the rhetoric without critically analyzing whether or not those promises hold true for everybody. Getting alliances on their side that see that the university has long strides to make in the fight for inclusivity will be crucial if the students plan on making any sort of headway at the university. In the proposal of my intervention in Chapter 4, I will talk more in-depth about getting university stakeholders to side with the students and understanding their vision for liberation. I will call on fraternity and sorority life advisors, club advisors, faculty members, diversity workers, and key administrators to help students lead this mission. Students will need access to resources and part of operating within the university to execute their goal means calling on like-minded individuals that are willing to support and advance their mission.

Tempered radicals have the ability to make change, but they have to be willing to endure a number of hardships over long periods of time while maintaining their momentum and not losing sight of the end goal. I think that a slow and steady process toward effecting change is rational and makes sense when approaching issues of structural racism and other methods of oppression given that it is so ingrained in the daily operation of the university. If students want to impact change, they will have to have a keen understanding of how to operate within the duality



of belonging to an institution that stands on the very problems that they are trying to call out and eliminate. Students, staff, faculty members, and other university officials have to be willing to start small in order to effect a large change in the long run. In chapter four I will provide a detailed outline of how a student advisory board, with the assistance from university faculty and staff, can help BGLOs and the university as a whole revolutionize and understand how the development of anti-racist policies and practices can and will have a positive impact at institutions of higher education.

### **Reflecting on My Journey**

My experiences as an undergraduate member of a BGLO and working in fraternity and sorority life as a graduate assistant is what inspired me to write about this topic. While I had a great experience in my sorority, it wasn't until I began pursuing my graduate degree that I realized all of the inequities that I experienced but never questioned. Any obstacle that I faced during my undergraduate experience I left unquestioned because that was how Greek life was always run. Oftentimes the members of the other BGLOs were frustrated with the processes of the office and we often felt uncared for and misunderstood. We were never given a space to share our frustrations and were left feeling like our existence didn't matter. It wasn't until I was inspired by class readings and learned about Black studies and methods of resistance that I realized that something could be done.

When working in fraternity and sorority life as a graduate assistant, I made it a point to put most of my efforts into highlighting the members of BGLOs in a positive light across campus. I got to create special ceremonies for them that highlighted their achievements, I created a position on an advisory board that was all about tradition and celebration of BGLOs, I got the opportunity to sit on a search committee and had a voice in hiring the first Latina Greek advisor

that my institution had seen and together we worked to make sure our students felt seen and supported. When doing this work, I came up against a lot of resistance from people that did not understand why I was so focused on creating a space specifically for BGLO members. People could not understand why I advocated for them in every meeting and would never let a conversation go by without speaking positively of the students belonging to these organizations. There were times where I was reassigned to other projects that the office deemed as more important than the work I was doing for BGLOs which quickly showed me that the work I was doing was not perceived as valuable. Regardless of the hardships that I faced, I continued in my personal mission and continued to work alongside these students to support them in all of their endeavors.

Being rejected and reassigned off of projects that promoted students in BGLOs only provided me with the ammunition that I needed to continue to push my agenda forward. When I saw how much of a positive impact that the initiatives that centered the BGLOs had on their sense of belonging I knew that I had to keep fighting and writing about this work. Through my short term in my graduate assistantship I was privileged to watch the GPAs of BGLOs climb above the GPAs that were produced in the past few years. With the help of the other multicultural advisor in the office we created over ten new leadership positions that got multicultural students involved in a way that they never had the opportunity to get involved before. We sent over fifteen students to conferences in Washington, D.C, and we had students represented as commencement speakers in a graduation ceremony that honors students of color. This was by no stretch of the imagination only my doing. As a team we were able to gain support from other offices and university stakeholders that saw how special and deserving our students were of having the experiences that they signed up for. Because the students were able to

generate so much interest and positive publicity on campus, we had university staff wanting to support more and more events throughout the year and investing in the longevity of BGLO programming.

That support made the students feel seen and left them eager to continue fighting for more positive recognition. This desire for recognition, while incredible and so impactful, is not enough. I wanted them to fight for policy change and zero-tolerance when acts of racism happen so that they never have to be in a position of inferiority ever again. My experiences fueled my concern for this thesis and showed me that small changes can truly have a large impact. Given more time, I think we could have continued to do great work for the undergraduate students. Seeing what can be done inspired me to create an intervention that will uphold the values of BGLOs, provide the positive recognition that they are looking for, effect change on an institutional level, and transform the oppressive systems of the university over time. I have seen first-hand the power that these students hold. Giving them a space to use their voices to transform the culture will reignite the spark within these organizations and give way for them to be liberation fighters that they were founded to be.

## Chapter 4

### Program Inspiration

Developing this program took a long time because I wanted to make sure that the program I proposed was possible and applicable to the problems that I addressed in Chapter 3. Knowing that I was tackling an issue as large as systemic racism, neoliberalism, and the creation of anti-racist policies, I quickly became overwhelmed because there is no way that I could create an intervention that would completely dismantle the long-standing systems of oppression in higher education. It was not until after many conversations with professors, mentors, and experts in the field that I was able to draw together a proposal that I would be proud of. After about a dozen one-on-one meetings spent conversing, reimagining, and rebuilding this proposal, I realized that I was right, there was *no way* that I could dismantle systemic racism in this one thesis proposal all on my own. My point is, this proposal serves as a starting point. This program serves as a way to get the conversation started about the inequalities happening on our campuses. It positions students belonging to Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) at the forefront of this movement and allows for the students to have a voice in bringing awareness to the issues that impact them daily. My hope is that whoever reads this proposal sees the value in centering the voices of young Black students and uses the program to inspire change within their institution.

It was important to me that throughout this proposal I spoke from experience. I did not want to speak on a subject that I have not at least attempted to carry out on my own. In fact, one of the mentors that I referenced is the person who connected the dots for me and gave me the idea to speak on a project that I have already implemented in the past. When I first began my graduate program, I was quickly struck with the reality that I was once again the minority

amongst the group. This was a predicament that I was accustomed to at this point in my educational career given that I had attended a predominantly White Institution (PWI) for my undergraduate education. However, my graduate program was centered around critical action research and had a specific intent to highlight the voices and experiences of those belonging to marginalized groups. Through my coursework, class readings, and the support of my peers and professors, I was inspired to create a program within my cohort that would bring awareness to the students of color in higher education.

The inspiration for the program came after attending a Women of Color day celebration where I felt moved and empowered by the sea of strength and beauty in the room. After a performance paying homage to African culture, a small conversation erupted with some peers and professors all sitting at my roundtable. We were delighted with the experiences that we had that day throughout the celebration and briefly mentioned that it would be amazing to be able to offer this same feeling to all of the students of color in our program. Shortly after that I went to work booking rooms, making flyers, and spreading the word about the development of a new organization, Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs (HEPSA) Students of Color Caucus. The following semester, the students of color in HEPSA started meeting twice a month to discuss a wide range of topics. We developed a plan to have the group function as a space to support students of color in a variety of endeavors including but not limited to networking opportunities, leadership and professional development, access and information about conferences, thesis support and much more. Although these were some of the topics that we discussed, our main initiative was to offer a space of support and solidarity between the students of color in the field of higher education.

Institutions of higher education often promote diversity and inclusivity as a means to create a welcoming and hospitable environment for all members of the community. Although diversity and inclusivity may appear on university brochures and orientation packets, the fact of the matter is that people belonging to marginalized communities are still disproportionately underrepresented in institutions of higher education. People of color are constantly trying to overcome the impacts of systems of oppression and institutionalized racism that are prevalent throughout higher education. The HEPSA Students of Color Caucus served as a means to create a pocket of cultural solidarity that operated *within* the institution but not *of* the institution as its mission was to name and dismantle the racist and oppressive ideologies permeating throughout the walls of the institution. We brought in faculty and staff guest speakers of color that were in high administrative status at the institution to discuss how they overcame racism and oppression in their careers. We strategized as a group and began to develop a draft of demands that we would like to see operationalized throughout the Division of Student Affairs. We responded when the department was under attack after a racist incident occurred on campus, but most importantly we shared our stories, sought advice, and supported one another. We soon discovered that the impact of our organization had the potential to touch more lives other than those just in HEPSA. In the Fall of 2020, the HEPSA Students of Color Caucus is set to expand into the Black Graduate Student Association and will reach across all graduate programs at my institution. The initiative serves to unite all Black students in every graduate program and create a space of mutual uplift, connectedness, advocacy, and support on our campus.

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 3 I referenced the work of John Dewey (1916), and Paulo Freire (1970) to model my philosophy of education and theoretical framework for this thesis. In this chapter I will

integrate those philosophies through an intervention to address my concern. Black Greek Letter Organizations have been integrated in the neoliberal regime of the university. This integration calls for an erasure of culture and history and promotes the commodification of personalities and return on investment through membership in these organizations. In order to break through the unwavering chains that neoliberalism confines us to, we have to revolutionize BGLOs and reintegrate their founding purpose at institutions of higher education, specifically predominantly White institutions, on campuses today. My intervention consists of centering the voices of the students involved in these organizations and making them the leaders in their own education. Their experiences are what will shape the design and curriculum of the intervention and they will have complete control over what matters and what should be addressed. Students will learn and study together about their history and about large scale issues at the university that are impacting their ability to be fully human. After learning and studying together, they will combine their knowledge with their personal experiences and have the ability to take their stories out into the university, cultivating conversations and creating pockets of change.

**Intervention: RACE – Raising Awareness on Cultural Equity aka “The Racers”**

The Racers program initiative is a student lead organization composed of undergraduate members of Black Greek Letter Organizations with support from BGLO staff advisors working in fraternity and sorority life. The members of this team will be elected officials that serve on the executive boards of their chapters. Each organization that is active on an individual campus should be represented within the group. For the purpose of this intervention I have assumed that the model institution has representation from all nine of the Greek organizations that make up BGLOs, more formally known as the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). This student group will serve as an advisory board facilitating workshop conversations around racial equity,

diversity, and inclusion to the campus community, faculty, and staff. This student group will meet bi-weekly (or as needed) throughout the course of the academic year, studying new materials and brainstorming new ideas for upcoming workshops. The Racers will address the concerns that I have listed in Chapter 3 working to revolutionize the university and become leaders in antiracist initiatives at their institution by breaking the silence and paving a way to have critical conversations around race.

In the proposed intervention below, I have fleshed out the details of a retreat for the student members that are a part of The Racers organization. The retreat portion of this intervention details the foundational frameworks that the remainder of the intervention will model. The retreat agenda names specific readings that address issues impacting higher education, students, Black students, and those in Black Greek Organizations. The material is content heavy and is therefore always followed up with debriefing and discussion questions. This is a three-day retreat that serves to educate the students on the history of their organization, while also creating a space for students to connect, share their experiences and create a network of cultural solidarity where they can depend on and trust one another. Each day of the intervention has a race theme title to help to keep the sessions creative and fun for the students and staff.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

#### ***A Democratic Intervention***

John Dewey's (1916) *Democracy of Education* requires education to highlight experiences and communication. My proposed intervention does that by bringing together a community of people that share a common goal of learning and sharing their experiences as a group. The purpose of the group is to share their stories, take what they have learned from each other and share it with the rest of the campus community in the hopes of influencing change and



establishing a new way to be at the university. Together they will have created an experience amongst each other and will formulate that experience to be shared. This aligns directly with Dewey's philosophy of education when he states that, "the experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that he can appreciate its meaning" (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). This quote from Dewey (1916) was a guiding force in the development and structure of my proposed intervention. First, the student members of the BGLOs will read, learn, and experience their experiences as a group. This process serves to "get outside" of their individual experiences and learn about the common group experiences overall. After they complete the reading and learning process, they will then go on to present their material to university faculty and staff. These workshops serve as a mechanism for both presenters and audience to recognize and appreciate other people's experiences in issues of diversity and equity. In my proposed intervention there is a reciprocal process of understanding and learning with a common goal that seeks to create a microcosm of a democratic system of education within these student run sessions.

### ***Rejecting "the banking model"***

In Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he is adamant about critiquing what he defines as the banking model of education where students only exist to receive information from those that have deemed themselves worthy and capable of depositing knowledge. For Freire (1970), a liberatory model of education is one that "reconciles the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p. 72). This model is designed for the students to become the teachers and facilitate conversations with members of the campus community that are traditionally seen as having the power in higher education. Allowing the

students to be at the center of these conversations directly opposes the banking model of education as this model calls for an integration of experiences, conversations and mutual learning. The idea is that there is a shared power amongst the group where all voices and experiences matter and contribute to the success and overall mission of the organization. One of the main factors in this proposed model is the ability to create solidarity as members of BGLOs operating within an institution that was not created to serve their needs. According to Freire (1970), solidarity requires true communication, and only through communication can human life hold meaning (p. 77). This model of education designed for this intervention creates the opportunity to call out the inequitable structures present at the university that are negating the students' ability to be fully human.

### ***Collaborative Teaching***

Elizabeth Colwill and Richard Boyd (2008) in their article about collaborative teaching as a feminist practice explore this method of education as, “interweaving the scholarship on collaborative teaching, feminist and critical pedagogies” (p. 216). Collaborative teaching directly opposes the banking model of education, and instead allows room for a more integrated learning experience. Collaboration as a method of teaching defies the traditional teacher/student model of education upheld by hierarchies of power. Inequitable, and oppressive system of higher education. Collaborative teaching challenges the dominant ideologies of the purpose of education and calls for participation from those committed to a more progressive educational system. With demographics of the study body rapidly changing at institutions, Colwill and Boyd (2008) discuss how there is an ever-growing push for more egalitarian and inclusive knowledge. The traditional banking model of education exists to serve the elite, and this model positions BGLOs to dismantle those structures of systemic racism and oppression in a collaborative member.

“Anticolonial, antiracist, and feminist theorists that eschew reductionist understandings of gender and cultural pluralism in favor intersectional theories of power and identity have emphasized the importance of collaborative connection between teacher and students” (Colwill & Boyd, 2008, p, 219). Colwill and Boyd (2008) assert that this method of teaching is key to transformative education and developing liberatory methods of teaching and learning.

In addition to collaborative teaching integrating critical pedagogies, there have also been studies conducted that show that teaching as a method of learning deepens students' understanding of class material. In an essay by Heidi G. Elmendorf (2006) she explores an experiential model of learning through teaching that gives students the opportunity to take what they have learned in the classroom and develop a curriculum to teach to other students (p. 37). Elmendorf (2006) in her analysis of learning through teaching, explains how when students learn through teaching, it helps them to understand the gaps that they have in their own knowledge. Learning through teaching, however, Elmendorf (2006) says develops a new level of understanding in three parts, “*basal understanding* of foundational knowledge, *structured understanding* of how ideas are organized into the larger conceptual framework of a field, and *translational understanding* which enables students to move fluidly between different levels of knowledge” ( p. 39).

My goal in developing the layers of my intervention was centered around these three ideals. I would argue that most undergraduate student members of BGLOs have a base level understanding of their origin history and development over the years. Throughout my intervention, specifically in the retreat and workshop portions, I am trying to push students to develop a more macro level understanding about how the existence and influence of BGLOs play a role in the larger context of the university and how they have been an integral part in

advocating for access and equity for Black students. During the retreat when the students are teaching other students about what they have read and learned, this understanding will help to raise the levels of awareness as a group and allow for them to reveal the gaps in their knowledge about the history of their organizations and about systemic oppression in institutions of higher education. Once they have studied as a group and gained a more in-depth understanding of their history, having the opportunity to relay that information to faculty and staff members, as well as other student members of their organization will help to develop their translational understanding of the material. Presenting the information to multiple demographics will encourage students to develop different ways of teaching, and therefore learning the information.

### ***Antiracist Teachings***

In my proposed intervention, not only do I have it on the agenda to learn about the intricate dynamics of antiracism, but by learning about race and naming how racism has negated Black folks' ability to be fully human, we are actively engaging in an antiracist educative process. The core of everything that will be discussed throughout the course of the intervention is directly related to blackness and the Black experience. The students are developing ways to implement the values and practices of their historically Black Greek organization into systems of higher education that have stood as racist structures for so long. Ibram X. Kendi (2019) in *How to be an Antiracist* states, "assimilationists believe in the post-racial myth that talking about race constitutes racism, or that we stop identifying by race, then racism miraculously go away" (p. 54). The core mission and motivation behind the creation of this group is that anti-Black racism exists in institutions of higher education, and if students do not do the work to condemn and revolutionize these practices, then there is a chance that these inequities will never be identified or dismantled. The students themselves would never have the opportunity to be assimilationists

because they do not have the privilege to not recognize how their skin color impacts their experiences. Having students at the forefront of the conversations about race allows them to be in control of their own narrative as well as break the “blinding seal” for others that believe that naming race is anything but necessary in revolutionizing higher education.

### **RACE – Raising Awareness on Cultural Equity aka “The Racers”**

While there are a number of components to this intervention, my main focus will be on the retreat details for the BGLO members that are a part of The Racers. The purpose of this retreat is for undergraduate members belonging to BGLOs to have the opportunity to cultivate their leadership skills, learn how their history has influenced activism on college campuses, discuss and understand the impacts of neoliberalism and identity politics, and develop a workshop series that they will present to the campus community, staff, and faculty. In later sections of this chapter, I will discuss the implications for the faculty and staff involved in this initiative, as well as discuss potential challenges to keep in mind when catering this program to various institutions.

### **Program Goals**

1. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will increase advising support for students involved in Black Greek Lettered Organizations.
2. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will advise students in Black Greek Letter Organizations based on specific council and cultural needs.
3. The Division of Student Affairs will implement antiracist practices throughout each of their departments.
4. Academic Affairs will implement antiracist practices throughout each of their departments.

### **Program Objectives**

1. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will form an advisory board comprised of representatives from each of the nine Black Greek Lettered Organizations. These students will facilitate workshops on issues of diversity and equity in higher education.
2. The advisory board will attend a three-day retreat where they will develop a curriculum that will address the racially inequitable practices and highlight racial experiences at their institution.
3. The advisory board will facilitate workshops to faculty and staff across campus in order to increase awareness of racial inequities on campus.
4. The advisory board will provide tangible steps for faculty and staff members to implement antiracist practices into their departmental objectives and classroom curricula.

### **Learning Outcomes for Racers Retreat**

1. Students will be able to articulate issues in higher education through the readings provided in the retreat workshops.
2. Students will be able to name how the history of BGLOs influences their need to dismantle oppressive policies and procedures at institutions of higher education
3. Students will demonstrate their ability to collaborate through the collective development of the workshop series and sharing their personal experiences with racial inequity at their institution

### **Recruitment**

- Representation on The Racers organization will be mandated by fraternity and sorority life departments. Communication should take place with graduate advisors and

supervising graduate chapters about the implementation of the new position on campus given that it is outside of the positions mandated by NPHC requirements.

- Positions on The Racers will be elected positions with members being voted on to the board during the same time as regularly scheduled executive board elections take place.
- Members of The Racers should be active members of their chapters for at least one semester and have a qualifying cumulative GPA of at least 2.5.
- Every BGLO that is active on a particular campus should be represented on The Racers
  - ⇒ If a small number of BGLO chapters are present on your campus, consider requiring more than one participant to be present on the board, or modify the program to adapt to the needs of your campus.

### **Retreat Event Details**

- When: Friday-Sunday
- Where: A location on campus that holds 15-20 people
- Important Notes:
  - ⇒ Have the retreat on campus to eliminate the cost of having to find a venue.
  - ⇒ The retreat should take place during a weekend where students are already on campus to avoid having to pay for additional housing and transportation costs.
- Questions to Consider:
  - ⇒ Does transportation need to be provided for students that live off campus?
  - ⇒ How will students be compensated for their time?
  - ⇒ How far in advance should students be made aware about the time commitment required to attend this retreat?

⇒ Other events on campus, reserving space far enough in advance, availability of staff, graduate assistants, etc.

### **Retreat Sample Program Outline**

Below is an overall schedule for the 3-day retreat. For a more detailed description of the retreat and individual sessions, see Appendix A.

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#### ***Friday- On your Mark!***

6:00 – 6:45	Dinner
6:45 – 7:00	Introduction
7:00-8:00	Guided Discussion
8:00-8:30	Wrap-Up, Meeting Ends

#### ***Saturday- Long Jumps &Hurdles!***

9:00-9:30	Breakfast
9:30-10:45	Team Building Exercise
10:50-11:50	Reading Workshop
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:30-3:00	Debrief
3:30-4:00	Guided Discussion
4:00-4:30	Wrap Up, Meeting Ends

#### ***Sunday- The Last Lap!***

9:00-9:45	Breakfast
10:00-10:30	Brainstorming Workshop
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:45	Workshop Development

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12:00-12:30	Working Lunch
12:30-2:00	Workshop Development
2:00-3:00	Final Discussion, Retreat Ends

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### **Retreat Challenges**

Having any sort of on-campus retreat will require a lot of pre-retreat planning to ensure that the retreat can take place without any major problems. Since this is a small group of students, I propose having the retreat take place somewhere on-campus in a classroom setting or a space in the student center. Having a retreat on-campus during the school year will alleviate having to find and pay for a venue off-campus and is more than likely going to alleviate having to provide transportation for the students attending the retreat. I recommend reserving the space for the retreat one entire academic year in advance keeping in mind which weekends there are other events happening on campus. Since this is a small group of people consisting of nine students, two staff members., and two graduate assistants, attendance is imperative to the success of the retreat. Finding a relatively slow weekend on campus to conduct this event would be ideal. Since the event is on a weekend, the retreat organizers will have to be prepared to pay for the cost of meals throughout the duration of this retreat, unless it can be confirmed that all students have access to use a meal plan at dining halls on campus. If the retreat organizers are considering having students eat their meals on campus, I would suggest providing meal vouchers for all the students to alleviate the cost of them having to provide their own meals. Lastly, I would urge the staff to confirm whether or not security presence is needed for the duration of the retreat. Since a majority of the retreat is taking place during the weekend, it should be confirmed that buildings and doors will be unlocked prior to the student's arrival, that lights will be turned on, and that the basic functions of the space will be accessible.

## Staffing Challenges

Staff members of the fraternity and sorority life offices will be solely responsible for the planning and executing of this retreat, as well as responsible for the oversight and supervisions of The Racers organizations throughout the remainder of the semester. I expect that graduate assistants would also be required to assist in the development and execution of this project and use it as a way to develop their supervision skills and create best practices for their future careers in fraternity and sorority life. Given that this retreat is the staff's responsibility there are a few aspects I would keep in consideration when developing this retreat and events throughout the year.

Staff members need to be prepared to spend an adequate time of their work week dedicated to the success of the programming initiative. While I recommended that the advisors who directly supervise the BGLOs on campus be the ones to execute this event, I am aware that a number of institutions do not have a staff member solely dedicated to BGLOs. With that being said, it is equally important that all Greek life advisors be well-versed on the history of BGLOs and provide space for the Black students in these organizations to share their experiences with racism and inequity within fraternity and sorority life and in the institution as a whole. If staff members are not members of BGLOs themselves, I suggest that the advisors go through a mandated cultural competency and cultural sensitivity training before taking on the responsibility of doing this kind of work. It is necessary that the students feel they can share their experiences free of fear of retaliation and mistreatment from their advisors. Staff members need to be able to have a deep understanding of how their privilege can quickly spiral into victimization and tokenism of people of color. Developing a sense of cultural competency puts responsibility back

on the office of fraternity and sorority life, student affairs departments, and the university as a whole to make sure that they are producing socially responsible and culturally competent leaders.

Additionally, this type of program requires a lot of time dedicated to reading, workshopping, and supporting students. If the institution has the budget and space necessary, I strongly recommend that they create a position and job description for an advisor specifically dedicated to do this work. The creation of a new position will ensure that the students will have someone available, and with access to the necessary resources that can help advocate for them and understand their position at the university. If creating a new position is not feasible, then I would still recommend integrating this responsibility into the job description of an existing position being mindful to compensate for any additional labor that would go into the creation of this project. This retreat and following workshop series and meetings require extensive time and effort, therefore staff members should be given the necessary time to adequately advise this student group.

### **Challenges with BGLOs**

As much as this program is a time commitment for the staff members, it is equally, if not more time consuming for the students that will be a part of this programming initiative. Since this program centers the voices of Black students, it is necessary to be keenly aware of the struggles and inequities that these students are facing throughout their time in college. In 2017, The U.S. Department of Education reported that 16% of Black full-time students worked at least thirty-five hours per week (Perna & Odle, 2020). This means that Black students are already doing additional labor during their undergraduate careers, not even taking into account other familial obligations, extracurricular activities, and required classwork. I suggest the students that are members of The Racers organization be compensated for their work and that they receive a

stipend at the end of each semester of no less than \$1,500. The payments can be given in a lump-sum or separated into increments distributed bi-weekly throughout the semester. If we are asking students to do this level or intellectual work outside of the responsibilities that they already have, then they deserve to be compensated for that time.

Lastly, members of BGLOs that exist on predominantly White campuses are traditionally smaller in size simply given that there are less students of color that exist on those campuses. As a result of low membership in BGLOs at PWIs, students are often charged with taking on a number of leadership positions in their organizations. It is uncommon to see members of BGLOs serving on a number of other executive boards for clubs and organizations. These student leaders have a tendency to be over involved in multiple co-curricular activities. Walter M. Kimbrough and Phil A. Hutcheson (1998) in a study on Black student involvement, found that fraternity and sorority membership is a factor in increasing Black college students' level of involvement and leadership in campus activities and organizations over their non-Greek counterparts. In the study they found that members of BGLOs were also more likely to be involved in a wide range of other activities including student government, academic clubs, and residence life organization (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). It is important to understand that the goals of this organization are to create a new leadership position that specifically serves Black students. It is also important to know that these students will most likely be highly involved students in the community. Therefore, it is important to be thoughtful when creating meeting schedules, timelines, and expectations for this student group. I would urge that advisors of this organization be prepared to implement flexible and adaptable leadership skills and be willing to work to accommodate student needs throughout the development and implementation of this program.

## **Budget and Funding**

As with all new initiatives, funding would be an important component to implementation. Some expenses in the first year would include the cost of student stipends, meals, supplies, and reading material. For a more detailed budget plan, see Appendix B.

## **Faculty and Staff Workshops**

### *Sample Workshop Topics*

The topics that I have listed below are examples are workshop topics that The Racers can build on and implement at their own institutions. It is important to note that these are just suggested ideas, and that ultimately, I think the topics should be centered around issues that are most prevalent at individual institutions. The workshops serve as a way to get the campus community involved in the teaching and learning process and allow for different members of the campus to understand how to implement new practices and policies. The goal of these workshop sessions is to provide faculty and staff with tangible methods of implementing new procedures, while also raising the consciousness to the issues that marginalized students face on campus. While these workshops will not address everything wrong with education, they do serve as a starting ground to have conversations about race and begin to revolutionize higher education as an emancipatory practice.

### *A Guide to Critical Advising of BGLOs*

This event would be marketed toward university faculty and staff that are interested in becoming on-campus or faculty advisors for BGLOs or other culturally based organizations. The students should invite trusted members of the student affairs team to this workshop, especially those that already oversee student groups on campus. The students should also connect with

faculty members that are members of their organizations that could be looking for unique opportunities to get involved with other areas of campus life.

This particular workshop could review the basics of antiracist teachings and allow for the members of the community to ask questions and understand what the role of advising looks like for students that are members of cultural organizations. If the staff members attending the workshop already advise student leaders, The Racers should specifically focus on what makes advising BGLOs unique, and how they should be treated differently than other organizations on campus. Students should consider highlighting topics ranging from raising awareness of unconsciousness bias, understanding microaggressions, and addressing White saviorism as well as other positions of privilege. It is important to emphasize the history of BGLOs and their participation in social movements, and overall provide background for potential advisors to understand the relevance and necessity to maintain and promote the existence of BGLOs.

### ***Democracy and Diversity in the Classroom***

This workshop topic should be marketed to new faculty members and to new or existing student affairs professionals that either teach a class, or regularly conduct trainings throughout the institution. In this workshop, participants will be able to learn how to implement antiracist and democratic teachings in a classroom setting. For example, students can require that participants bring their class syllabi to class. They can facilitate an activity where the faculty and staff would have to critique their own syllabus and determine what could be interpreted as inequitable, non-inclusive policies. Students could propose that there should be a policy implemented about students that are parents and caretakers, students that may identify as trans or queer, students that speak another language, students with disabilities, etc. Facilitators would have to emphasize that this critiquing exercise is not to judge, scrutinize, and chastise other

faculty members. This activity should be an opportunity to learn and bring awareness to issues some people may not know exist. I recommended that students have the support of another faculty member or college dean to help facilitate this activity. The purpose of this activity is to highlight that there are often simple solutions to making spaces more equitable on campus.

In addition to the syllabus activity, students could also suggest that faculty and staff members diversify the required reading lists for class to include more Black authors, or authors of varying demographics. There should be zero-tolerance policies implemented for acts of violence (verbal, physical, etc.) against marginalized students, and the costs of course materials should be reevaluated given the disparity in earnings and financial support for minority students. Faculty and staff members should also be urged to collaborate with other identity offices on campus, leaving one classroom session per semester for diversity trainers to come facilitate a workshop during class time. Faculty and staff members could require their students to attend a diversity training on campus as a part of their requirements for the class. Lastly, The Racers can demonstrate to participants how to implement a democratic style of teaching while in their workshop session, providing them with the tools to implement what they learned in classes of their own.

***Cultivating Solidarity and Meaningful Collaboration with Identity Centers and the Humanities.***

Professionals working in multicultural centers, other identity centers on campus, and faculty members that teach African history, women's studies, and other humanities courses should be invited to this workshop. I imagine this workshop serving to build relationships and increase rapport with other campus community professionals that are likely to have similar experiences as it pertains to race and identity that the students do. This workshop could allow for

some strategic alliance building between faculty and staff members and serve as a way to spread the mission of the group into areas of the university that students traditionally do not have access to. The humanities are positioned to serve the people, and advocates in this field could push for antiracism in their individual departments. The members of the session could help be “the eyes” of the mission watching over other faculty members in their department and keeping a listening ear to any issues that arise. Together, this group can develop ways to revolutionize the university from within and help support the students that are fighting for radical change on campus.

### ***How Our Values Should Inform Your Practice***

Members of BGLOs have strong moral values and ethical codes that are the foundation of their organizations. As I have detailed in this thesis, these organizations exist to support and advance all people. They stand to serve the community and will fight an arduous political battle if it means freedom for their people. The values in place in BGLOs stand to support the brothers and sisters in their organizations, to uplift them, and to celebrate them when society will not. These are values that should not only be implemented in fraternities and sororities, but they should be interwoven throughout institutions of higher education. This workshop should be geared to university administrators, directors, deans, vice presidents, etc. Oftentimes, universities do an excellent job of promoting a diverse and inclusive environment without stopping to critically examine if the practices and policies that are in place are actually diverse, inclusive, and equitable. This session is for those university senior officials to understand how campus is experienced as a Black student. Students will share their experiences and facilitate conversation with the audience to gain a better understanding of the often-divided perspectives. Students could gently propose new methods to approaching policy, or they could take this opportunity to present a list of demands to these university officials requiring the erasure of anything imparting on their



abilities to be fully human. I recommend that students also take this time to emphasize the importance of zero-tolerance policies, racial bias reporting protocol, equitable hiring practices, higher counselors of color to address some of the mental-health needs of minority students, disparities in debt, and potential reparations to indigenous peoples. However, my overall goal is that students and staff will use this opportunity to build community and reimagine the possibilities of higher education to truly serve all students.

### **Incentives for Faculty and Staff**

Although creating workshops for faculty and staff to attend sounds good, the reality is that we all know how difficult it is to get people to attend these sorts of events. For that reason, I thought it was important to briefly think through some ways to incentivize members of the community to attend these student led workshops. For new professors, I think it would be ideal if the institution was able to consider attendance at these workshops as service toward tenure and promotion, especially if a faculty member became an advisor to a student group as a result of these workshops. This exchange could allow professors that may not usually attend events to get connected to campus in a new and meaningful way. Sometimes faculty members may feel disconnected from students, or maybe they are struggling to attain this portion of criteria needed for tenure. Regardless of the reasoning, having this model in place can help increase attendance and participation at workshop sessions while also benefiting both students and teachers.

In my personal experiences, I have found that many higher education and student affairs professionals are motivated by fostering inclusive learning communities. I believe this group will be slightly easier to encourage given that the contents of their work centers around student needs. Although professionals in the field may be motivated by transformational education, I believe as progressive models of the student affairs practice are emerging, attending these workshops could

have more of a benefit than just the opportunity to support students. For example, it is becoming more common that institutions are adopting a co-curricular student affairs model. Seeing it first-hand as a pilot in my institution, a co-curricular transcript serves as a means to evaluate student learning through involvement in outside traditional classroom-learning activities. As student affairs is transforming, I would not be surprised if student affairs professionals were also evaluated on their involvement in co-curricular activities and considered for promotion (or salary increases) based on their personal co-curricular transcripts. Attendance at these workshops has future potential for student affairs professionals to leverage their experience in the field as they move through the ranks of the division.

Lastly, I believe regardless of who people are and the titles that they hold, for the most part all people like to be celebrated. I would propose having an end of the year ceremony or celebration to honor the students that worked hard to facilitate these workshops all year long, as well as honor each one of the attendees. This public recognition would increase morale and help people feel like the work that they did mattered. Getting sponsors for this event from the division of student affairs, academic affairs, and other offices on campus can help to support the costs of food, entertainment, gifts for the students, certificates for all of the participants, and any other “swag” that could be given out.

A celebration is also another opportunity to get campus stakeholders involved and allows them to see that this initiative matters to people and deserves to be adequately funded. Having a celebration gives students and fraternity and sorority life staff to make a statement and showcase how students have the power to make change. A celebration allows for some good press and media coverage on BGLOs which is increasingly important as people of color and fraternities and sororities are often portrayed negatively in the news and other media outlets.

### **Racers Bi-Weekly Meeting Details**

As the final portion in this programmatic intervention I have articulated below what should take place during the follow up bi-weekly meetings that the Racers will be attending after the retreat ends. Each meeting should consist of more discussion about assigned readings and articles. The group members can decide what they want to read, or the supervising staff members can provide them with the materials depending on the dynamic of the group. The Racers should also have an opportunity to process any experiences they had during the previous weeks that they would like to discuss with the group. If a concern arose, or a new idea was thought of as to how they are conducting themselves and/or the workshop series, now is the time for it to be addressed. When the workshops begin, they should use these bi-weekly meetings to debrief from the workshop by discussing what went well, what was challenging, and what questions they have. Depending on the time allotted for these meetings, students can either use this designated time to develop the next workshop, or they can choose to meet outside of the group time to do this work. Ultimately, this time should be a way for the group members to build solidarity and community between each other. They should problematize ideals, debate, advise, and support one another. This should never be a quiet space, but instead a liberatory one where all voices are heard and where each member simultaneously serves as both teacher and student in group discussion.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In the next chapter I will thoroughly design my plan to assess and evaluate the success of this programmatic intervention. Throughout my assessment, I integrated theories that would allow me to analyze my intervention through a critical lens, centering the experiences and voices of Black students. This intervention relies on collaboration and support from students, faculty

and staff, and designing it gave me hope that this democratic system of education can exist. In chapter 5 I discuss collaboration as a form of leadership, and I continue to highlight that all voices should matter in the educational experience. Centering students as the trailblazers of the intervention was empowering as it gave students a voice in controlling their own narrative. In the future, I hope to see this intervention implemented in fraternity and sorority life offices across the United States, and I hope that people will understand the importance of collaborating and building a community.

## Chapter 5

### Introduction

Transformational leadership theory is commonly shared and celebrated among student affairs professionals. In an article written by Laura M. Harrison (2011), she explains that transformational leadership encompasses two main tenants, “(1) change is the central purpose of leadership, and (2) leadership transcends one’s position in an organizational hierarchy” (Harrison, 2011, p. 45). Transformational leadership works to dispel traditional conceptions of leadership that centralize power in forms of titles and position. This model of transformational leadership supports the development and implementation of my proposed programmatic intervention in Chapter 4 given that it encompasses the voices and experiences of various campus partners.

Although transformational leadership in higher education and student affairs is essential to the growth and development of each department and should serve as the primary objective of the field, too often this model of leadership is romanticized as a catchall methodology that equally represents and serves the diverse demographics of people at institutions of higher education. Transformational leadership means nothing if there is not a critical analysis of power structures in higher education systems. My programmatic intervention in Chapter 4 centers the experiences of Black students and positions those students as transformational leaders at their institutions. Throughout this chapter my goal is to take a more critical approach to transformational leadership and implement assessments with influence from critical race theorists.

## **Leadership and *The Racers***

### ***Breaking Organizational Chains***

While advocating for change is one of the main purposes of transformational leadership, it also requires that all members of the organization be leaders at the same time. This concept of mutual leadership is one that is often faced with a number of obstacles, hurdles and setbacks given that this model requires a distribution of power. In Harrison's (2011) analysis of transformational leadership as it relates to power structures, she explains that power structures often push back hard against those that challenge them, and that those trying to effect change in this manner were at risk of being labeled "troublemakers, passed over for promotions, victims of low morale, and in most extreme cases, terminated for challenging systemic power in their respective institutions" (p. 47). Fear of retaliation for conducting this type of work is often the reality for those challenging dominant power structures. For this reason, Harrison (2011) goes on to discuss strategies for building more transformational systems, and even refers to Deborah Meyerson's (2003) *tempered radical* theory, that I have also mentioned in Chapter 3, as a framework for how to influence gradual change in education. *The Racers* organization that I have developed adopts some the suggestions presented by Harrison (2011) and Meyerson (2003) as methods to promote transformational change by building strategic alliance groups, and reinserting literature about institutional politics and power into student affairs leadership discourse. The mission of *The Racers* organization is to create a distributive leadership model that recognizes, challenges, and redistributes power equally amongst group members.

### ***The Racers Distributive Leadership Model***

In Adrianna J. Kezar and Elizabeth M. Holcombe's (2017) analysis of shared leadership in higher education, they discuss how, "the current push for greater top-down leadership is

counterproductive to today's higher education landscape and is in misalignment with research of effective organizations that demonstrates the need for share leadership" (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017, p. 2). They instead highlight a distributive model of leadership where, "leadership is dispersed across organizations or even across organizational boundaries. Different individuals at multiple levels of the organization cross organizational boundaries to exert influence during particular projects or times of change" (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017, p. 7). This model of distributive leadership supports the organizational model of *The Racers* due to the fact that at the different levels of this model, a democratic leadership style is always promoted. Democratic leaders as explained by Daniel Goleman (2000), "gives workers a voice in decisions, democratic leaders build organizational flexibility and responsibility and help generate fresh ideas" (p.1). A democratic leadership style in combination with an affiliative style that takes more of a "people come first" approach to leadership as a way to, "increase team harmony and build morale" are at the core of the organizational values for *The Racers* organization (Goleman, 2001, p.1).

Engaging in a distributive and democratic model of leadership challenges the dominant ideologies of leadership and power structures in higher education. These methods of collaborative group leadership eliminate the notion that only those with a title have the opportunity to influence change. It is important to note that in order to adopt these leadership methods, one must recognize that power structures do exist, and similarly to how Kendi (2019) suggests that the only way to dismantle racism is to name it, the only way to dismantle structures of power is to acknowledge their existence.

My proposed intervention incorporates various stakeholders at the institution because of the fact that they all possess different levels of power and influence at the university. Senior level administrators have the ability to influence university policy in all departments, staff members in

fraternity and sorority life offices have the power to undo and rebuild any inequitable procedures as well as provide direct support to BGLO students, and the students have power in sharing their voices, stories, and experiences about the racial inequities on campus. My proposed intervention serves to transcend the boundaries of a confined organizational chain in order to make room for new ways of learning in being in the university and in the world.

### ***A Critical Approach to Leadership***

After the civil rights era of the 1960s, there was a need to develop new theories and strategies to combat more subtle forms of racism, Richard Delgado (2001) explains. He continues to discuss the history of critical race theory (CRT) stating that it builds on the movements of critical legal studies and radical feminism (Delgado, 2001, p.4). There are a number of tenants that build the framework of critical race theory but for the purpose of this section I want to highlight the tenant of CRT that states, “the voice-of-color thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, (racial minority groups) may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that Whites are unlikely to know. Minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism” (Delgado, 2001, p. 9). This basic tenant of CRT highlights why I have situated the voices of Black student leaders and members of the fraternity and sorority life community at the forefront of the push for transformation at the university. CRT analyzes how racially minoritized groups have the inherent ability to articulate their experiences about race and describe realities that those of the majority likely will not understand. It is for this reason why the Black students in BGLOs are at the center of facilitating the conversations about racial equity on campus.

John P. Dugan (2017) explains in his work on critical perspectives that throughout history women, people of color, and other minoritized groups are often disassociated from the dominant



narrative about leadership. Our stories are rarely told and our contributions to society are often delegitimized. Rarely are we seen as “real” leaders holding legitimate positions of power, and whenever we do attain a “legitimate” leadership role we are seen as an exception to the rule. This reinforcing ideology can have a negative effect on the efficacy and motivation of minority groups to challenge those constraining dominant ideologies and instead requires us to stay quiet and confined to the roles placed upon us (Dugan, 2017). Throughout my thesis I have positioned BGLOs as social activists with the potential to influence change through social movements and through disrupting racist norms by consistently naming the existence of racism, similarly to the ways in which the founders of these organizations conducted themselves. Understanding this piece of history is so important given the narrative can sometimes question the impact of social movements. Dugan (2017) explains that, “social movements and activism represent attempts to disrupt the status quo. Their disassociation from leadership theory in general has a powerful effect in labeling these efforts as episodic and unsustainable” (Dugan, 2017, p. 67). As a result, an ideology is reinforced that leadership should only exist in a manner that is, “positive, nondisruptive, and strengthens existing power structures” (Dugan. 2017, p. 67). My proposed intervention breaks the confines of traditional leadership models and theories, and instead requires integration and sharing of stories and experiences as methods of learning and leading.

## **Assessment and Evaluation in *The Racers***

### ***Introduction***

Assessment and evaluation are essential to measuring success of learning outcomes and programming initiatives. Having measurable goals allows those creating a program to gather information and data, advocate for resources and funding, and overall creates a clear picture of what in the program is working and what needs to be adjusted to better fit the needs of the

students. Although there are a number of methods used to assess multiple variables in a program, for the sake of this program I will be focused primarily on assessing more indirect measures of student learning and have only a slight focus on direct measures of learning. According to a definition presented by Southern Methodist University (n.d.), “indirect measures provide a less concrete view of student learning; for example, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, values, etc.” (Direct and Indirect Measures, n.d.). As a method of assessment for my programmatic intervention, I will be adopting the strategies of participatory action research, the *trenzas* (2019) of Chicana scholars, and journaling as a method of storytelling as proposed by critical race theorists.

### ***Action Research***

In article written by Mary Brydon-Miller, Davydd Greenwood, and Patricia Maguire (2003), they explore the concept of action research when they say:

Action research challenges the claims of a positivistic view of knowledge which holds that in order to be credible, research must remain objective and value-free. Instead, we embrace the notion of knowledge as socially constructed and, recognizing that all research is embedded within a system of values and promotes some model of human interaction, we commit ourselves to a form of research which challenges unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices (p. 11).

Utilizing the methods of action research allows for the recollection of stories and experiences to be viewed as legitimate sources of knowledge and gives voice to those who have been forced to remain silent and have their history erased. Knowing that typically the voices of those belonging to the racial minority are the ones that have historically been silenced throughout centuries, I wanted to make sure that in this proposed intervention all of the experiences of those students

were heard, validated and celebrated. Action research demands that humanity and relationships be at the core of all experiences. Given that my proposed intervention highlights the experiences of Black students in Greek Letter Organization, adopting the methods of action research made perfect sense when determining how this intervention was going to be assessed. Action research is reciprocal and built on social constructs, and collaborative leadership is one of the main tenets of my intervention. The methodologies that action research utilizes provided me with the groundwork that I needed to move forward in developing my assessment and evaluation.

### ***Breaking the Silence through Journaling and Storytelling***

The primary method of evaluation of my program is journaling as means to recall events, process emotions, control one's own narrative, and tell the story of how certain experiences make the students feel. The students in The Racers organization will be responsible for completing weekly journal entries that they will share with the other students in the group and share with the advisor of the organization. The advisor is responsible for recognizing reoccurring themes in the students writing and should share these revelations with the group to be discussed. For example, looking for themes of how students are fostering a sense of belonging in their organizations, how they are coping with issues of racial discrimination, and analyzing how their perspectives have changed about BGLOs on campus as a result of The Racers organization could be helpful to measure student learning and development overtime. Throughout the semester and academic year, the group and the advisor should take the time to notice how the themes in writing have changed, and also notice which themes have been reoccurring throughout the group. If there is a theme that is recurring and negative in nature, the group needs to discuss ways in which they can address that concern moving forward, and brainstorm strategies to support one another if they are struggling with a difficult experience. The purpose of journaling as a method

of evaluation gives power back to those that are often victims of racial discrimination and allows for those students to name and control the narrative of their own experiences.

Delgado (2001) explains that, “stories serve a powerful psychic function for minority communities and that many victims of racial discrimination suffer in silence, or blame themselves for their predicament” (Delgado, 2001, p. 43). He continues to explain that, “stories have the ability to name discrimination, and that once discrimination is named, it can be combated” (Delgado, 2001, p. 43).

I believe it is important for the students that are a part of this organization to document the experiences that they are having. In this intervention, I am asking that the students be extremely vulnerable and honest with their emotions when recalling and discussing racist incidents, stereotypes, inequalities, and acts of discrimination they have been through. I am not ignorant to the fact that what I am proposing requires immense emotional vulnerability, and the ability to have trust and confidence that the other members of the group will support them in the sharing of these difficult experiences. Since this intervention is all about collaboration and sharing, I think journaling will provide students with a more personal and private way of disclosing how they feel. Although these journals do serve to be shared with the group, having the space to reflect individually could help to bring to the forefront emotions and ideas they may not have been present when addressing the group as a whole.

Positioning undergraduate student members of Black Greek Letter Organizations in the center of the conversation about racial inequities on campus is terrifying and has the potential to be a triggering experience. When presenting concepts like structural racism and inequalities to groups of people who most likely do not share the same skin color as the students, do not have the same experiences as the students, and who are all in positions of power at the university will

undoubtedly create anxiety for the student facilitators. More likely than not someone will say something racially insensitive and offensive, and the questions that might be asked could be hurtful and dehumanizing in nature. This is why the retreat portion of the event is so necessary to cultivate solidarity between the group so that members know that they can count on and support one another through challenging experiences. One of the *trenzas* of Chicana/Latina feminist theories have provided us with specific theoretical concepts to, “guide and interpret our work, including the idea of bringing our whole selves into the academic/activist process” (Bernal et al, 2019). Critical race feminism methodology and the act of reflection requires us to grapple with our roles as activists and create alternate ways of existing and experiencing the world (Bernal et al, 2019). If I believe that higher education should be liberatory, democratic, and antiracist, then that means that I have to include liberatory, democratic, and antiracist methods of assessment throughout my proposed intervention which is exactly what the implementation of these reflection journals provide.

### ***Pre/Post Surveys as Direct Measures of Learning***

Although the primary evaluation method for this program is journal entries by the students, I still recognize the importance of gathering other forms of data for the proposal. I plan to administer pre- and post-surveys to the students in The Racers as a way of measuring their learned knowledge from the retreat. These will serve as direct measures of learning and will primarily consist of a combination of a learning outcome and satisfaction assessment. In the survey, I will ask for other information including student GPA, year in school, and major, as well as other information including how they heard about the program, and how likely they are to return to the program in order to have baseline of data on the types of students we are recruiting, satisfaction of the students in the program, and the likelihood to return to the program next

academic year. What would make the retreat portion of this program successful is if students are able to identify and articulate what exactly they learned throughout the duration of the retreat, and discuss ways in how they plan to apply that knowledge in the workshops and other scenarios. For the purpose of this chapter, I will only be developing the pre- and post-surveys for the students attending the retreat. However, I do strongly recommend that if this program were to be adopted at another university, that the students and staff develop measurable learning outcomes and a pre- and post-survey for the university faculty and staff that will be attending the workshop series throughout the semester.

Having a variety of qualitative measures allows for different components of the program to be assessed when needed. The journals show a range of how student's attitudes were transformed throughout this learning process, while the surveys provide more factual and concise data about the students in the groups and the level of understanding of the learning outcomes. In furthering research I would like to also explore the opportunity to measure faculty and staff implementation of the suggested remodel of practices and policies at the classroom, department, and university level.

The ability to assess how policies are being transformed to become antiracist, equitable and inclusive could provide important data about the success and impact of this programing initiative. To know that the proposed changes are being implemented in other areas of the institution could then allow for other institutions to adopt a similar model. This could in turn effect change across systems of higher education in the state, and even the country. Having Black students at the center of this revolutionary change makes the impact all the more powerful. Lastly, in addition to measuring the implementation of antiracist practices across the university, I think it would also be important to develop an assessment for the program over a period of time.

For example, faculty and staff members should be followed up with one week, one semester, and one academic year post-workshop via survey to see what policies they have implemented as a result of the workshop sessions. For a detailed example of the pre- and post- survey questionnaire, please see Appendices C and D.

## **Limitations**

### ***Emotional Labor***

If I had more time in this thesis, I would have loved to explore more in-depth how the emotional labor of doing this work would impact the student's motivation and ability to succeed. Speaking from personal experiences, and from experiences of family and loved ones, whenever we are pushed to talk about the issues of racism or equity, it is always coupled with an emotional labor tax. As a Black person, having to always be the one at the forefront of the discussion about race is emotionally exhausting and often leaves me feeling hopeless and saddened at the fact the conversations like these are even still necessary. Doing more research about the impact of emotional labor could reinforce the notion that higher education should exist to serve students, and the fact that students have to "shine light" on these issues concludes that higher education is not doing the job it claims to be doing. In addition, investigating how emotional labor impacts a student's attitudes about the institution and society as a whole might lead to a creative model of compensation for that additional labor. In my opinion, this model could be transformational to the field of education. Having students and staff monetarily compensated for the emotional work that they are doing could be a revolutionary practice that adopts the tenants of critical race theory and critical race feminist theory, ultimately creating new ways of thinking about the constructs of race at institutions of higher education.

### ***Institutional Type and Size***

Another limitation I would think through in another area of this proposal is the implementation of this programmatic intervention at a small institution, a private institution, and maybe a Historically Black College/University (HBCU). Throughout this model I assumed that the hypothetical institution that was adopting this intervention to be a medium-sized, predominantly White, liberal public school with representation from all of the nine Black Greek organizations and a fair amount of resources to be distributed. This is a very specific type of institution and I know that there are a multitude of colleges and universities with varying demographics, access to resources, and presence of Black Greek organizations on campus. Adopting this model at a different kind of institution would look very different and would call for some creativity and imagination when trying to implement this program. There is also the fact that there is a large group of people that believe that Greek life should cease to exist on college campuses, a thought that I have often found myself questioning throughout this project. I ask myself; how do I make an argument that BGLOs can be the leaders in establishing antiracist practices in higher education when there are people that believe that Greek life and Black people serve no purpose in higher education at all?

### ***Struggling to Survive***

I spoke to this issue briefly when discussing the challenges of my program, but I am also aware of the fact that there are a lot of Black students and Black Greek students struggling to stay afloat throughout their college careers as is. While members of BGLOs can often be leaders in their communities, highly involved, and have a great understanding of what it means to be a leader, there are also a number of students that are struggling to maintain the GPA requirement, have financial burdens, are dealing with food insecurity, homelessness, and lack support on



campus. James Dubick, Brandon Matthews, and Clare Cady (2016) in a report on hunger in two- to four-year institutions explained:

57 percent of black students and 56 percent of Latino students reported food insecurity compared to 40 percent of white and 45 percent of Asian students. Food-insecure students in that study were more prone to housing insecurity and homelessness. Of students who reported either hunger or housing instability, 81 percent said that the problems harmed their academic performance (pp. 7-8).

Asking those students to get involved in another student organization is probably not their first priority, and I would have loved to explore how fraternity and sorority life offices could help to alleviate the issues common impact students of color.

### ***Culturally Competent Advisors***

In addition to finding students that are prepared to handle the labor of this work, I worry about finding culturally competent advisors that are able to support the students throughout the duration of this retreat and workshop series. In my time as an undergraduate member of my organization, I never had an advisor that was a member of the NPHC that understood my experiences at a predominantly White institution. Terrell L. Strayhorn and Fred C. McCall (2012) highlight the importance of culturally competent advisors for BGLOs when they state, “without culturally competent advisors, students may be treated unfairly, advised against their own cultural practices, and these actions may lead to unproductive responses. That is, cultural competence allows advisors to “see” students through their lived cultural experiences” (p. 702). In my experience, I was so busy trying to advocate for my sorority and our existence that it would have been impossible to do the work that I am proposing. The fraternity and sorority life staff at my institution, though kind-hearted and well-intentioned, had at best a foundational level

of knowledge about the history of BGLOs. This is the sad reality for a number of institutions, and I worry that students will not have the opportunity to develop and succeed in this program because it will be deemed as unnecessary and will lack support from the office staff.

## **Conclusion**

Though this thesis that I have presented is highly theoretical in nature, there is still a place for this project in higher education and student affairs. While in this project I work through the impacts of neoliberalism, identity politics, and antiracism, at the core I am fighting for inclusion and student support. The purpose of student affairs professionals' work is to serve the students and support student initiatives. There are not enough people in this field and in the world that are willing to speak up and advocate for these people and the voices that have been silenced for so long. I want students to believe in their potential, and although some of these concepts may seem big and complicated, these are the realities in which we are living. I want Black students and student affairs professionals to understand that nothing will change unless we make it change. Calling out the systems that oppress us to create space for a new way of being allows for the potential to create a reality in which all lives and voices matter, especially the Black ones. Student affairs professionals should feel empowered by this thesis knowing that are possibilities to ignite change throughout all levels of the institution.

In the future I can see myself taking this thesis to small BGLO conferences and presenting my topics and intervention. I hope to normalize the conversations about theoretical frameworks and philosophies of education throughout Black Greek organizations. Given that students are currently integrated into the neoliberal regime of the university and are busy fighting the fight for recognition, they are not challenged enough to think about how their positions in the organization can invoke change throughout higher education. Presenting my thesis at

conferences can help to awaken the consciousness of some of the student members of BGLOs and allow them to understand why their role in their organizations is so important to the progress of education. I want to start the conversation with students and get them to believe that a liberatory, democratic and equitable system of education is possible, and while I do not think that this thesis has all of the answers, I think it could serve as a good starting point about how we can use our position to push for transformation in education. BGLOs absolutely have the power to revolutionize and dismantle systemic racism in higher education, and cultivating a community of strategic alliances, solidarity, and support will render these organizations unstoppable in fighting this fight.

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## Appendix A:

### Racers Retreat Detailed Program Outline

#### Friday:

- Title: *On your Mark!* - Racers Retreat Kick-Off Dinner.
- Time: 6-8:30pm
- Purpose:
  - Small catered dinner for the Racers and any staff that will be attending the event.
- Materials:
  - Large notepad
  - Markers
  - Pens

#### *Agenda*

- 6pm-6:45pm ~ Dinner
  - Introductions
    - Why did everyone join their organization?
    - What do they hope to gain from their experiences in Black Greek life?
- 6:45pm-7pm ~ Introduction to Racers Program
  - Overall mission of the retreat and program
  - Incentives and expectations
  - Schedule of events and requirements
  - Administer pre-survey questions
- 7pm-8pm ~ Guided Discussion
  - Important Note:
    - Advisors should use this time to gauge the interest of the students. This is a time for the students to share their experiences, concerns, and discuss the topics that matter to them in order to potentially identify workshop topics that will be presented later on.
  - Sample Discussion Questions
    - What does your race, culture, and/or identity mean to you? How did it influence your decision to join a BGLO?
    - What have your experiences been like in your organization thus far?
    - What challenges or inequities have you faced as a member of your organization as it pertains to your racial/cultural identity?
    - Would you say that you have been exposed to the same opportunities and resources as members of other councils?
    - How is racism prevalent in your institution? How is it prevalent in fraternity and sorority life?
    - What do you know about your organization's history in activism and societal movements?
    - How have negative stereotypes about your racial identity or your organization impacted your experience?

- How can your position in a BGLO influence change, and help people to understand the importance of equity and inclusion?
- How can the office of fraternity and sorority life be more supportive to the specific needs of your organization and council as a whole?
- What do you hope to learn during this retreat? What specifically interests or concerns you?
- 8-8:30 ~Discussion Wrap-Up, Plans for Next Meeting

### Saturday:

- Title: *Long Jumps & Hurdles!* – Full workshop day
- Time: 9am-4:30pm
- Materials:
  - Laptops
  - Highlights/markers/pens
  - Large notebook paper
  - Regular notebook/sheet of paper
  - PowerPoint that reviews content (suggested)

### *Agenda*

- 9-9:30am~ Breakfast
  - Discussion topics
    - Today's Goals/Agenda
    - Any lingering questions from the day before
- 9:30am-10:50am~ Team Building Exercises
  - Title: Confronting Stereotypes, "I am, But I am Not"
  - Instructions:
    - Each participant should fold a piece of paper in half to create two separate columns.
    - In the first column, write "I Am".
    - In the second column, write "I Am Not".
    - In between these two columns, write the word "But".
    - The final phrase will read "I am \_\_\_\_\_, but I am not \_\_\_\_\_."
    - Participants should fill in the first blank with some kind of common identifier about their organization or race, and the second with a common stereotype about that group which is not true of them (whether the stereotype is positive or negative).  
Ex: "I am a member of XYZ Sorority, but I am not (common stereotype/misperception)"
    - Make sure there are no questions and have everyone write at least 5 statements.
    - ("5 Game-Changing Diversity and Inclusion Activities for Teams", 2020)
  - Discussion and Debrief
    - Allow participants to share their statements with the team and have an open and respectful discourse on stereotypes.
    - Discuss how stereotypes have had impact on each of the students and their experiences in fraternity and sorority life

- Do they feel any pressure to live up to those stereotypes? Who do they feel pressure from? In what situations?
  - How have they tried to break those stereotypes?
  - Do they feel safe on campus? What do they want the community to know about them and their organization?
- 10:50-11:50 ~Reading Workshop
  - Instructions:
    - Break students off into three groups of three. Assign each group an excerpt from the suggested reading list below. Have students report to the whole group key takeaways.
- Reading List
  - *Tempered Radicals* by Debra Meyerson- Harvard Business Review, pages 1-9
    - Link: <https://hbr.org/2001/10/radical-change-the-quiet-way>
  - *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, pages 1-31
    - Cost- \$14.99
    - <https://www.amazon.com/How-Be-Antiracist-Ibram-Kendi/dp/0525509283>
  - *Rethinking Recognition* by Nancy Fraser, pages 1-14
    - Link: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/II3/articles/nancy-fraser-rethinking-recognition.pdf>
  - *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* by Wendy Brown
    - Chapter 6, "Educating Human Capital" pages 175-191
    - Link: <https://revistas.ufpr.br/doiPontos/article/downloadSuppFile/48108/25893>
  - *Black Study, Black Struggle* by Robin D. G. Kelley, pages 153-167
    - <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8cj8q196>
- Debrief Discussion Questions
  - What are the initial reactions to the readings? What questions to people have? What do people agree with? What do students not understand?
  - How are the readings related to their positions in the Racers? How can the concepts in these meetings influence their positions in their organizations? How can these concepts shape their workshops and conversations with faculty and staff?
  - *Important Note:* Consider asking philosophy, history, or higher education professors to come and help facilitate this conversation.
- 12pm-1pm ~ Lunch
- 1pm-1:30pm ~ Debrief Continued
  - Use this time to answer any additional questions about the first set of readings, wrap up conversations, take small break before moving on
- 1:30pm-3:00pm ~ Our History, Readings that Center BGLOs
  - Instructions
    - Select articles from the list below, have students read and share their thoughts and reflections as a group
- Reading List:
  - *Cultural Solidarity and the Free Space of the Black Fraternity* (Chambers, 2014)

- *Community Service and Social Action: Using the Past to Guide the Future of Black Greek Letter Fraternities*, (McKenzie, 1990)
- *Race and Racism in Fraternity and Sorority Life, A Historical Overview* (Gillon, K.E., Beatty, C.C. and Salinas, C., Jr., 2019).
- *Organization despite Adversity: The Origins and Development of African American Fraternal Associations* (Skocpol, T., & Oser, J., 2004).
- *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision* (Brown, T., Parks, G., & Phillips, C., 2005).
- Additional Reading Options
  - *The history of African American fraternities and Sororities* (Cross, 2001)
    - Cost-\$18.59
  - *So you want to talk about race?* (Oluo, 2018)
    - Cost- \$13.59
  - *White Fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism* (DiAngelo, 2018)
    - Cost-\$12.19
- 3:30-4pm ~Discussion Questions
  - In what ways have these articles influenced how you think of your responsibilities as a member of a BGLO?
  - How can/do BGLOs serve as a place for cultural solidarity within the university? How can they operate in the university without being of the university?
  - What was most impactful for you in these readings?
  - What did you learn that you did not know before?
  - How can we integrate what we just learned into actual practices on campus?
  - What do you want to learn more about?
  - What do you disagree with?
- 4-4:30pm ~Wrap Up

### Sunday:

- Title- *The Last Lap!* —Final workshop day
- Time: 9am-4:30pm
- Materials
  - Laptops
  - Highlights/markers/pens
  - Large notebook paper
  - Regular notebook/sheet of paper
  - PowerPoint that reviews content (suggested)
- Purpose:
  - This day will primarily consist of the students creating a draft of the workshops that they would like to present throughout the semester. The topics should cover issues that are the most relevant to their campus around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 9-9:45am~ Breakfast
- 10-10:30am ~ Workshop Brainstorming Topics
  - Instructions:

- Once students have a solidified list of topics they would like to discuss, allow them to break themselves into groups to flesh out the details and materials needed for their sessions. This allows for each group to have autonomy over sessions and lead the sessions they feel most passionate about,
- 10:30-10:45am~ Break
- 10:45-11:45am ~Workshop Development
- 12pm-12:30pm~ Working Lunch
  - Allow students to continue conversing about their topics over lunch
  - Check in to see if anyone has questions
- 12:30-2pm~ Workshop Development
- 2pm-3pm ~Wrap Up!
  - Allow each group to briefly discuss what they have developed thus far. Discuss what was challenging for them, what was easy for them, and how the process went overall.
  - Establish a meeting timeline for the group throughout the remainder of the semester.
  - Groups should meet at least twice a month
  - Distribute a calendar of when workshops are and who will be presenting. A staff member should follow up with these students before and after each presentation to make sure they are prepared and have the necessary materials.
  - Answer any questions the groups may have
  - Distribute post-survey

## Appendix B:

### *The Racers- Program Budget*

Budget Description	Total
<b>1. Friday Night Pizza Dinner</b>	
<b>a. Large pizzas (3)</b>	40
<b>b. Drinks</b>	15
<b>c. Paperware (cups, napkins, plates)</b>	10
<b>Friday Total</b>	<b>\$65</b>
<b>2. Saturday Morning Breakfast</b>	
<b>a. Catered breakfast, including drinks (13)</b>	12
<b>3. Saturday Lunch</b>	
<b>a. Boxed lunches (13)</b>	11
<b>b. Drinks</b>	15
<b>c. Snacks</b>	50
<b>Saturday Total</b>	<b>\$364</b>
<b>4. Sunday Morning Breakfast</b>	
<b>a. Catered breakfast, including drinks (13)</b>	12
<b>5. Sunday Lunch</b>	
<b>a. Boxed lunches (13)</b>	11
<b>b. Drinks</b>	15
<b>c. Snacks</b>	50
<b>Sunday Total</b>	<b>\$364</b>
<b>6. Additional/Optional Materials</b>	
<b>a. Optional book costs (5)</b>	85.98
<b>b. Security</b>	200
<b>c. Stipends for Students (9)</b>	13, 585.98
<b>d. Venue</b>	1,500
<b>e. Small Van Transportation (2 days)</b>	50
<b>f. Pens</b>	5
<b>g. Highlighters</b>	5
<b>h. Large notepads</b>	15
<b>i. Journals (9)</b>	45
<b>j. Certificate Paper (1 pack)</b>	12
<b>k. Flyer prints (50)</b>	13
<b>l. T-shirts (9)</b>	180
<b>m. Gifts (9)</b>	180
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15, 878.96</b>
<b>Program Total</b>	<b>\$16, 669. 96</b>

## Appendix C:

### *The Racers Retreat Pre-Survey Questionnaire*

Please complete this assessment *before* the retreat begins.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live on or off campus (circle one)? On /Off

1. Please rate your knowledge of the history of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

Very poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    Very good

2. Please rate your knowledge of the concept of neoliberalism.

Very poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    Very good

3. Please rate your knowledge of the concept of antiracism.

Very poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    Very good

4. Please rate your knowledge on the concept of identity politics.

Very poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    Very good

5. Please rate your membership experience in your Black Greek Letter Organization.

Very poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    Very good

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>I am confident in my leadership ability.</b>					
<b>I am confident in my ability to work as a member of a team.</b>					
<b>I am confident in my ability to present a workshop to university faculty and staff.</b>					
<b>I have experienced racism, prejudice, and/or discrimination while on campus.</b>					



<b>I feel supported by the staff members in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.</b>					
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**Please fill in the blanks**

I am most looking forward to learning about...

I am the most concerned about...

I have questions about...

I am excited about...

**Please respond to the following prompts**

1. What is the primary purpose of BGLOs on college campuses today?
2. Name two ways you would change about your experience as a member of a BGLO on campus?
3. What are the primary ways BGLOs make a difference on your campus?
4. Name two ways BGLOs can affect positive change on campus?
5. How did you hear about this program?
6. Name one reason why you decided to participate in this program?
7. Do you have any additional questions or concerns?

**Appendix D:**  
***The Racers Retreat Post-Survey Questionnaire***

Please complete this assessment *after* the retreat ends.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live on or off campus (circle one)? On /Off

1. Please rate your knowledge of the history of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

Very poor    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       Very good

2. Please rate your knowledge of the concept of neoliberalism.

Very poor    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       Very good

3. Please rate your knowledge of the concept of antiracism.

Very poor    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       Very good

4. Please rate your knowledge on the concept of identity politics.

Very poor    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       Very good

5. Please rate your overall experience during this retreat.

Very poor    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       Very good

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>I am confident in my leadership ability.</b>					
<b>I am confident in my ability to work as a member of a team.</b>					
<b>I am confident in my ability to present a workshop to university faculty and staff</b>					
<b>I feel empowered to address racism, prejudice, and/or discrimination while on campus.</b>					

<b>I feel supported by the staff members in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.</b>					
<b>I am going to return to this program again next year.</b>					

**Please fill in the blanks**

One piece of information I learned as a result of today's session is...

I still have questions about...

I most enjoyed learning about...

I wish we learned more about...

**Please respond to the following prompts**

1. List one fact about the history of BGLOs.
2. Describe one concept of neoliberalism.
3. Describe one concept of antiracism
4. Describe one concept of identity politics
5. What is the purpose of BGLOs on college campuses today?
6. Name two ways BGLOs affect positive change
7. Name two ways these theoretical frameworks are impacting BGLOs ability to succeed on campus
8. List two examples of how you can apply today's material to your organization or to the university
9. What other topics might you be interested in learning more about?
10. How can this retreat be improved?