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Author(s): Bryan K. Hotchkins

Source: *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 86, No. 3, Special Issue—When Voices Rise: Race, Resistance, and Campus Uprisings in the Information Age (Summer 2017), pp. 269–282

Published by: Journal of Negro Education

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.3.0269>

Accessed: 04-11-2017 23:33 UTC

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Black Student Leaders Practicing Resistance in the Midst of Chaos: Applying Transgenerational Activist Knowledge to Navigate a Predominantly White Institution

Bryan K. Hotchkins

Texas Tech University

This study examines how 12 Black student leaders apply transgenerational knowledge to pursue social change while attending a predominantly White institution. Findings indicated participants' used Black cultural beliefs as a source of pride concerning what it means to be Black and to create positive change on campus through engaging in activism. By applying parental and elder transgenerational knowledge participants were able to preserve and protect the communal interest of Black students. Participants engaged in face-to-face and digital modes of protest, resistance and communication by using technology to conduct activism. The emergent themes were: Preserving "My" Black; and Digital Underground. These findings provide insight into how Black student leadership identities are positively influenced by racial socialization.

Keywords: *Black student leadership, activism, transgenerational*

The resurgence of a modern day Civil Rights Era can be directly traced to the formation of a Black Lives Matter social movement, which was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 (Garza, 2014). This social movement serves as an organizational platform for activists to protest institutional anti-Blackness practices and the systemic dehumanization of Black adults, while simultaneously providing a digital outlet for youth to share experiential narratives about combating racism (Dohrn & Ayers, 2016; Schuschke & Tynes, 2016). Concerning Black student leaders, Black Lives Matter has provided a source of transgenerational connectivity that is used to challenge blatant racism on social media, predominantly White campuses and within the public sphere (Joshi et al., 2017; White, 2016). As an example of a larger social movement, Black Lives Matter is reminiscent of organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was created at Shaw University in 1960 by Black student leaders to help African American citizens gain equal rights. Similarly, SNCC and Black Lives Matter built extensive transgenerational communal networks to respond to the cyclical erasure of Black people whether living in segregated neighborhoods or on hostile predominantly White institution (PWI) campuses.

How African American students experience being Black while attending PWIs has been researched during the past 50 years. Black students face threatening campus racial climates at PWIs where White institutional presence (Gusa, 2010) impedes academic, social and cultural progress (Fleming, 1984; Gusa, 2010; Hurtado, Alvarado & Guillermo-Wann, 2015). Specifically, Gusa (2010) conceptualizes White institutional presence as having four aspects: (a) White ascendancy, (b) monoculturalism, (c) White estrangement, and (d) White blindness—all of which are detrimental to the educational experience of Black students. These impediments represent both a form of blatant racism (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Smith, Hung & Franklin, 2011; Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000) and nuanced racial microaggressions (Gomez et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2014; Robinson-Wood et al., 2015; Sue, 2010) that can traumatically culminate in *gendernoir* racial battle fatigue (Hotchkins, 2017) if not avoided.

To illustrate, Black students often navigate racist PWI environments by being engaged in social change movements, joining historically Black organizations, participating in leadership

roles with students of color, practicing cyberactivism and through involvement in community giveback (Arminio et al., 2000; Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Gin et al., 2017; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). The impetus for becoming Black student leaders at PWIs is influenced by African American parents who racially socialize their children about participating in activism, the need to flourish while in college and giving back to Black communities through organizational involvement (Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994). Furthermore, racial socialization narratives provide home pedagogy (Delgado Bernal, 2001) perspectives about how elders and ancestors thrived despite being descendants of enslaved Africans who maintained cultural and academic excellence even in a modern era where Black people are constantly under siege (Hartman, 2007; Womack, 2017). In fact, the aforementioned studies indicated cultural expectations are transmitted through transgenerational knowledge from Black parents to children for the purpose of assuring an understanding about the value of racial connectedness, resistance, and community.

This research uses a qualitative comparative case study to explore how Black student leaders apply transgenerational knowledge, as a result of racial socialization, to participate in social change movements while attending a PWI. Drawing upon data from 12 participants, this study informs previous research by offering the narratives of Black student leader activists concerning how to navigate a PWI while being viewed in cultural and intellectual deficit terms. Participants employed racial resistance by using face-to-face and technological forms of activism to preserve what they deemed as their Blackness. Based on the findings, the author defines *racial resistance* as identifying racially threatening sources (e.g., White peers) and responding by developing strategies (e.g., organizing protest) to avert race-based trauma. Participants' perspectives about being Black were directly influenced by Black parents, elders, and communities prior to attending college. Finally, although African American and Black are not necessarily synonymous, the two terms are used interchangeably due to participants' self-identifying with both.

QUESTIONS GUIDING THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine how Black student leaders make sense of modern day social change movements, as a form of activism, within a higher education context. The overarching lines of query that informed the study were

- How do African American student leaders experience enacting activism on a PWI campus?
- What do Black student leader activists value about transgenerational knowledge shared by parents, elders and members of their communities?

The author also asked participants questions about how they construct themselves as activists, what it means to be a leader, and to what extent race and the legacy of chattel slavery influenced self-perceptions of being Black.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Broad Definitions of Black Identity within the Home and Academe

Black students' experiences at PWIs are replete with examples of how family support influenced success and current research explains why off campus family support contributes to the building of social, communal, and cultural capital in ways that positively influence academic outcomes (Carter-Francique, Hart, & Cheeks, 2015; Dennis, Phinney & Chuateco, 2005; Garriott et al., 2014; Goings, 2016; Johnson & Lane, 2016). This research is built on the previous work of Clark (1983), Bowman and Howard (1985), Dressier (1987), Kiah (1992), McAdoo (1993), and Herndon and Hirt (2004) that explained the relevance of family to the holistic development of Black students. To illustrate, Bowman and Howard (1985) found connections between parental racial socialization (e. g. communicating positive messages about being African American), levels

of self-efficacy and academic performance for African American students. Results implied participants who were racially socialized about 'racial barriers' and had higher awareness of interracial protocols attained higher grades. Kiah (1992) explored African American college students' persistence and achievement and found that nearly 50% of the participants perceived their mothers as 'most influential' in the development of attitudes toward education and racial identity. African American families influence how their children view education by building scholarly self-esteem through validating intellectual capabilities and instilling a sense of entitlement about deserving access to higher education. Bolstering this premise is research conducted by Clark (1983) who conducted studies with 'high-achieving' African American high school seniors from working-class families and found that students perceived parents as supportive and nurturing of their academic pursuits.

Dressier (1987) found members of Black households are more likely to seek and receive informal social and emotional support from family members. Additionally, these perceptions are formed due to the fact that "Black parents generally are involved in the lives of their children well into adulthood" (Herndon & Hirt, 2004, p. 494) even during graduate study years. Even though African American nuclear families have an enormous influence on identity development, it is the extended family that reinforces individual normative behaviors, which allows for fictive kinships that are equally significant (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). This assertion speaks to a communal nature of African American families as being bound by resiliency in the form of an ability to endure, survive, and develop buoyancy in the face of crises and adversities (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). The term 'resiliency' intentionally relates to the helping nature and tradition present of nuclear and extended kin relationships that are a primary part of African American identity development prior to college (McAdoo, 1993).

Finally, the way most African American students express their racially socialized Black identities is by being leaders and through activism in organizations (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, 2017; Patton, Bridges, & Flowers, 2011; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). In these organizations Black student leaders become socially responsible, develop leadership identities, create counterstories that dismantle majoritarian narratives, navigate varied sources of racism, and practice varied forms of activism (Dugan, 2006; Komives et al., 2005; Lichtenstein et al., 2014; Morris, 1981; Robinson-Wood, 2009; Sawyer III & Palmer, 2014). Historically, these displays of activism by Black student leaders are a direct response to unwelcoming or hostile campus racial climates at PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Joseph, 2003; Rosenthal, 1975). Recent renderings of activism involve dismantling structures of oppression at the intersection of issues such as sexual assault and hatred against Black, lesbian, and transgender women (Krause et al., 2017; Renn, 2007). Whether the medium is face-to-face or online (Cabrera, Matias, & Montoya, 2017; Gismondi & Osteen, 2017), Black student leaders purposefully act to achieve the emancipation of marginalized people through social change movements.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994, 2005) ecological paradigm was applied to examine how Black student leaders apply transgenerational knowledge as a form of racial socialization (Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994) to pursue social change through activist movements. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems influence identity development based on proximal interpersonal interactions. To illustrate, interactions occur between parent-child, child-child, child-elder, and child-environment exposures. Bronfenbrenner's posited, the identity development of children is influenced by societal landscapes that contribute to the worldview of a child. This development is shaped by five systems: (a) micro-, represents immediate surroundings; (b) meso-, connects children to direct places of interaction (e.g., schools); (c) exo-, is comprised of seemingly random indirect personal interactions; (d) macro-, is the outermost overarching societal layer (e.g., systemic racism); and (e) chronosystems, represent time passing throughout an individual's identity development. For instance, Black people are currently in the afterlife of chattel slavery where they exist in a constant state of systemic threat (Hartman, 2007; Womack, 2017), so how they respond to

systems of oppression is based on not only personal characteristics, but also how environments interact with their intersectional identities.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994, 2005) framework was applied in concert with Peters' (1985) and Stevenson's (1994) racial socialization models, which occur within parent-child and child-elder relationships as transgenerational knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. Racial socialization is defined as "tasks Black parents share with all parents—providing for and raising children . . . but include the responsibility of raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations" (Peters, 1985, p. 161). Historically, the racial socialization of Black children has been tied to communal transmissions of Black values and beliefs that served as a source of pride concerning what it means to be Black and how to combat racism.

Although Black parents and elders racially socialize children about racism prior to attending college, as students they are unable to avoid it once they arrive on campus. In fact, the literature is replete with empirical examples about how exposure to racism, in the form of racial microaggressions, hostile campus climates, racial battle fatigue, toxic White institutional presence and White male opposition to diversity is detrimental to Black students (Fleming, 1984; Gomez et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2015; Hotchkins, 2017; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015, 2017; Lichtenstein et al., 2014; Nadal et al., 2014; Robinson-Wood, 2009; Robinson-Wood et al., 2015; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

This study elucidates three points about the transference of transgenerational knowledge as racial socialization: (a) Black student leader activists use racial resistance to advance social change; (b) increased resonance about how Black people are historically treated can lead to responding against systemic oppression, marginalization and racism; and (c) using technology while participating in activism enhances organizational membership communication, builds sociocultural alliances and allows for in-group anonymity.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Comparative case study was used to understand participants' meaning-making in real life situations by collecting in-depth information through multiple sources (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Although this research informs academe about Black student leadership and activism experiences, this author is aware that "the goal of a case study is not to generalize the results to all institutions of higher education since the case is influenced by a number of specific and unique factors" (Perna et al., 2009, p. 6) all of which are considered with this study context.

Study Context

This study was conducted at Midwest State University (MWSU, a pseudonym), a public, research intensive PWI in a Midwestern mountainous state where the student body is comprised of 34,601 students and only 1% of those enrolled self-identify as Black. As of 2016, disaggregated gender data approximate 198 men and 148 women in attendance.

Historically, MWSU has never had more than 2% Black students and within the last five years there was a series of racist events on campus as a response to the Freedom Party members running for the student body presidential cabinet—the Freedom Party was completely comprised of students of color.

Participants

Twelve self-identifying Black student leaders, seven men and five women, participated in the study. (Pseudonyms have been used). Collectively they held leadership positions in 11 predominantly White and 14 historically Black organizations. A purposeful sampling criterion technique (Patton, 1990) was applied:

- self-identified African American or Black;
- held an elected or appointed position as a leader in a student organization; and
- considered as a leader and activist.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of MWSU was sent a request to conduct the research and after securing approval the MWSU Multicultural Student Office (MSO) disseminated information about the study to Black undergraduates; and while 38 responded, only 12 were able to participate.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To understand how Black student leaders apply transgenerational knowledge to pursue social change while attending a PWI, a comparative case study was conducted. In-depth information was gathered from 12 participants who were used as individual units of analysis to render robust findings (Yin, 2009). Two in-depth, face-to-face, 60 to 80 minute interviews were conducted with each participant, in addition to two 30 to 60 minute follow-up interviews, for member checking purposes. In-depth interviews were used to “reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people’s subjective experiences and attitudes” (Peräkylä & Russuvuori, 2011, p. 129). Each participant was required to sign a consent form, and the interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and stored on an encrypted jump drive.

An open line-by-line coding, constant comparative method of data analysis was utilized to determine themes (Merriman, 1998). Using a “broad brush-stroke representation called holistic coding” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 19) allowed for better answering of the research questions concerning participants’ experiential knowledge about engaging in social change movements. To, illustrate, cross-case synthesis techniques were used to analyze cases individually, then comparatively since each participant served as an independent unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). Data were organized, analyzed, and reduced into themes through coding and condensing codes (Creswell, 2007) to determine categorical differences and similarities by examining behaviors, issues and the PWI context (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995), which provided substantiated meaning.

Positionality

As a researcher, biases, personal preconceived notions, and theoretical perspectives influence my reflexivity and critical constructivist paradigm. As a Black male who grew up in the South, I was exposed to White supremacy and structural racism throughout my K–12 and college educational attainment. Furthermore, I was inundated with ancestral narratives about navigating segregation, the Civil Rights Era, redlining, and lynching, all of which had an adverse generational impact on not only my family, but also Black people in surrounding communities. Conducting this study enhanced my understanding about how Black student leaders enacted activism, face-to-face and through the Internet, as informed by communal funds of knowledge about collective experiences with racism. My insider status as a former undergraduate, graduate and doctoral leader activist, in a variety of historically Black organizations, allowed me to relate with students and develop a collegial rapport throughout the interviews.

RESULTS

This study’s findings contribute to intersectional research about racial socialization and student leadership identity development (Arminio et al., 2000; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Dugan, 2006; Harper & Quayle, 2007; Hotchkins, 2017; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017; Komives et al., 2005; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994) by examining the experiences of African American student leader activists and illustrating the benefits of using transgenerational knowledge to practice racial resistance on a PWI campus. Two themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) Preserving “My” Black; and (b) Digital Underground. Participants indicated their parents and elders racially socialized them to value, respect, honor and preserve Black culture, people, and traditions. This

racial socialization process influenced students to become activists who were charged with building and sustaining Black college communities. Second, participants acknowledged the value of using technology to expose racially threatening sources, identify acts of racism, memorialize wrongful deaths of Black people and to communicate with communities about when, where, and how to engage in activism.

Concerning understanding the racial socialization process as essential to acquiring transgenerational knowledge from parent and elder interactions, participants repeatedly cited these relationships as integral to their leadership and activism success. Parents and elders provided the cultural rationale for becoming leaders and engaging in activism. Interactions with participants' communities provided opportunities to problematize, question, and understand the treatment of Black people historically and within a modern context. These opportunities created moments for strategizing about how to lead through activism by creating social change to eliminate all forms of oppression.

Preserving “My” Black

I remember growing up my mom would always talk about loving my dark skin and never allowing anyone to disrespect it. I think I knew I was Black before I learned my ABCs! We had Black art in the house, visited relatives in Atlanta during the summer and attended our AME [African Methodist Episcopal Church] religiously. Understanding who I am and who's [sic] I am is central to my purpose on earth especially if I want to prosper. (Kendrick)

Kendrick's understanding of Preserving “My” Black stems from being racially socialized to have self-worth, which contributed to the development of what he called a “high cultural esteem.” The Preserving “My” Black theme is defined as being invested in the positive transgenerational outcomes of Black people, actively working toward the preservation of Black life, and purposefully engaging in acts of racial resistance to protect Black communities. Kendrick viewed being Black as involved in a Blackness that is positively embraced, internalized, and expressed with members of the Black community. Study participants described their Blackness positively and viewed embracing it as necessary to navigate the negative MWSU campus climate.

While attending MWSU, participants made calculated efforts to confront what they interpreted as an unwelcoming environment by creating ethnic enclaves, calling out racial hostilities, and protesting inequality. To illustrate, some student leaders used their organizations as social change agents to participate in #BlackLivesMatter events. Rapsody lamented “Being Black now means you can die in an instant and then be demonized afterwards so our protests need to be extravagantly orchestrated to get the most media exposure possible. Dead-ins are highly effective!” Sean elaborated “We must persist. White administrators, faculty, students and mainstream communities need to know that the vibe at MWSU is just like the University of Missouri. We see, hear and feel it. We will respond!” Perspectives like these stemmed from an informed awareness that modern Black lives are devalued, and being silent will not assure justice is achieved.

Further, participants understood history repeats itself if interventions are not pursued. “My father attended this MWSU 29 years ago and the stories he shared are the same ones we live now so nothing has changed. The good thing is I knew in advance so I had a plan of attack” stated Frank. Frank's response is an example of how transgenerational knowledge informs Black student leaders PWI navigational practices.

Jhene offered a similar perspective about the value of transgenerational knowledge:

My Grandmother Jesse would always tell me that Black women were the foundation of not only the Women's Suffrage Movement, but they played a pivotal role in acquiring Civil Rights for Black people. Leaders like Harriet Tubman, Shirley Chisholm, Condoleezza Rice and Michele Obama each contributed to the advancement of Black people and my knowing this affirms me as a Black women who can and will make a difference! G'ma shaped me.

In describing the influence of African American college students' Black identity development and value of education, Herndon and Hirt (2004) argued that Black "families provide the background for explaining meaning in life and the world. Another influence of family relates to social context. Parents provide students with a social environment that influences the way students view education" (p. 491). To this point, Nipsey explained, "to be successful and Black one must be educated—my parents taught me that. I can help Black people change once I earn this degree. I went to college to get paid and create a better circumstance for my community!" Similarly, participants were highly aware of being able to use organizational positions to dismantle negative stereotypes about Black men (Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and women (Hotchkins, 2017; Patton, Bridges & Flowers, 2011). To enumerate, Black students accomplished the aforementioned by being articulate, always early to meetings, dressing professionally, and never showing anger. Participants understood each of these behaviors as forms of being exemplary when performed by Black people, yet typical of their White peers. More importantly, they learned the value of these behavioral narratives during transgenerational discussions with parents and elders in their communities as part of a racial socialization process. Additionally, they used organizations to increase leadership self-efficacy and performance (Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Consequently, participants understood that in order to create social change, whether on campus or within the community, awareness must be raised, long-term plans derived, and generational expectations met.

Aubrey added to Nipsey's point

My parents expect me to challenge inequitable systems of oppression, especially racism, in ways that they deem effective. They provide advice about how they organized sit-ins and did things to attract the media to their plight. I do the same!

In having their perspectives about the worth of transgenerational knowledge, some participants believed, eventually, if they were diligent in resisting, sources of oppression would be dismantled. Consequently, participants shared various pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001) to transmit community memories among themselves and organization members. Doing so was essential since it is "through culturally specific ways of teaching and learning that ancestors and elders share the knowledge of conquest, segregation, labor market stratification, patriarchy, homophobia, assimilation, and resistance" (Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 624). Subsequently, participants found various ways to spread these pedagogies with the most prevalent being through technology use in the form of smart phones, iPads, and computers.

Digital Underground

Having a cell phone allows for our entire organization to be Griots because we can chronicle our history, share struggles and preserve Black millennial vantage points with a single swipe. Plus, nowadays you have to be savvy with social media, post accurate information and learn to discern the difference between real and fake news. (Foxy)

Foxy's explanation of Digital Underground is derived from her understanding of the value of technology in communicating across generational divides. Digital Underground refers to participants' use of technology to inform, persuade, encourage, and nurture peers, elders, communities, and organization members about injustices against Black people. For instance, while attending MWSU classes or during organization meetings participants cited numerous times when they texted or posted comments about how they would organize around the #BlackLivesMatter social movement. Rick discussed how to spread information while being discrete: "the difference between alerting the masses and keeping it amongst just Black students is like Twitter versus the Group Me app." Nicki elaborated "being able to communicate off the radar is important because being Black on a college campus means you are under surveillance; plus, sometimes only we [Black students] need to know how to move and where to meet." These types

of covert strategies were interpreted by participants as central to peer digital interactions and essential if the masking of participants' identities were to be maintained.

In an attempt to assure anonymity, participants hosted invitation-only, face-to-face group meetings that were simulcast over Facebook and reproduced in smaller segments by way of Instagram and Snap Chat so organization members could access information from remote locations. Nipsey explained,

[The] #BlackLivesMatter movement is local, but national. Sometimes we need everyone to know, while no one knows. Short and long-term plans can be secret and public. Decentralization works so to stop one is not to stop all.

In fact, technological interactions allowed for meeting spontaneously and facilitating discussions about instances of injustice in real time, which provided participants the opportunities to strategize, and then act instantaneously. Lauren elaborated, "We use technology to not only educate the public about how Black people are treated, but to also document how we get treated unfairly."

Participants in this study viewed technology as central to their ability to conduct activism and used it in response to inaccurate media, while also depending on it to serve as a primary form of communication. Aubrey explained:

When Mike Brown was murdered the media flooded airwaves with images of him giving the finger so they could frame him as deviant, which means deserving of dying violently. In response, his family circulated the picture of him in the graduation cap and gown. We used the #IfIDieUseThisPic campaign to show us [Black students] as non-threatening, prosperous members of our college community so they [White folk] can understand that we also contribute to society in positive ways. Black students run the organizational yard, but they would probably use our kicking it pictures to tell our stories after we were killed.

Furthermore, applying technology to frame themselves positively in the media confirms research about how counterstories can be used to disrupt negative majoritarian narratives that situate people of color as violent, uneducated, un-Patriotic and incapable of contributing to American society (Hotchkins, 2017; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Sawyer III & Palmer, 2014; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

By using technology to spread the concerns of Black people, participants learned about the experiences, movements and concerns of other college students of color. In response, participants leveraged organization affiliations to create alliances with peers and discuss similar sources of oppression. "Deltas always attend MEChA events because immigration issues, like police brutality against unarmed Black citizens, are the same. White male legislators pass laws. White male cops shoot first, then lie. Our sufferings are coupled so we support" stated Rapsody. Jhene added,

I learned about #OURBrownImmigration posting on #BlackLivesMatter, which caused me to engage the topic. I spoke with Latinx leaders on our campus and joined their movement! Now our BSU supports Dreamer initiatives of undocumented peers. We work together!

Taking advantage of opportunities to support students of color created sociocultural moments for determining the best ways to collectively organize on how to disrupt oppression and locate supports on campus. Subsequently, the peers of Black student leaders reciprocated activist supports, which facilitated the building of cultural networks across racial, gender and leadership difference. Rick stated, "Now we move as a Black and Brown unit on campus. Before Trayvon Martin died that wasn't the case. They [Latinos] support us, we [Black males] support them."

These examples of sociocultural cooperatives not only granted Black student leaders access to varied forms of racial resistance as employed by students of color, but they also served to build digital databases of mutual allies, co-conspirators, and philanthropist who aided in activism efforts. It is also important to note that the successful activism efforts of Black student leaders,

face-to-face or technologically-based, was in direct opposition to the hostile campus climate experienced when interacting with White faculty and peers at MWSU. For example, during a #BlackLivesMatter rally on campus White students conducted an #AllLivesMatter campaign, which participants interpreted as a culturally insensitive racist act of defiance.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Using Bronfenbrenner's (1994, 2005) ecological paradigm, coupled with Peters' (1985) and Stevenson's (1994) racial socialization models, the author demonstrated that Black student leaders applied transgenerational knowledge to pursue social change while attending a predominantly White institution. In doing so they purposefully applied technology to navigate often unwelcoming, contentious, and racially adversarial educational environments at MWSU. Although the rationale for applying racial resistance was shaped by the treatment of participants during their undergraduate years, their understanding about being Black was informed by micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-systematic influences that shaped their identity development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 2005). In fact, participants ability to endure what they perceived as a hostile campus racial climate (Gusa, 2010; Hotchkins, 2017; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017; Hurtado, Alvarado & Guillermo-Wann, 2015) juxtaposed to an American society where Black life is devalued, also speaks to embodying a cultural resilience that dares to boldly oppose oppression in numerous forms (i.e., White faculty, peers, or administrators).

Racial Resistance as Informed by Micro-, Meso- and Exosystems

Generally, Black student leaders practiced activism in organizations, due to being racially socialized by parents, to have a strong sense of self, give back to their communities, and positively portray Black people (Arminio et al., 2000; Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Hotchkins, 2014; Komives et al., 2005; Lavant & Terrell, 1994). Furthermore, participants took leadership roles that were connected to their Black cultural and racial frames of reference. African American students who have been racially socialized by their parents come to campuses with a positive outlook of themselves and their communities because "racial socialization messages are lifelong memories that make up 'Who I am' stories. They form the foundation of African American children's identities" (Stevenson, 1994, p. 193). Participants' identity development was a direct result of proximal interpersonal interactions experienced in the home with parents and grandparents (micro-); extended family members and elders comprised of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins within places like neighborhoods and churches (meso-) where fictive kinships flourished (Herndon & Hirt, 2004); and by local, state, and national events such as the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Korryn Gaines, which motivated participants to be activists for social change (eco-) in an effort to combat a perpetual sense of being Black and in peril (Hartman, 2007; Womack, 2017).

Racial Resistance as Informed by Macro- and Chronosystems

Participants' worldviews concerning being Black and responding to racism were influenced by macro-systems that adversely impacted student leaders at the personal, familial, and communal levels. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological macrosystems

. . . refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems. . . that exist or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (p. 25)

To illustrate, although participants experienced racist interactions with MWSU White peers, on campus and throughout the city, each of them conceptualized racism as institutional, systemic, and endemic. Furthermore, as self-identified descendants of enslaved Africans, participants understood racism a phenomenon existing across time, linear and constant, which confirms Bronfenbrenner (2005) framing that a ". . . phenomenon extends over the life course across

successive generations and through historical time, both past and present” (p. 3) and the notion that Black people are actively living in the afterlife of chattel slavery (Hartman, 2007; Womack, 2017). In fact, based on being racially socialized about racism through the sharing of pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994) participants understood that their racial identities were in a perpetual interplay with racism, one that began when they were born, but would continue long after death (chronosystems).

This study’s findings firmly establish participants’ identity development as influenced by proximal interpersonal interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994, 2005) with Black people, places and events that constitute a racial socialization process (Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994). As a result participants were not only dedicated to engaging in activism, but also used racial resistance to disrupt oppression, marginalization, and racism. To extend fixed chronosystems framing, participants viewed racism as a perpetual system existing beyond the past and present by extending into the future as a source of trauma for unborn generations of Black people. Additionally, applying racial resistance aided participants in navigating MWSU by allowing them to locate exclusive Black spaces where solidarity and strategy occurred, which led to participants inextricably exercising leadership with the intention of achieving social change through enacting activism.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

This particular study represents the importance of using comparative case study to explain the identity development of Black student leader activists who value transgenerational knowledge. Administrators must recognize how past, present, and future PWI climates converge with intersectional identities of Black students when endorsing detriments that could potentially present racial harm (e.g., White fraternity culturally themed parties). Consequently, how PWIs invest in Black student leader activists, social change movements and Black identity development is essential to facilitating Black students thriving on White campuses. Doing so is the responsibility of every faculty member, organization advisors, and administrator. Furthermore, institutions must invest resources in connecting Black students to Black communities beyond university boundaries and into cities where activism, resistance to oppression and social change movements unfurl. This investment allows for transgenerational racial socialization to continue beyond graduation, and to benefit Black students in their understanding about how racism manifest in spaces beyond academe.

CONCLUSION

My interactions with Black student leader activists explained their understandings about using technology to spread transgenerational knowledge as learned throughout their lifetimes. Preoccupation with achieving social change was instrumental to not only how participants constructed the purpose of being Black, but also rationale for doing so despite knowing future generations would face the same challenges. Considering the intersections of Black student identity development, leadership and activism and as interwoven with transgenerational experiences, it becomes easier to derive the difficulty of being in spaces that are representative of perpetual racialized traumas. Participants’ ability to apply racial resistance indicates that in order to participate in activism one must first be racially socialized to see themselves as Black, value Black people and culture, and then spend a lifetime working toward achieving social change.

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AUTHOR

BRYAN K. HOTCHKINS is an assistant professor of higher education in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership and a Faculty Fellow for the Institute for Inclusive Excellence at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas.

All comments and queries regarding this article should be addressed to bryan.hotchkins@ttu.edu