BLACK ON WHITE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BLACK STUDENTS ON A PREDOMINATELY WHITE UNIVERSITY

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The premise of this study was to explore the recollections of the experiences of African American graduates from a predominately White university and to understand how these experiences shaped them within the context of their professional and personal lives. Using a qualitative research design, this study uses Critical Race Theory, an emerging theoretical framework in the field of education to better understand the stories and cultural life worlds of the minority college student. Through in depth interviews the study draws from the work of Sarah Willie’s work, Acting Black (2003) as a starting point to understand what the researcher defined as The New Talented Tenth, a term coined by the great intellectual African American, W.E.B. DuBois in an effort to illustrate the responsibilities of the gifted of the race in regard to those who were unable to obtain a higher education.

The creation of an African American community on campus separate from the mainstream campus community, the internal cliques that existed within the community, the impact of minority leadership on the lives of the students and the press of ever changing cultural norms and expectations as well as the adoption of more competitive and individualist values are presented through the eyes of the research participants to tell the story of the African American experience at a
predominately White university at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The major findings of the study were as follows:

1. African American college students create and maintain a separate cultural community on campus with internal cliques and smaller groups within. They transmit their values to new members of the community, however, the extent of this acceptance of values and knowledge are changing all the time. They do not view the need for this community as one of protection from racism or hostility on campus; rather, the community perpetuates itself for social and emotional communal purposes.

2. By the very nature of racial identifiability, all African American students who do not consciously choose to self-exclude from this community are in fact a part of it, even if they see themselves as outsiders.

3. African American students are dealing with the tension between maintaining Africentric community values of cooperation and collaboration while adopting and adapting more Eurocentric values of competition and individualism.

4. The leadership of a dynamic African American president at a predominately White university greatly changed the perceptions of success for African American students on campus as well as the climate and the interactions with majority campus members. Thus, his death in fact retarded the growth and development of diversity and inclusion and changed the campus climate
forcing African American students to adopt new ways of coping on the campus.

Implications, recommendations and conclusions to assist educators in developing praxis while opening dialogue and advancing knowledge and understanding in the area of the African American college student experience were all drawn from the findings of this study.
With Love and Great Devotion…

This is dedicated to my parents
Gary who always believed and Lucille who taught me faith.

And to Ms. Ma and The Mighty Ba Ba – Thank you for instilling in me the love of little dogs, the song and the story.
I’ll always remember our gingersnap treats and special dances…

Most importantly to Jesus, The Christ, My Love, My Life, My Everything
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And all the Johnstons, Parkers, Matthews, Burnsides, and Decostas

My Church Family – The Lighthouse CORCC of Fairborn

My Adopted Ohio Families:
The Stevensons, The Wintons, The Lemons and The Grants

And to all the Graduates of Palmer U, thank you for sharing your lives with me,
I pray I might always be a Mother in Zion

To the Lord Almighty thank you for a great dog Bianca, whose antics and faithfulness
always remind me of Your unfailing Love.
Jesus, I am eternally blessed for all your goodness and grace towards me…
Psalm 71 Verses 20 – 23
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapters</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. African American Graduates of Predominately White Universities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher as Instrument</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Talented Tenth</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quest for Community</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of Students of Color on Campus</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification of African American Students</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Black</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Culture of Power</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Critical Race Theory</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory in Education</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification of Qualitative Research Methodology</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the Researcher</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Setting – Palmer University</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sample</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Culture and Community</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling The Story</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion.................................................................................................................. 81

4. The New Talented Tenth
   Broken Glasses................................................................................................. 83
   African American Community on Campus: The Cliques.............................. 87
   Indoctrination: Becoming a Part of the Community...................................... 95
   Setting the Standard: Acquiring Cultural Values and Learning Social Norms......................................................................................... 96
   On The Outside Looking In: Self-Proclaimed Outsiders of the Community.......................................................................................... 100
   How the World Works: Interaction With White Students............................ 106
   It Wasn’t Really Hostile: Persistence of Self-Segregated African American Community on Campus.................................................. 111
   The New Talented Tenth: Preparing to Compete in Mainstream Society........ 119
   Conclusion........................................................................................................... 130

5. Dr. Brother, Campus Climate and The New Talented Tenth
   The Legacy of a Leader: The Importance of Mentors.................................... 133
   The Measure of a Man: Dr. Brother................................................................. 136
   Creating Community: Campus During The Brother Era.............................. 140
   Dr. Who? Life on Campus After the Death of Dr. Brother.............................. 150
   There Are No Momma’s Here: Interaction with Faculty and Staff on Campus...................................................................................... 155
   Paradigm Shifts: Changing Focus of the Center and the Death of the Servant Leadership Program.................................................. 160
   For The Sake of Unity “The Incident”............................................................... 167
   And The Chief Was A Black Woman: Negative Experiences with African American Faculty and Staff.................................................. 173
   Conclusion........................................................................................................... 180

6. Reflecting Black – Implications and Conclusions
   I Meant No Offense – Rise of Intellectual Racism and the Persistence of the Self-Segregated Community.................................................. 183
   Coming Around Again: The Persistence of Community................................ 185
   Racism – Palmer State’s Continued Problem.................................................. 192
   Reflections on Acting Black............................................................................. 195
   Implications for Higher Education Professionals.......................................... 198
   Conclusions........................................................................................................ 202
CHAPTER 1

AFRICAN AMERICAN GRADUATES FROM A PREDOMINATELY WHITE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The importance of obtaining a degree from a prestigious American college or university cannot be denied, for not only does it bestow prestige on those who successfully graduate, it also opens doors of opportunities for possible financial freedom and success in our American capitalistic society. Over the last ten years a great deal of educational research has been done on issues such as retention and the academic attainment of African American students, however, there has been little direct research done on the impact of educational experiences on students of color who have successfully graduated and gone on to other professional pursuits. Thus, this dissertation will examine the experiences of African American graduates from a predominately White institution of higher learning and how social support, the role of mentors, the campus climate and extracurricular activities shaped their lives and prepared them to be successful members of the professional world. Furthermore, this study will examine the changing nature of the African American campus experience, the adoption of less communal values and the importance of learning to cross cultural boundaries and interact successful with majority campus members.
Each year thousands of students apply and are accepted and rejected at America’s top colleges. According to the Center for the Study of College Student Retention, few gains have been made by African American graduates. 12% of the American population is African American with 13% of the total African American population attending college. Of those seeking degrees only 38% of African Americans will graduate over a six-year period. However, for those minorities who are catapulted to an elite status by benefit of their impending education, the road to educational attainment is often paved with difficulty and doubt. As educators committed to the success of all students we must investigate the lives of our minority scholars in order to shed light on their experiences so that we might better design and implement programs and policies that meet their needs. It would be easier to lend our so called expertise to the problem and create policy and programs that we feel best meets the needs of our students of color, however, it seems wiser to draw knowledge and wisdom from those who have lived through the educational experience and thus have stories to tell that can assist us as well as guide us in creating new praxis and epistemologies.

**Black on White** is such a study seeking to understand the impact of the educational experiences of African Americans using a autoethnographical approach from a racialized epistemological location (Ladson Billings 2001, Ellis and Bochner 2001). According to Seidman (2005), the support and advocacy of an ethnic
student’s peer group, as well as other factors such as faculty/staff relations, social and emotional support and career preparation can often have great impact on the successful matriculation and graduation of African American college students who attend predominately White institutions of higher learning. Much of the research discussed in Chapter Two suggests that African American college students create and sustain a separate community on predominately White college campuses with its own values, norms, and methods of transmitting social codes. For educational researchers and practitioners understanding how such a community is defined and described through the recollection of its members is an important first step in initiating dialogue, shaping policy, counseling students and creating programs that assist in the academic, social and emotional support of minority students. It is in addressing research questions that deal specifically with the African American experience on campus that the academic body of knowledge will be expanded and scholars will gain a better understanding of the values, norms, traditions, struggles and distinct aspects of such a community and its role in the academic and social success or failure of its members.

**Researcher as Instrument**

As an African American scholar who attended a predominately White university, I personally felt invested in the research topic. Furthermore, while
reviewing groundbreaking qualitative methodologies I felt that centering the study in the framework of Critical Race Theory while using an autoethnographical approach would best present the findings of African Americans since such a racialized discourse is concerned with understanding the ethnic experience (Ladson Billings, 2001, Ellis and Bochner 2001). Autoethnography allows for the researcher to become an active part of the research through the use of autobiographical content to understand and interpret the lives and the culture that they are studying, while also shedding light on the personal experience of the researcher. According to Ellis and Bochner (2001) in autoethnography “…concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self consciousness are featured appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought and language (p. 739).” Therefore, autobiographical content is used in the context of this dissertation to assist in presenting and analyzing the data and to strengthen the findings.

In 1989 I was granted admission to Faith Western University, a small Methodist private liberal arts institution located 30 miles outside of Columbus, in rural Delaware, Ohio. Coming from the Bronx, New York, I suffered complete culture shock realizing that I was one of only 60 African Americans on campus and completely out of my element. I often felt alienated in my classes and remember many of the hostile and uncomfortable moments that I was placed in as the sole
minority student in a social or academic situation. In the midst of this alienation, I found support and comfort in the community of African American students who shared my feelings of isolation and social marginalization. Our community was loving and alive, already in existence upon my arrival, ready to embrace me and teach me how to navigate the socio-cultural world of academia.

During my undergraduate years I learned many theoretical concepts, strengthened my intellectual abilities and was taught many perspectives and ideologies that were suppose to prepare me to perform well in the professional world. Despite the rigorous academic training that I obtained, I remember very little of the knowledge I was suppose to have learned in the classroom. What I remember most and hold most dear are the experiences and interactions that I had outside the classroom with the small community of African American students on campus, as well as the many valuable and painful lessons that I learned as I experienced both unintentional and blatant racism both from my majority peers, as well as the institution and its representatives. Most campus social events were not culturally relevant to my experiences, the curriculum very seldom included a non-European perspective or paradigm and our concerns about campus climate were often ignored or explained away by those who could not or would not understand our issues. College was often viewed as a hostile environment that one had to overcome in order to find success in the greater world. If it had not been for the cultural community that
I was immersed in I know that I never would have graduated. My university experience taught me that it was easier, safer, and more satisfying to remain within my own cultural community, and it was within that community I received the support that was needed in order to achieve my goals.

Today, as a consultant working in the field of higher education I have had an opportunity to observe many students of color and found through daily interactions that many have experiences that seem identical to my own college recollections. Through my work with the Black Alumni Network of Faith Western as well through a number of conversations with my professional African American peers who have also graduated from predominately White institutions, I have discovered a striking similarity between us. I know that if it had not been for the love and support of the African American campus community I never would have graduated from Faith Western University, nor would I have gone on to obtain my Master’s Degree from The Ohio State University. In casual conversation with a number of African American professionals who also graduated from schools such as Faith Western, Kenyon and Dennison, and are now operating in a multitude of diverse careers, it has been expressed to me that they feel the same way and share similar perceptions.

In my desire to obtain a PhD, I realized that I had to conduct research that was meaningful to me as it was important to me to gain an understanding about my own academic experiences. But more importantly, conducting research that explores the
campus cultural life worlds of African American graduates and how these life worlds have caused these graduates to develop into the people they are today will inform the praxis of educational scholars, will provide starting points for continued research on the changing African American campus experience, as well as provide higher education professionals with the opportunity to create programs better suited to the needs of African American college students. Although I graduated from college over twelve years ago, I know that my ultimate educational outcome was an ability to function as a bicultural individual with a fine tuned double consciousness, able to negotiate through corporate/academic America as well as be comfortable and uninhibited in the African American community, furthermore, the participants in this study although with some differences share a similar educational outcome.

W.E.B. DuBois – The Skills of Double Consciousness

As Sociology and Women’s Studies Major at Faith Western I remember hating my Philosophy and Feminism class. As the only African American in the class my anger burned as several White students decried the barbarism of Africans who allowed their daughters to be victims of female circumcision. Although I also detested the practice, I could not ally myself with my White peers due to their ignorant and racist suppositions, they were doing more then decrying the practice, they were proclaiming their superiority because in America, we would never allow
such practices to be performed on our daughters. In one heated discussion, where I simply stated that they had no right to make a judgment call on a nation due to its oppressive patriarchy I was told that I had a problem and I needed to make a choice. I was either a woman or an African American I could not be both, one had to take the forefront, one had to dominate. In other words, they asked me to take sides. An intense anger rose up in me and I remember answering with conviction and confidence that I could not choose, I would not choose for to ask me to separate the two parts of my being would be like asking me to cleave myself in two, but if I had to choose, if my life depended on it, I would be African American, for it is from this location I have suffered the most oppression and discrimination. Besides, if we erased gender inequality tomorrow, I remember saying, I would still suffer due to my race where others in this classroom would be free. I remember every tongue was silenced after that comment and the professor quickly moved us on to a more distant practice – Chinese Foot Binding.

The inability to choose between the two distinct aspects of myself is I believe, a common reality for African Americans who have in fact learned to function in two separate worlds, applying two separate selves to each. Over 100 years ago, scholar W.E. B. DuBois, gave voice to this unique way of being. He wrote, “…the Negro is… gifted with second sight… a world which yields him no true self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar
sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others…(p.8).” As advancements have been made in civil rights Dubois’s conceptions of double consciousness have evolved as African Americans have learned to cross between two cultures as they spend more time engaged in mainstream society within the realms of education, the work place and in social settings. The interaction between White and African Americans has so increased over the last century that the state of double consciousness is lived daily without conscious or premeditated thought by African Americans.

For students of color who come from race enclaves in which they may only interact with Whites in academic and professional settings, double consciousness is pushed to the forefront. The ability to change behavior, dialect, and to find cultural security as African Americans move between two worlds becomes second nature. In the educational arena, these enclaves are recreated as students select to self-segregate and move between two worlds on campus in an effort to secure their portion of the American pie. Even in the midst of perceived cultural changes and a push for inclusion and appreciation of diversity, DuBois words still ring true today, “One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals, one dark body whose strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p.9).” As African Americans move further into the mainstream however, a chasm seems to be appearing within the cultural community, for some
African Americans seem better able to handle the constant crossing between two worlds, culturally versed in both, yet refusing to be pigeon held by either, determined to achieve all that can be achieved for people of color in modern America.

**The New Talented Tenth**

Education in DuBois opinion was vital to the success of the African American community and would in fact free the community from the lingering effects of slavery. Furthermore, DuBois asserted that the African American community would be lifted from ignorance and led out of the cultural abyss by those of the race who were strong in mental abilities, intellectual promise and passionate for educational pursuits. These would be the crème de la crème of the “Negro” race, who would be charged with not only obtaining an education for their personal gain but would also use their educational achievements to serve the greater masses. He writes, “… From the very first it has been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people that have led and elevated the mass…” (p.1). Thus, DuBois conceptualized The Talented Tenth, the top 10% of the African American community who he believed were more gifted in intellectual pursuits then the remainder of the population.

It was the Talented Tenth that DuBois believed had the responsibility of obtaining an education to train not only the Talented Tenth of the next generation, but also to provide technical education for the majority of the race who would be situated
within the more labor intensive vocational arts. The Talented Tenth he argued were the natural leaders of the African American community as they were the teachers, preachers, lawyers, artisans and doctors who had historically provided leadership to the community through the church, the school system and healing and performing arts. DuBois determined that the best of the race needed to be educated in schools of higher learning geared towards a classical liberal arts education not only for the providing a way to feed themselves but to also gain knowledge for knowledge’s sake. He wrote, “All men cannot go to college but some men must; every isolated group or nation must have it’s yeast, must have for the talented few centers of training where men are not so mystified and befuddled by the hard and necessary toll of earning a living, as to have no aims higher than their bellies and no God greater than Gold (p.5).” It is profound to think that the education that DuBois was in fact advocating was fraught with hegemony and racist ideology. Despite this tension of educational pursuit DuBois expressed that the importance of a true education was not in obtaining wealth, but in educating oneself for self-improvement as well as the greater good of the community.

Although educational opportunity is more widely available for African Americans then ever before, the Talented Tenth, who as DuBois defined are, “…the man who sets the ideals of the community where he lives, directs it thoughts and heads its social movements (p.5)” have continued to make their way to the elite
educational centers of America’s colleges and universities. In a desire to be the next Puff Daddy or the first African American Bill Gates, education for education’s sake is no longer a primary concern for today’s African American college students, although many are involved in charity programs and nonprofit organizations. Today the New Talented Tenth primarily view education as the passport to financial freedom and professional success. What DuBois called in 1903 the “sinister signs in the recent educational movement” has in fact taken root, for although it is of paramount importance to gain an education to support oneself, DuBois and even I argue that due to the ever present specter of racism, discrimination, poverty and ignorance, racial responsibility must still be at the forefront of the agenda of the New Talented Tenth.

As the gap between the classes increases and African Americans are able to achieve greater wealth then ever before, we must not fall into the trap of what DuBois called, “the deification of bread” to the exclusion of our social responsibilities. For today as in fact was the case in 1903, the Talented Tenth is responsible for moving the community forward, for working to abolish hegemonic practices and providing leadership to the remainder of the race. John Alan (2003) in discussing today’s Talented Tenth wrote, “…an attempt to separate culture from its source in the struggle for freedom is doomed to make it no more than an intellectual exercise that fits into the bourgeois world without solving any of the problems of poverty and social dislocation (p.2).” Thus this study examines a group of graduates from a
predominately White university who are in fact today’s Talented Tenth, the impact of role models and community on their educational experience, and examines the tensions between traditional Africentric values of community responsibility and the more free market driven values of competition and individualism which are so needed in order to advance in today’s America.

As competition increases and the gap widens between the classes, America is giving birth to the “neoliberal subject.” The creation of such a subject has led to increased individualism, which has the subject constantly examining and implementing life choices that allow for greater inroads in the competitive world market (Mitchell, Marsten and Katz 2003). As defined by Demerath and Lynch (2006) reasons for the creation of the neoliberal subject are a change in the family structure, the increasing technological consumer culture and the ability of the subject to direct their own education and socialization practices. In describing today’s African American students Weil states “African-American college students demonstrate high levels of media consumption, enthusiastically embrace technology and are active consumers… Black collegians also are socially conscious and highly motivated to achieve professional goals and to continue their education beyond the baccalaureate level (p.1, 2006).”

The New Talented Tenth are experiencing a change in the family structure; however, I contend that this change is not in the traditional sense. Rather, I believe
that changes that occurred in the African American community in this study have led to the fusion of neoliberalism and more traditional Africentric values producing an African American graduate who is versed in the skills needed to navigate and find success in the mainstream world while maintaining ties to their cultural community. This becomes apparent in the study as the participants give voice to their personal experiences with the African American president who led the institution during their tenure there or with their interaction with his legacy after his death.

**Overview of the Study**

Aforementioned, the second chapter of my dissertation will review research that has already been conducted in this area while exploring various research and findings that have illustrated and captured the stories of communities that exist on campus as well as the experiences of minority graduates. The experiences of African American college students, their interactions with campus community members, the impact of faculty and staff on their lives, the skills they have sought to obtain to achieve success, as well as various cultural concepts that inform this study will be explored and used as a foundation for creating new theoretical frameworks that will not only inform praxis, but will also open debate, give voice to experience and hopefully, shape policy and programming.
Critical Race Theory, an important methodological tool was used to understand the data collected and give voice to the findings of the study. Furthermore, approaching this study from a qualitative research paradigm allowed the participants an opportunity to share their voice through in depth interviews that shed light and understanding on the creation of community at a predominately White institution of higher learning, as well as how this experience has shaped them into who they are today. Therefore, the third chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, outlining the selection of subjects, the collection of data, and addressing the theoretical framework used to analyze the data. Chapter Three also shares literature to support what could be deemed as an unconventional approach to the presentation of data through this dissertation. Using a more ethnographic focus, while situating the researcher within the context of the research experience provides a richer, more detailed description of the lives of the participants. Chapter Four explores the graduates recollections of the self segregated African American community on campus, the experiences of interactions between the various groups on campus and the learning of skills needed to successfully navigate the university political and educational processes. Chapter Five is devoted to telling the story of Dr. Brother the African American president of the predominately White school, who led Palmer University during the time the majority of the students were there, his impact on their lives, the changing campus climate upon his death, and how his leadership may in
fact have encouraged the students to strive for greater academic and professional success. Finally, Chapter Six will address possible implications and applications of the research and its importance to the academic world.

**Conclusion**

The study of the experiences of recent African American graduates from predominately White colleges and universities serves to be an important undertaking in an effort to address the needs and issues of current students of color matriculating at such institutions. It is the goal of this study to give voice to these experiences, begin dialogue between educators, document the experiences of one group of graduates, while also offering educators an opportunity to see and invest in the changes that would need to occur in order to ensure the academic success of their African American students. Furthermore, research exploring how this ethnic subpopulation performs as The Talented Tenth, how they experience, create and maintain community on campus and the ever changing cultural values of African Americans as they appear to be assimilated into mainstream society must be conducted to truly further multiculturalism on campus while challenging the perceptions, values and norms that sustain the status quo.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

When embarking on a study that explores the experiences of African American college students who attended a predominately White university, and the impact of such experiences on their lives, there are several topics of interest that should be reviewed. Thus, this literature review will explore studies conducted by researchers interested in telling the stories of students of color, their interaction with their White peers and their views of life on a campus that was often perceived as hostile and unfriendly. The need of these students of color to cluster together for self-preservation will also be explored as well as issues of community, academic challenges, societal impact and social interaction. The work of Sarah Willie (2003) will be discussed in an effort to strengthen the framework of this study and support the need for further research in this area. Finally, an overview of Critical Race Theory and its relation to educational research will be outlined as a way to support the methodological approach to the research as well as explain the theoretical lenses from which this study will be viewed.

Over the last twenty years, research conducted by many scholars has delved into the experiences and life worlds of ethnic subpopulations exploring barriers to
success and the ability to overcome adversity in higher education. Much of the research that I have read greatly supports my own experiences as a minority student at a predominately White university. For example, Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) studied the perspectives of students of color who were attending a predominately White university in the Midwest, as well as the perceptions of these academics experiences through the eyes of the student’s parents. The authors documented that African American students struggle to survive and thrive in an environment that has little or no support systems in place to assist them in their academic endeavors and is culturally non conducive to or accepting of their cultural differences.

Coupled with a lack of support, the students in the Feagin, Vera, and Imani, study described a basic disregard for their identity, cultural needs, and experience both covert and overt discrimination and racism from majority campus members. The authors write, “…African American students at predominately White institutions often do not receive full recognition and respect from many White students, teachers, advisors, police, and other campus personnel. This White failure to recognize is very serious for it teaches lessons of out-of-place-ness and self worthlessness to Black students (p.15).” In the hallowed halls of the world of higher learning it is disconcerting that the profession of multicultural acceptance on campus is in fact still a long way from being the norm. Furthermore, it challenges researchers and educational professionals to examine the impact of such experiences on students of
color as well as how such experiences prepare them for professional lives in their post academic lives.

**The Quest For Community**

“That life is stressful for Black students… on predominately White campuses should not come as a surprise, but it often does. White students and faculty frequently underestimate the power and presence of the overt and covert manifestations of racism on campus, and students of color often come to predominately White campuses expecting more civility than they find. …Black students on predominately White college campuses must cope with ongoing affronts to their racial identity. The desire to retreat to safe space is understandable. (1997, p. 78)” writes Beverly Daniel Tatum in her book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting together in the Cafeteria?* This statement of Dr. Tatum’s greatly reflects the compelling issues of race, community relationships and how African American cultural life is situated within the cultural context of academia. Tatum’s review of the need for students of color to find a place to locate themselves within a self segregated community to ensure their emotional stability is an issue of constant debate. This debate causes many educators to question if the desire for inclusion and the draw of multicultural programming at the expense of
eliminating such racial community groupings may not be of benefit to students of color.

The quest for community on American colleges and universities is often professed in their mission and institutional goals furthermore; the holistic development of students is also a primary concern of many institutions of higher education. Colleges and universities strive through their academic curriculum and student affairs programs to create community and develop students into productive members of society. As the majority of a student’s campus life is spent outside the classroom, the social world of the university is a fertile ground fraught with possible research topics (Boyer, 1987, 1990). According to Hennessy (1981) a student’s academic success and satisfaction with their college experience is often hinged on their well being both emotionally and socially. Thus, if a student sees themselves outside the community, unhappy with their college experience or marginalized from university life, they are less likely to achieve academic success unless they develop coping skills and mechanisms. According to Cohen (1998), society creates and sustains “barriers to blending” between cultures because of its desire to protect the status quo and sustain current American ideology. These barriers also exist on the college campus, keeping groups separated from each other, while limiting interaction and sustaining the current cultural dominance of the majority group on campus. If this is in fact the case, the community on campus is not open to the full inclusion of
African American students, furthermore, research indicates that many African American students seem to prefer to stay within their own group instead of venturing into perhaps hostile social situations.

Research conducted by many respected scholars illustrates that cultural community support is extremely important to the success of students of color. African American students who attend historically Black colleges and universities are more likely to graduate than their peers at predominately White colleges. These students who are immersed in African American culture and are the majority on campus also perform at higher levels in the work place upon graduation and achieve academic distinction at predominately White colleges and universities when seeking a graduate or professional degree (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Students of color who do not attend historically Black colleges may then create an environment of cultural community in order to understand and negotiate the campus where they are enrolled.

The work of Bohr and others (1995) reflects that, “Although the majority of Black students attend college at predominately White institutions, historically Black colleges and universities still educate a significant number of Black men and women (p. 75.).” The researchers found that the African American students who attend White schools experience a great deal of social isolation, are more likely to be dissatisfied with their school experience and sadly are subjected to a great deal of racism on campus. The authors found that historically Black colleges on average had
less resources and financial support, yet this did not hinder their ability to meet the
needs of their students. Black colleges were better able to meet the needs of their
students than White institutions could for their Black students. Students at Black
colleges and universities were found to have better academic success, a smoother
adjustment to college life, high levels of persistence, as well as performed better
academically during the first year of college.

Experiences of Students of Color on Campus

In the 1960’s Charles Lawrence III, recalls an experience that many African
American students and graduates may have encountered. He recollects, “I am a
student at Haverford College. Again, I am a token Black presence in a White world.
A companion whose face and name I can’t remember seeks to compliment me by
saying, “I don’t think of you as a Negro”. I understand his benign intention and
accept the compliment. But the knot is in my stomach again. Once again, I have
betrayed myself (p.236).” The power of this story brings crashing down the
arguments of those who believe that the educational arena is a level playing field that
allows all who try hard enough access to their educational goals. Examples such as
Lawrence’s memories from 1960 are still valid today as we see similar research and
personal testimony to support the premise that acceptance of multiculturalism in
ideology and action have yet to become part of the fabric of higher education.
Furthermore, stories such as Lawrence’s prove that these types of experiences linger long after they occur and more then likely affect the personal and professional outcome of a student’s life.

For Bray (1998) and Milner (1998) graduates of Harvard and Yale respectively, life as African American students at predominately White Ivy League institutions of higher learning was difficult and challenging. After struggling to make a place for themselves on campus, both women found the support they needed by becoming active in the African American community on campus. This community was separated from the majority campus, engaged in its own social life and invested in assisting each other in gaining the coping skills necessary to live a successful life on campus and work towards obtaining graduation. Furthermore, both women found adult support systems in the African American staff on campus who were centralized in the service fields, discovered that African American students maintained their own physical spaces on campus and are certain that they never would have graduated if they had not become active in the African American community on campus.

The support of faculty and staff were of paramount importance to the success of African American students. Mentoring, and modeling both play a key role in the colleges and universities meeting the need of their African American students. There have been few research studies done on the impact of African American faculty and staff and their relationship and the impact of such relationships on the educational
experiences and outcomes of African American graduates. Research conducted by Hawkins (1996) Holmes (2004) and Seidman (2005) explore the role of the African American president and other high ranking professionals and how individuals in these positions deal with the tensions, leadership issues and challenges of this position. The need for such professionals of color to serve students as mentors and role models as well as a need for them to serve as advocates for students is research that must be conducted to further the body of scholarly literature. These missing pieces will further the understanding of educators and their ability to better meet the needs of African American students.

Beckham (1988) states that although there are more than 3,000 White colleges and universities in the nation, the majority of them have failed to meet the needs of African American students. Similar to the research previously cited, African Americans on campus are often insulted, rejected, suffer from damaged self esteem, denied access to campus resources, particularly extracurricular activities that are formulated based on the dominant ideology on campus and find little support from the university administration. Beckham asserts that, “Black experiences in mostly White colleges are chronicles of how institutions have almost systematically bruised self esteem and doled out mere pittances of support services (p.76).” University life is according to Beckham, a microcosm of American society and current cases of racial harassment and abuse at schools such as Olivet, Brown and the University of
Massachusetts support his belief that racism is rampant on American campuses.

Beckham calls for the administration to acknowledge and work to end racism on campus, examine personal bias, change policy in support of students of color, and to create long range plans, allocate the proper resources and follow up with these plans.

Based on the research conducted and the recollections of graduates such as Bray and Milner the current status of African Americans on campus can be seen as age old issues that center on the struggle for academic success, and the obstacles that are encountered upon their arrival to the supposed utopia of academia. As the research indicates racism on campus is of paramount concern, a lack of support systems are hindering the psychological well being of students of color and White students believe that Black students should conform to their ways of knowing and being in the world. African Americans students are clustering together on campus to assist and support each other in obtaining their goals. Despite these many challenges, African Americans are graduating from predominately White institutions and are using the support of their peers and other individuals of color on campus to obtain their goals and find social acceptance and outlets. Further research must be conducted to further advance the knowledge of life for African American students on predominately White campuses in order to urge a change in the practice, expectations and cultural communities of such institutions.
The Classification of African American Students

In a study conducted by Henderson (1988), the researcher found that, “Adapting to a predominately White university is threatening for a majority of Black students. Four years of hostility, isolation, insensitivity, and sorrow are almost certain (p. 349).” Henderson also discovered that African Americans at predominately White colleges and universities were expected to assimilate and conform to the norms, values and cultures of their majority dominated community, found little or no formal support systems in place and were often faced with racism in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. African American students also developed coping skills and strategies to survive on campus and assist them in their educational attainment. Interestingly, Henderson grouped African American students into three distinct groups after conducting a qualitative research study with his participants at a predominately White Southern University.

African Americans classified as Partisans viewed the campus as a hotbed of racial hostility and were active in challenging the administration while committed to changing the campus environment for the better for students of color. African American students who were classified as Stoics were not involved as activists on campus, however, they felt that the campus environment was hostile and did not participate in the greater social life of the campus; rather they found their social outlets with other African Americans mainly off campus. The last group of students,
Henderson classified as Renegades, totally immersed in the majority campus life, spending no time with their Black peers and focusing their energy on assimilating into the mainstream campus life through their development of relationships with White students and majority community extracurricular activities. The majority of students in the study were Partisan, the second largest group were students defined as Stoic and the smallest group of African Americans were classified as Renegades.

This classification of African American students on campus is interesting in light of how White students may perceive their African American peers. Research conducted by Saddlemire (1996) found that White students enrolled at a predominately White institution had little or no contact with students of color prior to their arrival on campus. Many however, could quote the exact number of African Americans in their high schools or in their hometowns. These students shared that although they had very little interaction with African Americans prior to their arrival on campus, they had even less interaction with them on campus despite the fact that students of color were more accessible. White students in the study viewed African American students as living in a self imposed isolation, separated by choice from mainstream campus life, although they tended to be actively involved with each other.

The findings of the study indicated that Whites saw two distinct kinds of African American students, the majority who were loud, rude and self segregating and those who were active in White campus life and acted in ways similar to
themselves. Students in the study believed that they could only live with an African American if they shared similar norms, values and behaviors as themselves and were not obnoxious or overly loud. Most importantly, White students did not believe that there was anything that they could personally do to make the college environment more open and accepting to students of color, they did not perceive it as their responsibility. Saddlemire wrote, “The interviewees seemed to hold to a strong desire for others to assimilate to their ways of thinking and acting, which indicates a concern for dealing with differences of any kind (p.690).” At the turn of the century, White students are requiring African Americans to fit into their own perceptions and cultural expectations because it is still acceptable that their view of their culture is the proper view of all culture and is necessary in order to facilitate interaction between the races. I believe that this intolerance does not go unnoticed by students of color, causes them to find support within their own cultural community and greatly impacts their educational outcomes and professional successes.

In reviewing the experiences of African American students on campus, a model proposed by Aguirre and Turner can be used to understand the phenomenon of self-segregated communities. Aguirre and Turner (1995) propose that minority groups facing oppressive and discriminatory social situations will respond in one of the following ways: they will accept their conditions passively, they will assimilate if they are able, they may participate in marginal ways, choose to withdraw or self
segregate or participate in organized protest, rebellion or even revolt. This model can
easily be applied to the experience of African American college students at
predominately White universities. Based on the student’s family background,
personal beliefs and experiences, as well as their own world view, it seems that some
students of color may decide to passively accept their status on campus, participate
marginally in campus life as they are able and allowed or if possible assimilate to the
best of their ability.

The literature suggest that due to shared biological traits, shared cultural
practices and history, African American students have a high rate of identifiably and
thus are immediately grouped together by majority campus community members
(Ballinger). Based on this high rate of identifiably, their shared historical and cultural
context, instances of racism, insensitivity, and ingrained ignorance on the part of
majority members, the research cited allows theory to be constructed that historically
most African American students on campus seem to withdraw from overall campus
social life and self segregate creating their own community. Furthermore this
community has its own rules, values, norms and language as well as cultural
understanding and ways of constructing and transmitting knowledge. Activist work
in organizations such as Black Student Unions, historically Black sororities and
fraternities and other culturally specific groups encompass the Aguirre and Turner
idea of revolt, rebellion and organized protest through student political involvement
on campus. Participating in such a community would have a lasting effect on the lives of African American graduates and perhaps guide them as they navigate the professional world of work and interaction with their majority peers.

**Acting Black**

*Acting Black: College, Identity and the Performance of Race* by Sarah Willie (2003) examines the recollections of African American alumni from both a historically Black university as well as a predominately White institution of higher learning. Willie, an Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Black Studies Program at Swarthmore College, uses this study of the African American educational experience to explore the challenges of the construction of a flexible racial identity, the ability to modify this identity so that African Americans can fit into various social settings and reviews the overarching permeation of racism within the academic infrastructure. Interviewing 55 students who were enrolled between 1967 and 1989 at Howard University and Northwestern University, Willie investigates if, “…the racial sense African Americans had of themselves was influenced by the colleges they attended (p. 1).” Willie further states that her research produced, “…portraits of college life – from socializing with friends and sense of community with friends and sense of community to enduring the rigors of academics and, for many a sense of alienation and isolation.”
For African American students at Northwestern, a larger public predominately White institution of higher learning located in the Midwest, student recollections are both sad and sweet. With a 7% - 10% population of African Americans, Northwestern minority alumni in Willie’s study have expressed that they believe their attendance at such a prestigious school has allowed them access to greater success in their professional lives. Graduates noted that the few but invested mentors, the ability to gain confidence in self and their participation in a cultural community separate from the majority campus created an ability to navigate successfully the professional world dominated by those in the majority. Although many students recall racism, blatant discrimination as well as an ongoing “ambivalence” by their White peers, almost all who participated in Willie’s study would attend Northwestern again if given a second chance at their college years.

According to study participants Northwestern had done an amazing job of creating culturally sensitive programs, developing multicultural courses, recruiting faculty and students of color, yet the alumni use words such as, “socially polarized along racial lines.” to describe life on campus. In fact 83% of those engaged in the study defined the campus as, “two separate worlds, one White and one Black (p.47).” Murray a graduate from the university stated that, “…if he had not seen White students in class, he would have thought that he was at a Black college (p. 47).” Many alumni describe this separation as a conscious choice made by community
members who ate together, studied together and socialized together perpetuating the already segregated community lines of campus life. Many students tell stories of being assigned Black roommates in the supposed random housing lottery and rarely remember White students taking any action to initiate interactions in social or academic settings on campus.

Guided by work done by Ogbu and Fordham (1986) Willie asserts that what most African American graduates of Northwestern experienced is the culturally created concept of fictive kinship. This culturally created concept attaches a familial ideology between groups where relationships transcend blood, birth or marriage and ties groups together based on shared racial traits, experiences and socio-economic statues. Alumni use words such as, “family” and “kinship” to describe friendships made during their time in college and many of these relationships persist to the present day. Those students of color who moved outside the realm of this separated community were often chastised by their minority peers and defined as “Oreos” who were thought to be more concerned with being accepted by their White peers then supporting their minority counterparts. According to the alumni approximately 90% of African American students on campus were a part of this separated community, with few students able to straddle both worlds and others labeled as “sellouts (p.54).”

Racism was present on Northwestern’s campus and manifested itself in both subtle and pronounced ways. Alumni describe incidents of snobbery from White
sorority women, lewd and disparaging remarks made by White fraternity men, unkind pranks played by dorm mates, the disinterested approach of professors and other incidents that were hard to name or define. Many graduates tell tales of struggling as the only minority in some of the more challenging disciplines with little or no academic support system to fall back on. Willie writes, “These situations, however, in which professors could have either challenged the prevailing norms (that is, that they have the final say, without explanation or apology) and in so doing contributed to making the campus environment feel welcoming and fair. For students already feeling embattled, experiences like these confirmed feelings of being under siege or humiliated and sometimes led to bitterness (p.64).” Although the majority of interactions appear positive, some alumni express dismay over negative experiences with African American faculty and staff as well. However, many suggest that without the love and support of staff of color, they never would have attained their academic goals.

60% of the participants would attend Northwestern again if given a chance despite the unique challenges it posed to African American students. The other 40% were either unsure if they would make the same choice or thought that they might have enjoyed pursuing their degree at a historically African American institution due to a perceived increase of social lives and greater self confidence generated from being in a majority position. All however, felt that their education at Northwestern
provided them with opportunities and access in the professional world based on the prestige of their chosen alma mater. Ultimately, despite the challenges that existed at Northwestern, African American alumni remember the experiences as one where they, “provided each other with opportunities for social life, acting as mutual support systems, and nurturing a community that acted as a buffer against a larger campus community that was often considered hostile or uninterested (p.68).”

The importance of Willie’s study is contained in her ability to give voice to the stories of African Americans who successfully navigated life in a university where they were often regulated to the margins by choice as well as by the institutional climate in which they were engaged. The ability to glimpse into the life worlds and the long standing effects of achieving an education in such a setting can be used to guide educators as they strive to develop a non-hostile environment, multicultural awareness and culturally sensitive programs that ensure the success of all students. For many the college years are formative ones, shaping student’s views of life, society, culture and assisting them in building the skills to cope in our often hegemonic world. Willie’s research allows us valuable insight into how this hegemony has been overcome, ignored, experienced and harmful to students of color who have found unique and important ways of dealing with their majority peers, their internal community, the university culture while preparing them for entrance into a world so often reflected on the college campuses of America.
The Culture of Power

Colleges and universities across our nation are invested either consciously or unconsciously in maintaining the status quo in America, and in supporting the current ideology that keeps Eurocentric worldviews at the dominant center. Students of color who are denied access to the means to acquire the skills that are necessary to navigate within this paradigm are often isolated and unable to achieve academic, economic, and social parity with their majority peers. Lisa Delpit (1995) defines this as the “Culture of Power” that is consistently perpetuating and supporting oppressive and discriminatory class and race relations. The acquiring of such skills can be defined as cultural capital, which allows individuals the ability to successfully function within a setting according to the dominant ideology that governs social norms, values, and interactions. Many African American students are denied access to the culture of power because they have not gained the necessary cultural capital needed to ensure their academic and social success on campus.

Lisa Delpit writes, “To provide schooling for everyone’s children that reflects liberal, middle class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it (p. 28).” African American college students come to campus and are often forced to quickly learn how the culture of power works and how lacking they
are in the cultural capital that is deemed as valuable on campus. Due to the stressful
nature of this culture of power the research reviewed illustrates that African American
students often band together to provide support, share knowledge and to continue to
affirm their own cultural capital that is adapted to assist them in coping with life on
campus. Furthermore, the only way to dismantle the culture of power, to achieve
educational and economic parity and to silence those who seek to maintain the status
quo is to provide research from the perspective of those who are experiencing life on
the margins and denied access to the much needed cultural capital that is dispersed at
all levels of education.

Cameron McCarthy (1998) expresses the importance of schools as cultural
agents that are often political in that the educational institution disperses unequal
resources based on a community or cultural group’s ability to mobilize support and
assets for educational attainment. McCarthy writes, “This capacity to mobilize
resources, and exploit the unequal reward system and symbolic rituals of schooling,
varies considerably according to race, gender, and class background… …the
production of inequality of school is a highly contradictory and nonsynchronous
phenomenon – one that does not guarantee nice, clean, or definitive outcomes for
embattled minority and majority school actors (p.66).” As African Americans are
often clustered in lower social economic classes they are often the unable to obtain
much needed educational resources. How this is acted out in the realm of higher
education is a much needed study that will allow policy makers and educators to reexamine their priorities in regards to American education truly being a meritocracy.

McCarthy further asserts that there are specific relations that govern the interaction between majority and minority students within the educational realm and these relations must be studied to broaden our understanding of the African American experience at predominately White colleges and universities. Relations of competition stresses that groups compete for access to the resources that ensure educational excellence and those who are unable to compete are thus denied the resources. Relations of exploitation asserts that society educates individuals according to its various labor needs, research conducted by Jean Anyon (1992) also supports this as she explored how schools within various social economic status educated students in a manner that would perpetuate the current class system in America. Anyon found that schools in lower socio economic classes educate students to perform menial and repetitive work, while schools in the elite economic classes teach students to think critically, create and manipulate new forms of knowledge, thus preparing them to own, create and control wealth and capital. This is related to McCarthy’s next idea, that minority and majority groups struggle in relations of domination, that schools attempt to maintain hierarchies and are extremely stratified. Finally, and most importantly, there is a struggle over the relations of cultural
selection as schools decide whose knowledge and culture will be included, taught and thus validated.

Educators must understand how these relationships are formed and sustained not to dismantle or destroy the self-segregated communities that exist on campus, but rather to understand the importance of such communities and offer support as needed. Furthermore, understanding such relationships can activate needed dialogue that causes all members of the campus community to critically question and reflect on their responsibility to making the campus an inclusive environment. As well as striving to change the dominant ideology, opening it up for alternative paradigms, norms and values. In order to do so, a theoretical paradigm that is beneficial to people of color must be used to give voice to a study such as this.

**History of Critical Race Theory**

In conducting a study that examines the life worlds of African American college graduates from predominately White institutions of higher learning a theoretical framework must be used that illuminates the struggles of the subjects while giving a clear view into the workings of the society in which they live. It is my belief that Critical Race Theory is such a framework that can be used to gain a greater understanding of how racism and discrimination subtly continue to persist in an environment that prides itself on equality and enlightenment. In order to use Critical
Race Theory as the theoretical framework for this study, the history and formation of this ideology must be examined.

It was of paramount importance to the founders of Critical Race Theory to understand the disparities in the American legal system in relation to issues of race and justice. Many of the pioneers in the movement were legal scholars eager to make inroads in the areas of civil rights legislation and social action, yet found themselves limited based on institutionalized ideologies that discouraged the advancement of such scholarship. The work of Delgado (1995) dedicated to advancing the cause of people of color was discouraged early in his legal career from investigating more controversial approaches to legal scholarship. He documents the lack of attention paid to minority views in the areas of legal studies by legal educators, scholars and those actually practicing law, despite minority expertise on issues of race, discrimination, civil rights and the state of African Americans in society. For Dalton (1995) scholars of color were often silenced in legal debates between colleagues and excluded from dialogue due to liberal White scholars dismissing uncomfortable conversation that might cause them to inwardly reflect. Furthermore, Dalton found that there was a lack of concern with the importance of experience in relation to theorizing, yet many liberal scholars were willing to appropriate minority concerns that focused on the problems with liberalism and the American justice system.
This liberal approach to legal studies, the forerunner of Critical Race Theory was coined Critical Legal Studies by engaged scholars dedicated to exploring issues of great concern to legal scholars of color. The premise of Critical Legal Studies according to Matsuda (1995) is, “…characterized by skepticism toward the liberal vision of the rule of law, by a focus on the role of legal issues in capturing human consciousness by the agreement that fundamental change is required to attain a just society, and by a utopian conception of a world more communal and less hierarchical than the one we know now (p65).” This legal lens of viewing the world was quickly adopted by many minority scholars although the theory failed to address issues of race and the intersection between race, racism and its impact on legal outcomes. Critiques of Critical Legal Studies came fast and furious as scholars of color asserted that the paradigm was overly concerned with theory at the expense of the practice (Dalton, 1995) and did not take into consideration the special insight of people of color who had a wealth of understanding about oppression, what caused it and the possible solutions (Matsuda, 1995).

Cook (1995) believes that Critical Legal Studies purports itself as a theory concerned with the critiquing of liberal ideology in America yet fails to do so because it gives no credence to the connection between the law, history and issues of race. Cook writes, “Furthermore, minority scholars have criticized the failure of the CLS movement to acquaint itself with the history and perspective of those who have, in
different contexts, endured the problems of most concern to CLS – problems associated with hierarchy, powerlessness, and legitimating ideologies (p. 85).” For Cook, Critical Legal Studies perpetuates a false consciousness by allowing those who subscribe to it to deny the marginalization of groups of people while ignoring the presence of oppression institutionalized within structures. Cook’s challenge to scholars was to first recognize that as a society we constructed these oppressive institutions and we must begin to deconstruct these structures that perpetuate the status quo and reconstruct them using theories that truly change society for the better.

In agreement with Cook and other scholars aforementioned, Crenshaw (1995) was greatly concerned with Critical Legal Studies lack of attention to race as a viable variable for study. This lack of attention to race allows Whites to maintain their superior status in society at the expense of true social justice causing Crenshaw to believe that CLS actually allows hegemonic ideology to perpetuate legal scholarship and encourages the continuance of the status quo. Crenshaw states that, “…hegemonic rule succeeds to the extent that the ruling class’ worldview establishes the appearance of a unity of interests between the dominant class and the dominated (p.112).” She asserts that both Blacks and Whites have a race consciousness, however, for Whites this consciousness allows them to hold onto their entrenched views of the cultural inferiority of Blacks that allows discrimination and practices that are grievous to the African American community. These views of Black inferiority
are deeply rooted in the myth that America is a meritocracy and thus it must be concluded that the lack of African American gain in this country is due to their own lack of ability.

For Whites, according to Crenshaw, this reconfirms their sense of superiority as our nation is touted as a land of equal opportunity regardless of race, class, gender or other attributes never taking into account issues of environment, historical context or the embedded racial practices in American structures and institutions. Lawrence (1995) supports Crenshaw’s views stating that all people harbor some racist ideologies regardless of their race yet few realize it. This is due in part to our cultural experiences, he writes that, “…a large part of the behavior that produces racial discrimination is influenced by unconscious racial motivation. Thus, for these reasons and many others Critical Race Theory was developed as a response to Critical Legal Studies in order to allow scholars a paradigm from which to theorize about their paramount concerns, the issue of race in the legal system. Items such as race conscious districting, voting rights, the unfairness of the district based electoral system, issues of political representation and allowing the burden of proof to rest with the plaintiff in racial discrimination cases are some examples of issues addressed by Critical Race Theorists (Guiner, 1995, Lawrence, 1995).

Critical Race Theory is concerned with the insidiousness of racism and it’s pervasiveness in our society. The fact that racism is often an unconscious behavior
that is a result of subconscious actions brings no comfort to those who are hurt and oppressed by its venom. Lawrence asserts that racism is in fact a learned behavior resulting in our shared historical past and guides us in formulating our own actions as well as our responses to the actions of others. Gotunda (1995) outlines the historical developments of race as a legal concept, defined by law granting the government the right to assign individuals to specific categories. Furthermore, Gotunda believes that the American justice system pays no attention to race seeking to truly offer a form of blind justice to those who are currently participating in legal proceedings in an attempt to give everyone ultimate fairness. The problem with so-called blind justice is that by refusing to address issues of race, those involved in the legal system do not ignore the unique circumstances that surround African Americans. African American culture is devalued and the legal system continues to support hegemonic tactics by discounting African American culture, ways of knowing and through disregarding historical context.

For African Americans who arrived in America as the property of Whites, laws and their implementation have consistently been structured in ways that are not in the best interest of the race. The legal system has continually perpetuated the subordination of African Americans, Native Americans and other people of color. Viewing individuals as property and developing laws to enforce such ideology as well as encouraging the appropriation of land from the Native peoples has allowed the
United States to ground itself in an ideology that supports cultural genocide through the colonization of various ethnic groups and the expectation that these colonized groups dismiss their own culture in favor of a Eurocentric paradigm (Ladson Billings 1998, Harris, 1995). These ideologies, norms and worldviews are in existence today and are filtered through our educational systems. Calmore (1995) defines Critical Race Theory as the ability to, “…confront the texts of America’s dominant legal, social, and cultural strata, we are critical and fundamentally so, because we engage these texts in a way that counters their oppressive and subordinating features (p.319).” Although primarily used to analyze the discourse of law and encourage a praxis that seeks to challenge and change the legal status quo, Critical Race Studies is now being used in many other disciplines to bring understanding and advocacy in other important parts of society such as education. Thus, it is imperative that we examine the educational process using the lens of Critical Race Theory to explore the educational impact on students who graduate from institutions of higher education where they are profoundly the minority.

**Critical Race Theory in Education**

The use of Critical Race Theory as the framework for this study is appropriate because it can be used as a filter for the stories of African American college graduates who lived on the margins of campus community life. This brief literature review
covering the tenets of Critical Race Theory explores how such a paradigm can be used in conducting research that explores the educational process of African American college students. According to Solorzano and Villalpando (1998), “…the overall goal of Critical Race Theory in higher education is to develop a pedagogy, curriculum and research agenda that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. higher education and work towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination in higher education (p. 213).” In order to further the application of Critical Race Theory as a viable conceptual practice that can be used to examine educational systems, the paradigm must be used in research studies such as this one which strives to understand the experiences of students of color who graduated from predominately White colleges and universities, how these experiences shaped their lives after graduation and give voice to their narratives.

Petersen (1999), describes how powerful Critical Race Theory is when used to guide dialogue in an effort to develop educational programs that meet the needs of diverse student populations. Critical Race Theory should be used to examine the curriculum and the bias that often exists within it and the importance of reconstructing the curriculum so that it is inclusive of diverse perspectives and ideologies. Other areas that can be viewed and practice changed by applying this unique lens include issues of: instruction and the development of liberatory pedagogy, assessment and the cultural bias of standardized testing as well as tracking, and the
disparities in funding and resource allocations. Education, Petersen asserts, is often a form of conflict between African American socio-economic classes as those who obtain a college education are often used by White society to reinforce their views of those African Americans who are unable to obtain an education as inferior or unwilling to change their situations. Critical Race Theory can be the catalyst to open discussion and bridge the gap between the classes in the community.

Ladson Billings (1998) suggests that Critical Race Theory be used to examine academic programs on campus such as teacher training programs in order to shape them to ensure they prepare college students to meet the needs of the diverse student populations that they will be working with. It can also be used as a tool to critique multicultural education programs, assist educators in exploring personal biases and prejudices as well as assist them in developing liberatory pedagogy. Critical Race Theory can be applied in efforts to support the expansion of the academic canon to include more then a Eurocentric perspective in teaching and learning. Finally, Ladson Billing believes that Critical Race Theory is more then a theory, it is in fact a practice to be applied and should be used to spur students and educators to participate in social activism.

Solorzano and Villalpando (1998) use Critical Race Theory to understand the power that students can gain from life on the margins at predominately White colleges and universities. Marginality, according to the authors, “… is a complex and
contentious location and process whereby People of Color are subordinated because of their race, gender, and class. Moreover, those on society’s margin do not have the power to define who is at the center and who is at the margin; what is considered privileged or valuable knowledge and experience and what is not; and who has social status and related privilege and who does not (p.212).” Despite the shared view of most educators that life on the margin is an undesired existence and who work to bring those on the margins to the center, Critical Race Theory allows us to view the positives of margin life.

The authors purport that students who have been regulated to the margins can exercise and develop their creative abilities, gain a greater understanding of themselves as well as obtain a truer vision of American society. Consciousness is birthed in the margins and students are able to use it as a space for resistance, activism and advocacy while using it to critique social institutions and their institutionalized racism and discriminatory practices. Furthermore, students on the margin develop the ability to perceive multiple realities, develop coping skills to navigate life on campus and find the support and comfort needed to succeed on campus. Critical Race Theory allows us to understand that in the American university there will always be a margin, students and some staff members will be regulated to it, and what is learned at the margin can be used to further success after graduation. The authors also cite supporting work by prominent scholars such as

47
Cornel West, bell hooks, Gloria Anzulda and Patricia Hill Collins who all see the positive attributes that can be found from the margin of American life.

“Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those Herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more then temporary peaks of progress, short lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain White dominance. This is a hard to accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as an act of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance (p.12).” This profound statement made by Derek Bell (1992), requires scholars concerned with African American education to respond and react through the formation and application of theories that can counter the permanence of the subordination of people of color in our society. Critical Race Theory is the much needed lens that can be used to view the Eurocentric paradigms that govern our nation and perpetuate colonial and oppressive ideology that regulates African Americans to second class citizens in this nation.

Although its origins are rooted in legal scholarship, Critical Race Theory is a worldview that can be applied to a multitude of disciplines in order to understand the inequality that exists in our nation while recognizing the role of historical contexts. There are four major points in Critical Race Theory that should be used as a guide to furthering knowledge and developing praxis. First, Critical Race Theory suggests that racism is so embedded in our society that we will never be able to escape from it.
Furthermore, discriminatory practices in our institutions are also a permanent part of our societal landscape. Because the ideology of racism is in fact a natural part of our culture many people are unaware that it is not only entrenched in our lives but that we act according to this entrenchment. Critical Race Theory serves as a form of opposition, demanding that the status quo reexamine the internal workings of our society.

Secondly, Critical Race Theory uses the telling of stories to make a powerful statement about racism and its impact on people of color. Scholarship through storytelling gives voice to those defined as other in our society while legitimatising their experiences as they share knowledge based on such experiences. The stories of graduates Milner and Bray and Lawrence all previously mentioned, are an example of the use of narrative and storytelling to bring to life the recollection of the struggles of African American students on campus, their experiences within the majority educational culture, and how deeply these experiences stayed with the students long after they graduated.

Thirdly, Critical Race Theory stresses that the liberalism that is currently shared by many modern scholars, educators and activists cannot achieve the social change that is needed to end racism in our nation. The changes that must occur are so far reaching in America that Critical Race Theorists believe that the current form of liberalism cannot accomplish the changes needed to produce a fair and just society.
Bell (1995) asserts that the law cannot change the status quo in America, as legal decisions are value laden and not objective. Furthermore, education is also not neutral, but political, value laden and designed to reinforce the dominant ideology in American. If in fact racism is a permanent part of American society, and individuals harbor subconscious racist attitudes and act on such attitudes, curriculum, educational programs, extracurricular activities are thus designed and implemented with this imbedded racist ideology underpinning and supporting them.

Finally, Critical Race Theory outlines that the primary beneficiaries of civil rights gains and legislation have been Whites citing instances such as the vast ground made by White women under Affirmative Action (Bell, 1992, Ladson Billings 1998, Delgado, 1995). Even today with challenges towards race based scholarships, the dismantling of Affirmative Action Programs and the revelation of unfair allocation practices of educational resources we see that the so called ground gained by civil rights legislation, new laws and academic advancement are quickly being lost. Calmore (1995) defines Critical Race Theory as the ability to, “…confront the texts of America’s dominant legal, social, and cultural strata, we are critical and fundamentally so, because we engage these texts in a way that counters their oppressive and subordinating features (p.319).” Although historically used to analyze the discourse of law and encourage a praxis that seeks to challenge and change the legal status quo, based on its far reaching possibilities for viewing the world, Critical
Race Theory is now being used in many other disciplines to bring understanding and advocacy in other important parts of society such as education. Thus, Critical Race Theory is a paradigm which allows access to the African American educational experience while giving voice to those who have been most effected by it.

**Conclusion**

This chapter sought to present the relevant literature in regard to the experiences of African Americans and the educational process that they have experienced over the later part of the 20th and the first years of the 21st century. The ideological views of students of color, their personal experiences, how these experiences shaped their lives and their interaction with other students of color as well as with mainstream society were discussed in an effort to provide a foundational framework from which to view the data. Theoretical concepts have been examined that will set the stage for the remainder of the research in addressing the experiences of African American graduates of a predominately White institution of higher learning. An in depth discussion of Critical Race Theory, its history and expanding use in breakout methodology in fields such as education were also employed to ensure a basic understanding of its concepts and tenets thus setting the stage for data analysis and interpretation.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Audre Lorde (1999) wrote, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” and due to the discriminatory nature of research historically conducted on African Americans, quantitative research, the methodology often toted as superior and empirical in my opinion was not the best approach to develop an understanding of the educational experiences of recent African Americans graduates. Research from a more positivistic approach has been used to deny African American intelligence, deny the right to education and the political process, as well as make African Americans victims of scientific butchery and unethical treatment as exemplified in instances such as the Tuskegee Project. Furthermore, quantitative research has been used to discredit African American and other people of color’s intelligence and used to qualify and create culturally bias tests supposedly designed to measure intelligence (Gould, 1996). In preparing for this study, using the overarching research question as a guide, I believe that a qualitative approach using the lens of Critical Race Theory will provide the most insight and understanding in regard to the lives of African American graduates of a predominately White institution of higher learning. Using Critical Race Theory as a lens to analyze the data while applying a qualitative research method allows the participants as well as
myself as the researcher, to be an active part of the research process and is important in gaining participant trust and a truer understanding of their experiences. For African Americans, representation is of paramount importance as it allows them to take an active part in the research conducted about their lives and assist in the interpretation of such research. According to Ragin (1994), “Researchers use qualitative methods when they believe that the best way to construct a proper representation is through in-depth study of phenomena. Often they address phenomena that they believe have been seriously misrepresented, sometimes by social researchers using other approaches, or perhaps not represented at all (p. 102).”

As qualitative research can be used to capture the voice of the research participants as they perceive their reality and make sense of the lives in which they are engaged, it was the method of choice for this study.

The purpose of this study was to understand how attending a predominately White university affected the lives of African American alumni. I was interested in understanding how this experience prepared them for life in the professional world, how it shaped their perception of culture and community, as well as the overall impact of their educational experiences in relation to their personal lives. Thus, the study began by asking the following specific questions:
- How did African American graduates who were enrolled at predominately White universities adapt to life on campus as a minority?
- While on campus did they self-segregate and create their own communities?
- How were these communities defined, developed and maintained?
- Why did they choose to self-segregate and what experiences led them to separate from the greater campus community?
- If they did not self-segregate, how were they treated?
- How new members were indoctrinated into the community?
- How were the community’s norms, values, rules, language and cultural knowledge transmitted to new members?
- Was the community engaged in revolt, rebellion, and organized protest and if so how was this protest acted out?
- How did community members perceive themselves in relation to their majority peers and how was social interaction between the various groups occurring?
- How did the community interact within itself, develop social outlets, find allies and create support systems to assist members in navigating the educational terrain?

- How did these experiences shape their futures and their current lives?

- What are their current interactions like with the institution and their peers who have also graduated?

These questions continued to develop as the study was conducted and gave valuable insight to the stories of life on campus from the perspective of those who were successfully able to navigate the terrain.

As the study progressed, the focus of the questions were adapted to address the emerging findings. The new questions addressed the specific issues related to the University’s previous president, shifting community expectations and perceived changes in cultural values and norms. Finally, I also incorporated several questions used by Willie to gain further understanding and to assist me in strengthening the reliability and validity of my study. I believe that my initial questions in which some were drawn from Willie’s work and the questions that emerged as the interviews progressed gave insight into the post academic lives allowing both the interviewer and the subject to see and understand the impact that their time at Palmer State
University had on their lives. An in depth interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

**Justification of Qualitative Research Methodology**

Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as, “…an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem (p.15).” When executed correctly qualitative research is a rigorous method of inquiry exploring, describing and interpreting aspects of the social world that cannot be understood using positivistic paradigms or quantitative approaches. Quantitative methodology can provide interesting and important insight into the relationships between variables and issues of cause and effect, however, these methods rarely subscribe to the belief that knowledge and reality is constructed and a person’s perspective is in fact their truth. Furthermore, these methods often lack an understanding of alternative paradigms in which research participants are involved in and use daily in creating or participating in the reality that they are engaged in.

Traditionally, quantitative approaches using positivistic methods posit that there is only one absolute truth and this truth can be determined using scientific methods of inquiry from a truly objective point of view. Based on observations, researchers develop theories and strive to prove or disprove them by attempting to explore and explain the causal relationships that exist between variables (Bredo and
For quantitative researchers reality is apprehendable, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), “… reality is assumed to exist, driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms (p.109).” Guba and Lincoln define this type of research as being experimental and manipulative as it strives to verify or disprove theories, through the primary use of quantitative methods. However when studying issues that address oppression, discrimination, isolation or alienation the oppressor and the oppressed will have two very different perspectives, two very different understandings and interpretations of reality.

Whose truth is the correct truth? This study seeks to tell the truth from the perspective of those who have historically not been given the opportunity to speak or whose voices have not been taken seriously. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) positivistic sciences are seen as more legitimate in the academic arena as the methodology prescribes that researchers be free from their values and personal opinions because truth in fact can transcend all researcher bias. It is an interesting assumption that individuals can divorce themselves from that which makes them unique individuals – their culture, worldviews, personal experience and family upbringing. How in fact can truth transcend personal opinion when truth is constructed by the individual? For this study qualitative research is important as it gives the participants the chance to discuss their perspective and their truth in their voices, furthermore, applying a Critical Race Theory to the study it allows me as the
researcher to examine my own experiences. I believe that in issues of marginalization the stories told in the voices of those who lived it, are more powerful, valid and meaningful than numbers or statistics. I also believe quantitative research tells us the “what” of the research question and is an important part of research inquiry, yet, qualitative research tells us the “why” of a study and this study is concerned with the “why”.

**The Role of the Researcher**

As a graduate of a predominately White university, with shared experiences of many of my subjects, it may appear that I am unable to conduct this study with little bias or with a clear view. Although I may in fact be emotionally invested in this research, I believe that this investment allows an even clearer picture to be constructed of the experiences of African American graduates both on campus and in the world beyond higher education. Qualitative research also stresses the importance of researcher as instrument used to gather and interpret the data. Research cannot be a truly objective endeavor; personal bias, ways of knowing, personal ideology, and culture, all combine to produce the researcher’s understanding of the social setting that they are studying.

According to Lofland and Lofland (1995) many researchers ground their studies in areas of their own life that they find problematic, this is important to me as
the researcher because it allows me to validate my own experiences, contribute to a body of knowledge that I feel personally invested in, and use my experiences as a springboard for my own research. Punch (1994) outlines the importance of ethics for researchers in the field while positing that science and research cannot be neutral and that newer research paradigms stress that researchers care, have compassion and build trust in order to ensure that harm is not done to the research participants. Punch writes, “…ethnic solidarity between the researcher and the researched welds that relationship into one of cooperation and collaboration that represents a personal commitment and also a contribution… (p.89).”

Unhappy with the ways in which quantitative methodology from positivistic paradigms were being used to explain and explore the life worlds of those being studied, researchers began to develop methodology and paradigms that examined social life by attempting to become a part of the world being studied through participant observation. Furthermore, the researcher sought to gain the perspective of those being studied through extensive interviewing and time spent in the field. These postmodern ways of approaching research allowed researchers to take an active part in that which they were studying while using a personal paradigm to guide the analysis of the research. For women and ethnic subpopulations various theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain the effect of culture, politics, race, gender and other attributes of importance to researchers to explain the various issues
and concerns that researchers hope to understand. Qualitative research allows the researcher to apply their worldview to a specific issue and make sense of that issue in a manner that is beneficial to the group being studied. Although this approach may result in research that cannot be replicated, it does not mean that this research is any less valuable or that it can’t be generalized to the greater population being studied.

Gloria Ladson Billings (2001) stresses the need for research done from a racialized epistemological worldview in pointing out how research from this stance can be viewed as liberating and used to assist in breaking down modern day hegemonic practices. From this perspective race and the challenges that the conception of race presents, is used as the lens from which to view the world and to create and understand new forms of knowledge. For Ladson Billings choosing to conduct research from a centered racialized epistemological standpoint gives the researcher the opportunity to participate in challenging the status quo and work towards applying a praxis that challenges and changes these hegemonic institutionalized and systematic practices. She writes, "...how one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply by one’s worldview. Thus the conditions under which people live and learn shape both their knowledge and their worldviews. The process of developing a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the
structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant worldview and knowledge production and acquisition processes (p. 258).” Therefore I believe that the researcher must focus this awareness on research problems such as the experiences of African American graduates from predominately White institutions of higher learning to demonstrate, explore and dismantle a system that refuses to acknowledge and accept the ways of knowing and being of those classified as other despite the richness and gain that could be gathered and applied from alternate perspectives, discourses and epistemological approaches from various ethnic perspectives.

**The Setting - Palmer State University**

Palmer State University, a public, federally funded, research and teaching institution is located in a small town about twenty miles outside of a large urban city in the Midwest. Despite technically being located in another city and county, Palmer State University boasts an area address and zip code for the nearby city to enhance its marketing and name recognition purposes. According to the 2003 Student Fact Book and the 2000 African American Student Fact Book, both published by the Office of Budget Planning and Resource Analysis at Palmer State, 16,729 students were enrolled on the main campus and 1,061 students were attending the satellite campus located approximately 60 miles north of the main campus. Although Palmer State has
a renowned medical school and several other graduate programs, the majority of students enrolled are full time, undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 25.

In 2003, 12,708 students were enrolled as undergraduates and 12,852 of these students were enrolled full time. Interestingly, 94% of all students enrolled on campus come from the state where Palmer is located with 51% of all students hailing from the four counties directly surrounding the university.

Palmer State seems to reflect national trends of enrollment and society with 12% of the student population self identified as African American. Although the overall student population has slightly more women then men seeking degrees, there is a great disparity between African American men and women enrolled at the university. African American women are almost double the population of African American men on campus with 891 undergraduate women and 419 undergraduate men making up the African American campus community. The numbers are just as striking in the graduate programs with 69 men and 216 women enrolled respectively. Almost all first year students at Palmer State are required to enroll in University College before declaring a major; majors are grouped together in colleges in which one must be admitted. In order to be admitted to the college of choice, one must meet certain academic requirements, and thus, the majority of African American students enrolled at Palmer State are currently academically centered in the University College working on general education requirements and building up their grade point average.
The majority of African American students classified as upper classmen are academically centered in the college of liberal arts and then the college of education and human services. The median GPA of African American students varies between 2.5 and 2.7 with women more likely to have higher levels of academic achievement. For first time, full time, degree seeking students, graduation rates are only available from 1995 to 1998 academic years. The average African American student is graduating from Palmer State University in 5 to 6 years. For example, in 1998 only .35% of African American students who had begun attending four years earlier graduated, compared to 21.74% graduating in 5 years and 17.39% graduating in six years. Unfortunately, Palmer State University is retaining approximately only 50% of African American students who enroll over a five year period. From July 2002 to June 2003 Palmer State awarded 163 BA degrees to African American students, 42 Master’s Degrees, 7 MDs and 6 Doctorate of Professional Psychology – a total of 218 degrees.

Founded in the early 1960’s, Palmer State University is currently focusing on building tradition and strengthening its alumni support base. The recent addition of an extensive Homecoming program, added student services and the continued growth and development of the residential program are of paramount importance. Despite its attempts to strengthen the traditional campus experience, Palmer State has limited housing facilities and owns only two of its many residence halls. PMP Management,
an independent builder and management firm specializing in the development and maintenance of campus residence halls owns the remainder of the housing facilities on campus. Working in conjunction with PMP management, Palmer State staffs all of the residential buildings with a primary concern for creating campus community and fostering an extra curricular experience that fosters learning outside the classroom. As of the most recent data available to the public, 2,764 students live in campus housing; yet according to the Office of Commuter Student Services on campus approximately 7,000 students live in a 3 mile radius in apartment complexes and independent small living units. Currently, 660 African American students live on campus.

As a larger land grant institution, Palmer State is able to provide several resources and support services to assist in the development of all university students. For African American students, Palmer State has The Center, which exists to provide academic support, social outlets and educational programming. There are several mentoring programs in departments such as engineering, University College and math and sciences, all developed to assist in the retention of African American students. The Associate Director of Student Activities has partial responsibility for student relations focusing on the needs of minority students, retention issues and student advocacy. There are also several academically based organizations that exist being
spearheaded by students and/or faculty focusing on the specific needs of African Americans in their chosen career paths.

Many social and cultural organizations exist to also meet the extracurricular needs of African Americans. Organizations such as: Black Women Moving, Black Men Forward, Af/Am Christian Fellowship, the Black Hall Council and the Palmer State Gospel Choir all exist to provide social and cultural outlets and emotional support to the students on campus. The university is also home to all nine of the National Pan-Hellenic Council sororities and fraternities. These African American Greek organizations are responsible for many of the social events and activities on campus. There are also several African American faculty and staff organizations on campus that interact with students of color as well as provide emotional and career support for African American professionals on campus.

Interestingly enough, African Americans at Palmer State appear to be greatly integrated into the social world of the majority campus. For several years African Americans have held the titles of Homecoming King and Queen as well as been on the court. African American students have been student trustees, as well as held the most coveted position of leadership on campus – President of the Student Government. A great many African American students serve as resident assistants, serve on the Greek Council and are active in various leadership and Graduate Administrative positions. Finally, although the majority of African American staff
members on campus are contained in the service fields such as food services and maintenance, Palmer State has quite a few African American professionals as well as academic administrators and professors.

**The Sample**

This study was designed as a collective case study in which I conducted in-depth interviews of eleven African American graduates of Palmer State University (PSU) as well as two professionals who were also affiliated with the University. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was followed up for clarifications and member checks through email, phone calls and short meetings. The subjects represent a cross section of students of African descent including two students with disabilities, three students who obtained both graduate and undergraduate degrees from PSU, one student who obtained only a graduate degree and one African Canadian student who was classified as an International student. All of my participants attended Palmer State University between 1999 and 2005 and all graduated except for one who is currently two credits short for his degree but unable to complete his educational requirements due to problems with financial aid. Two individuals in my study were married and quickly approaching their second anniversary, another couple was engaged at the time of the interview and now are in fact married. The study consisted of seven women and four men, all lived on campus...
in residential housing during the majority of their time on campus, although some did have apartments off campus during their upper class years.

Following Willie’s method of obtaining subjects for my study, I implemented a method of snowball sampling to locate participants. Snowball sampling is a process in which the researcher locates several potential interviewees and asks them to assist them in locating other potential interviewees. As a former employee of Palmer State University I began locating potential interviewees by contacting those students who had graduated while I worked there and had kept in contact with me. I then asked them to recommend other students who had graduated that I might not have known as well to ensure a more accurate picture of life on campus. Finally, I sent an email to two former coworkers requesting their suggestions for contacting several graduates that I had limited contact with but felt would give honest answers in regard to my study.

According to Willie, the challenges of snowball sampling come when interviewing a group of people who spent a great deal of time together during their academic years. Due to the nature of their interactions and relationships they may in fact share similar perceptions and perspectives that skew the study. Furthermore, there is an assumption that because both the researcher and the subjects share a racial distinction that there will be an automatic understanding and openness during the collection of the data. Willie suggests that the researcher should strive to combat
these issues by, “Carefully analyzing the content of what people say…” and “…
capture the complexity of an issue in a way that other forms of analysis can obscure
(p.166).” It is also true that the researcher must remember that racial distinctions
does not necessarily mean cultural sameness, and thus cannot assume to automatically
understand the experiences of the participants. I purposely choose participants who I
was aware may have known each other but were not necessarily close in terms of
spending a great deal of time together while on campus. Although the majority of
those I interviewed I had a previous relationship with it was clear based on the data
gathered that their experience was not my experience and thus it was easier to refrain
from coloring my interviews with my personal perspectives.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study was intensive interviewing
and member checks occurred as each concept and assertion was developed and
concluded to ensure reliability and validity. I believe that the interview process
strengthens the interpretation of the data and its trustworthiness and credibility. As
aforementioned, the snowball method of sampling was used to recruit subjects for the
study. Documents were also used to assist in the analysis of the data and include
information that the participants have collected and kept and were willing to share.
These documents included: newspaper articles, information from various student
organizations, the PSU handbook, the speeches of Dr. Brother, the university strategic plan under Dr. Brother, and other cultural artifacts such as video tapes that would further be used to support the research study.

A field journal was kept documenting my personal experiences, insights, emotions and dilemmas as I spent time with my interviewees. To further support issues of validity and to ensure reliability, basic statistics were also used to track the instances of certain events or the numbers of individuals involved in such events. Using a combination of interviewing, basic statistics, documentation collection, member checks, and through keeping a field journal, triangulation occurred that ensured that the research project produced credible, reliable and valid findings while producing a study that can be used to guide the research of others (Glesne, 1999, Creswell, 1998, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Through constant comparison across each interview case as well as within each case, the research took an inductive approach as specific instances and assertions arose repeatedly allowing me to make generalized conclusions that I believe were shared by the majority of participants in my study.

**Definitions of Culture and Community**

As one of the goals of this study was to understand culture and community it was important to define such terms to set the standard for the research process. For
the purpose of this study, culture was defined as, “…the mostly unwritten rules and conventions of thought, communication, and behavior that people use so that they can interact in an orderly way. People who agree tacitly (and are taught or socialized) to obey a common set of cultural rules in order to make their behavior mutually comprehensible… cultures are the set of rules, formal and informal, spoken and unspoken that govern behavior (Cohen, 1998 p. 63).” Although culture will include differences in dress, language, food and other items, the primary concern of this study was to understand how the participants constructed and interacted within the world of campus life and how that life shaped their interactions in the present. As the research focused on recent college graduates and their recollections of life within the academic realm, focusing on residential campuses and social life, a definition of community as espoused by Christen and Robinson (1989) was be used. They define community as, “people that live within a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more psychological ties with each other and the place they live (p.9).” This definition is especially useful when conducting research on college graduates who lived in the residence halls, spent a great deal of social time together and attended classes together.
Data Analysis

In Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks states that we, “formulate theory from lived experience (1994, p.75).” and because of this individuals can give expert testimony about the lives they live and how those lives are constructed. The purpose of this research focusing on recent African American college graduates is to not only give voice to students of color on campus, but to also shape theory to inform higher education praxis based on the lived experience of students of color. As a theoretical framework Critical Race Theory pays special attention to the historical implications for African Americans in this country and takes into account how these experiences have structured the current society that they are a part of. Critical Race Theory is needed to truly understand how the campus community is structured and how African Americans are positioned within it. As African Americans are often positioned on the fringe of society and subjected to discriminatory practices, Critical Race Theory offered an interesting paradigm to be used to begin the process of making meaning in the context of the current cultural system of the lives of African American college students at predominately White colleges and universities.

I believe that the greatest strength of Critical Race Theory for the use of analyzing the data is the use of narrative or storytelling to express the heart wrenching effects of racism, the supportive tales of community life, and the descriptions of the life worlds of African Americans and the implications of the findings for the greater
society. Ladson Billings writes, “…much of the scholarship of CRT focuses on the role of voice… CRT theorists attempt to interject minority cultural viewpoints, derived from a common history of oppression, into their efforts to reconstruct a society crumbling under the burden of racial hegemony (p. 215).” The use of narrative or storytelling is in fact assigning power to the voice of a group long denied status, access to resources and privilege in American society. According to Gordon (1995) the use of narrative is a way in which African Americans, particularly women, achieve representation in a world that often excludes them. Gordon also asserts that because racism is a natural part of American society, narrative has great value because it exposes the perspectives of those whose viewpoint are often discounted in the academic world.

Applying Critical Race Theory as the lenses used to understand and analyze research on African Americans graduates from predominately White colleges and universities assumes that the campus community is a microcosm of greater society and thus also has racism entrenched in its polices, procedures, curriculum and cultural life. Using narrative to present the interview data produces research that illustrates in thick description the life worlds of African American students while allowing educators a view into the status of students on campus and informing praxis. According to Solorzano and Villalpando (1998) Critical Race Theory can be used to understand the marginality of students of color enrolled at institutions of higher
learning. Critical Race Theory can be used to, “… identify, analyze and transform those structural and cultural aspects of higher education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of students of color (p.212).” By using this theory to examine and interpret the experiences of African Americans graduates, I have situated the subjects within the historical context of their marginality, while acknowledging their current marginality, and providing insight on how this position defined, determined and shaped their cultural lives at school as well as their perceptions of the effects on their educational outcomes.

In reviewing the experiences of African American students on campus, the aforementioned model proposed by Aguirre and Turner was also used to understand and interpret the phenomenon of self-segregated communities. Coupled with Critical Race Theory this model was applied to make sense of the data once it was collected and coded. Aguirre and Turner (1995) propose that minority groups facing oppressive and discriminatory social situations will respond in one of the following ways: they will accept their conditions passively, they will assimilate if they are able, they may participate in marginal ways, they might choose to withdraw or self segregate or participate in organized protest, rebellion or even revolt. Furthermore, I believe that it due to shared biological traits, cultural practices and history, African American students have historically been identified as a separate group outside the confines of the accepted cultural world view and thus are immediately grouped
together by majority campus community members (Aguirre and Turner, 1995). Based on this high rate of identifiably, their shared historical and cultural context, instances of racism, insensitivity, and ingrained ignorance on the part of majority members, a need for social and educational support, as well as my personal experiences, a clear and concise narrative can be created from the data.

Glesne writes, “Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns and interpret the data you have collected (p.130).” The analysis of the data was an ongoing process occurring throughout the data collection process. During the research process memos were written to capture thoughts and emerging ideas. Analytic files were kept to assist in the development of the narrative through grouping various issues and concerns together consisting of possible literature quotes, thoughts on possible headings, subjectivity issues and other items that needed to be tracked. The data was managed and analyzed using a unique coding system that kept emerging themes in the research grouped together, used to develop assertions and support for each assertion. Finally, monthly field reports were given to members of the researcher’s committee to achieve insight and guidance. Using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, the emphasis in the section on data analysis is

According to Lofland and Lofland (1995) good qualitative research must collect the richest and most descriptive data possible, be intimate within the setting and with the participants as well as be active in the setting and in the participant’s lives. Good research also informs knowledge and professional practice and in my opinion allows the voices of the participants to be heard. Furthermore, I also assert that researchers cannot be truly objective, should be honest about this, and should take this into account when crafting their interpretation. For me, this study is a representation of African American college student lives, a call to higher education professionals to understand and support these lives while also reflecting and validating my own experiences. Many researchers believe that researchers are in fact a part of the research process effecting and changing the setting, the participants, the outcomes and ultimately are a major part of the interpretation of the data. Defining this type of research as co-created Glense writes, “…what you know about your research – reflected in your interpretations - is entwined with what you know about yourself (p.176).”

What I know about myself is that I am committed to assisting African American students achieve their academic goals and to informing my professional
peers so that they might have the knowledge and information that they need to better assist their students. In many ways this study has been conducted and analyzed from an autoenthographic perspective (Ellis and Bochner, 2001), this perspective fits well with Critical Race Theory as it accepts the story as the foundational basis for analysis and understanding. The authors write, “Now as bicultural insiders/outsiders, native ethnographers construct their own cultural stories, raise serious questions about the interpretations of others who write about them, and use their dual positionality to problematize the distinction between observer and observed, insider and outsider (p. 741).” I found myself a researcher who was “complete member” a term described by Adler and Adler (1987) fully committed to my participants and the cultural community in which I was involved in investigating. I found myself engaged in interviews that became conversations in which we shared and analyzed our experiences together. An autoenthographical approach allowed me to conduct research within a group that I was already a part of. It was reflexive in that my personal experiences allowed me to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the African American graduates who were participating in my subject as well as myself:

Thus, I saw my role as researcher two fold, to be an advocate for the needs of the students in regards to their socio-cultural lives by providing the research needed to inform practice as well as a researcher contributing to the body of academic
knowledge. Ethically, some might feel that I could not be objective, however, I contend that because I am a member of the African American community I was more qualified to complete this study. As I have experienced similar situations as those I explored, am dedicated to academic and professional success of all students, and am aware that this might have caused potential bias I did all within my power to safeguard against such bias. Furthermore, using triangulation, working closely with faculty members, and strictly adhering to the proposed methodology ensured that I was conducting this research in an ethically appropriate way. Because this research does mean so much to me and I am personally involved, I believe that this makes the story all the richer, and that I have strived to portray an accurate, detailed, vivid description, analysis, and text that bring the voices and the stories alive from those on the margin.

**Telling The Story**

In presenting the data I followed the example of Gloria Ladson Billings who used a unique style to frame the reporting of her research in her book, *The Dream Keepers* (1994). A mixture of scholarship and story, Ladson Billings writes with three distinct voices using the stories to relate the findings of the research as well as to support the use of Critical Race Theory as one of the emerging methodologies of the 21st century. She writes, “In my own research I have attempted to tell a story
about myself as well as about my work (pg. 268).” and I have attempted to do the same with mine, as it was my own personal educational experiences that spurred me to action and interest in this topic. Using Critical Race Theory as her lens, Ladson Billings applies the aspect of storytelling by including her own experiences within the context of her analysis. Breaking what she defines as the “canons of traditional research” Ladson Billings constructs a new methodology while not only situating herself as researcher within the confines of her chosen field of study, but using the data to understand her experiences and her investment in her research as well. In Critical Race Theory the researcher makes a deliberate appearance in the work as either an alter ego who instructs on the tenets of CRT in such work as, Faces At The Bottom of The Well by Derrick Bell (1992) or as themselves as Ladson Billings appears in her stories in The Dream Keepers, I have attempted to present my research in a similar style using vignettes that describe my own educational experiences.

Ladson Billings use of Critical Race Theory illustrates how important it is for the researcher to be a part of the story as it draws on the Africentric values of community, inclusion and collaboration which are of paramount importance to me and intrinsic to my understanding of my participant’s stories. Ladson Billings argues that although issues of validity and reliability are important, for the researcher must report as accurately as possible, however, authenticity and reality must be the priority and the acceptance of the fact that the worldview of the researcher will always effect
the outcome of the study. Thus as in Ladson Billings research with successful
teachers of African American students, I found that many of my interviews were
often more conversational and at times were dialogues where equal exchange of
ideas, emotions and stories were shared.

Citing Patricia Hill Collins (1990) theory of Africentric Feminist
Epistemology as a guide, Ladson Billings asserts that dialogue can be used to assess
claims of knowledge. The stories that I share as I present the data not only lend
support to the experiences of my participants, provide guides for educators and also
gives me the ability to deconstruct my experiences through the emotional connection
of others. Using experience as a criterion of meaning is therefore a way to
legitimatize the fact that concrete experience will always be valued over theoretical
conceptions made by those who have never experienced that which is being studied.
It is this sharing that is used to in fact understand the participant’s experience. In
applying an ethic of care, the ability of the researcher to show empathy, emotion,
personal investment in the participants and in the research outcomes allows
knowledge claims to be further validated. Finally, personal accountability must be
understood that as knowledge is created the researcher is responsible for allowing the
participants to define what is being constructed as the story is told – in other words as
Ladson Billings states, “…claims to knowledge must be grounded in the individual.”
The use of Critical Race Theory in telling the story of the data is an acknowledgment of my own double consciousness and the construction of my own multiple identities. As Ladson Billings so eloquently states it is the embracing of “all our selves” when applied to research using this theoretical framework as the lens from which to view the world. It is an embracing of myself as the graduate of a predominately White institution of higher learning, myself as a woman of faith, a woman of color, a higher education professional and a researcher. Thus, I employed the use of my own stories to explain the multiple intersections of all my identities and the identities of my participants as well as to give a richer and more profound voice to the experiences of African American graduates of White Universities.

**Conclusion**

George and Louise Spindler believe, “…what we study is the continuing dialogue that holds a given nation, community or group together or tears it apart. It is what we believe we study, though we have not always called it that (1997, p.54).” The purpose of this study is to examine what holds together African American college students at predominately White colleges and universities as a community, as well as what keeps them separated from full participation in their higher education experience from the perspective of recent graduates. In a paper written in 1999, I stated, “In the American educational system this transmission of culture, this dialogue
holding our nation together is an attempt to maintain the hegemonic, imperialistic, and Eurocentric ideologies that exist and are sustained at the expense of the well being of other groups outside the dominant paradigm.” Those who seek to maintain the current ideology seek to maintain an American educational system that denies, ignores, and negates the experiences and needs of those different from the majority population while silencing the discussion that would enlighten all to the truth about America’s need for diversity, acceptance and cultural pluralism. The most tragic part of this maintenance of the status quo is that many participate in it, without any knowledge of their self-participation.

Believing that the importance of race is of paramount concern to American society and thus racism is an intrinsic part of this society, this study explores the cultural status quo and documents the culture of power and the marginalization of African Americans on campus. I believe that this study will greatly contribute to the existing body of knowledge and challenge the traditional paradigms that define American educational systems. As Glesne writes, “Research is a political act, involving power, resources, policy and ethics (p.173).” It is my hope that this research study is one that challenges the political process of education, informs the praxis of professionals and represents a community through their own words, experiences, and voices.
CHAPTER 4

THE NEW TALENTED TENTH

Broken Glasses

I don’t remember much from the academic side of my life during my four years at Faith Western University, the place that I maintain a love hate relationship with and attended from the fall of 1989 through the spring of 1993. What I do remember is hanging in the TV lounge watching The Cosby Show, going to and then presiding over SUBA (Student Union on Black Awareness), pledging Delta Sigma Theta, excited for Soul Food Nights in the café during Black History Month, crying in Dr. Golden’s office (Director of Minority Affairs) study sessions in the library that never amounted to much, and dancing to bumping R and B and Hip Hop until dawn down in the Cave, SUBA’s resource center, that sat in a niche under one of the residence halls. I seem to remember it clearly, I remember it as an isolated community of less then 120 people of African and African American descent unified, committed, contained within an environment of almost 1800 people who did not look, act, or think the way we did. We were bound together in a hostile place, working together to achieve our goals and dreams. I remember it as family.
Based on my own experiences and the academic literature I reviewed I expected to find recollections from my participants that used the word family, community, unity, but that was not what I found at all. I expected to find tales of coming together to overcome and to achieve, but I didn’t find that either. And for a moment I was devastated and frustrated, what happened to the unity that I so remember from my college days that had been so often portrayed in the educational literature from the late 20th century? Had I been looking back towards the past with rose-colored glasses and projecting this rosy picture onto what I believed I would find with my research?

Had the Black community at Faith Western really been that unified – or was this research a wake up call that shattered my glasses into shards leaving only the brilliant red colors to reflect back at me? And I started to remember, fights, cliques, banding together under oppressive circumstances and coming apart when it was over, partying together maybe not out of unity, but maybe because no one else on campus listened to “The New Jack Swing” but us. Maybe it hadn’t. If it had been why would my good friend Denise Johnson and I run under the campaign slogan “Umoja, Unity Above All Else” for the presidential ticket for the Student Union on Black Awareness (SUBLE)? Umoja, the Swahili word for Unity was adopted because we believed that the African American campus was fractured, unstructured and divided. We even battled for the presidency with two individuals who never came to SUBLE meetings
and felt that we were too radical to run one of the most prominent organizations on campus. But somehow in looking back I had forgotten all of these things.

It was during my fifth interview that I had this revelation, sitting with Joann by her beautiful baby grand piano, her sightless eyes letting her fingers see the keys. She shared with me again what I had already heard a number of times, the African American community at Palmer State was cliquish, separated from the mainstream community, but broken up into many small groups just the same. The notes from my field journal clearly illustrate this point:

And it is during this time that I think I understand something that I am seeing – once again I am hearing how cliquish the Black community on campus was and how hard it was to be accepted and how the unity was just a façade – it was mystical. It appears to exist to those who are on the outside, and even on some level African Americans maintain this appearance through self segregated social and cultural events, in everyday lives and in the ability to step into the world of the mainstream as the other and jump right back out because we want to, not because we feel like we have to. It’s like somewhere African Americans let go of more communal values, although they keep up that image, but they let go to embrace a desire for self to get ahead, “it’s all about getting’ mine.” (Written Field notes – 1-06)

The findings from this study of African American graduates from Palmer State University caused me to challenge my own past memories, while presenting issues of educational importance to those invested in the success of minority students on campus. Based on the literature reviewed and the data collected from the PSU graduates a separate campus community is maintained by African American students who attend predominately White institutions of learning. The reasons for its existence
and continual perpetuation appear to have changed over the last twenty years.

According to the graduates the community exists for social support more than safety, although safety is available in times of social stress or perceived hostility. The harmony I had so defended to other higher educational professionals, students in my charge and to my own recollections was not as true as I thought them to be. I just had to face the fact; my rose colored glasses were useless.

Therefore, this chapter will explore the participants' stories, stories of a community that had chosen to segregate itself from mainstream campus life through social activities and emotional support, however, filled with stories of individuals who had learned to move freely between the White world of campus and their cultural home in the African American community. The need for African Americans to develop skills that better positioned them to compete with their White counterparts and understanding the importance of acquiring these skills are told as graduates share emotional reflections with me. Furthermore, the understanding of the importance of maintaining their ties to those they shared a historical and cultural context with in groups that were often seen as cliques, consisting of those who could be racially identified as African American are illustrated. Stories of indoctrination into and position within this community, interaction with White students, the view that the campus was not necessarily a hostile place also emerge as the participants share with me their reflections. Finally, the emergence of changing cultural values as the
graduates come forth as this generation’s Talented Tenth armed with the ability to acquire new skills, that allow them to compete in the fast paced consumer driven culture of America are also shared.

**African American Community on Campus: The Cliques**

Lunch at Faith Western for African and African American students happened in one place on main campus and one place only, the Student Union TV Lounge. Everyday at noon sixty students of color would cram into a small room, eat, laugh and study, and although it was one of only three TVs serving two thousand students on the academic side of campus, you hardly ever saw White students enter the lounge. When they did I recall snickering with my friends as they glanced around at a multitude of Black faces and quickly left. The majority of the Black community on campus ate lunch in that room, it was as if we commandeered it and claimed the space as our own. In beginning this interview process I found it quite interesting that this experience also shared by the African American graduates of Palmer State University. Using a sample of African American graduates from Northwestern who attended the university between 1967 and 1988 Sarah Willie’s (2003) work often mirrors my own in experience, however, the experience is only shared in part with students from my study who attended Palmer State University between 1999 and
2005. Could life have changed much in the years between the work of Willie and my own?

On a beautiful Indian Summer day I conducted my first interview at the library in the heart of the African American section of the city with Don and Dawn an engaged couple who had graduated from Palmer State in 2005 and 2004 respectively. I was amused by their first descriptions of social life on campus.

Naima: What was life like on campus? Particularly with Black students.
Don: Was there a Black community? Yeah.

Dawn: Yeah, but PSU is not about Black students. We are just off to the side. Physically, we were out there. We use to live in the Union, but not anymore. They moved Center (the Black cultural center) and the people they put on campus! There is no one there that loves their job. It’s like ya’ll are here do what you do.

Dawn: And White people (they both start laughing) there’s a lot of them.
Don: You can tell there is a system. Black folks and White folks don’t speak unless they have to. Everybody sticks to their own. Even with Asians, Whites, all kinds.

Naima: Why do you think that is?
Dawn: Culture, some of those folks have never even seen Black folks before. Like my roommate. People are fearful, they stay away from each other. You stick with those that are like you, it’s about commonality.

Don: We did not mix to a great extent. Freshman year I had a White roommate that bought into that whole college thing. They were always drinking and I wasn’t into that.

Naima: What was the community like?
Don: At noon it was all Black folks in the Union Station. It was like a big conspiracy theory!

Naima: Conspiracy theory?
Don: Yeah, that’s what they all thought. We were all in the same area. But you know, we didn’t really talk.

(Dawn Interrupts) It was like groups within groups with the Black folks.

Naima: So, there was a Black community that hung out together, but did not really interact or communicate?

Don: Yeah, you went to the Union Station because you wanted to be where your peoples were at.

Dawn: Because you are always outnumbered!

Don: You wanted to be among the group.

During this time they are both making sound effects, snickering, snorting, and laughing, and I have to admit, I am to. (Recorded Interview, 10/05)

The idea of a community existing on campus created by African Americans was affirmed in every interview that I conducted. Don states that every racial group spends the majority of their time in groups that mirror their own image, furthermore he asserts as Tatum (1997) does in her own work that this is not culturally unique to African Americans, rather most cultural and ethnic groups on campus shared this same practice.

Because the concept of community is one that can sometimes be perceived as elusive to define, create and maintain, I find it interesting that every person who participated in my study stated that there was an African American community on campus, it was only their placement within it that changed according to the individual. Christen and Robinson’s (1989) definition of community works well in
understanding the community that existed at Palmer State from 1999 through 2005. They purport that community begins with “people that live within a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more psychological ties with each other and the place they live (p.9).” All of the participants in the study lived on campus for the majority of their tenure there and they were in fact tied to each other through social interactions and the many psychological ties that were created during their time at the university. Psychological bonds through the need for entertainment, culturally sensitive programming, intimate personal relationships and mentoring were all bonds that were created through the African American community on campus and tied the graduates to not only each other, but to Palmer State University as well.

The idea of community however, is one that is fluid and can sometimes be surmised as threatening to those on the outside. During my tenure as a professional in higher education I often heard questions as to why African Americans felt the need to separate from mainstream campus life. I challenge this idea and counter it with the question as to why does the majority campus feel the need to have African Americans integrate into mainstream life, instead of a mutual meeting in the center? Tatum (1997) writes, “Walk into any racially mixed high school cafeteria at lunch time and you will instantly notice that in the sea of adolescent faces, there is an identifiable group of Black student sitting together. Conversely it could be pointed out that there
are many groups of White students sitting together as well, though people rarely comment about that (p.58).” When viewing this issue through a Eurocentric paradigm it is easy to question why “they” separate themselves and stay away. However, when we examine this phenomenon from a more racialized location we must ask the question as to why would educators and majority campus members expect students of color to surrender the comforts of a cultural community because it is now socially acceptable to be included or integrated in mainstream society?

Furthermore, we must question honestly how far this acceptance would truly extend in making campus life socially satisfying for all students – in other words, who would decide what bands would play for Homecoming? We must understand this cry for social integration as it really is, for it takes a great deal of maturity and introspection to question one’s self to understand, “my demand of wanting them to join me” instead of questioning myself as to why “don’t I go and join them?”

Tina confirms that the African American community was a distinct entity separated from mainstream campus life in many ways. Furthermore, she asserts that the community had its own cultural rules, values, and indoctrination practices and that this community was in fact created by choice. African Americans on campus made a conscious decision to seek social and emotional outlets within a community primarily comprised of people that they shared history and culture with. During our interview she stated:
“The African American community was totally different from the White community. It was very, very much segregated. Which meant that White students did what they did and the Black students did what they did. Everything had a counter part, the White students had student government and the Black students had BSU (Black Student Union). The White students had their sororities and fraternities and the Black students had theirs. Black parties, White parties, Black this and White that. So it was always separate to me, and it seems that it wasn’t by the fact that they didn’t include us, we didn’t include us. We decided on our own this is what we were going to do. This is what we were going to have, it was only us. So I think that it was segregated, but it wasn’t a bad thing. And when I came freshman year I came with roommates who went to high school with me and when we came here we saw pretty much how it was. There were White students and Black students but we had no idea there was such a clique, a different world. Like the Black campus side, which meant we had different parties and different events. And it wasn’t that we weren’t friendly or cordial to the White students or that they were not friendly or cordial to us it just meant that we lived in two different worlds.”

Every participant described the African American community on campus as not only a separate community within the greater campus community but a community comprised of internal cliques, small groups of African Americans often located in the same spaces on campus, such as The Center, culturally specific campus activities or specific tables in the Student Union. These smaller groups were comprised of African American students who shared similar interests, academic or personal goals, hailed from the same hometown, or had met through their first year experiences on campus.

Kelly, CEO of a non-profit organization based in a large midwestern city, described the campus community as… “I would describe it as being cliquish. There’s
a lot of cliques going on.” Lisa a higher education professional describes campus life as, “In terms of the culture or characteristics of the community I think it is very clicky. Not real accepting of new people so every year when the new students came in there was this initiation. Like you were not really accepted until the next year and they did the same thing with the next class coming in.” Terry believed that the African American community on campus was “…they were not a close knit group. I mean there were pockets. I think the Greeks were close and I think that if you lived in that community (residential) you were close, but I don’t think that there was a lot of cross conversation or interaction from what I saw.” Alex stated that, “…I think it was very cliquish…like it would be in high school…” This illusion of community on campus was defined by a specific set of cultural ideas and expectations that one was expected to fit into. Once on campus student learned quickly to stay within the African American community for social and emotional needs, but they also quickly found their specific niche, their place of comfort, and their home within home base.  

The African American community of Willie’s students is described as a single community with only a small group of students of color who self selected out. Those who did in fact self-select out did not participate in any way with the African American community and thus were treated with disdain. Willie’s respondents do not share the experience of an internal breakdown in the African American community, one in which most students know each other, yet each group remains tied to the
community while anchored in their own smaller subset. All of the Palmer State graduates defined the African American community as a large group separated from mainstream campus life in their extracurricular lives which is a similar finding to Willie’s study where over 80% of those who participated defined their campus as two separate worlds divided along racial lines. Furthermore, Willie’s participants only saw those two worlds as they rarely mentioned interactions and experiences with students from other ethnic and social groups on campus, for Willie’s participants it was as if the world only existed in Black and White.

Willie writes, “African American students nurtured a world unto themselves, where rejection by White students and by the Black students who socialized with them was rationalized, and then in turn justified their own separatism. For the most part, alumni describe themselves as independent and those Black students who stood outside the group as sellouts (p.53).” In contrast Palmer State graduates rarely mentioned their racial peers who chose to live life primarily outside of the African American community on campus probably because the Palmer State graduates interacted more freely with members of the mainstream campus. Those who made a conscious choice to never affiliate with the African American community on campus were deemed as either invisible or there were simply not commented on at all as it was culturally acceptable to find the place you best fit on campus. Zach stated that:

“Since it’s so little of us, there is not too much you can get away with. Everybody knows everybody, or everybody is related to somebody in some
sort of way. Depending on what you do or what you say it’s going to get back to whomever, cause it’s only like what 5%. So, It’s not bad, if you got people in the same class, it turns out good study habits, they become like study partners. At some point in time you want more, especially being across the street from an HBCU. Make you wish the retention rate wasn’t so low there.”

Zach’s understanding of everyone knowing everyone else begs the question of how African American students came to understand their placement on campus, the cultural rules that govern interaction within the mainstream and minority communities and the ability to navigate the educational system.

**Indoctrination – Becoming a Part of the Community**

She was the most beautiful person I had ever met, with a strand of pearls around her neck, creased denim jeans, a red turtle neck peeking out from beneath a cream sweat shirt decorated with crimson Greek letters. She sat in her rocking chair comforting me as I sat on the floor at her feet weeping due to the crushing sense of homesickness that I felt. Doreen Y. Delaney, a Resident Assistant, campus leader and member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. introduced me to the African American community at Faith Western University and like many other upperclassmen taught me the rules that governed campus life. During my interviews with the African American graduates the role of upperclassmen in coming to understand how the community worked was also clearly evident in the ways that they remember being indoctrinated into the community. Kitty who works with Kelly says:
“Freshman year I was kind of sheltered, I didn’t know anybody but my friend who came from home with me and then like our roommate so we basically stayed in our dorms. But we kind of got tricked out our dorms (upper classmen would bribe them to come to events sponsored by African American organizations on campus). Presidents of other organizations they would see that we were freshman and that we only came out to certain things or whatever, and so they made a point of calling us and telling us you know come on to this event or come to this, or this is going on, or you’ll have fun at this, or this will get you connected, yada, yada.” (Recorded Interview, 3/06)

The indoctrination began the moment students were brought on campus and identified as freshman. It was during these first months of Fall quarter that a student needed to decide if they were going to be an active part of the community. Tina stated that:

“Yeah, I think I decided to be a part of the African American community because it was very welcoming and it was more embracing of me. The older students telling us about classes and telling us, come to this, come to that. And the organizations so that Blacks would not get bored and going to meetings and different events and leadership conferences all kinds of things for Black students to get involved with and I wanted to take advantage of that, because I was involved in organizations in high school and I just thought that I would get started and meet people.” (Recorded Interview, 11/05)

Although both Tina and Kelly believe they made a choice to be a part of the African American community on campus it is apparent that many of the upper class students were intent on transmitting knowledge and wisdom to their first year counterparts.

**Setting The Standard: Acquiring Cultural Values and Learning Social Norms**

In reviewing the work of Cohen (1998) the participants in this study are clearly defining an intersectional community based on race and culture. Both the
unwritten guidelines that were transmitted through cultural indoctrination and the personal and verbal instruction that the first year students received shaped thoughts, interactions and behaviors of community members. The indoctrination process of the new African American students into the African American community on Palmer State’s campus from the perspective of the graduates, was that once you came on campus you were taught a specific set of cultural rules, these rules defined the community and set the parameters for interaction within the community as well as provided navigation for interaction with the majority campus.

Acceptable behavior was often determined based on what majority campus members might think of African American students. Kitty stated that:

“We kind of had upper classmen telling us what to do on campus… you do not walk around with a head scarf on your head, on campus because they already think that you’re ghetto so don’t give them that perception. You do not walk around with house shoes on we don’t care if your roommate is going to class with their pajamas on, you don’t do that. We need to prepare you right now.”

Some of this indoctrination occurred due to structured university programs that were designed to prepare African American students for a successful tenure at Palmer State. It was often these programs that added into the development of internal community groups or “cliques.” Lisa described it this way:

“…the class itself became a clique and then that clique had to work its way into the bigger clique. I think that the mentoring program worked some. But I think it was unrealistic to think that upper class African American students could mentor freshman without some type of training or some type of
guidance. I think there were some expectations, but I think that very few of those expectations were ever met.”

I then ask Lisa to clarify what mentoring program that she is speaking of, she tells me the name and then continues:

“Cause I think that would have been a really nice bridge. To have the first year’s students move into the bigger clump had that mentorship worked. I had a great mentor when I got here and I didn’t do a lot with her. Cause I was already involved in things so she would call me and I would be like oh I’m busy, I can’t go! But I know for students who came in some people had great mentors and some of those people didn’t. And for those who didn’t they had to figure out how to get involved. Some of those people got washed aside and didn’t get involved and they just hung out with their friends. And then there were some who trickled through and maybe they got the secretary position for BSU the next year or they became Greek and they kindda got flushed into the system. I know it was very, very “clickee.” You’d be surprised since there wasn’t that many of us how we would have the audacity to be clickee! And yet still we were. And I don’t know if that was because it was more comfortable for me to talk with you because I know you than it would be to come over and introduce myself to you and bring you over. Which I think is odd, because culturally that’s how we are programmed to be, but it’s not that way. And we’re told that that is the way our culture is but it does not seem to be that way anymore.” (Taped interview 11/05)

Once again the idea of the clique emerges in the description of life on campus, however, it is clear based on the answers of participants such as Lisa and that this mentality is culturally transmitted from class to class as each school year begins. Many of the students felt that it was their responsibility to leave a legacy for those coming behind them, an African cultural value of care that has continued to manifest itself in many ways despite the adaptation of more Eurocentric values. In
reflecting on her life on campus in relation to the African American community Kitty understands how that legacy affected her own life after college. She stated:

“I’m a well rounded student and I don’t think that Palmer State had a part to play in that I think it was the people on Palmer State’s campus, being the students, the other students, and here and there an administrator, but basically just the stuff that I saw and the lessons I learned from other people and their mistakes I didn’t want to follow that.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

Zach’s perspective seems to sum this concept up clearly and succinctly. He like many of the participants in the study see the indoctrination process as inclusive of the teaching and accepting of responsibilities to and for students of color who come after him. He states:

“…you don’t want nobody to go through whatever it is you went through for the most part. Cause I was, I guess the guinea pig man. Whoever come through and do something first is the one who go through the fire. Once you make it through that fire, you create that blueprint, you know what I’m saying, you don’t have to go through as much as that first person. I went through the fire for everybody that I needed to go through the fire for… It was a couple of people that I went passed knowledge onto and they did exactly what I needed them to do with it. It was just like it wasn’t really for me cause I’m not going to be here no more. You just need to do this for you and who ever comes behind you.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

In response to my question about the cultural expectation of leaving a legacy, Don and Dawn also share this perspective:

Don: Stand up when you can stand up or play the game for the next person.

Dawn: I’m the advisor to the minority student medical association. Black students in the organization refuse to go to their advisor. But I keep tell telling them you have to do what you have to do.
Naima: Would you do it again?

Don: I would but I would fight a little harder, I would have more influence. I just graduated in June so I’m still involved with my brothers in the frat. As long as I’m here, (in town) I gotta stay involved.

Naima: You feel you have an obligation to those coming up behind you?

Don: Yeah. (Taped Interview 10/06)

This desire to leave a legacy for those who come after them speaks to the fact that Palmer State Alumni feel a sincere need to indoctrinate those who come after them to act in appropriate ways, excel on campus in social situations and leave a lasting legacy that will make the university better for the next generation.

On The Outside Looking In: Self-Proclaimed Outsiders of the Community

The term fictive kinship coined by scholars such as Ogbu and Fordham is used to express the ideological formation of a created community that binds African Americans together based on their shared cultural traits and history. Instances of fictive kinship can be found throughout the recollections of African American graduates, however there were alumni who did not define themselves as part of the community and did not see themselves as a part of this extended family of small internal groups making up the whole. Despite the existence of this fictive kinship within the self segregated African American community at Palmer State University, few of the African Americans graduates who participated in the study would describe
themselves as part of a community that was driven by a foundation built on familial practices. This however is again in contrast with the work of Willie whose participants described the African American community using words such as, “kin”, and “family”, while those African American students who socialized with White students were defined as “Oreo” and were socially sanctioned by the Northwestern family because they did not interact with their cultural peers (p.51).

Palmer State alumni although not self describing as family on campus, however, did in fact feel the cultural connection with home being based in the African American campus community. Taylor shared with me that:

“As far as social, it was like I never left home, it was like I was in the neighborhood. I mean there were people of influence there, but it still, the Black came out at one point in time like if it was a serious point or not. I felt like I was at home.” (Taped Interview 2/06)

Several of the students I interviewed believed that they were not a part of the African American community on campus at all; rather, they were outsiders who had never found their niche in the cliques that existed. Despite this feeling of being on the outside, these students did in fact spend their time within a group of African Americans on campus, unlike Willie’s “Oreos.” As mentioned previously the majority of the participants saw themselves as part of the community and all but three of them saw themselves as very active in the mainstream campus life. The three, Tina, Don and Dawn, saw themselves as emerged totally in the African American
community and all three attended the university after the passing of Palmer’s African American president Dr. Brother.

I interviewed Alex and her husband Taylor at their stylish town home in an upper middle class section of the city in which they live. During my time at Palmer State I never got to know Taylor well, my experiences with him were limited and only occurred through our mutual connection to Alex. I was very involved and invested in Alex’s life as she worked directly for me in the office of Student Activities and during my tenure at Palmer State. Alex considers me a mentor and occasionally will call for advice, to give life updates and to check on my ministry work. Married for almost two years, they have a seven-month-old son who was being fed when I arrived and they announce with much chagrin that they are expecting their second child in August 2006. Alex and Taylor are as different as night and day, she is currently completing her Master’s Degree, has a fast track career in the Criminal Justice system and is currently in line for a promotion. Taylor is two credits shy of obtaining his degree from Palmer State and is unable to complete the requirements due to an issue with Financial Aid that they just can’t seem to get resolved – an issue that has been going on since June of 2004, the year they got married. Taylor currently spends a great deal of time home with the baby and works as a cook at a local upscale Asian restaurant, his dream however is to be a broadcast journalist. When I look at them I think how it seems like just yesterday I was kicking them out
of my office for fighting over something so trivial that I can’t remember what it was.

I also sang at their wedding.

Like most married couples Alex and Taylor finish each other’s thoughts and prod each other to answer questions, often clarifying for me statements that seem confusing. Alex came to Palmer State because her first choice was financially unavailable and was too far from home. When I ask Taylor what made him choose Palmer State, he looks down shyly and smiles. Alex prods him on:

Alex: How did you get there honey?

Taylor: Well, uh, I had just come back from Job Core and I met Alex, and uh, she pretty much convinced me to come… (he stops speaking and looks down at the baby who he is holding in his arms, Alex starts to giggle, she has her legs up in his lap and the baby is resting on them)

Naima: That’s cool. Alex, why you laughing?

Taylor: Because I was searching, just looking for my own direction, and she told me she was going to school and I applied and I got in and so I went. (Taped Interview 2/06)

Most traditional college age students are searching, trying to find a place to belong as they develop their identity and shape their lives through campus, community and academic experiences. The interesting thing about Taylor and Alex is that Taylor followed Alex to school, and although he did not complete his coursework, he felt that he was a part of the African American community on campus. Alex however, felt that she did not fit into the community and was in fact an outsider.
Taylor stresses that coming to Palmer State was like coming home and although he would not classify himself as a leader or overly involved on campus, he would describe himself as a part of the African American community on campus.

Taylor: As far as social, it was like I never left home, it was like I was in the neighborhood. I mean there were people of influence there, but it still, the Black came out at one point in time like if it was a serious point or not. I felt like I was at home. (Taped Interview 2/06)

Although Alex spent the majority of her time on campus with Taylor, she however, did not consider herself a part of that community, but rather as one on the outskirts of African American campus community life.

Alex: I think you did better with the Black community then I did, (speaking to Taylor) I couldn’t even find it. Beside the BSU and the sororities and the fraternities I could not even tell you about it. (Taped Interview 2/06)

Alex’s view of being on the outside of a community that was already self regulated to the fringes of campus life was shared by Joann, a student who was visually impaired and had felt that life on campus always left something to be desired.

Despite this outsider mentality shared by Joann and Alex when asked about whom these graduates kept most in contact with from their Palmer State days, every single person they mentioned was of African American descent. This was especially true for Joann who was the receptionist in the office of Student Activities during my last year of employment at Palmer State. As I have a different perception of Joann’s placement inside the African American community, I question her about this and the following excerpt from my field notes illustrates this point:
Joann appears to be forthright, somewhat hurt by some of the instances that occurred at Palmer State. She seems to not have a social life now, and reflects that she did not have much of one when she was at Palmer State. She asserts that she was not an active part of the African American community even though I can remember her at almost all of the events I chaperoned or attended during the time that we were mutually there. I even remember her singing or reading poetry at most talent shows and poetry slams. I check this perception with her and she laughs and confirms that this is true. Also all of the people that she currently keeps in touch with are African American as well. (Written Field Notes 1/06)

When asked Alex listed numerous names of graduates she keeps in contact with and all are African American, except one. The self perception of placement that these students have of themselves cannot be negated, their emotional experience, although it does not conform to their physical experience in regard to interaction with the African American community only serves to strengthen the fact of a self segregated community with internal cliques.

These students were in fact part of the many small cliques of African Americans that existed inside the greater community, but were rarely recognized by the community or self identified as being inside the community. Students who saw themselves as a full participant in the African American community such as Tina, Don and Dawn also list only African Americans as people they continue to spend time with and keep in touch with. This perception of not fully fitting in is also expressed by students like JB, Lisa and Terry, who were free to move between the two distinct campus communities kept in contact with both White and Black students.
Finally, it was their perception of life on campus that allowed them to interact with White students on campus and participate in the White community while remaining anchored in the African American community.

**How The World Works: Interaction With White Students**

Interaction with White students seemed to be cordial and at times even intimate. The ability to feel that they could freely interact with their White peers further separates the Palmer State graduates from those in Willie’s study. Zach felt that there were occasions where his White peers were more accepting than his African American peers, and he served as the president of the Greek Affairs Council, the organization that oversaw all Greeks on campus, while also being tapped as Homecoming King. JB also was very involved with what could be perceived as “White” student organizations on campus as well as Lisa. Kelly shared that her experience with White people on campus taught her acceptance and appreciation. She said:

“My freshman year was a huge transition year for me. Moving out of my parent’s house to living on my own and knowing that Disability Services was going to provide me with a personal care assistant and she was White. I screamed and I cried cause my biggest concern was how is she going to do my hair. But after all of that she turned out to be the best PA that I ever had. She did my hair, whether it was ponytails… and that was when the White girls were using those little things that had the big clips on them and twisted up. So I had my hair like that and everybody wanted to know how I had my hair like that. It came to the point where everybody wanted to know, man Susan did that. I said that’s my girl. So my experience from that standpoint was good
because she didn’t know what she was getting into. It was a learning ground for both us cause she also came from a small little town that pretty much had no Black people. But it was a situation that was dealt with cause she was actually my attendant for three years…(Taped Interview 3/06).”

Lisa shared that:

“I think you always had your people who joined the White sororities and fraternities. My question was always why? Were we not welcoming? Did we not recruit them? I always wanted to know why, what made them go in that direction. I didn’t hear people really talking about them. Once again if you have a clique, what do I care what you do? I can view that and think that’s odd, but I’m not really welcoming you in either so what you do is what you do. Now if you choose to transition over and you want to be a part again, now that is interesting, but I have not seen many people do that. Once people find that niche, they just kinda stay and I can only think of one person who kinda went to that edge and then tried to come back in and was received really well. But I think that was more about his personality then the community as a whole. Cause I think people know when you’re an asset and when you’re a leader and you’re charismatic and people are drawn to you. They are much more forgiving about people leaving the community and coming back… (Taped Interview 11/06).”

JB stated that:

“Yeah, well I found myself involved with the (White) community through scholastic interaction and through living arrangements. I found myself spending social time with the same group and much of that came from hanging with the people I lived with. And you know how it is with Black students here, everybody knows everybody here. And I interacted with African American students, but I did not only identify with them. I spent time with White students as well. I feel that I had equal interaction; I lived equally with White students and Black students the entire time I was here on campus as an undergraduate (Taped Interview 11/05).”

The perceptions of African American graduates from Palmer were different then those who were in Willie’s study, it was alright to interact with White students and if
you were seen as a campus leader such as Kelly or Lisa or the individual that Lisa
was speaking of it was alright to cross cultural boundaries. Being able to cross those
cultural boundaries assured student placement in the leadership of campus life, thus
allowing the participants to begin to gather skills needed to be successful in the
majority world.

Despite it being seen as acceptable to interact with White students, the Palmer
graduates were always aware of the cultural differences between them as well as the
inequality of the status quo. Kelly said:

“I went from living with one Black girl who was my friend in high school to
living with 3 White girls in Forest Lane and that was the biggest adjustment.
Their cleaning habits aren’t like ours, you know, it was just totally different. I
don’t know, but as far as living with them it was really different and it was a
learning experience for both races. In terms of interacting with them on
campus, they were always friendly on campus, you know hi, bye, but you
know your dealing with a whole ‘nother ball game (Taped Interview 3/06).”

In interacting with White students Kitty shared:

(Starts laughing) “I didn’t want to interact with them. I don’t know. I had a
White roommate my freshman year and she started off real good and then she
just went crazy. She moved out on her own and I thought that was weird. She
just scooted herself to the next door position and they let her stay there. I
would say that the people on my floor were curious. Because a lot of those
people didn’t have interaction with Black people on an everyday basis when
they were coming from these little towns or cities and then they interact with
us… it was also kindda like we were their study subjects, anything Black, or
if there was any question about a Black person they would come and ask us.
But I noticed that when your freshman you don’t know any better but by the
time you’re a senior they are more accepting or they have a better way of
hiding it if they are not accepting because they know that is how the world is
going to work.(Taped Interview 3/06)”
Lisa saw herself as one that was accepted by her White peers because she was a leader and a campus asset but she was always aware of the difference in societal privilege and power. Zach and JB believed that in order to find success one had to learn how to “talk to” White people in order to get things done.

As members of the New Talented Tenth, the Palmer graduates had come to understand what Lisa Delpit (1995) calls the Culture of Power. Using Delpit as a guide, the statements of the participants illustrate that power issues are in fact acted out in the university community although they might be subtle. The Palmer graduates have learned the codes and rules that exist in this culture and are using these new skills to participate in the culture and achieve positions such as Homecoming King and Queen. The research participants may not have been told the rules that govern this culture by their White peers, but they have been able to figure them out through interaction with their cultural peers and observation of the workings of the world. Each of the graduates were well aware that the rules that govern success on campus reflect the culture of their White peers and thus they have learned to navigate the campus based on these rules. Finally, although it appears that the African American graduates had learned to cross cultural boundaries, they were aware that they had little power, illustrated in their personal observations and interactions with their White peers.
Delpit writes, “To provide schooling for everyone’s children that reflects liberal, middle class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power remains in the hands of those who already have it (p. 28).” As the Talented Tenth take on these values the African American community becomes further fractured as some become more entrenched in mainstream values while others remain firmly in the cultural community. As Delpit suggests not only do schools transmit cultural capital but so do cultural communities, thus African American students are forced to obtain both kinds and learn to apply both kinds of capital in appropriate situations. Despite being aware of this Culture of Power and learning how to navigate within, the African American graduates have little to say about actual racism and discrimination on campus.

When asked about her interaction with White students on campus and racism and discrimination Alex felt that:

Naima: What about racism on campus? Discrimination, anything particular happen to you on campus? That was racist.

Alex: Not until the Bush election. Well being in the residence halls, you could just feel, you could just see how the divided the floor was it was just all race issues. The things that people would say. I mean that’s the only thing I can remember. As far as any racism from professors or in the classroom, I can’t remember any of that.

Naima: You don’t remember anything?

Alex: I’m really trying to think.
Nay: Hey, it’s good if you don’t. I mean it is good if you don’t. (Taped Interview 3/06)

Although Lisa could remember instances of what she felt were racism in the classroom she attributed these instances as unique to a few individuals not representative of the majority of professors or staff on campus. Zach believed that if you knew how to speak to White administrators they would go out of their way to assist you, where as JB felt that it was about following the proper procedures, working through the system and dropping a name when all else failed. Both Kitty and Kelly agreed with Lisa Tina, JB, and Joann and could remember very few incidents of racism on campus, thus asserting that Palmer was not a hostile place for minority students.

It Wasn’t Really Hostile: The Persistence of the Self-Segregated African American Community on Campus

In describing the various ways that African American students obtain power for self and for the African American community, Sarah Willie writes,

“Subordinate communities often find ways of reclaiming power, especially the power to name self and others. And yet, naming, affiliating, or categorizing of oneself and others is always a negotiation, dependent upon ascribed, acquired, and behavioral characteristics as well as the status one holds in the group and the larger society. If one has higher status, more people will accept one’s labeling of a situation, self or another than if one has lower status (2003, p.52).”
One late Spring evening where several members of the African American leadership at Faith Western University and I were invited to dinner with the President, Dr. Warren Peace. I don’t remember what we talked about during that dinner, I am sure it had to do with social programming, hostility on campus, racism and a greater need for African American faculty on campus. But it was an off-handed comment that Dr. Peace made from his porch as we were leaving that intrigues me to this day. He simply stated, “Thanks for coming to talk with me, I mean you could have done something like go to the news or call the TV stations.” The perception was that we at Faith Western were tied together in an effort to overcome hostility and find a place at the university that was safe for us and perception that was also shared by the graduates in Willie’s study. The Palmer State African Americans, some of which attended college upwards of 25 years later then Willie’s graduates or I had a much different view.

Tina, a 2004 Palmer State graduate and I sit on her large and comfortable couch with the recorder between us. She tucks her hair behind her ear and tilts her head to the side as she thinks about what I’ve asked. I pause and wait for her to answer and then I repeat the question (Field Notes 10/05).

Naima: “So do you think that the environment was hostile?”

Tina: “It wasn’t really hostile. No, not really.” (Interview 10/05)
Out of the eleven interviews that I conducted with African American graduates only three defined the campus community as hostile to African American students, and all three attended Palmer State after the death of its charismatic and beloved African American president Dr. Brother. All of the other participants saw the campus as a place that could potentially be hostile, but rarely was. Based on the recollections of the participants the self-segregated African American community on campus existed to provide social and cultural support to those on campus who chose to participate. It was not a community joined together for survival purposes due to a campus environment that blatantly disregarded the African American cultural experience, rather, these graduates recollect living on the margin by choice, when they wanted to and enjoying it.

According to Fordham (1996) African Americans have experienced two distinct periods of Emancipation. The first begins with the civil war and flows into the late 1950’s. During this time, African Americans struggled against assimilation, the perception of “acting White” while being denied basic civil rights and being denied humanness through the application of laws, values and norms, that defined them as less then Whites. The second era, beginning with the civil rights movement, is fraught with supposed “opportunity” that has been created based on the advancement of the political, legal and social gains made by African Americans and the equality that was brought about through integration. Integration in the
educational system has created opportunities that Fordham (1996) believes have caused African American students to suffer a loss of community, culture, as well as perpetuating a feeling of racial isolation. Fordham asserts that these experiences coupled with modern issues of racism and economic disparity, present ongoing struggles for students of color with issues of conformity, culture loss, racial stigmas and the disenchantment of leaders.

If Fordham’s assertion is correct, then the Palmer participants have learned to walk the line between conforming and the possibility of cultural loss without fear of isolation and disenchantment. How can one be isolated if one believes that it is of the utmost importance to be able to flow freely between the two worlds of campus life? Lisa, a graduate from 2002 responded to my question about the campus being hostile in this way:

Naima: So for you, would you be able to say you were able to negotiate both worlds, like the White world of campus? You didn’t see Palmer State as a hostile environment on campus…

Lisa: I wouldn’t say hostile. It just depends on how you maneuver, and for me it is survival. So that the fall, or the fear, or they don’t like Black people, I don’t have time for all that drama. That’s the world. So if I continue to say I’m just going to do the Black things because these are the people I am comfortable with then where will I be? The world is not all Black. And I came from a predominately Black High School, 95% of the school was Black. Yet you still have to persevere with that. I mean you can be a part of the community, but that can’t be the only thing you’re a part of. Because then when do you learn those other skills about survival? When you’re in those very odd situations how do I negotiate this environment and how do I stand up for myself when stuff happens that I don’t agree with? I don’t learn that in the Black community, if I’m always comfortable. (Taped Interview 10/05)
Although Lisa understood the importance of the African American community she was determined to be a part of both the mainstream campus community as well as the community of her cultural understanding. Lisa was a member of the sky diving club, served as the Speaker of The House for Student Government and worked as a Community Advisor with Office of International Student Services.

JB, who is currently a medical student at Palmer State, graduated with his BA in 2000 agreed with Lisa. During our interview he shared with me that:

“You know, people came to college and the Black community gets all together. And then they look at the community, I mean they have to come together, but you don’t have to let that keep you from getting your stuff done. This is your chance to get it together. And either you get your stuff together quick, take it, find your place or you don’t and you spiral downwards. And then you take this mentality into the real world and it either destroys you or causes you to be a great success. But me, it prepared me for the real world, it prepared me for more diversity and for working with others like disabled students. I had a disabled patient the other day and she needed an ob/gyn exam. And I knew the proper way to lift her and I was not afraid to touch her, shake her hand. I could tell she appreciated it to. People don’t understand that it is about who you know. So I try to know everyone, all the other med students rush out after rounds, I stop hang out, keep up with folks, talk to folks and I visit the places I leave. I say that I will and then I do.” (Taped Interview, 10/05)

The interesting fact is that almost every participant that I interviewed shared a similar view. In response to my question about hostility on campus Zach a 2002 graduate said:
“Nah, not at all. I think for the most part once I became that person everybody was looking for they embraced me more. I mean you can’t be homecoming king at a predominately White school without people loving you or whatever it is that you are so doing. So I felt at sometimes more accepted by them then by my own but at the same time I had to show my own that if you stay within that bubble there is no real way you can get certain things accomplished, you gonna have to talk to somebody White to get something done, eventually.”

(Taped Interview 3/06)

This perception of a lack of hostility on campus freed African American students to negotiate campus in a way that allowed them to gain access to mainstream campus life and take advantage of the benefits to prepare them for life after college. Both JB and Zach were Homecoming King, Lisa was Homecoming Queen and on the court several other times as well. The fact that a predominately White University would elect African Americans to their most prestigious visible position appears to be a direct challenge to the work of Fordham and Tatum.

Terry who did her undergraduate work at Faith Western University and attended Palmer State as a graduate student, while working as a Graduate Hall Director, felt that the campus community was in fact hostile. As I interviewed Lisa and Terry together, their view of campus life was extremely different. Lisa believed that more African American students on campus needed to take advantage of leadership opportunities to prepare themselves for life after college. Terry on the other hand felt that students of color did not have that option. An excerpt of our conversation follows:
Lisa: Maybe, I don’t know. But if you didn’t run for student government then you could not be on student government. So I can only think of one other person, we were two of the few Blacks to run for student government. And most of the times when Black students start things, they start things with other Black students. So you start a Black Bible study, instead of going into like Campus Crusade for Christ and starting a Bible study within that organization, there was not a lot of branching out, so of course we were more segregated from the rest of the campus.

Terry: I think a lot of that to is that you have to feel welcome and supported when you do something like that and I don’t think that the students felt that if they went into a White organization that they would be welcomed and supported. And I also think too that Black students, particularly those who go to White high schools don’t get a chance to lead, so they assume that they won’t have opportunities to lead when they get to college as well.

Naima: So then in your opinion, from what I am hearing, and I don’t want to put any words in your mouth, but that Black students choose on some level to self segregate?

Lisa: I would say yes.

Terry: I think so and I think it’s for safety, emotionally, mentally and physically. I think it’s safety and it’s comfortable.

Naima: What do they need to be safe from?

Terry: They need to be safe from the oppression. I think they come to college and they think that this is a place where people are embracing and accepting and accepting and they quickly realize that’s not true. So they segregate to protect their emotional and mental health. And their physical health cause I think that Black students, if put in the wrong position can find them selves in physical harm or can be physically harmed. Whether that’s from the police or roommates or walking down the street, so I think they self segregate for protection.

Lisa: I think it really depends; I can only speak from my own perspective. But for me being involved is survival. You know I had a CA (resident assistant) job and I enjoyed it, but I also got my housing and my food paid for. And doing student government, yeah I enjoyed it but that was ¾ tuition. That was
a stipend that I could do something with. Studying abroad and all that goes on my resume, it’s about survival and I don’t think everyone knows or thinks that way…

I believe that the duality in thinking between Lisa and Terry can be attributed to several various factors. Terry served the university as a staff member and may in fact have been party to information and incidents that Lisa did not have access to, this may have colored her ability to clearly view the African American community on Palmer State’s campus. Furthermore, Terry attended Faith Western in the early 1990’s a full ten years before Lisa did her undergraduate work at Palmer State.

It is possible that Terry’s personal experiences color her perspectives and did not allow her to see the changing values and norms of the African American undergraduate campus community. For although Terry was a student at Palmer State, she was also a staff member, a graduate student and was not involved in the daily interactions of life on campus as a member of the self segregated community. This has a profound implication on higher education professionals, for if we let our personal experiences dictate our praxis without a constant check in regard to the needs of our students, our programmatic efforts will be ill devised and with little effect. Where as Lisa shared the view of most of her fellow alumni, in order to survive on campus, she not only needed to obtain skills that would allow her to successfully cross over, but would also prepare her for making those types of cultural “cross overs” in the professional world. The compelling concept here is that Lisa,
along with Alex, Taylor, Kelly, Kendra, JB and Zach, did not feel that the University or its members any way prohibited their full participation in activities that would allow them to gain these skills. This creates a challenge for professionals such as Terry and myself who have viewed campus life from our own perspectives and program and determine policy based on these past experiences. Therefore, the data suggests that one of the reasons the self segregated African American community on campus persists is for the social, cultural and emotional benefit of its members, making its existence still of paramount importance.

**The New Talented Tenth: Preparing to Compete in Mainstream Society**

These student experiences suggest that Lisa and her alumni peers are describing a new, more distinct form of the W.E.B DuBois (1903) concept of double consciousness. This expansion affords African American college students the ability to navigate between the White American and Black American worlds while understanding that social support and cultural fulfillment comes from life on the margins of mainstream society. Although the idea of double consciousness is not a new one, it is a skill learned by those often defined as “other” out of necessity, this new form of double consciousness appears to be developed and honed by the graduates by choice. Those deeply invested in propelling themselves forward in the professional world of work choose to garner all the necessary cultural capital from the
center while maintaining ties to the margins. For African American college students’
educational and professional advancement comes from an acquired ability to visit the
center, obtain needed skills from that mainstream ideological worldview, and
applying that ability and skills to situations that propel the individual forward in life.
Although the participants of the study did not see campus as an overtly hostile place,
they did not see it as a place inclusive of their cultural worldviews in most social and
academic settings. In other words the Palmer State graduates in this study learned to
cross cultural boundaries through visiting the center, navigating it with their new
double consciousness and returning to the margins of campus life for social and
emotional fulfillment with the skills needed to advance themselves professionally.

At Faith Western during our annual Black Family weekend, Dr. Golden gave
an award to every student who obtained above a 3.0 GPA for the quarter, for those
students who got a 3.5 or better she gave a plaque declaring that the recipient was a
member of the Talented Tenth. According to DuBois, it was the educated and
privileged ten percent of the African American population in America that would lift
people of color out of degradation and oppression. These professional people of color
were able to find a place in American society that allowed them the opportunity to
succeed despite the racism, oppression and discriminatory practices legally in place at
the time and were charged with the upliftment of the remainder of their cultural
community.
The Palmer State graduate blessed with an opportunity to achieve an education and thus acquire a form of cultural capital that opens more doors for them opposed to their uneducated peers can be defined as the new Talented Tenth. Furthermore, their desire to leave a legacy for those coming after them and instruct them in the ways of campus life speaks to the tension between their adoption of more competitive ideals and their more traditional Africentric communal ones. This group of young, educated, African American professionals live their personal lives on the margins, their professional lives in the center and find it necessary to obtain, adapt and adopt Eurocentric principles in today’s market driven economy. Prominent scholar Henry Louis Gates, the W.E.B. DuBois professor of Humanities at Harvard University saw the African American college graduates of today as members of “the cross over generation” African Americans who would make great economic strides and political gains in America (Alan 2003). The participants in this study are members of this African American new elite, who have the education to move cross culturally and make great strides for not only themselves but for the entire African American community as well.

Traditionally the academic approach has been a struggle to shift the lens of the center onto other ideological forms of reality; however, Solorzano and Villalpando (1998) and Ladson Billings (2001) insist that it is from the margin that we may in fact see more clearly. Applying a critical voice to the dominant ideology of
multiculturalism on campus is a desire to see the integration of all groups into the
dominant paradigm, they purport that students gain an understanding of life on the
margins at predominately White colleges and universities that prepares them to
function successfully in the real world. It is in the educational setting that students of
color come to understand that historically they have been discriminated against
because of their race, gender, and class. Furthermore, they have little power to define
their location in current society in response to who has power and who has privilege.
For the participants in this study, life on the outside of the cultural context of
mainstream society was not an unhappy or undesired existence; rather it was a
positive location that prepared them to compete with their majority counterparts.

Although the students are unable to define Palmer State University as a hostile
place, on some intrinsic level they comprehend that they find fulfillment in their
ability to be successful in mainstream campus life, yet maintain their emotional and
social bonds with the African American community on campus. Applying the lens of
Critical Race Theory to this assertion allows us to understand why this may in fact be
true. As racism will always be a part of the social fabric of American life, it must
always remain in our consciousness. Although society appears to be more embracing
of America’s ever changing cultural landscape, shifts in political, economic and
cultural power have not occurred. In other words, just because you don’t see it,
doesn’t mean that it is not there. It is my contention that the participants of this study
were in fact aware that racism exists, although their lack of blatant experience with it made them unsure on some level what it looked like. This internal way of knowing that insists that racism is still alive and well on campus and hostility is ever under the surface, is a skill that has allowed students of color to perceive and interact in multiple realities on campus and is seen as paramount to their success.

Despite the participant’s inability to see Palmer State University as a hostile environment, many of their answers in response to questions about racism on campus and their personal experiences with discrimination seem ambiguous. It was as if the need to obtain the skills necessary to succeed in the mainstream professional world would not allow the graduates to remain sheltered in their own internal self segregated community even if hostility was a possibility from within their own community or from the greater campus community. Furthermore, none of the participants spoke of repercussions or being treated differently for participating in and crossing the boundaries into mainstream campus life. Willie’s graduates have a different story to tell. She writes,

“...African Americans... sometimes negatively sanction each other as they achieve success differently within predominately White organizations. The sanctions – regardless of the politics of those making the observations – are real and often include epitats like “Oreo” and “sell out” for a range of behavior from socializing with Whites to pursuing goals not deemed relevant to the Black community by those making the judgment (Willie, 2003, p. 51).”
It was as if the Palmer State alumni understood that during one’s tenure in school, one had to move between the two worlds of campus in order to achieve success in college and in life.

Lisa illustrates this point when reflecting on her participation in the Black community. She stated that:

“I would say that I was a part of the Black community but not super involved in the Black community. I made a very conscious choice not to do all Black things. Cause I knew I had to be more diverse and well rounded when I graduated so. I was never really involved with BSU, never really involved with Black Women Striving Forward. I went to the Heritage Ball and Black Greek things. But being Greek was my major Black relationship and then everything else like student government were things where I was just trying to venture out and not get stuck in that mold.” (Taped Interview, 10/05)

Zach also shared this view:

“…prior to me being Greek it was me and everybody who looked like me and that was what I was comfortable with. Once I became Greek though, you can’t be in your own bubble it’s impossible. Cause in some way, shape or form you’re going to need something and the only way to get it is to go through another group and I learned how… I learned professionalism. I learned how to conduct myself within the meeting, I learned how to run the meeting. I think uhm, “postgreekdom” I had an evolution. I evolved, I don’t want to say as a man, I’m still young but, I learned different aspects of reality by involving myself within a diverse community oppose to just being around my own kind.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

The graduates of Palmer State understood the importance of crossing cultural boundaries, they defined how they would incorporate themselves into mainstream
campus community life and to some extent how much they would insert themselves into the cultural context of the defined center of campus.

In a yet to be published article by Demerath and Lynch (2006) the growth of neo-liberalism may play some part in the desire of the New Talented Tenth to cross cultural boundaries and ensure their professional success. The premise of neo-liberalism is a positioning of oneself to operate at maximum effectiveness in a capitalistic free market. Today’s African American students in particular live with role models such as Puff Daddy and Oprah, African Americans who are invested in their communities, yet active in mainstream society having gained access to multimillionaire status through successful capitalistic endeavors. Demerath and Lynch write, “…”the subjectivities fostered in part by brand consumption are shaping student’s perceptions of and responses to, school.” Thus, education is seen as a tool for African Americans to obtain the lifestyle they desire while being in control of their financial futures. In order to effectively use this tool, the Palmer State alumni found that they had to adopt more individualistic and competitive values, and that meant moving out of the safety of the African American community and into the center to obtain the cultural capital necessary to achieve their goals.

Both Zach and Lisa described this cultural cross over and desire to obtain cultural capital for success as “breaking out of the bubble.” Lisa shared that:

“…it is easier to stay in that bubble and just trying to hang out with your friends when heck, I’m just happy to be here. When my reality was very
different. Yes I am happy to be here, however, since I am here I might as well really prepare for what the next step is, once again, I have to separate myself from the rest. So that when jobs come around and other experiences I am able to get those because I put myself in the right position to do so.” (Taped Interview, 10/05)

Graduates such as JB, Lisa, Taylor, and Alex describe two types of African American students on campus, those who have assimilated on what they perceive as their own terms and are able to move successfully between the two worlds of campus life and those who by choice or inability are unable to master the new methods of assimilation. JB stated that:

Naima: So are you saying that there was two distinct groups on campus of African American students, or rather minority students?

JB: Yeah, those who took advantage of every chance and those who didn’t. I remember people would always talk about how unfairly they were treated but some times it was because they did not have their stuff together. I never gave anyone a chance to put me out there, but so many of them did. My mentees would come back with stories of stuff that went wrong in the classroom. But I always wondered if it was because they were Black or if it was because they had not done what they needed to do. They would tell me stuff and then I would ask and it would be like well the professor graded me hard. Well maybe he did, but I bet the next time you would have your shit tight. Aw, excuse me. (Taped Interview 11/05)

It was this inability to “get it tight” that further separated the African American campus community into cliques and propelled some into mainstream campus life while others remained firmly entrenched in the African American community and participated only in that community. Those who were in fact able to “get it tight” were the members of the New Talented Tenth; able to shatter traditional and
historical boundaries in order to obtain the training that they believed they needed to achieve their educational and future professional goals.

Alex who self defined as an outsider but remains close with several fellow African American graduates shared a similar view with the aforementioned alumni. She observed that not everyone participated in the “breaking out of the bubble”, and in both her and her husband’s opinion those who did not learn the skills of double consciousness took several years longer to obtain their degree, partied a great deal and never ventured out of the African American campus community, it was as if they were unable to function on the outside. The following is an excerpt of that illustrates this point:

Taylor: Cause there are few Black people that really put their nose to the grind stone and there are people who come and do the work and just get by, not really going anywhere.

(Alex lifts her hand to testify as if she is in church)

Naima: But why? Why do you think that is?

Taylor: Because once you get around your own kind and you do what your own kind do, you get comfortable. And that’s what I mean when I say they like the neighborhood, it’s like they at home. Cause if you ride through the dorms you see Black guys in t-shirts, pants hanging down sitting on the porch. That’s what I see when I go down to my old neighborhood, young Black kids in White t-shirts, baggy pants sitting on the corner doing nothing.

Naima: And you see the same thing on campus?

Taylor: When it comes down to class, they’ll get up and go to class if they feel like it, if they are not hung over…
Alex: Which goes back to why they been there five and six years, no focus no discipline.

Taylor: They get up there, those first couple of days and I call it “the away from home syndrome”

Naima: The away from home syndrome?

Taylor: Yeah, cause there ain’t nobody there to tell you what to do. So you have to decide if you gonna go with group A to the party or are you gonna go over here with group B to the study table and I think they are gonna go to the party, cause that’s what they think it is. A party and they don’t really know, it’s like I did so much so I’ll go to the party.

Taylor: Like the education was the icing on the cake, so I’ll go to the party.

Nay: So if you were part of group A, the party group, were you more so in the community?

Taylor: Yeah, I think so. Palmer State is a straight up party school.

Naima: So if you take on the community mentality, you may not succeed? As much as those who separate themselves?

Taylor: Yeah you might get your degree, but it will be on Cs and Ds instead of A and B, you might just get by, but you get by, so can you really call it a degree. You could call us separate but equal, because the Black people who study hard, hang with the Black people who study hard, they are more together then others.

Alex: And folks who think that they don’t have to be ten times better to work ten times harder to get where they want, their a fool for real…

Taylor: And then your job ends up overseas for real.

Alex: So you have no option, but to take on the European values of trying to be competitive being the best and everything else. I mean you don’t have an option anymore, if you want to succeed that’s what you got to do. You party later.
Naima: You ain’t party later. (I stop and think about it, maybe she did when I wasn’t looking) Did you party later?

Taylor: She had tequila or two… (we all laugh) (Written Field Notes, Taped Interview, 2/06)

Alex and Taylor’s stories also seem to share a duality in response to their placement in the community. Alex reflects on her experience as an outsider looking in, and shares a similar perspective with Joann, however, in truth, neither women were truly not outside of the community, rather both were a part of a small clique who saw the importance of educational attainment and was not necessarily popular or registering on the radar as overly involved African American students such as Tina, Don and Dawn. Joann, however, never fully mastered the skills of the new assimilation and although Taylor has insight on the needed skills, he did not obtain them like his wife during his time at PSU.

Alumni such as Lisa, JB, Kitty, Alex and Kelly who learned the skills of the New Talented Tenth were in fact further in their careers then those in my study who did not. JB was granted admission to PSU’s medical school on the his first attempt, Dawn on the other hand had to return to school to obtain a Master’s Degree in the biological sciences before being admitted to medical school. Kelly founded and serves as the CEO of her own nonprofit organization and is doing so well she was able to hire Kitty after her graduation from Palmer State. Don and Joann are currently struggling to find a place in their chosen career fields, both are unhappy
with their current professional positions, Don serves as a cook, Joann a receptionist both outside of their educational training. Tina who did not often cross cultural boundaries during her time on campus has found great success in the public relations field, she was however hired by an African American owned and operated firm and she had poor luck obtaining a position in the mainstream fields of media relations and entertainment productions prior to this appointment. Lisa, who has gone into the field of Higher Education Administration and is currently in the center of a bidding war, as she has just completed her Master’s degree and is on the job market fulltime for the first time, she has already had several offers.

**Conclusion**

When asked about the impact Palmer State University had on their lives, Don and Dawn’s perspective mirrors their peers in the study.

Don: My mom use to talk to me about growing up and seeing the difference in race. I never thought there was one when I was younger. Johnnie was just my friend, not a White boy even though we grew up and grew apart. But Mom was right. Palmer State: it is really, “Pale State” it is true. Makes you question is the world really like that? They say college is just like the world. You look at somebody and I wonder what’s your real motive? We were really involved, it gave us a little bit of power, so we now know how to work it out.

Dawn:Yeah we know how to go from, Yes Mam to Yeah, dawg.

The ability to understand how to switch from one cultural context to another is not a new development for African American graduates of colleges and universities. This
is a skill that most African Americans have mastered and still apply today. I find that
the language and persona that I use with my friends in social settings is very different
from the way I present myself when I am in a ministerial or business meeting. This
common denominator is a ground that is shared by participants in the study, as well as
with my own memories.

The African American Community at Palmer State University was in fact a
separate community with its own rules, norms, values and indoctrination process.
This assertion is supported by the research that has been conducted by scholars such
different turn as we rush forward into the highly competitive age of the 21st century.
We find the Palmer State African American campus community broken down into
cliques, with the students accepting a posture that in order to survive in the “real
world” they must culturally cross over to obtain experiences and skills that will allow
them to compete against their White counterparts in the professional world. In their
opinion the African American community exists for social and emotional support not
necessarily for safety or as a sole provider of community and culture for the
participants.

The Palmer State graduates seem to have little understanding of racism and
see the campus community not as a hostile place, but rather as a place they must learn
to interact in, in order to ensure their future professional success. Willie (2003)

130
explains that the inclusion or exclusion of African American students on campus comes from varying degrees of motivation. Those at Palmer State who were more motivated and almost all of the students in my study seemed to be highly motivated and had little or no recollection of being treated as an outsider because of their interaction with majority students and organizations. Unlike the Northwestern alumni there was no conscious choice to stay segregated within the African American community because of hostility, rather, the choice was made to ensure that The New Talented were able to interact in the mainstream while holding on to a social and emotional foundation that allowed for necessary interaction with both worlds.
The Legacy of a Leader: The Importance of Mentors

I hold Dr. Kathryn Golden deeply in my heart. Of all the people who can claim to have assisted me in obtaining my degree from Faith Western University, she is the one who held my hand daily and ensured my education was complete through the extracurricular activities that she urged me to become involved with. As the Director of Minority Student Affairs at Faith Western University, it was Dr. Golden who advised the Student Union on Black Awareness, coordinated the Soul Food Dinners, devised the Black History Month Calendar, counseled us on, in and through the political processes of campus and stood as ally and advocate for us in situations that we could not emotionally or mentally handle. I cried when I hugged her as I left my childhood behind and headed off to graduate school at The Ohio State University. For the students at Palmer State University Dr. F. Brother served as their Dr. Golden.

According to Seidman (2005) African American success in college can be assured when African American mentors and role models are a prominent part of the student’s university experience. As I conducted my study one of the emerging
themes was the impact that the former president of Palmer State University had on the lives of the successful graduates and they spoke with great passion about his influence. Another theme that emerged was the changing campus climate after the death of Dr. Brother who reigned as the first African American president of a school that had often been called by the moniker “Pale (for White) State.” The appointment of Dr. Brother seemed to many as a positive step by the university to increase diversity and prove its commitment to the advancement of their African American students.

Dr. Brother felt that all students should see themselves as leaders committed to the cause of service, both in the community, and in their personal and professional lives as well. He instituted a program based on the Robert Greenleaf ideology of Servant Leadership, which posits that true leaders are servants dedicated to community service, defeating inequality, and the advancement of the greater good before personal gain. Upon his death, this leadership program was dismantled and the Office of Student Activities was urged to implement a more mainstream leadership approach. The dismantling of a more communal base leadership program gave the Palmer State graduates an interesting mix of leadership training, including a communal approach and a more competitive approach thus further situating them as members of the new Talented Tenth. Furthermore, several other programs were also
dismantled that supported students of color thus changing the campus landscape to a more pre-Dr. Brother portrait.

Therefore, this chapter relays the stories of a great man who lead with fairness and truth for all people, how the university community adopted his stance in many areas while he was alive and how many of these gains were lost as he was lost, passing from this world to the next. Whereas Chapter Four discussed the actual African American experience at Palmer State, Chapter Five seeks to explore possible variables that shaped the students experiences during the 1999 – 2005 academic years. Many of the recollections reveal a dulled ability to recognize racism as African American graduates freely interacted with their White peers, faculty, staff and the world around them. The frustration of unhelpful administrators, the lack of role models, the change of campus climate and the dismantling of programs all come to light through the recollections of the participants. It is through these stories that the formation of the New Talented Tenth emerges, for it is in the changing campus climate that new skills are developed in order to ensure individual success and future benefits. For if the university community has in fact done away with much of the infrastructure in place to assist student of color in obtaining success, then these students have only themselves to count on.
The University Presidency and The Measure of a Man - Dr. Brother

A man to be admired for his accomplishments and mourned for a too soon passing, Dr. F. Brother served as the first African American president of Palmer State University. Born in a small city in the Midwest, Dr. Brother had the distinction of being the first African American to lead a major metropolitan institution of higher learning in the state in which Palmer is located and served PSU from February 1994 until his death on March 29, 1998. Achieving the university presidency is no small feat, and to obtain such a position is a rare and unusual event. According to research conducted by Jackson (2004) studies about African American presidents is virtually nonexistent as only 6.3% of college and university presidents are African American. As this statistics includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Jackson asserts that, “…it stands to reason that those making decision for a diverse student population should themselves be diverse (p.3).” Thus the appointment of Dr. Brother to Palmer’s highest position, “as the first among equals” illustrates that those who selected him for leadership saw him as highly qualified to achieve the task at hand.

Mentioned so frequently throughout the interview process, I felt it necessary to meet with a former staff member of Dr. Brother’s to understand his vision, mission and the great impression that he left on those participating in my study. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

I ask her (Dr. Brother’s former assistant) about Dr. Brother and she immediately gets wistful, a little sad even. She talks about his vision, how he
desired to build a school where all races were treated equally. He wanted to get out from underneath the moniker of Palmer State being seen as “Pale State.” He was always roaming the halls and talking with students, meeting with students, creating programs for students. He believed that the university’s first priority was always the students, first and foremost the students. Getting them in, getting them educated, and getting them graduated— it is a useful philosophy that I think many professionals miss- happy graduates = happy alums = bigger endowments = more resources and higher paid and better faculty = better taught students = a better university. It’s a great formula. (Written Field Notes, 3/06)

A graduate of a major research institution with extensive educational experience as a professor, administrator and provost at both White universities and HBCUs, Dr. Brother based his presidency and the focus of Palmer State’s improvement on his Three C’s – caring, competence and collaboration. All aimed at the development of faculty, the internationalization of the student body, the fostering of campus community across racial, cultural and socio-economic lines, the improvement of campus climate, coalition building with the cities surrounding Palmer, and the improvement of teaching, research, retention and recruitment, the Three C’s were the foundation upon which Dr. Brother guided Palmer State’s success in the late 1990’s.

Hawkins (1996) asserts that the presidency is situational and the appointment of an African American at a predominately White university can present challenges to their leadership and acceptance. A gifted musician and a man of great faith active in church and ministry, Dr. Brother was able to overcome many affronts and challenges to his leadership due to his race. During his first days at Palmer State, Dr. Brother
received a letter at home informing him that he would be killed if he attempted to turn Palmer State into a “nigger school.” The perpetrator was never found and after serving at the helm of Palmer State for two years Dr. Brother remarked, “Racism is still one of the most forceful phenomena in our society. It drives decisions and perceptions. It is still one of the powerful shapers of opinion in our society, and I don’t expect it to be any different at Palmer State or in this state we live in.” The fact that Dr. Brother made such an observation lends creditability to the idea that while he was leading Palmer State, he experienced struggles, subtle challenges to his leadership and racism at the very institution that he was leading to great success.

Research on the African American presidency conducted by Sharon Holmes (2004) suggests that despite gains made by African Americans senior administrators many are still faced with challenges based on their racial designation. She writes, “…African Americans experienced chilly and inhospitable campus environments, isolation, alienation, marginalization, wage inequities, unrealistic role expectations, limited advancement opportunities, feelings of powerlessness, tokenism, and lack of mentoring and sponsorship (p.25).” Despite these challenges, Dr. Brother appears to have overcome adversities and made a lasting impact on the lives of the Palmer State graduates. During his tenure, Dr. Brother increased retention, recruited students with higher grades and test scores, increased minority enrollment, led in the implementation of the PSU Faculty Senate, created a myriad of programs to lend in
student success such as: The African American Male Mentoring Program, as well as reversed a six year decline in overall enrollment for the university. He was talented, He was qualified, and he produced results, however he still faced racism and discrimination.

Participants who knew Dr. Brother all had wonderful things to say, stories that recalled his easy going and caring manner with students. They shared with me his intense desire to see students trained in the Greenleaf method where service was the underpinning tenet of true leadership and making lifetime impacts on a student’s campus, cultural and local communities. Dr. Brother also personally admonished the faculty to gauge their success, and the university’s success, based on the success of their students (taken from personal speeches of Dr. Brother, Book 4/1994). This assertion of Dr. Brother’s is also supported by work done by Seidman (2005) who found that more personalized faculty and staff involvement increased the success of African American students. When asked about his relationship with Dr. Brother, JB reflects:

“He was the greatest man that I ever had the chance to be around. I learned the importance of treating everyone with respect. It (respect) demands it and gives it right back. I also learned about leadership and how it is something you learn throughout life and the best leaders are those that serve also, hence, Dr, Brother’s impact on Servant Leadership on campus. I was very blessed to know him and his family, only a great man would be blessed with the wonderful woman and mother figure to me he married. I was part of the Dreams Program because of his drive to help African American students on campus, for that I am truly thankful.”

(Emailed Response Follow Up 3/06)
Dawn like every participant in the study who did not know Dr. Brother had only favorable things to say:

“I heard he was the best president that PSU ever had. He actually walked around campus and talked to students. He not only talked to students, but he actually remembered the ones he talked to.” (Emailed Response Follow Up 3/06)

But I believe that the words of Dr. Brother himself speak to his love and desire for student success. The following is taken from my field journal written after I had met with a former assistant of Dr. Brother’s:

I look… I can feel her emotion and her pain. I feel it to, and I didn’t even know the man. How different would life have been if he had been alive and still the president of Palmer State? She is speaking softly – “He loved those students. You know when he was nearing the end of his sickness; I helped his wife bring him home to die. And on his deathbed, do you know what he said to me? One of the last things he said to me was, “Are the students registering? Make sure the students are registering.” The funny thing about it was that it was not even time for the students to register for the upcoming quarter. Naima, the man was dying, these are some of his last words and all he could think about, all he could ask of me was were the students getting their education.” (Field Journal, 3/06)

**Creating Community: Life on Campus During the Brother Era**

During my interview with Kitty and Kelly, Dr. Brother was brought up immediately after the first question was posed to them. Dr. Brother was the president the first three years that Kelly was enrolled at Palmer State and in describing campus life and her experiences she stated:
“I’d describe my life as being very fulfilling and rewarding on campus. I took advantage of a lot of student activities on campus, became really involved on campus. So my perspective was there were organizations that serviced minority students. You know you got some colleges that don’t even have a BSU (Black Student Union) or shut down their BSU but um, I think that administration was very receptive to the needs of African American students in general. And I worked really closely with different areas, administrators in different areas. I think my life on campus was really rewarding, especially when we had a Black president.” (She whispers this and snickers) (Tape Recorded Interview 3/06)

Kelly believes that life on campus was more open to her and provided better leadership opportunities during Dr. Brother’s presidency. Zach, who spent the majority of his first year on campus regrets that he did not spend more time getting to know Palmer State’s charismatic president, although he was full of insight based on the recollections of his friends. He shared with me that:

(Zach was a freshman during Dr. Brother’s last year at Palmer State) “…but the sad thing is that I didn’t even know him cause like I said I was in my own personal world and I didn’t really care about nobody else as far as like administrators or people who really ran things. I was just going there having fun, going to a couple of classes whenever I went. Like I didn’t know that he had that much of an impact. Like a couple of people who had been there a couple of years like students understood, like the programs he set up for African American students on the campus… Like there was this one program for Black males like if you kept a 3.0 they paid this amount of your schooling, keep a 3.5 and they paid more and more if you got to a 4 point, not only did they pay for your schooling but you got a mentor…” (Taped Interview 3/06)

From Zach’s perspective Dr. Brother was invested in the development of African American students, thus the university adopted his stance and followed his lead by supporting programs geared toward various minority enclaves on campus. As the
Willie graduates had no one of African American descent in such a position at Northwestern, little can be compared between them and the PSU graduates in this instance. The PSU graduates were in fact part of a minority within a minority, African Americans at a predominately White university where a living example of achievement was directly in their view.

As the leader of PSU, Dr. Brother was in fact a role model and mentor for African American students on campus. Maloney and Saunders (2004) who created a unique mentoring program for minority high school students posit that mentoring minority students is a way to combat isolation and thus assist them in making greater inroads into mainstream educational life. Furthermore, a more unstructured approach to mentoring including, the presentation of successful role models to mentees, transmitting cultural capital to compete in the professional world and mentoring those identified as gifted ensure the academic success of minority students. When viewing Dr. Brother within the context of Maloney and Saunders work, it appears that the Talented Tenth PSU students were receiving a similar unstructured mentoring experience and thus were better able to cross the cultural boundaries in place before them. These experiences were important because they taught minority students how to compete with their majority counterparts, armed with the same type of cultural capital and thus further entrenching a neoliberal ideology within the African American cultural worldview.
Despite Dr. Brother’s great involvement with African American students, he was in fact dedicated to fostering a campus community that was tolerant and accepting of all students. Kitty stated during our interview that:

“I remember they used to have the Fire Side chats and I remember going to one of those. And I didn’t know at the time that our president was Black so I went a whole year not knowing that we had a Black President. I use to see him on campus a lot and see him up on pictures and stuff I just thought he was a higher up administrator but from what I understand he was involved with the students.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

Kelly agreed with Kitty’s observations:

“One thing that really stuck out in my mind about Dr. Brother was I had never seen nor heard of a university president helping with move in day. I remember my freshman year moving into the Lily Hall, he was out moving boxes out of people’s cars and right there that told me that he was a president that really cared about his students and wants to have a relationship with his students and not be this high and mighty person. Then I had the opportunity to be involved with President Ambassador’s Club and we had meetings over his house. And we had meetings either on campus or over his house and there were lots of different opportunities to work with the President’s Ambassador’s Club. But the meetings over his house was like being over my grandmother’s house, just sitting there and gaining knowledge from him. He really cared about the direction that the university was going and the recruitment of African American students on campus. So I think at that point PSU was doing a lot with diversity and recruiting African American students and it was nothing to see him walking around talking to the students and making sure their needs were being met.” (Taped Interview 3/06)
Hawkins (1996) suggests that African American presidents at predominately White universities are successful because they often downplay race and reach out to majority campus members. Through these subtle interactions with students, Dr. Brother was in fact challenging racial perceptions and attempting to dismantle the status quo while also staying connected and leading by example African American students.

Representative Bureaucracy is an important skill for African Americans leaders in higher education to master. Jackson (2004) believes that it can be used to examine the interaction between undergraduate students and campus academic administrators. Representative Bureaucracy states that leaders who demographically represent those within their constituency group will generally make decisions based on the needs of those whom they share cultural traits with. Dr. Brother, however, did not share such traits with the majority of those he represented but worked to support all students. Jackson writes, “Passive representation refers to similarities in demographic characteristics between administrators and constituency groups. Active representation refers to situations in which administrators work to further the needs of a particular group who do not share their same demographic characteristics (p.8).”

As African Americans at Palmer State University made up less than 7% of the student population during the time that Dr. Brother led the institution, he was both passively
and actively representing students, readily available and in sight of all incoming freshman and their parents, the majority of which did not share his cultural background or racial identity. Furthermore, this stance encouraged, while setting the example of, breaking out of the bubble and crossing cultural boundaries.

As aforementioned, one of Dr. Brother’s favorite sayings was that the university could measure its success based on the success of its students and he modeled the expectations that he required of the faculty and staff through his behavior and close daily interactions with students. Jackson and Kile (2004) stress that most administrators make their greatest contribution to the success of students through stressing to faculty and staff their impact on student outcomes while creating policies and programs that better serve student needs. Dr. Brother’s constant stressing of the importance of both in classroom and extracurricular engagement between faculty and students were so successful that it caused Joann to remark during our interview:

“Um, I felt like there was, a more sense of respect among faculty (when Dr. Brother was alive). In the way that they viewed Black students. In the way that we viewed ourselves. Cause he was fair. Even in regard to academically, when it came to knowing that Blacks had problems in certain subjects, there were nice grace periods for students in their first year of college who had those few stumbles and fumbles.” (Taped Interview, 2/06)

The program that Joann described, First Year Forgive and Forget, allowed all students to retake classes and throw out the lower grade thus improving their grade point averages. Jackson and Kile assert that programs such as this are of great importance
because they, “…directly affect emerging student outcomes, e.g. student satisfaction, and increased diversity in the student population (p.286).”

Although there is little direct research on student outcomes and the work of administrators, Dr. Brother’s determination to develop Palmer State University into a place where all were welcomed was exhibited in his support of faculty, his coalition building with the external community, his determination to increase access for students with disabilities and through the creation of programs and focus groups geared towards the promotion of diversity and cross cultural understanding. Jackson and Kile’s research suggests that students view organizational behavior as an actual actor with characteristics that enable it to act with human qualities and thus Dr. Brother’s programs transformed Palmer State into an organization determined to embrace diversity, prepare students for post graduate success and embracing of increased interaction between faculty, staff and students.

Dr. Brother exhibits the findings of Jackson and Kile when we examine several of the programs he created. Through the implementation of a Campus Climate Committee, Dr. Brother assembled a team of campus community members to monitor the climate at Palmer State and then provide him with recommendations about how to best improve the quality of campus life. The Campus Climate Committee came back with over 100 recommendations in the areas of campus morale, gender relations, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic and religious diversity,
external relations and disabilities and access. Furthermore, he implemented Community Day a Palmer State tradition that had gone by the way side in which campus community members pledged to foster a life without prejudice, intimidation and discrimination, respect and enjoy diversity, while building a mutual understanding that everyone is connected and must contribute to building a better world.

Despite his dedication to being a President that all at Palmer State could follow with eagerness and pride, Dr. Brother was clear in his support and community connection to African American students on campus. In his June 1995 address to the African American graduates sponsored by the Black Faculty and Staff organization on campus, Dr. Brother stated:

“You have been a part of a truly special ceremony this evening. Like the traditional rites of passage in Africa, you are becoming part of a larger community. You saw tonight how wisdom of the larger community is passed on to you as you reach this important milestone in your life. African tradition says the community is greater then each of it's parts. This conveys a sense of obligation to the community to work and live wherever your life and career may take you. Be sure to take with you this community-based vision. Where ever you are and whatever you are doing always strive to increase the capacity of our families and our community to care effectively and humanly for one another.” (Personal Speeches Book 4, 1994)

Dr. Brother acknowledged the fictive kinship relationship as posited by Fordham (1996) and suggested by Willie (2003) that he had with African American staff and students.
Furthermore, his stance on collaboration and caring echo the work of Gordon (1997) and DuBois (1903) in which life for all people is better and more rich when we all see ourselves as mutually connected, kin across cultural and racial boundaries. As Fordham (1996) suggests, African American egalitarianism has meant that everyone is equal and the success of one is tantamount to the success of all, therefore, Dr. Brother’s leadership was a boon to the entire African American population and inspired them to achieve greatness. Fordham writes, “The imagined fictive kinship system still survives. As a symbol of resistance, fictive kinship embodies the guerilla-like nature of Black life in America. It is sutured to existing social conditions and structured by oppressive forces confronting African Americans during any historical era. …while its form and configuration are constantly changing, the permanence of racism in America assures and promotes its persistence(1996, p.77).” Dr. Brother’s acknowledgement of the existence of racism, his desire to provide guidance to Palmer State’s African American students and his illustration of true concern for the entire campus community all demonstrate that the ideology of fictive kinship should be used to prepare students to compete in the professional world.

The graduates who were on campus during Dr. Palmer’s tenure remember campus as being more open and supportive of students of color and they reflect on his personable approach and dedication to their advancement. As a member of a rare class of individuals – The African American University President, Dr. Brother could
indeed be defined as a member of the Talented Tenth. Dr. Brother, as DuBois (1903) suggests is a true member of the Talented Tenth concerned with the improvement of the entire race to the benefit of all Americans. Furthermore, his desire to ensure the preparation of his students to compete in the free market through the development of much needed skills is seen in the student centered programs he created. His ability to cross cultural boundaries and to hone his own double consciousness was of paramount importance and played a key role in the development of PSU African American graduates.

Through his ability to lead in a White world that could be fraught with racism and hostility, challenge the status quo and bring about positive change that enhanced the life of these graduates Dr. Brother embodied the importance of individual success, competition and readiness, however he never abandoned the African cultural ideals that stressed collaboration, community building and an ethic of care – all aspects of his platform as the first African American president of Palmer State University. This approach could in fact be defined as neoliberalism (Demerath and Lynch 2006) however, Dr. Brother’s application of Africentric values illustrates that the members of the New Talented have found a way to fuse the two ideologies together.

Rich (1986) sees conflict between neoliberalism and Africentric ideals therefore creating a fusion between the two ideologies is important for the success of African American graduates. Rich believes that traditional neoliberalism is a way to
maintain the status quo because it centers education on the development of human capital for the benefit of the nation’s economic improvement, rather than the gaining of cultural capital or personal or communal gain. He writes, “DuBois championed the liberal arts to help Blacks study and cultivate their own culture. His concerns were not only economic equality but civil and political equality as well. The neoliberal proposals are not within the DuBois tradition (p.25).” Therefore, with an example of the presence of a dynamic African American leader, it appears that a fusion of ideologies took place allowing the PSU graduates the ability to glean from both paradigms the aspects most important to not only their professional success but their personal success as well.

**Dr. Who? Life on Campus After The Death of Dr. Brother**

Sitting in the booth at Applebee’s Lisa and I are having our bimonthly counseling session, it is a time when I as one of her mentors sit and listen to all that is going on in her life and give the sagest and most faith based advice I can muster. She asks me how my research is coming and as she was one of the first people I interviewed I begin to ask her about Dr. Brother. She shares with me that she was not there during his tenure, but believes that she benefited a great deal from his legacy as her freshman year began the quarter after his death. She tilts her head back, deep in thought and she explains to me that campus is different now, campus has changed and
that if we went back today, and asked people about Dr. Brother, they would probably say, “Dr. Who?” (Personal Journal Notes, 2/06)

It appears that the first years after the death of Dr. Brother, the campus retained a great deal of his spirit in programming, faculty, staff and student interaction and in its heightened promotion of diversity. The participants in my study who were on campus during this time have a mixed experience, most benefiting from his lingering ideology, yet sensing deep inside that the university was balancing on the cusp of a change. Alex shares:

“I heard a lot of positive things (about Dr. Brother). I heard I missed out. I don’t doubt that I missed out. I met his wife and she was wonderful, I definitely can say that after speaking with people like JB, and those who really got to mature through their college years with him they definitely had a better experience, a richer experience at Palmer State then I did. I think that when I came on to Palmer State, the administration, the culture changed. To me it was very financial and money, and business culture, it was like where’s the money, you an’t got it, you an’t getting it. And that was just where it was at. Sorry about your luck, go down to the financial aid office and if they can’t help you then you better go get you a job.” (Taped Interview 2/06)

Kelly who was a senior when Dr. Brother died and then stayed on campus as a Graduate student for one year after that was a true witness to that change. The following is an excerpt from our conversation:

Naima: Did you find that life changed after he died on campus?

Kelly: I think it did. The support for minority organizations in terms of funding and support kindda went down. Cause it wasn’t on the priority level of Tamann… (the new president) what’s his name? Yeah, Tamann. I mean
even looking at the Greek organizations because Dr. Brother was Greek I think that even played a role in terms of the development of the Greek organizations on campus and then making sure that we had things to get funding. And I think that after he passed those different types of activities kind of went by the wayside. (Taped Interview 3/06)

Students who witnessed this change remarked on the ending of programs as well as the replacement of faculty and staff. Kitty shared that:

“If felt like the administration rapidly changed. Like people who were in positions that were not connected to his were still booted out in the end. You heard, well the new president he was responsible for this, well I’m like if he is not really affected (by) this position right here, then why are they changing the positions? I just thought that was kind of ironic. So the majority of our higher up African Americans were either booted out by choice or they were forced out. And when they were forced out they were placed in a position that really wasn’t, being able to compare to the other position. To me in my mind it was more of a step down then a step over or either a step up.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

When asked to clarify who she is speaking of Kitty begins to list several African American professionals whose positions were phased out or were reassigned due to a new vision for their department. One African American woman went from being the Director of a unit to an Academic Advisor in the University College.

Zach and Joann also have strong feelings about the changing climate on campus after the death of Dr. Brother. It was as if Cohen’s (1998) understanding of the “barriers to blending” were recreated, as PSU’s leadership once again became a Representative Bureaucracy passive in nature. These barriers are designed to keep cultural groups separate, maintain the status quo and sustain the cultural dominance of the majority were re-erected, however, many of the students who were there during
this time of reconstruction were able to continue to cross cultural boundaries due to
the skill they obtained during the presidency of Dr. Brother. Those who did not, or
who came later had a harder time achieving these skills as demonstrated by the PSU
graduates success and struggle in the professional world.

Zach mused about how foolish he was to have not taken advantage of Dr.
Brother’s program for African American males, one of the first to be dismantled after
his death:

“…when he passed that program went down the drain. It was like you’re on
your own. And I mean, it’s not too many people at Palmer State of African
American descent that got scholarships. And we don’t have no sports really
and only a handful of us got basketball scholarships, student loans or maybe a
grant or two.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

Joann shared Zach’s view:

“That stuff went away after he was gone. People like me, I wasn’t college
material and after he passed away those programs that would help people like
me they were not there.” (Taped Interview 2/06)

Although most students understand that a new administration brings in its own
philosophy, leadership and experience, the blow of changes made at Palmer State was
vastly felt due to the previous leadership’s departure from traditional American
ideology in which the status quo was broken down and not maintained.

The changes also trickled down into the African American community itself.
When asked about the African American community on campus during the time of
Dr. Brother’s tenure, JB felt that:
“I would say… as a whole, we supported each other a lot better than the others on campus. There were divisions and cliques, but for the most part, it was a work in progress that was not terribly bad at that time.” (Taped Interview 11/05)

Compared to the reflections of Tina who was on campus almost three years after Dr. Brother’s death:

“No, the Black community was not unified, we were all divided into our own organizations even before the sororities and fraternities came…” (Taped Interview, 11/05)

Dawn who was there during the time Tina was there shared a similar view:

“The Black community… on the most part they are not on the same page. Some of the Black community goes to school and (are) really trying to graduate, others are at school to have fun and play around on campus. There is no sense of pride or respect that would make us want to be unified.” (Taped Interview 10/05)

The perceived break down of African American unity after the death of Dr. Brother is apparent through the student’s inability to maintain a more vibrant form of fictive kinship. They held on tightly to the ideals of Dr. Brother who stressed that they work hard to obtain an education that would open the doors in their professional life, however, the graduates recollect that the importance of community seemed to become less of a priority after his death perhaps resulting even more so in the internal cliques contained within the African American self-segregated community.
There Are No Momma’s Here: Interaction With Faculty and Staff On Campus

One of the most profound moments in my life occurred at the library during my interview with Dawn and Don. They were speaking with great passion about the lack of African American faculty and staff who were invested in the lives of African American students and lamenting the fact that all of those who were sincere in their support had either left or were marginalized by being reassigned to positions on campus that did not allow them the freedom to advocate for African American students. Since this was my first interview I was unaware of the implications of this statement, where this conversation was personally leading me. Dawn bends forward across the table, neck rolling in sure “sista” posture and says with great authority:

“I look at it now. It’s not like it was. There are no Momma’s on campus anymore. Yeah, they got rid of all the people who helped us and replaced them with people who played the game. Nobody is there now telling the freshman who to talk to. They just recruit you.” (Taped Interview 10/05)

As I shift through my field notes and reread Dawn’s statement, the memory comes clear and concise like a waking dream, it is about Winter my biracial Resident Assistant, my problem child who during my time as the Director of Residence Life at St. Mary University use to press her face against the glass on my office door and yell, “Momma!” I am unsure how I obtained the exalted title of Momma during my time at SMU, but another image flashes into my memory, Terry and I my senior year at Faith Western University hanging over a banister outside the Campus Center as Dr.
Golden pulls up in her overly packed station wagon. As she emerges from the car, Terry lets out a yell, “Mom Golden, we’ve been looking for you all day!”

According to the participants in the study as the climate on campus changed, African American staff seemed to be more distant and much more concerned with maintaining their positions on campus then in reaching out towards the African American community to ensure their success. This served as detrimental to the African American community experience as scholars such as Milner and Bray (1998) relate that it was in fact such interactions with faculty and staff that kept them grounded in the community. While reflecting on Dawn’s aforementioned comment, Don responds with:

“There is no mentoring on campus and you have got to stay to take care of business.” (Taped Interview, 10/06)

When asked if African American faculty and staff treated him differently then White faculty and staff, Zach responds that:

“Sometimes, yeah. Crabs in a bucket. Sometimes, they see… there is two types of people, people who see the potential in you and they work you cause they know what’s out there. They ride you at the same time they tell you why they ridin’ you. You got the other ones who see what your worth and they try to rain on you anyway possible because they jealous man, and I un had that. But the White ones, man they just… sometimes I felt more accepted by them then the people of my own race. I say Black women, I learned everything from Black women. If they weren’t, I learned it from women period. I mean where I am now, it was like the Black (women) administrators showing me what to do or telling me how to go about things. The White administrators if you know what you talking about and you got conviction behind everything that you saying and they believe you then they go out they way for you. So I say between the Black women administrators and their White counter parts as a whole I didn’t see no difference. The Black
ones just let me know you stay focused, cause even though some of them seem that they your friends (laughing now) they could still have that hidden agenda. The Black males, man they be on something else. I never really understood it.”

(Taped Interview, 3/06)

Both Don and Zach spoke of their influences on campus as primarily coming from African American women who were invested in their personal lives and were constantly engaging them during their time at Palmer State University.

Whereas during the tenure of Dr. Brother participants labeled the faculty and staff as helpful, three years later there was a distinct change in this view. Like the participants in Willie’s (2003) study, Joann, Tina, Don and Dawn all felt that they suffered due to a lack of advising and faculty and staff reaching out if they knew students were failing. This inability to reach out further entrenches individuality and competitiveness in the African American students who further develop as the New Talented Tenth as they acquire coping skills to deal with these situations and learn how to manage academically on campus. Tina believed that Palmer State would benefit greatly from improving the academic advising programs for students of color because her personal experience was so poor. She shared:

“I do not think that we had the support system in the university college, or in academic advising. … a lot of people had very poor guidance counselors and it cost them extra years at the university, bills they are still paying off today. I had an experience with an advisor that was not good, she was always very short with me and I said am I on the (four year) graduation track and she said you’re never going to make it. There just wasn’t enough tough love, I needed someone to guide me and to not waste my time, helping me get things together and not miss opportunities. I definitely would add a guidance counselor for African American students. The reason why I say just for us is
because sometimes we have a little bit of a difference in the approach on how we are educated or how this process worked. I know for myself, I was the first person in my family to graduate so my parents didn’t go to school so they don’t ask me about credit hours. They didn’t know what credit hours are. They might ask me how I’m doing in school and I’d tell them fine. And sometimes you need that extra love because a lot of time White students are ahead of the game because they have somebody who really got them to that point. I ultimately had to fire my counselor and I started doing things myself and then I went to the dean. And I told him I am not getting what I need from your counselor so please do something, if you want to investigate her, please do so cause she’s not helping us be here. I said I’m coming to you because you’re the head of the department. And you can understand, I need answers to my questions… I’m trying to get a degree here, so I’m coming to you each quarter so I did that and he did a good job.”

Seidman’s (2005) research supports the views expressed by Tina and indicates that many African American students struggle because they are the first in their family to go to college and thus have few family members who can advise them on the academic process. Where the biological family is unable to assist, the fictive kinship has historically stepped in and picked up the slack, fictive kinship in positions of power or in possession of needed cultural capital are of the utmost importance to students navigating the academic terrain.

The importance of “Mommas” on campus provided PSU students with the cultural capital needed to successfully navigate the campus community. Smith (2004) believes that it is the responsibility of mentors and roles models to provide students with access to the hidden curriculum. This hidden curriculum is “… the unwritten and unspoken rules of how to successfully navigate through the nebulous academic culture of higher education which is essential to academic success (p. 48).” These
rules are similar to those previously described as necessary to obtain by Delpit in order for students to interact successfully within the Culture of Power. Skills such as learning to interact with faculty are defined by Smith as the “academic cultural knowledge of the university” and are best taught through nontraditional approaches to mentorship. Smith proposes that a Network Mentoring program with faculty and staff who are invested in student success and who have identified and understand academic cultural knowledge would allow students to, “…learn the academic cultural knowledge of the institution from networks of faculty, administrators and advanced students (p. 49)” The ability to learn this cultural knowledge was limited with the changes that occurred on campus after the death of Dr. Brother.

Lisa felt that she also suffered due to a lack of support in her English classes, she shared that she believed she could write a proper paper until her time at Palmer State, Dawn found herself often frustrated with the advanced science classes she was taken and commented on how difficult it was to compete with her White peers who seemed to have a better grasp coming from more affluent school systems. Willie writes, “Faculty and staff mentors and advisors were especially helpful to student success…. Since it is clear that faculty and staff play important roles in the lives of their students, the burden of helping students appreciate how to learn from and become friends with each other falls on the shoulders of such people (p. 78).” The lack of “Mommas” on the PSU campus had in fact further increased the need for a
more honed double consciousness as the graduates had to learn on their own how best
to navigate the campus community.

The lack of advisors and role models seemed to hinder the students who
graduated from Palmer State during the later years of this study and several expressed
concern for students who were no longer at Palmer State because of poor grades or
unresolved financial matters. Seidman (2005) asserts that pre-college preparation
programs and greater academic and financial guidance ensure greater levels of
African American success. Willie’s graduates and the Palmer State graduates feel
that these advising issues could have been resolved with a more personalized
approach to advising and mentoring. Thus the data suggests that an educational
approach more kinship natured then the traditionally academic approach that took
precedence once Dr. Brother passed away was of greater benefit to the African
American graduates.

Paradigm Shifts: The Changing Focus of The Center and the Death of the
Servant Leadership Program

One factor that may have contributed to the changing climate on campus for
African American students was a programmatic and physical move of The Center, the
African American cultural unit on campus. Founded on Martin Luther King’s
Birthday in 1971, according to the Palmer State website, the goals of the Center were as follows:

- To promote an understanding of the culture and heritage of Black Americans
- To make easily accessible, by housing in one central location, a variety of resource material on the Black experience
- To encourage research about Black people and aid in the resolution of problems that have resulted from racial discrimination and prejudice
- To work for the advancement of the Black Creative Arts.

Interestingly enough in no section of the stated mission and goals of The Center at the time of its founding was a commitment to students or to the enhancement of the quality of African American student life. Despite this omission, The Center in the late 1990’s was a place frequented by students and often provided programs that were student directed and centered as well. Much of this came from the highly popular Dream’s Program in which African American upper class students mentored first year students. A bustling place full of activity, earlier graduates such as Kelly and JB remember it as place where they could seek support and help, the others in the study saw it as a place that was drastically different and unsupportive due to a major change in focus and direction.
Originally positioned in the Student Union, the hub of campus life, The Center was the home of various academic and social programs, informal counseling sessions and student gatherings. Several years after the death of Dr. Brother the administration decided to shift The Center’s focus from a programmatic one to one more academic in scope. Under direction from the President to streamline services all minority serving student affairs offices were to be moved into a shared physical space. The Provost’s Office relocated the African/African American Studies department into The Center and announced that The Center would be moving out of the Student Union and into one of the academic campus buildings once renovations were complete. This announcement came with absolutely no input from the students.

Furthermore, to the student’s outrage, both the Director and Associate Director were “reassigned” as counselors in the University College and a faculty person was selected to serve as an interim until a national search could be conducted to replace them. Kitty who worked in The Center during this time reflected:

“I use to be a student worker in The Center for two years and I remember when we had Dr. Brown as the interim director. Cause I remember having a talk about the students, you know The Center is for the students, they need to come in and yada, yada, yada, well it was all talk. All the students come to The Center, and that was just for photo opportunities cause when the photographers were walking around and when students actually started coming to The Center, hanging out, chilling like they were suppose to. He said that too many students were coming in and hanging out. That when people come visit cause he was over African American Studies, that you know they were kind of intimidated, well that’s not our fault. You know The Center is for us, it was actually a part of our tuition is going to the center so why are we not allowed to go in there and hang out? So it was to the point that our friends didn’t want to come in there to hang out or to get
something done or they didn’t want to come to The Center to ask them to do something for them. I was like, I don’t know why not just because he told you to quit coming in, he basically told them to quit coming in there. But you still need to come in there cause you’re paying for it. And that’s what they’re for.” (Taped Interview 3/06)

Kitty saw it as the student’s right to continue to take advantage of The Center’s resources, but The Center no longer felt like home, it was now run by an African American man whose approach was anything but student centered, Momma had been removed and the kinship previously felt had been erased.

When asked about The Center, JB speaks about, “always able to count on the support of the Directors” and working with them to advance the mentoring program so that it better served the students, Tina remembers benefiting from a Center Book Scholarship but noted that The Center seemed unorganized while Zach cited that it seemed The Center was in turmoil as change loomed on the horizon. Dawn, who unlike JB actually lived through the change as an undergraduate, discussed how the change altered not only her perspective about life on campus, but ripped away from her an intrinsic part of her support system. She shared with me that:

“Freshman year The Center was in the Union. The Center was a great place, sort of a refuge from all of the other stuff going on at school. Mrs. J and Mrs. T were my moms away from home. I could talk to them about anything… school, personal, etc and they would give me their advice on what I should do and who to seek for help. After they were removed from The Center, The Center became an awful place. I don’t think that it helped moving the Center to the academic side of campus with all of the other minority groups and definitely making LC (the new Assistant Director hired in about a year later) in charge of most of the programs was an awful mistake. Even now as a graduate student, The Center is a place I wouldn’t dare go to for anything. I talked with a graduate student who attended
another undergrad institution and she also said The does nothing for graduate students, what is their purpose? She came from Georgia and went to a Black school. The Center is a joke!” (Taped Interview 10/05)

I believe that the shift in focus of The Center, the removal of its “Mommas” and the move of The Center from the Student Union, the crux of student social life, all combined to further the embracing of the ideologies of the New Talented Tenth.

It appears that as the university streamlined The Center into what it believed it should be, it alienated students and removed the necessary communal and collaborative social support they were receiving from The Center and its staff. These changes could have furthered the ideology of one’s need to achieve success on one’s own, for the dismantling of a support system forces those who are benefiting from it to either adapt, prosper or fail and it appears that the African American graduates of this study chose to adapt and prosper. McCarthy’s (1998) idea of school as a cultural agent is illustrated through the changes made in regard to The Center. By changing the focus of a resource specifically geared towards the success of African American students, PSU illustrates McCarthy’s premise that schools are hegemonic in practice through their control of knowledge, culture, through domination, maintaining hierarchies and the direction of resources all working in concert to continue to produce inequality.

The death of the Servant Leadership Program, the dream of Dr. Brother was another programmatic demise that further positioned the university as a cultural agent
while presenting opportunities for a more neo-liberal paradigm to take root within the emerging ideology of the New Talented Tenth. Using the concept of service as the true nature of a leader, the retiring of this program separated African American students from the norms, values and ideologies of the university’s primer person of color. Promoting instead a leadership program that was more capitalistic in nature with a thrust to prepare students to compete with others in society. In my conversation with Alex who took over the Servant Leadership Program after the death of Dr. Brother:

Naima: what was your perception to the administration’s approach to the Servant Leadership Program (after Dr. Brother’s death)?

Alex: Roadblock. Why? I don’t, well, I, I don’t know. Because people who really wanted to support it had to be on the hush, hush. They didn’t want people to get the wrong idea and this was their job, and I understood that. So it was like keep your financial contribution on the low low and don’t say nothing. Personally, I, well, I take that back, I think people were scared, and I think predominately the new president was… as it is with any new administration, it was out with what your doing and in with my philosophy. And that’s basically where it was at. And I think that goes back to, it wasn’t about giving back to the community or community service, user friendly, it was not at the forefront and that’s why I go back and say Palmer was and is a money hungry machine. It really is. It’s a machine at this point, if you cash out with a degree great, if you don’t thank you for your time and service. It got cut out, I think (she laughs) well, with all the lovely changes that started to happen… …well the Servant Leadership Program, we had built it into my job, and once I broke off and then left all that was gone. Nobody ever picked it up, there was no, “Into The Streets” Service Programs, no week long dedication to community service, there was no community service events, there were none of the things we use to do. It was like the idea of Servant Leadership it was like it never existed. It was like in my opinion, they got what they wanted.
Naima: Whose they? (make a creepy music sound, we all start laughing)

Alex: I would probably say that with all the opposition that we got when we started the development, especially when we came up with the idea to name it the Dr. Brother Community Leaders…I would say with all the opposition that we got that it was… I remember your boss saying, oh! oh! (mocks distress and imitates my former supervisor’s voice) …are you guys set on that? And I said yes, we are. With all that I think the administration got what they wanted… The whole idea was to wipe the slate clean like the man never existed, but you could never wipe the slate clean like he didn’t exist, cause he did, any memory, anything wiped away so he could do what he needed to do, that happened. You could probably go to Palmer State now and ask anybody who he is and they would probably look at you and be like who? (Taped Interview 2/06)

Alex’s anger at the lack of support to the Servant Leadership program is filled with passion and pain, it also mirrors the comment made by Lisa who stated that students currently on campus probably have little or no recollection of Dr. Brother and his legacy.

The end of the Servant Leadership Program was an end to a more Africentric approach to skill building with the premise of service to all before personal gain, fosters a more collaborative approach to education as well as a more dynamic expression of fictive kinship that expands beyond the African American community. Using Servant Leadership as the primary leadership program was an effort to break through the traditional status quo values and reposition all students to begin to think in more global community oriented ways in which the betterment of the group took precedence over the betterment of the individual. The death of Dr. Brother and of his
beloved program pushed the ideals of leadership for personal and professional advancement to the forefront. This push caused the Palmer graduates to cross cultural boundaries and build skills that would better position them in the professional world.

**For The Sake of Unity – “The Incident”**

In almost every interview that I conducted the Palmer State alums shared their perspective about what has come to be called, “The Incident.” Although everyone remembered the incident, the participants fell into three groups, Lisa and Zach who were involved, JB, Alex and Taylor who remember it with disdain but little emotion, and Don, Dawn, Tina, Kitty and Joann who remember it with anger. Terry was not at Palmer State when the incident occurred and Kelly had already graduated. On a brisk fall day, several African American student leaders woke up to find flyers of African Americans being lynched and beaten with slogans stating things like, “It could happen again.”

To the horror of administrators and students alike it later was discovered that the flyers were the work of several African American student leaders and an African American male staff member who felt that there was no unity on campus. Tina describes the incident:

“Yeah, well sometimes you have African American students who think its ok... and you have an advisor who Ok’d them to do this, to put flyers up with racial hatred and they put it on every door of African American leaders on campus. To try to get them to come to unity, but they didn’t say that. Then the BSU had a

166
meeting to say they were going to do something about it, but they actually did it and it was a big conflict. I thought it was tacky and stupid it was ridiculous and it made us look stupid. And then they tried to complain about it. Because they put it on my roommate’s door and we called the police, and they tried to say that we should not have called the police. But if somebody put something on your door, in this day and age of anthrax and all kinds of stuff, you have to be careful. And racial hatred is nothing to play with. You know it is something that I will never forget, I look at it and I think it really caused a stigmatism on the Black community.

Naima: What happened in the community? How did you resolve it?

Tina: In the community we just looked at them. We kind of looked down on the people who did it. We looked at them and was like that’s not smart. Just looking at them like you don’t have people come to stuff because you have nasty attitudes, (laughs) I just think people we’re trying to get noticed. That’s my personal position.” (Taped Interview 11/05)

In an effort to unify a community that seemed to be changing and becoming more fractured, this effort did nothing but produce a momentary camaraderie based on fear.

In an effort to question the lack of community on campus since the passing of Dr. Brother, Zach who was one of the leaders of the group that put the flyers up described it as:

Zach: “I was at the meeting the night before they decided to do the whole thing. Most of the prominent cats on campus got letters talking about we gonna hang you and blah this and blah that and they made everybody scared. But it was the biggest outcome I ever seen for some kind of social event. Where the majority of the Black people on campus came together, they only came together cause they were scared. We had people from other campuses coming over here to see what was going on. Some of them were salty about it turning out to be a hoax, but the point behind it is like the only time you come out is when we serving alcohol and got music playing, other then that you don’t come out to nothing conscious, anytime we need to be feed with knowledge about a particular situation or if anything is going on that need to
be addressed don’t nobody show up. The same people show up, preaching to
the choir so they sent out the stuff and everybody was... I never seen the
Multipurpose Room open, all three rooms opened up and they were packed.

Naima: Did it work? Did it unify the community?

Zach: I guess for that moment yeah. But that’s what fear do. Fear make you
band together until it’s over with. And when it’s over with you might have a
couple more, you might have a couple less people are going to be people after
they figured out it wasn’t real it turned into aggression. (Taped Interview
3/06)

Lisa, who was also involved in the planning of this incident, remembers it with anger
due to the actions of the staff person who had convinced the students to participate:

Lisa: “… so there was a group of Black leaders, who came together with an
administrator and were really upset because they really felt that Black people
were lazy. …the administrator brought up the idea that we could boost the
morale by hanging up these flyers. I know one of them had a Black person
being lynched another one had a Black person being beat… So the plan was to
fold them up and put them into either Black leaders mailboxes... We targeted
lots of people in the Greek system, random Black people. Heck, I put my own
note in my door. … the objective was for people on the committee not to find
them. I let my roommate find them. And the people who didn’t know about it
cause there was only six of us who knew, were like oh my gosh the White
people are trying to kill us. And so the idea was to have this big summit, a big
town meeting. But I guess these flyers got up to higher administration, you
know Black people calling home saying these people are putting signs of
Black people lynched in my doorway and in my mailbox… Interesting that
there were no White people there. But we was excited because we got all the
Black people together this was the goal! …people find out at the meeting that
White people had not done this that this was the initiative of some group that
no body knew of and that they were just trying to get Black people to
understand that we needed to stick together. Need to be as one, hold each
other’s interest and help and support the community. And that lasted, not so
very long. Which I find to be typical about the Black community that I am a
part of. There is one big incident and everybody comes together, you help and
help and then everybody disperse. There is no real glue. I think maybe back

168
in the 60’s it was always high stress and tense and that was the glue, but we don’t really have that now. And so after it was all said and done, the administrator was called out and he basically lied and said the students put that out and he just thought it was a good idea and let us run with it. And that left a bitter taste in my mouth and I think I understood cause he could not just come out and say that was my idea or he would have been fired. But at the same time he did not need to say how crazy we are… there was a newsletter that went out cause the university had to respond to that and it went out like wild fire. And the article went out in a major newspaper the Daily and he (the administrator) was in there being quoted, the students did this initiative and it was inappropriate and da, da, da. And I don’t think he needed to go that far. And say this was poor planning and poor judgment, instead of saying the students should not have done this, that this was a dumb idea. And from that point on - you are not an ally. You’re a person who likes to start fires and walk away from them and take no ownership of that fire. So from then on he was just a hothead to me, someone who was about the culture but not able to articulate yourself enough to stab all the people in the back. It was quite a hype.” (Taped Interview 11/05)

It is interesting to note that Lisa, who often felt outside of the African American community and Zach who sometimes felt more accepted by his White peers then his cultural peer group were involved in the planning and execution of this endeavor.

Those involved in the planning of “The Incident” were drawing on the Critical Race Tenet (1992) that racism is a permanent part of American society and trusting that their peers would react in a way that brought them together. By creating a story of a racist incident they drew their peers into a situation in which they were confronted by their shared historical past of oppression. The desire for community was in fact so strong that students such as Lisa and Zach were willing to risk the anger of others to bring the community together through a shared experience that heightened emotions and brought unity on campus for but a moment. The fact that
they choose such images of violence against people of their race speaks to the understanding that although the shape of racism may have changed, it still lurks in the corners of the minds and is apparent in the very fabric of our social consciousness.

Kitty attributes the changes on campus with the death of Dr. Brother as one of the reasons that motivated students and staff members to take such drastic measures to bring unity to campus. In our conversation I shared with her that I had been on campus several days earlier and seen African American women with scarves and slippers on and as she had mentioned earlier in her interview, I also was appalled, an excerpt from that portion of the interview follows:

Kitty: I would say mine is a mix. (experience with faculty and staff on campus) Because the earlier part (when Dr. Brother was alive), I’d say freshman through junior year it was a supportive staff or you would see someone at this event or at that event, it was more encouraging and more nurturing. We kind of had upper classmen telling us what to do on campus… you do not walk around with a head scarf on your head, on campus because they already think that you’re ghetto so don’t give them that perception. You do not walk around with house shoes on we don’t care if your roommate is going to class with their pajamas on, you don’t do that. We need to prepare you right now. So by the time I became a junior and a senior and we tried to pass that along to the underclassmen they were not receptive the way we were receptive. So in that way and at that time they stopped coming to events I remember my senior year, one of the administrators on campus actually pulled a stunt. He went around pasted up hate messages, put it on the BSU… somebody hanging from a noose, nigger this and nigger that. And he put it on the main people’s doors on campus and so that was the buzz of we have a racist on campus, blah, blah, blah and they called a town hall meeting come to find out he did it. Why did you do that? Well I don’t see any unity in the people. Well your not going to have any unity this way if you’re an administrator and your acting like a child you could of went to that a whole different way. I think that people off even more so then we really didn’t have anything by the time I graduated. And then when I started grad school I just
saw the difference between when I was a freshman and when I was a first year grad student. I didn’t think it was the whole, oh when people walk on campus, even if your Black I think you should speak to somebody. You didn’t have that. They would look you straight in your face roll their eyes and keep walking like they did not see you. Um, I don’t think it’s better now from walking on campus to visit different administrators or to go on campus for professional experiences, no, they will not speak to you. But I do see the difference in that and I kind of wish and I hope that it will evolve back to where it was when I first started.

Naima: Why do you think that happens? It’s like the community disintegrated and I don’t exactly know, but I saw it cause I was there when you were there and it was like this progress crumbling. Why do you think that happens?

Kitty: I kind of want to say it has to do with the administrators turning over when Dr. Brother died. Cause we also had those administrators that were there when he was there, they taught the people who were in front of me. So when I was there I had the tail end of them. And so when the underclassmen came in they didn’t have nobody. Not no real key Black people and the key Black people that they had in my opinion, they were not very good. They were all about I’m going to evolve in my own position and if I help you in a way then good, if I don’t oh, well, the next person will help you. So if you don’t have anyone telling you the dos and the don’ts then you don’t know anything else and if you come from high school acting like that and the majority of high school students from your same school are coming then your going to continue that. It’s sad. (Taped Interview 3/06)

Don, Dawn, Lisa and Zach all shared a similar view of the underclassmen who were there when they were there and their refusal to be properly indoctrinated into the campus culture. Zach said:

Zach: I think what hurt the most was that when I tried to pass it down (things he had learned) somebody didn’t want it but they still wanted to be mad at me because I was doing what I was doing. I always felt that if you are blessed with some type of knowledge then you pass it down and if you don’t pass it down, shame on you if you didn’t pass it down, and a lot of them didn’t want it.
Naima: Why do you think they did not want it? Why do you suppose that was?

Zach: I still try to figure it out to this day, for the most part I think that’s just life. Everybody is not going to accept what you try to give them even if it is the truth. You just got to come to that understanding yourself. That everybody is not going to accept. I think you deal with it harder cause you see the outcome of not taking that truth. And you don’t want nobody to go through whatever it is you went through for the most part. It’s like you get wind of certain things that go on down there and for me it left a bad taste in my mouth cause I did so much and it really does not seem like it even mattered. I used to go through the archives and read like memos that people before me left concerning like events on campuses and how things are to be ran and rough drafts of constitutions. And I applied what I could apply and I figured I could do the same thing. Leave some kind of archive of everything that I done, to me it really didn’t matter. Cause I did leave all the stuff I was suppose to leave and it seemed that things just got worse. (Taped Interview 3/06)

It was as if Dr. Brother’s death filtered into every aspect of campus life. These effects pushed students to a place where they felt they needed to fend for themselves in the creation of community.

**And The Chief Was A Black Woman – Negative Experiences with African American Faculty and Staff**

In examining the conceptual idea of the New Talented Tenth, the participants in the study often denied that they experienced racism on campus, that campus was not a hostile place, or at first denied that they had experienced it and then remembered some little “situation” that they had forgotten all about until the end of the interview process. Many of those I interviewed shared stories of frustration with
campus police and their strict regulations about social events on campus; this was particularly difficult because the Palmer State Police Department was headed by an African American woman. From 1998 to 2004 Palmer State University had a strict policy that governed a “campus social event.” The definition was so narrow that it only impacted African American student organizations hosting parties on campus.

Each year Student Government hosted a lottery for student organizations to obtain a date to host a party in the Student Union. According to the participants, White Greek organizations never participated in the lottery because they often held their events off campus with alcohol. Other organizations had no need to host an event which might have upwards of 400 people in attendance therefore the lottery dates were truly the domain of the African American organizations on campus. Historically the first party of the year was the best garnering outsiders from the community and each organization waited with baited breath as their names were randomly pulled from a hat. Parties on campus were elaborate requiring that the following adults supervise: campus faculty advisor, official advisor from the national organization if Greek, a Student Life representative as well as one police officer per 50 students in attendance.

This police to partier ratio called “capacity” was determined based on the number of officers available to work the social event. If another event was occurring that required police attention, if someone called in sick, or did not want to work
overtime, capacity for a social event could be as low as 100. If all officers were present capacity could be 500 participants. Used as a fundraiser, student organizations charged a minimum of $6 per person, making capacity a major issue of contention between the students and the police chief and could be stressful since capacity could be capricious and change up to the 20 minutes before the party began. Ratio issues could also fan the flames of resistance as students who were waiting in lines outside the party were denied access as capacity was reached. To add further insult to injury, students were also required to have a minimum of 6 private security guards on the premise during the party. These guards used a wand to “frisk” everyone who came and once people were admitted they could leave and re-enter. Parties ended at 1:00am, but at 12:45am the DJ called the last song and the staff turned the lights on, cheating the students in their opinion of their last 15 minutes of party fun (Field Notes and Palmer State Student Handbook 2002).

Almost all the students remember their interactions with parties as an unfair battle they always seemed to lose. Don and Dawn said:

Don: Even the Chief… – she prejudiced against her own people.

Dawn: (she interrupts) They (the police) believe all the stereotypes about us.

Don: (he keeps going) The Chief told me that herself. She said typically Black students have more problems at parties

Dawn: And we are the only ones on campus having parties!
Don: Where’s the interaction? They need to get to know us! (PSU Police), You should know us. No parties, you know how they regulate them! No congregating. Push everything into The Center. They have nothing for us. What about May Daze? Hundreds of White kids out and drinking and we can’t even have a party on campus.

Don is referring to the annual Spring Fling celebration that occurred on the last Friday of the Spring quarter. Adjacent to the residence halls is a private apartment complex called Sage Hall, as darkness falls on Spring Fling, hundreds of White Students gather in the small complex, drinking, playing loud music and on occasion wrestling in Jell-O.

Although the graduates relate many issues with the unfairness of the campus party social system, a great deal is also mentioned about the unfair attention given to African America students overall. Kitty shares that:

“Campus security… oh, campus security and it didn’t help that Park Lane (campus residence halls) was right next to Sage Hall and they would sit there and tell you that they did not have jurisdiction over Sage Hall but they do have jurisdiction over Sage Hall and it doesn’t help that over Spring Fling they let these kids run amok in Sage Hall, but as soon as they step foot back on Palmer State’s campus you trying to come down on them and then the first week of classes every year it never fails. A Black apartment in Park Lane would try to have a party and it would go on for ½ an hour, an hour at most and it would get shut down and that would be the apartment that would be back to back with Sage Hall. And these kids are over there doing this and you’re telling me I have to shut up. It doesn’t help that they give us that little curfew for our parties and at that time it was over at 1 but it was really over at 12:45 cause they turned those lights on and they wanted you OUT by 12:50 so they could be on their way home by 1:00. (Kitty’s neck is rolling, and she is sitting up in the chair) And it didn’t help… I have issues with campus police… that they’ll sit there and it’s like they’ll either follow you or they’ll either try to be over helpful. Like may I help you? No you don’t need to help
me! You asked me this around the corner or why are you following me? That don’t make any sense, you should not be following me from The Township (another residence hall) all the way over here to the library now that does not make any sense. (She is talking super fast) and when I need you, you’re nowhere to be found. So those are my issues with racism on campus cause I do believe that campus security has a little underlying plot. Ok, but let me tell you this though. I remember one time in the summer we were coming home like 3:00 in the morning. Who was up patrolling at 3:00 in the morning on a Saturday? And my friend her blinker light was messed up. They pulled us over called another police car… a car full of girls and these four (police) guys talking about well, we pulled you over cause you didn’t put your turn signal on. I don’t believe you called two police cars on a car full of girls, at 3:00 in the morning cause we didn’t put our turn signal on. She politely opened up her glove compartment, pulled out her turn signal and stuck it out the window and said here it go, I’m going to the shop tomorrow can I get my ticket or let me go home. He couldn’t give her a ticket and I’m still upset about that. Cause it didn’t make any sense to me you do not need to call two police cars with four men in for a car full of girls! …yeah.” (Tape Recorded Interview 3/06)

When asked her opinion on the situation with Campus Police, Kelly who was present simply said, “Ditto.” She, like Don and Dawn saw the problems with the police as the responsibility of the Chief who as an African American woman failed in her responsibilities to her fictive kin and as a “sista” should have done a better job in looking out for African American students. Terry shared that even as a member of the staff, she could not see the Chief as an ally. These negative instances of interaction with the campus police further support Willie’s claim that faculty and staff play a vital role in the African American college student experience. Furthermore, as Willie suggests negative encounters greatly impact the experiences of African American students causing them to feel betrayed or uncared for by those they believe are suppose to be on their side.
Some graduates felt that the struggle with the police and the Chief could not
be solely blamed on their department, Lisa said:

“I always thought it was so odd that we had so many racial issues with a Black
chief. It was like, how is this? And I think I have mixed emotions about it
cause there were defiantly times when they were in the wrong. When it was
clearly, we are not doing anything, we are just standing here, I mean over in
Sage Hall, there are a lot more White people over there breaking stuff, setting
stuff on fire and we are simply standing here. So I have definitely been in the
midst with that. But I also know that Black people don’t always follow
through and do the things on their end that they are suppose to do. So you
never know did they not follow through or are they really being racist? Or is
there something you could have done to prevent the situation? Or are they
really being racist. It’s frustrating when, I mean sometimes there are fights at
Black parties and you can’t hate the police for being there to break up those
fights. Yet and still how they brake them up is what needs to be questioned.
It’s a very frustrating matter. When you go, you never really know what the
issue is. So you are constantly swinging at the air hoping you’ll hit
something. Is it your fault, is it our fault? How can we have a really strong
case against the police when clearly the community has done some things that
wasn’t right. You know at parties and outside guests, and that type of thing,
things you can’t control but they look like you, cause we all look the same so
how would they know the difference?

Zach, Alex and Taylor also share a similar perception as Lisa wondering if some of
the problems African American students have with campus police were problems that
they assisted in creating. They felt that the Chief was only doing what was necessary
for the safety of all students and in some respect to protect her job. Zach believed
that through the sanctioning of tight control by her officers, the Chief was actually
protecting African American students. Alex was a firm supporter of the Chief and
was personally mentored by her, meeting her weekly to discuss strategy in achieving
her career goals. When questioned as to how this relationship occurred, Alex stressed that she sought the Chief out and found her to be very open to supporting students of color. These graduates all on campus after the death of Dr. Brother were easy to define as members of The New Talented Tenth and were better able to see both sides of the situations while taking the Chief’s viewpoint as an example of professional success.

The graduates of Willie’s (2003) study also speak about negative experiences with African American faculty and staff. Joann illustrates this point when she tells the story of her problems with the Director of the Gospel Choir on campus:

“I have not talked about this out loud since it happened and it is kind of sad how this person’s life turned out. I had a discrimination with someone of my own color. …when I was trying to get into the choir and they had changed the requirements and one was you had to read music. And it was discrimination cause naturally I can’t read music. It was with me and May (another blind African American student) my first time dealing with Affirmative Action ever and we filed a suit. We got a fair audition and we were both accepted into the choir. And that is what I mean when I say that some blind people can walk around and just let some things just happen. Like May she never came back to the choir, she was scarred by it. Unlike me I could not even convince her to come back to the choir, she stayed in the all White choir and was happy with it.” (Taped Interview 2/06)

Willie writes, “It becomes obvious that Black professors not only stand in as parent figures but shoulder many student’s hopes and dreams …Black professors are bound to disappoint… and students may experience the disappointment as dramatically as a family betrayal (p.66).” Although both Willie and the Palmer State graduates mention positive experiences with African American faculty and staff, it is the
negative experiences that seem to have long lasting effects. I concur with Willie that when applying fictive kinship to the experiences of graduates African American students who transfer parental images onto those they racially identify with find the negative experiences much more painful and tend to again become more self-sufficient and less involved and invested in the support that can be gained from the African American community.

Conclusion

During my recent meeting with the current President of the African American Alumni Association of Palmer State University, we discussed the death of Dr. Brother and the perceived impact on the lives of the graduates who were in my study. The Alumni Association was formed several years after the death of Dr. Brother in response to the alumni’s belief that support of current PSU African American students was a missing piece of the university puzzle. As members of the New Talented Tenth, these alumni were determined to give back to the community. An excerpt from the interview follows:

Naima: There’s a two-year period it seems before the alumni association was active, of students who had a very different view of Palmer State, then the Brother students that I interviewed. They look at is a more hostile place, a place where there wasn’t a lot of support. Whereas the students who were there when Dr. Brother was there talk about how wonderful it was, and how diverse it, and how supportive it was, and I’m not exactly sure how I am going to approach that…
President: Well, sure, that is very real. That two-year period is the view that people had before Dr. Brother and perhaps the view that they do now. I know that Dr. Tamann (the current president) puts out a great deal of effort to, to facilitate diversity. I.E. The Search program (an academic/professional conference that explores issues of diversity), another program that we participate in for diversity. So I’m out there a lot, probably more then most other folks. So I’m very active on Palmer State and I know what Dr. Tamann is attempting to do. Well unfortunately even with that said there still is that perception from students. Now when I think that when you had Dr. Brother, there once again, the number one person who looks like people of color that’s very rare in our universities except when you’re looking at a Black student. Now when you went there you had that. But not at our White schools, White universities. So Dr. Brother was more then a president, he was an icon, he was a role model, he was an individual who said, if that man can make it so can I, and that’s the difference, that’s why we need young people like you and others in authority positions because that’s what motivates us. It doesn’t matter what you put on paper. I need to see what you do. I get what you say, but I see better what you do.

The PSU African American Alumni Association president’s perspective neatly sums up the development of an ideology that nurtures self-success, changing campus climate and a perceived decrease in support from faculty, staff and administration. The development of the New Talented Tenth at Palmer State can in some ways be attributed to not only the changing norms and values of African American culture but I also believe can be viewed as a direct result of the legacy of Dr. Brother, the rapid changes that occurred after his death and the desire for students to follow in his footsteps to make a positive change in their personal status in the ever growing capitalistic free market of American society. Unfortunately, with the removal of many of Dr. Brother’s community based programs, his ideas of collaboration, community and caring have been lost on some level regulating the African American
community to a social outlet instead of the fictive kinship system of family it had been in the past.
“I Meant No Offense” – The Rise of Intellectual Racism and the Persistence of The African American Self Segregated Community

We had not been getting along – as a matter of fact it was the worst fight that I can remember between the members of my sorority and another African American women’s Greek lettered organization on campus. The feud was stupid really, a sorority sister of mine had stolen a boyfriend from one of our rivals and one of their members was spending too much time with a group of us. No one took into account that the one who had stolen the boyfriend had been dating him previously to his involvement with the rival and that before he started seeing her he had professed that he would always love my sister and leave his current girlfriend in a minute (I was the maid of honor at their wedding). And no one took into account that the sorority sister that was always hanging out with us had been hanging out with us since she arrived on campus as a bright-eyed freshman. The situation was ugly with veiled threats, rude comments, rolling eyes and public slams during impromptu step shows – the rival sorority had even stopped coming to Student Union on Black Awareness meetings because I was the president. But on that cold and dreary November day, every member of the Black community was present, even some who had never
associated or identified with the African American community. They had come to this emergency meeting ready to take a stand; they had come ready to demand safety and to see justice done. This fractured group had come together and they wanted to know how I was going to lead them in response to Michael being hit in the head by a bottle as he passed a White fraternity house on campus. We went from divided to unified in the time it took a White hand to crack a bottle over a Black head and suddenly our little trivial squabbles meant nothing.

A review of articles contained in the March and April 2005 Black Issues In Higher Education cite a number of recent racial incidents that have emerged on campuses across the country. Willie (2003) best describes, “While many White Americans were able to embrace the legal changes that no longer discriminated against nonwhites, just as many were unable to translate those changes into their personal philosophies. The result has been a combination of informal discriminatory behavior and a conservative and status quo interpretation of many of the legal changes that have taken place (p. 131).” Therefore it is as if the action or outward manifestation of racism has taken a backseat to the intellectual practice of it. The ideology of racism still exists and is played out daily in American society through physically nonviolent means.

Furthermore, recent racial incidents at Palmer State University during the Winter Quarter of 2006 have made headlines and news reports across the city where it
is located. These incidents of racism although not violent like the bottle throwing experience we had at Faith Western University, are in some ways more chilling because they deal with a more intellectual approach and an educational challenge to maintain the status quo, spouting racial hatred and bigotry and moronic attempts to break down gains made through various civil rights legislation. These intellectual racial attacks continue to produce tension among the races, prohibit true appreciation and/or tolerance for diversity and work to continue to silence people of color while holding them in their “proper” place in American society. As this study has shown the emerging and ever changing, yet constant, values of the African American community and advancement, this chapter seeks to discuss implications and conclusions on which future investigators might draw from as a starting point.

**Coming Around Again: The Persistence of Community**

University of Oklahoma baseball coach Larry Cochell resigned in June of 2005 due to what were deemed as racially insensitive comments made about one his African American players, student Joe Dunigan III. During an off camera interview with international sports network ESPN, Cochell stated to reporter Gary Thonne that Dunigan played poorly because, “…there is no nigger in him (2005, p.13).” Although Cochell apologized for his comments, according to Black Issues in Higher Education, this was the second racially insensitive situation that the coach had found
himself in. In an effort to defend himself, Cochell stated that the remarks he made were not indicative of his own values, which begs the question – whose values was Cochell representing and why then did he feel the need to share that unknown person’s values with the world? Furthermore, why was this the second time the Coach was being accused of sharing such explosive statements in a public forum? Comments such as Cochell lend further credence to the premise of Critical Race Theory that racism is embedded deeply in American society and that despite perceived value changes within the African American campus community – a self segregated community continues to persist.

During my sophomore at Faith Western University every African American player walked off the football team because of racial comments that the coach had made during practices. One male friend of mine quit the track team after the coach yelled out, “run nigger, run” in a fit of excitement during a cross-country track meet. It appears that not much has changed in the thirteen years since I graduated with my Bachelor’s Degree. Perhaps the purpose of a perpetuating self segregated African American community on Palmer State’s campus is a product of racial memory, an inner sanctuary that persists, “just in case.” Fordham (1996) suggests that fictive kinship will always exist, shifting and adapting to serve the needs of African American community members. Perhaps the community is in fact undergoing a
transition awaiting its next Genesis so that it might once again serve the needs of its members.

I believe that the graduates of Palmer State University in this study were bolstered by the recent experiences of having an African American in the most prominent position on campus. Seeing his success as well as the changing focus of cultural values, may have caused those who were there during Dr. Brother’s tenure to feel safe enough to explore their options outside of the self-segregated African American community. Furthermore this more neo-liberal approach was transmitted to new students in both concrete and tacit ways who then adopted more individualistic and competitive values while regulating more communal values to the sidelines. These shifting values changed the very fabric of African American community on campus. Kelly and I discussed the changing face of the African community and the possibility of the return to a community more family oriented:

Naima: …yeah everybody talks about police, the incident with the hate mail, Dr. Brother. And the other thing which I have to say because I want your thoughts on this, the community has become not a community anymore, because the people have picked up more White values, like competition and trying to get ahead, and looking out for the individual, it’s not about we’re a community we got to help each other out, we got to get where we are going together. So I’m interested in what your thoughts are…

Kelly: You know I think that is really just a cycle, a generational cycle. Because that is something, exactly what you just said is something my mother tells me from her generation to our generation. You know, to hear her tell it you know Black folks don’t support Black folks no more and back in the 60’s and 70’s there was the Black power movement and you know because we
didn’t have, we had to fight to get what we wanted but now a days because we get things so freely we don’t really care about our heritage you know how people have to work hard to get what they want. For the campus life, it’s so funny cause I talk to students and I got a little girl in my church who goes to PSU. And me and Lanie (another alum) are like oh, my gosh, what is going on and she’s like PSU sucks, and I’m like WOW! But you always hear the person that’s older then you say back in my day, even the people who were there before me you know, oh, back in my day Palmer State was this and this and this. So that even goes back to my high school, with every generation it seems like it gets worse and worse and worse. I don’t know why that is uhm, I mean Palmer State, when you talk about community and supporting each other it use to be like that. It really did. Uhm, I think I left right on the brink so when I left, the next year it started going major down hill. So I didn’t get to experience the woes of campus life. But I don’t know. It always helps when you have strong Black leaders in high positions to help students, you know, realize the value of their culture and when you don’t have those individuals in those positions then your culture just kind of goes to the wayside and if that wasn’t instilled in you when you left home, then it’s certainly not going to be instilled once you go away to college especially if there is no major administrator who taking a part in promoting diversity. (Taped Interview 3/06)

As the president of the university, Dr. Brother set the tone and the faculty and staff took their cues from him. His commitment to diversity and his ability to lead in the White world of campus life while supporting the African American community illustrated to students of the color the importance of being able to walk between two cultural worlds.

Delgado (1995) writes, “Many members of minority groups speak two languages, grow up in two cultures… and so… has the advantage in mastering and applying critical social thought? Who tends to think of everything in two or more ways at the same time? Who is a postmodernist virtually as a condition of his or her
being (p.8).” Dr. Brother was such a man and he walked a line of double
consciousness that was in fact appealing to the African American students under his
watchful eye. It is obvious from his care of students of color, excerpts from speeches
that he had given and innovative program initiatives that he created that he
understood the importance of the continuance of the separate African American
community while also understanding that importance for African Americans to
function in an increasingly diverse and market driven world. His ability to illustrate
the importance of acquiring the skills needed to obtain respect, prestige and financial
freedom in the “White” world while maintaining his link to the African American
community set the example for changes in student culture on campus – he offered
opportunities and opportunities begat change. But the rapid changes after his death
speak once again to the permanence and subtly of racism in our lives, for it is my
contention that the rapid decline of programs and the changing campus climate
represent a passive intellectual racism, where people’s intentions are not to be racist,
but their ingrown training and outward actions demonstrate differently even if they
are unaware that they are acting out the maintenance of the status quo.

The effects of Dr. Brother’s death were felt for several years after it occurred
and in fact tainted the experiences of those students who came after he had been gone
for three or more years like Alex and Taylor who watched the demise of Dr. Brother’s
beloved leadership program, and Don and Dawn who were the only participants who
labeled the campus hostile and were the most recent graduates in my study. These climate changes did not however, push the African American community back solely into communing in their own cultural group, although the importance of the African American self segregated community with its internal pockets continue to persist. Rather, it forced these alumni to further develop their ability to move between two worlds, to see themselves in what Ladson Billings (2001) defines as the liminal position, the ability to have multiple viewpoints and to use these multiple viewpoints to your advantage based on your societal assignment to the margins. Furthermore the ability to take advantage of this perspective produced a drive to develop skills that shaped the participants into new versions of W.E.B. Dubois’s Talented Tenth able to cross cultural boundaries and find success in the professional realms.

Being able to see from this position of liminality allowed the African American graduates to recognize that although there appeared to be little or no hostility and racism on campus, it did in fact exist, lurking somewhere just underneath the surface. Thus when “The Incident” occurred before it was known that it was perpetrated by their own, African American students from all the small internal and diverse groups within the self segregated community flocked to meetings and open houses to determine the best course of action, while attempting to protect themselves and each other. Furthermore, the community continues to exist despite adapting values because it serves the African American community as a place to
maintain cultural memory and support in times of stress and need, but also exists for cultural and emotional social support and outlets.

The awareness of race and the implications of race are a complex one that only now the students are beginning to understand. When asked, their answers sometimes seem to contradict earlier replies or impressions that life on campus and interactions with mainstream society was without malice or challenge. My conversation with Lisa and Terry exemplifies this point:

Lisa: Do I think it’s hostile? See I am a blending Negro. We’ll say that politically correct… (we are really laughing now) I am the Negro that White folks are comfortable with. I am the Negro that they say, you’re not like the others. I am the Negro that does not make their hair stand up on the back of their neck when all the other Negro’s walk in. I am the type of Negro that White folks say, I don’t even see color. So I think that the world in which I experience is never up in my face. Yeah a double quota as a Black and as a woman, man! Um, but I’ll be darned she’ll work hard, she’ll get it done, she’ll do it better then we think she’ll do it… I am very different, in front of White people I am very chipper and you can’t be to Black and you can’t be to loud and I think I am beginning to switch very easily. I think my only fear is that I can’t switch back to Black cause I am at work more then I am in my comfort zone. And so there are times when I may walk into the Black center here and I have to say you are Black now, so shake it off… I get really concerned that I won’t be able to relate to Black folks anymore. And what is the point of being in the profession if I can’t help people? But I have been in this world for so long that I just hope that I don’t lose it and get so deep in that the Black folks don’t get me anymore, cause the White folks got me! (laughing) So in terms of climate, it was great, there was not a lot I felt that I struggled with. . (Taped Interview 11/05)

Lisa was in fact coming to terms with understanding that although it appeared that she was welcomed in the mainstream world, she in fact was special and was treated as such as a member of The New Talented Tenth.
Further illustration can be found in Willie’s study as she defines the African American college student experience as a “complicated picture of marginality.” She writes, “In a society with increasing layers of stratification, contradictory class locations – a concept well articulated with the phrase “double consciousness” a century ago by DuBois – also exist (p.78).” Despite this ability to cross cultural boundaries, walk between two worlds to obtain the skills necessary to obtain success, and to apply these skills and function successfully, both the Willie graduates and the PSU graduates could in fact see that very little had changed. Lisa’s reflections illustrate that although she like most of the participants in this study have learned the rules of the Culture of Power and can perform within it, they are still not in control of it and have very little ability to change it. As Critical Race Theory asserts, racism is a feature of American society that will continue to persist and this persistence allows for the illusion of false gains in equality and inclusion in the American educational system.

**Racism – Palmer State’s Continued Problem**

An intellectual approach to racism can be illustrated by looking to examples on other campuses across America while also examining current situations occurring at Palmer State University today. When examined from a critical standpoint these situations challenge the very notion that we have made as much progress as we
believe that we have made. Today’s racism may not be as violent, but it is just as
insidious playing on the spirit, minds and emotions of its victims. During the Fall
Quarter of 2005 the Grand Valley State College Student Republicans held an
Affirmative Action Bake Sale to denounce polices that they believed gave
preferential treatment to African Americans and other minorities on campus.
Organized by student Kyle Rausch, the organization may lose university funding as
well as be suspended, despite these threats Rausch refuses to apologize insisting that
he never intended to offend anyone only to challenge ideals and expose what the
group perceived to be unfair practices(Black Issues, March 2005). The refusal to
apologize despite student outrage is a blatant disregard for the respect of experience,
it is in fact the placement of Eurocentric ideals as superior to Africentric ideals in
which the student group stresses that their right to express their views about the needs
of those classified as “other” are much more important than the comfort, experience,
or future success of those labeled as “other” or minority in this country.

At Palmer State University a current controversy rages as a group of White
students question the need for a Black Student Union and believe that they have every
right to form a White Student Union for the advancement of White people on campus.
The idea for this organization as well as unflattering and insensitive comments made
about African American students on campus were being posted on the popular online
journal website, The Face Book (www.thefacebook.com). The outrage generated by
these postings prompted heavy news coverage on major networks in the area, newspaper coverage as well as several town hall meetings and community forums, some generated by the Black Student Union so that the African American community could plan an approach in relation to this new form of racism (PSU Student Newspaper, March/April 2006).

This intellectual approach to racism can be viewed just as violent as discrimination, beating and killing people of color, for it seeks to destroy legal and civil rights gains, cross cultural communication, collaboration, ideological insight and awareness about the importance of globalization and diversity. It seeks to return us to an era of slavery, not through physical chains but through economic bondage and intellectual rape and murder. At the University of Massachusetts White student government leaders dressed up as members of the KKK to protest the University’s proposed diversity plan. At such an elite institution could these educated students find no other way to intellectually voice their objections? Why return to such a violent image of death and destruction for African Americans nationwide to propose that a plan of diversity needs to be re-examined? In 2005 complaints to the administration from African American students at Penn State University have doubled. According to the students the administration has taken little or no action to uncover those responsible or to protect the students (Black Issues, March/April 2005). Students complain of receiving death threats through letters and emails and it seems
that Palmer State is not alone in facing these new forms of racism, discrimination and harassment.

**Reflections on Acting Black**

When comparing the graduates of Palmer State University to the participants in Sarah Willie’s (2003) work, *Acting Black*, there are several similarities that are worth noting. The students in Willie’s study, while reflecting back on their college experiences remember their time on campus with almost utopian worldviews. They remember their first year on campus as one in which they were close to their African American peers and the community was cohesive, collaborative and caring. However, for the Willie graduates, this more familial community was in disarray by the time they had reached their senior years. Their recollections of the campus community at this time are fraught with disunity and fragmentation. According to Willie’s graduates, it was as if the community itself changed, a reflection often recollected by the Palmer State students as well. Both the Willie graduates and the Palmer graduates commented on “things being different” or “things having changed.”

Willie’s graduates mention the ambivalence of the underclassmen coming onto campus concerning racial and cultural community expectations. Palmer graduates also mention this seeming rejection of what they perceived as necessary skills for African American undergraduates on campus and the lack of receptiveness
of those coming after them leading to a failure in the proper indoctrination into campus life. Furthermore, like the Palmer graduates who attended college almost twenty years after the Willie graduates, the Willie graduates complained of the adoption of more middle class goals of the underclassmen who had come onto campus after them, however, the students offered no clear definition as to what these middle class goals were. The Palmer graduates who also complained about the disconnection of those coming up after them however exhibited traits more Eurocentric in nature, and these values and norms are often defined as middle class goals and professional success. Instances of these experiences were portrayed in the stories shared by Kitty, Kelly, and Zach.

According to Willie this perceived loss of cultural transmission of knowledge can be explained due to a lack of apparent hostility in America today. Furthermore, it can also be attributed to the increasing perceived acceptance of diversity in the world. This perceived acceptance has decreased the perceived need of racial group identity and as aforementioned, it is my contention that the self-segregated community persists because of racial memory. In other words, hostility may not be seen, but Critical Race Theory informs us that it is still there, lurking and waiting for the opportunity to unmask its hegemonic oppression and although African Americans do not always acknowledge this truth in word, it is seen in action as racial enclaves persist to ensure group cultural survival and social support. Willie contends that as
each generation becomes further removed from the passion of the Civil Rights Era, as colleges strive to recruit the “right” type of African American students (those less radical and from a higher socio-economic class), personal student development as well as increasing conservatism causes African American students to disassociate with traditional cultural values and pursue more mainstream status quo directed goals.

Truly, the Willie graduates and the Palmer graduates acquired the skills needed to cross cultural boundaries emerging as bicultural individuals or as DuBois defines it, in possession of a unique form of double consciousness. Willie writes, “If one is phenotypically black and therefore racially subordinate, one needs to be fluent in both the subculture and the dominant culture for the sake of survival (p.143).”

When asked the Palmer graduates speak about being able to perform professionally in any setting. Both Lisa, JB and Zach shared about obtaining practical leadership skills, while Kelly believes that had she not attended Palmer State she would not be able to head the non profit she founded. Tina stated that:

“My experience at Palmer State… I would make the comment that… a lot of people ask me what was the best college moment in my life and I would say I went to college and I learned how to work  A lot of things were easy for me in, High School I never really studied. I remember (thinking) oh, I can’t do this, every thing was just so easy. College was definitely hard work. Studying, staying up late, working. Juggling life, being involved in everything, organizing, learning how to step. I would say it was a holistic experience because I learned every aspect of college life, social interaction, education, I learned everything that I did from the experience and I’m glad I got a chance to use it off campus and on campus, through organizations and activities, so it was a good experience. A good experience (Taped Interview 11/05).”
Although Tina, Dawn, Don, Alex and Taylor have little to say about their academic preparation, they all believe that the skills obtained in the extracurricular realm better prepared them to achieve their goals on a professional level. Just as Willie’s graduates have affirmed, that attending a predominately White institution had afforded them the chance to learn to “talk to anybody” and use their networking ability to help them obtain mainstream success.

**Implications for Higher Education Professionals and Continued Research**

The implications for Higher Education professionals in response to this study are in fact necessary challenges to praxis in order to better serve our students of color. First, as reflecting on the perceptions of graduates such as Terry, it is necessary for professionals in the field to be careful not to program or provide advocacy based solely on their perceptions of student needs. Assessments, open dialogues and student input will be necessary to address the needs of the ever changing African American student population. Furthermore, those invested in the continuance of the cultural community must in fact assist students in reconnecting with the more Africentric values of community and collaboration, for a failure to reconnect to these values, although preparing African Americans to compete in the professional world,
further entrenches the status quo by opening an ever widening chasm between the internal groups of the African American community.

According to Gordon (1997) educators have a choice as to how education will best meet the needs of African American students. She writes, “Will that education function as a mode of ideological domination, working to co-opt and adapt Black students to the dominant societal hierarchy, or will it function as a force of social reconstruction to help them redefine the nature of their own lives (p. 232)?” It is up to educators to ensure that the process of obtaining knowledge assists students in defining the nature of their lives in a world that often treats them as second-class citizens. Gordon purports that the central function of knowledge is creating power and the knowledge students of color are obtaining although allowing them to be more successful in the professional world, is not granting them true power or in fact changing the status quo.

I agree with Gordon’s belief that the ideology of educators, our own personal cultures and history greatly affect our educational practices. Therefore, as educators we must be charged with constantly and honestly doing self-checks and self-challenges of our own perspectives and actions and adjust as necessary in order to ensure that we are serving students to the best of our abilities. Furthermore, Gordon agrees with DuBois in that it is in the best interest of our nation to have a collaborative, well educated population that is able to self sustain yet invested in the
development and well being of all its members. Thus an overall educational shift is needed focusing on as Dr. Brother entitled, The Three C’s, collaboration, competence and caring.

If we in fact treated everyone as fictive kin and drummed this ideology into the minds of all students, intellectual racism would fail, competition to the detriment of others would cease and the dominance of the status quo would diminish greatly. Therefore, educators must create community programs that assist African Americans in obtaining success in academic settings using Africentric values, as well as work with the campus community to fosters collaborative environments and a culture of care. As evidenced from the changing campus climate at Palmer State with the reign and then death of Dr. Brother, there must be more investment and interaction between students of color and faculty and staff as well as an aggressive push on the recruitment and retention of African American faculty and staff in high-ranking positions on campus.

Finally, culturally specific programs must be created and maintained to further support the students on the margin without dismantling the margin but appreciating it for the liminality that it produces in its members. Professionals must not work to negate or to dismantle the self segregated community of African Americans on campus, rather they must see this community as a place in which African American students can gain cultural capital that compliments the cultural capital they are
obtaining from the mainstream, allowing them to emerge as members of the true Talented Tenth as DuBois defined it, invested in the advancement of their cultural community, seeking education for the joy of learning and also to provide for themselves and their families. As the future leaders of the African American community these new members of the Talented Tenth must not be pushed from the margins of campus life through the stripping away of their cultural hubs, rather these cultural communities should be encouraged and funded with university resources to assist African American students in preparation for life in the real world.

Further research is needed to explore the experiences of African American graduates at predominately White institutions of higher learning. The impact of the roles of mentors and interaction between faculty, staff and students must be further examined to enhance teaching methods and the participation of faculty and staff in student lives. Research on the African American presidency and the impact of the presidency on the lives of students would make an excellent follow up study to this piece. The persistence of African American campus community must be examined at other colleges and universities across the nation to better understand if the birth of The New Talented Tenth is a national trend or a more localized one brought about by the unusual circumstances of African American leadership at PSU. Furthermore, neoliberalism, the adoption of more Eurocentric values by African American college graduates, the ability to adapt them to function in the center of campus life while
maintaining their affiliation with the margins and the ability to cross cultural boundaries while applying double consciousness are all research topics that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

Many of my participants shared with me their dreams and goals that if achieved will entrench them firmly in mainstream American life. However, this entrenchment does little to change or challenge the status quo as their limited success will do nothing to alter the true Culture of Power or the hegemonic practices alive in the cropping up of intellectual racism. The graduates who shared their stories with me are in fact emerging Critical Race Theorists. Although they may not understand all of the theory’s implications the African American community with all its fractures and divisions persists and racism is still manifesting itself in the places we often expect to be the most enlightened. Fictive kinship continues to persist outside of the African American campus community as the graduates maintain their social ties with Palmer State through other alumni of color and maintain very little contact with the university or their White peers. Despite the continuance of separate internal cliques, everyone is still seen as part of the community and in times of trouble come together to overcome the storm. Currently at Palmer it is as if everyone is waiting with baited
breath for the next tragedy to reunify the community and restore it to a time of more familial Africentric focused values.

The self segregated community of African American students at America’s colleges and universities are alive, well, vibrant, ever changing and far from stagnant. For scholars such as Milner, Bray, the participants in Willie’s study and for myself, it offered safety in the storm of an often hostile environment. It also offered a home base from which to protest, rebel and learn the art of survival. For the Palmer State graduates in this study it was a place to find social support while learning how to cope in the professional world of the status quo. Kelly stated that:

“I tell people all the time that my best years was in college. And they were my best years. You know, you can make or break your experience in college. But I surrounded myself with good people. My momma use to always say pick a good bunch of friends and let your friends raise you cause you ain’t gonna listen to what your parents say. But if you got a good bunch of friends then you will listen to what they say. But I tell people all the time if I could go back to the same era that I was at Palmer State I would cause I had a wonderful time, a wonderful experience. I had a good bunch of people, people on campus respected me and my values. I didn’t do, I never did anything in college that I regret, when it comes to drinking and all that, never. But there may have been individuals around me who did, but everybody respected me enough to know that I didn’t. And it’s all about the way you carry yourself on campus, you know? I carried myself as a strong Black woman, a leader, but I like to have fun too. I have people come up to me all the time and say sometimes I forget that you are in a wheel chair, you know but, I would go back. I loved my friends, I loved being there. I liked the campus environment, it wasn’t too big, it wasn’t too small. I always say that it was enough Black people to kick it with if you needed more you could go to the HBCU across town. But I understand that Palmer State is different now…”
Palmer State was different because of the changing values and ideologies that the community was in fact adopting. With the rise of some African American leaders to positions of prominence, the increasing adaptation and adoption of Eurocentric values into the African American community to create a new liberalism, the infusion of the hip hop culture into White mainstream America, and the always keen understanding that, “…despite my achievements, I am still Black in America” knowledge, the New Talented Tenth stride forward to take their place in 21st century America.

For the New Talented Tenth at Palmer State University the community existed as a place for social satisfaction and as a compass by which they guided their necessary forays and participations in the mainstream campus community. Even Alex and Joann who would not classify themselves as members of the community were simply a part of a clique contained within the community that was small and had little social prestige. But I believe that Dr. Brother himself best sums up the current state of the African American community on today’s predominately White campuses. He stated:

“I also believe that the commitment to the family that we as a people possessed in Africa has given way to American individualism of everyone for him/herself. Individualism has ultimately proven destructive to us as a people. Family values, family concerns and family support must be revitalized if we are to prepare our youth and our people for survival in the 21st century (Taken from the speech, Return to Family and Faith, 1994).”
Let Dr. Brother’s words be our guide and let us strive as educators to encompass his ideals of care, collaboration and community. For it is only in the embracing of these three values and the continued challenge of the status quo that true educational equity for all can be achieved and trickle out and overflow into all aspects of American society.
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- Palmer Student Handbook
- Palmer African American Fact Book
- Personal Speeches of Dr. Brother
- Black Issues of Higher Education Article discussing the death of Dr. Brother
- Black Issues of Higher Education Article discussing the hiring of Dr. Brother
APPENDIX

Interview Guide – African American Graduates Study

- Tell me about your time on campus?
- Where you are from?
- What was your major?
- Why did you choose PSU?
- Did you live on campus?
- What was your life was like on campus?
- What student groups were you involved with on campus?
- Who did you spend the majority of your time with on campus?
- What was the African American community like on campus?
- Did you feel like the African American community separated itself from the greater community?
- Were you a part of this community?  If not, why not.

(If not ask how you perceived questions)

- How did you become connected with this community when you first got on campus?
- Why did the African American students choose to stay to themselves in this community? What types of experiences led you to separate from the greater campus community?
- What type of social activities was the community engaged in?
- Were there African American students who were not a part of this community?
- If so, why do you think that was? How were they treated by others? Were there students who were able to walk between both worlds? How were they treated?
- Why did you choose PSU instead of a HBCU?
- What was the campus climate like? (Was it hostile? Receptive?)
- What was the interaction like with White students on campus?
- How were your relationships with faculty and staff? (Ask White and Black)
- Were there instances of racism and segregation on campus?
- Did everyone you start with graduate with you? Why did students leave campus?
- How did your experiences shape your current lives?
- What are your current interactions like with PSU?
- What are your relationships like with your peers who have also graduated?
- What do you feel was the most important thing that you learned at Palmer State University?
- Were you on campus when Dr. Brother was there?
- What types of interactions did you have with him?
- What do you remember about him?
- What were the faculty and staff like when he was there?
- How did the African American community change after he died?
- How did the overall campus change after he died?
- What was campus like while he was there?
- Is there anything else you’d like to share?