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## Social Identity Comparison of Black and White Students of Attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Korliss Hall Datcher

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Social Identity Comparison of Black and White Students Who Attend Historically Black

Colleges and Universities

by

Korliss Hall Datcher

MBA, American InterContinental University, 2004

BS, Stillman College, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

Throughout college, social identity and belonging to social groups significantly shape an individual's identity. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have become more diverse as more White students, faculty, staff, and administrators have begun to learn and work in this environment. This mixed-methods study aimed to contrast self-reported measures and experiences between Black and White students attending historically HBCUs. Social identity theory guided the study, as the theory suggests that groups, such as family, culture, and academic class, play a significant part in establishing pride and self-esteem. The qualitative component of the study explored the perceptions of social identity among 10 White and Black students at an HBCU by virtual interviews. Quantitatively, this study examined potential differences in self-reported measures of social identity with the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES), between 52 White and Black students enrolled at an HBCU. The research revealed that Black and White students at an HBCU experienced positive social identity. Both groups found a welcoming and inviting space on campus. These findings emphasize the importance of ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in college settings. This contribution to positive social change underscores the continuing need for initiatives encouraging cross-cultural interactions and creating supportive environments for all students, regardless of their racial backgrounds.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, spouse, children, family, extended family, chosen family, and colleagues in the field of psychology.

## Acknowledgments

But God! Thanks be to God for planting this seed many years ago and reminding me of His promises daily. Thanks to my chair, Dr. Melody Moore, and my Second Committee Member, Dr. Leslie Barnes-Young, for their exceptional leadership in guiding me to the finish line. Thank you to my husband Kelvin, children Zachary and Zoe, and my parents Sandra & William, who have offered continued support, guidance, and prayers throughout this process. Thank you to my extended family and friends for the prayers, laughs, and hugs.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The years that students attend college encompass a developmental stage where social maturation can impact interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. Social identities, such as socioeconomic status, race, and gender, are pertinent during the early years of college, as they are essential to the students' social attitudes and social group relationships (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). During the 1970s, Tajfel and Turner (1979) delineated social identity as an individual's perception of self, influenced by their group affiliations. An individual's choice of group membership plays a part in their self-esteem and pride, ultimately causing groups to be divided into "us" and "them" through social categorization. Overall, social identity connects the ideas of social groups and self. The next generation of social theorists, such as Hogg (2016), suggested that self-esteem and social identity are directly related, challenging the early thoughts and constructs of social identity of Tajfel (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Presently, researchers have explored social identity within various groups, including those affiliated with both predominantly White institutions (PWIs; Arroyo et al., 2016) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Over time, researchers have delved into the study of social identity. Still, they have not included Black and White students in the same social environment of HBCUs. The HBCU population is becoming more diverse yearly (Hogg, 2016). Since there is a rising number of White students attending these colleges, it is crucial to understand if there is a difference in the social identity of the two groups of students. This study aimed to study and compare how Black and White students who attend the HBCUs identify

socially.

## **Background**

### **Social Identity**

Social identity is the evolving and progressive trait shared by those in the same social group, such as neighborhood, school, family, media, and peers (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). Also defined as the method of growth related to race, gender, class, or sexuality (Quiñones-Rosado, 2010), social identity is one of the critical theories in intergroup relations. These definitions indicate that social identity contributes to human character development (Hong, 2004). When students transition into college, social identity is essential when determining their social group membership, whether joining new groups or reexamining the old groups (Chavous et al., 2018).

Many White students began to attend public HBCUs because of government mandates, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954; Henry & Closson, 2010), which opened HBCUs to more White students and White college leaders. Research between the 1970s and the 1990s found that most White students enrolled at HBCUs were from the South, had a pleasant experience (Libarkin, 1984), and enhanced their perception of Black people while attending those HBCUs (Brown & Stein, 1972). Additionally, the financial responsibility of attending an HBCU was significantly low compared to PWIs (Henry & Closson, 2010). Financial aid was extended, with some White students expressing interest in experiencing the minority perspective within the context of the Black experience (Elam, 1978). Despite these findings, there has been limited research that investigates the social and academic perspectives of White students at HBCUs.

Understanding how a group of people, historically classified as the majority, experience social identity in an environment where they are now the minority can provide college administrators with tools and resources to adequately equip students who may be experiencing minority status for the first time.

### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

HBCUs are higher education institutions founded to provide educational opportunities for African Americans during legal and cultural segregation (Anderson, 2019). Since its inception, HBCUs have played a significant role in academic success and social support and aid the African American community. Due to their nurturing environment and noted as the leader in Black progression, HBCUs remain devoted to upholding the history, racial dignity, and rooted traditions of Black culture (Henry & Closson, 2010). Primarily founded during the decades immediately after the Civil War, HBCUs are commonly located in southern states (Anderson, 2019), with a few located in the Midwest and the northern United States. Racial diversity at these institutions was most prominent in faculty, administration, donors, and financial leaders (Henry & Closson, 2010). In the late 1950s, HBCUs were nearly 100% African American (Maramba et al., 2015). Given the country's changing demographics, Black students currently make up about 78% of the HBCU population.

Psychologically, African American students who attend HBCUs generally have more positive experiences than African American students who attend PWIs (Spurgeon & Myers, 2008). This has resulted in higher academic success, positive social assimilation, and achievement of goals set during their college tenure (Spurgeon &

Myers, 2008). Therefore, this study filled the gap in the literature on how Black and White students compare in their experience and self-measured reports of social identity.

### **Problem Statement**

Though there is research that examined the social identity of White students who attend HBCUs (Closson & Henry, 2008b) and the social identity of Black students who attend PWIs (Thompson et al., 2019), there has been little research on the relationship between White and Black students who attend an HBCU and how their social identity plays a role in their lives during this time. HBCUs exhibit greater racial diversity than in previous years, with one in four students belonging to a different racial group than the one initially served by the institution (Butrymowicz, 2014). White enrollment at Black colleges rose to 13% at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century (Shorette & Arroyo, 2015). White students tend to attend HBCUs due to their lower tuition costs, lower admission standards (American College Testing; ACT) and the Scholastics Aptitude Testing; SAT), and lower grade point average admission requirements (Keel, 2016). They are also offered academic and athletic scholarships that they may not receive at PWIs.

As the White population in the United States is estimated to dip below 50% by 2044 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), the experiences of White students in majority-minority environments might offer insights into interracial interactions. With this shift in population, there is a projection for an increased threat to Whites regarding their social status (Craig & Richeson, 2014). This change in social status may also intensify White students' opposition to racial diversity (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Many students on



college campuses—both HBCUs and PWIs—are reluctant to have meaningful conversations on race and racial disparities due to students' shyness and a caution to reflect on racial conflict (Carey, 2012). The perception of race relations is significant in how college students address and express their social or cultural development (Carey, 2012), which can be done through classroom lectures or the college environment, such as faculty and peer interactions (Blimling, 2010).

Over the last several decades, researchers have become more interested in studying White students who attend and graduate from HBCUs as the White student population has increased. This demographic of students now plays a significant role in the HBCU society, including joining fraternities and sororities and participating in the college's athletic programs (Shorette & Arroyo, 2015). However, the research on White students who attend HBCUs is still limited and does not address how social identity happens for White and Black students at HBCUs (Shorette & Arroyo, 2015). This study determined how social identity varies between Black and White students who attend an HBCU. Learning about the differences in social identity may offer a better understanding of how Black and White students develop socially in the same environment when Black students are considered the majority and White students are the minority.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This mixed methods research study aimed to examine the differences in social identity between Black and White students who attend an HBCU. The dependent variable was social identity, and the independent variables were Black (African American) and White (Caucasian) students enrolled at an HBCU. Electronic administration assessed

social identity using the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES). Qualitative research techniques were used to explore how these two groups of students experience similar themes of social identity through individual interviews. Both research methods, qualitative and quantitative, were used to determine social identity within both groups of students.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

#### **Quantitative**

Are there differences on self-reported measures of social identity between White and Black students at an HBCU?

$H_0$ : There will not be a statistically significant difference in social identity between White and Black students.

$H_a$ : There will be a statistically significant difference in social identity between White and Black students.

#### **Qualitative**

In what ways do White and Black students experience social identity at an HBCU?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

This study was based on the theoretical framework of social identity from Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT). People that need to belong in a social environment was indicated by Fiske (2018). This theory suggests that groups, such as family, culture, and academic class, are significant in establishing pride and self-esteem. Creating categories, such as "us" and "them" and in-groups and out-groups, leads to

discrimination toward those different from their own (Hogg, 2016). SIT provides detailed and descriptive data on how people see themselves based on their group interactions and how their pride and self-esteem are acquired (Turner, 1982). This theory provided a foundation for this dissertation's research question, which asks if there will be differences in social identity measures between Black and White students. The two social groups have similarities and differences regarding culture, class, and other aspects of social groups.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study drew on the conceptual framework of the intergroup contact hypothesis (Garner, 2013), which posits that positive experiences and attitudes arise only in environments characterized by impartiality among groups. These positive experiences or attitudes are assessed by equal status among all group members, support from authorities, and shared goals (Mahonen et al., 2013). The intergroup contact hypothesis recognizes that contact with others can increase the acceptance of those in other social groups. The intergroup contact hypothesis theory also explains why and when contact with other social groups increases knowledge (Lytle, 2018). Several research studies explore intergroup contact theory, suggesting that the absence of personal and positive contact within groups is due to negative attitudes (Lytle, 2018). Positive outgroup norms can dictate positive ingroup norms, resulting in a robust optimistic influence on those in the outgroups (Turner et al., 2008).

Derived from Allport's nature of prejudice, the intergroup contact hypothesis explores the connection between equal status and social groups. Throughout the last 40

years, this hypothesis has mainly concentrated on the White perspective regarding Black people. The results show that the different perceptions and expectations of the two groups are based on the environment and contact situations (Smith, 1994).

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study was a non-experimental, mixed-methods approach. The mixed-method design provided reliable data through web-based structured surveys and provided more value about the participant's perspective and feelings regarding social identity while attending an HBCU. The quantitative portion of this study included one survey completed by Black and White college students (independent variables) who are enrolled at an HBCU. Each student completed the CSES (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) to measure their self-reported ideas of social identity, which is the dependent variable. The CSES consists of closed-ended questions.

Additionally, demographic information, including the participant's nationality, place of birth, age, religious affiliation, gender, and socioeconomic status, was collected. The sample selection included both Black and White students. Each student must be enrolled in 12 hours of coursework for the term or semester that the study took place. Also, each student participant must be at least 19 years old and reside in Alabama. Qualitative data were gathered from a randomly selected group of students from the same population who completed the survey through 10 individual interviews with five White and five Black students. These interviews helped establish the students' experiences on an HBCU campus and how they self-reported social identity.

The quantitative analysis consisted of the independent group's *t* test to assess the

difference of both groups' mean social identity scores. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyze the quantitative data and Microsoft Word and Excel were used to help organize the quantitative data. Delve online software, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel was used to transcribe the qualitative data into related themes, topics, and codes. Microsoft Word and Excel assisted with organizing the qualitative data. Both methods were compared for the final analysis and conclusion.

### **Definitions**

*African American/Black:* Terms to be used interchangeably throughout the study.

*Caucasian/White:* Terms to be used interchangeably throughout the study.

*Historically Black College and University (HBCU):* Established with the primary purpose of serving the African American community before the Civil Rights Movement (Anderson, 2019).

*Predominantly White institution (PWI):* Institutions of higher learning in which White students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

*Social identity:* The individual's knowledge that they belong to the same social group with some emotional and valuable significance for group membership (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

### **Assumptions**

This section describes the assumptions made that may not be apparent but are essential to understanding this research's possible outcomes. The first assumption was that participants responded honestly to the survey questions and during the group

interview discussion. It was assumed that student participants wanted to give truthful views of who they are and how they evaluate their social identity. Another assumption was that students could not identify socially with those outside their social groups, increasing their need to belong with those like them. It was assumed that social identity is based on connections that help an individual survive (Lieberman, 2013).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this research was to explore the differences and similarities in the social identity of Black and White college students and to understand their experience of this variable. This study was subject to the following delimitations. This study only included students who attended an HBCU within Central Alabama. These male and female participants were Black and White students and excluded any other race. The discussion of why social identity was selected as the topic for this research is related to how one ethnicity, White, is typically considered the majority within an environment. This same group then becomes classified as a minority when attending an HBCU. When this happens, Black students then become the majority in the HBCU environment even though they are usually considered a minority group in other environments.

### **Limitations**

This study was subject to the following limitations: a small, selected population from two HBCUs in the South may not be generalizable to a larger population. I presume that all participants were honest in their interactions in the group interviews and survey responses. Each participant was the age of majority in Alabama (19 years old), which reduced the sample size. Furthermore, only one type of social identity was tested among

college-aged students.

### **Significance**

This mixed-methods study explored social identity among Black students through both individual interviews and a survey designed to assess and measure their social identity regarding group memberships. The findings of this study can be used to assist college administrators, organizations, and educational departments in designing Student Affairs programming to create a positive environment for all students that embraces and supports all who may be experiencing minority status for the first time. Strategies can be identified to impact corporate and civic organizations by using the campus community as an enriching learning environment. This study also contributes to the literature on Black and White students' social identity who attend an HBCU.

### **Summary**

This study aimed to determine and compare how Black and White students who attend an HBCU socially identify while in college. These college campuses are grounded in racial excellence and Black culture (Henry & Closson, 2010), and take pride in the uplift of Black students. Mixed methods were used to gather data regarding the techniques and approaches that Black and White students use to develop their social identity at an HBCU by conducting individual interviews and completing a survey. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) SIT was the theoretical framework for understanding self-importance, while the intergroup contact hypothesis explains why and when social groups play a role in social identity (Garner, 2013). The research questions addressed a link between each group of students by utilizing the CSES and interviews. The results of this

study will provide data on how White students socially identify in an environment whose objective is to cultivate the Black experience. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on social identity.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since the late 20th century, research has been conducted on White students who attend and graduate from HBCUs, with the topic becoming incrementally more popular as White students became more involved in the HBCU society by joining fraternities and sororities and participating in the college's athletic programs (Shorette & Arroyo, 2015). Some research found that factors such as low-cost tuition, financial aid assistance, and government mandates that allowed for a more diverse community were incentives for White students to attend HBCUs (Arroyo et al., 2016). However, research on White students who attend HBCUs is limited and does not address how social identity occurs during college compared to Black students who attend HBCUs (Shorette & Arroyo, 2015). For example, some non-Black students experienced racial bias and felt unwelcomed, which resulted in poor academic performance while attending an HBCU (Arroyo et al., 2016). Further, much of the peer-reviewed research involving social identity has been conducted at PWIs, showing differences between ethnic groups in ethnic identity, global self-worth, family standards of living, and generation status (Gummadam et al., 2015). These findings do not address how Black and White students measure their social identity or how these two demographics experience social identity while enrolled at an HBCU. This mixed-methods study aimed to determine how social identity is distinguished between White students who attend HBCUs compared to Black students at HBCUs. This chapter covers the strategies employed for the literature search, the theoretical framework, the review of relevant literature, and the variables under consideration.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The following databases were used for the literature search: PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, PsycEXTRA, PsycBOOKS, SocINDEX with full text, and ERIC. The following keywords were used: *minorities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, African Americans and social identity, white students and social identity, minorities and social identity, social identity, racial identity during college, college racial diversity, whites at HBCUs, social development, self-esteem, integral theory, social belonging, and the intergroup contact hypothesis.*

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### **Social Identity Theory**

SIT was used to distinguish the relationship between the social identity of White and Black students who attend an HBCU. Tajfel (1982) defined social identity as a person's reality based on their perceived memberships within a social group and the relationship with members of this group. Mutual group associations, where positive relationships are built, define a person's self-concept, while that person's involvement in the group encourages others within the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). SIT further explains that when an identity is recognized, a person will begin to think about how that identity connects to others socially and emotionally (Haslam, 2014). These groups are defined by physical, social, and mental qualities, including race, social class, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation. For example, if a person identifies as a student, they will look for circumstances where they can validate the significance related to being a student, such as attending classes, participating in school

activities, and speaking with a professor (Carter, 2013). This research aimed to find the connection or disconnect between White and Black students' social identity while attending an HBCU. The SIT helped to understand better how others play a role in those networks of people.

### ***Social Identity Development***

Social identity and social identity development are essential in human growth, and both are integral to a person's idea of self. Defined as the development process that an individual goes through regarding their social group identities, social identity development has several stages related to social group identification and membership (Quinones-Rosado, 2010). Social group identity is a person's connection with diverse social groups, including race, gender, class, and more. The social identity development theory explains that everyone shares developmental patterns and qualities in the same social group. The stages of social identity development are naïve, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization. Naïve occurs from birth to early childhood. During this phase, the individual learns about social groups, particularly gender, and is taught by those in our social group where we belong regarding social status and dominant groups. From childhood to adulthood, acceptance describes a person's observance of values within their social groups. The resistance stage is when personalities begin to become aware of their impact on others, and individuals will surround themselves with people from their social group for support. During this stage, people will also begin to recognize the differences between their social group memberships and other social groups. Redefinition occurs when people start to search for their identity away from their known

social groups, seek out other relationships, and learn more about their social groups, developing pride and self-assurance. Last, during the internalization period, individuals have developed a healthy regard for themselves and begin to build relationships with other groups like their own. The developmental phase of college students typically occurs during the stage of acceptance between early childhood and adulthood. Individuals that are members of a dominant group, such as the White race, will identify with dominant aspects of the group, such as culture, values, and belief systems. They may be aware or unaware of their status as a dominant group and the privilege of that membership.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

#### **Social Identity**

The impact of social identity on the college choices and successes of students of color highlights the critical importance of creating safe and inclusive environments at HBCUs. Research on the relationship between experiences of social identity threat, how students of color attribute race-based rejection, and how that internalization impacted their selection of an HBCU concluded that when students feel safe in their social environment, academic and psychological success is promoted (Thompson et al., 2019). Essential factors include diversity representation regarding institutional belonging and establishing a safe, inclusive environment, despite the disproportionate sample size of female students and the relationship between the participants' attitudes and behaviors (Thompson et al., 2019).

#### ***Social Identity of College Students***

College students with high social and personal identity also have high

associations of well-being (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). There were 3009 students surveyed between the ages of 18 and 25 who identified as Black, Asian American, or Latino men and women (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). The Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (EPSI; Rosenthal et al., 1981), the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999), the American Identity Measure (AIM; Schwartz et al., 2012), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSES; Rosenberg, 1979) assessments were given electronically to determine their personal, ethnic, and US identity, as well as self-esteem. Among Black college students, they discovered significant differences in self-esteem with personal-social identity, resulting in unique personal-social profiles. These profiles differ among ethnic groups. Overall, the complex combination of these two identities is linked to well-being. A thorough analysis detailed how various identities play a significant role in a college student's adjustment to their social environment (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). This research study provided pertinent data regarding my study about the social identity of college students in general.

A study conducted by McIntyre et al. (2018) explained that social groups supply people with enforcement against distress, which leads to increased levels of belonging and self-worth. This study examined 1545 university students, including 30% Health and Life Sciences students, 42% Humanities and Social Sciences students, and 18% Science and Engineering students. Many of the participants were first-year students who were White, with seventy-one percent of the participants identified as female and an average age of 20.78. The Academic Stress Scale, expectations of stress, relative performance, loneliness, perceived discrimination, cyber victimization, social identity, living

conditions, childhood disadvantage, childhood maltreatment, paranoia, financial worry, depression, anxiety, and self-harm were all measured during this study. The findings of this study regarding social identity indicated that levels of social identity attributed to lower levels of anxiety and paranoia.

In conclusion, the research studies conducted by Gonzales-Backen et al. (2015) and McIntyre et al. (2018) aimed to understand the extent of social adjustment and social identity barriers for White undergraduate students in minority settings. The lack of analysis of a more racially diverse group of college students provided my study with data regarding the relationship between social identity and college-aged students.

### ***Social Identity and Black College Students***

Black collegiate students' experiences and social identity are influenced by their environment and upbringing (Stewart, 2009). Stewart's study aimed to explore the perceptions of multiple identities, including social identity, among Black college students. To achieve this, Stewart interviewed 13 Black and/or African American college students and had each participant complete a questionnaire that included demographic and campus involvement surveys. This study yielded three categories: Articulating Identity, Role of Peer Relationships, and Metaphysical context. The data produced several subcategories from those three categories, including Social Identity Salience. Furthermore, the results revealed that Black college students perceive their identities as multifaceted and insufficient information was available to reflect one social identity factor or descriptor. Concerning my study, the results of Stewart's (2009) research shed some light on how Black college students view and understand their social identities.

### ***Social Identity and White College Students***

White identity, discussed by Helms (1995), is a theory that describes the developmental direction in which white individuals move throughout their lives in a pattern of processing their race-related motivation. During a time of challenges, white social identity can lead to experiences of feeling shame, guilt, anger, and resentment. Foste and Jones (2020) explored how white college students give meaning to their racial and social identities through storytelling. Researchers interviewed 14 White college students from a college in the midwestern US. The Student Affairs administrators of the college nominated participants and, upon agreement, completed a demographic survey. The students participated in two interviews. The first interview centered around pre-college experiences of race, while the second one focused on the participants' race experiences while on the college's campus. The pre-college experiences focused on the student's time in high school, which caused them to think about their race and how their social groups impacted their experiences. The second interview centered around discussing curricular events and times in college that prompted a thought pattern of what it means to be white and when race-related activities resulted in emotional reactions.

The researchers found that whiteness is understood as a socio-historical consciousness that is often used to maintain racial dominance. Ignorant, emergent, and critical were found throughout the study, and these three constructs gave a better understanding of the participants' whiteness. Six participants were classified as ignorant, rarely recognizing how whiteness was an intricate concept to their day-to-day routine. The five participants who expressed emergent themes recognized their structural

advantages with understanding racism and their whiteness. Finally, three participants who exhibited critical themes, were actively aware of and explored what it meant to be white throughout history and institutionally.

The results of Foste and Jones' (2020) study highlight the importance of white racial awareness and how their social environment plays a role. Though this study included a small sample size, it details how white students experience their identity in a majority-white environment. However, this data is relevant to my study, as it provided contrasting data regarding the social identity of college students in a predominantly Black environment.

White students at an HBCU were studied and involved eight undergraduate students, five black and three white students from the "deep south" in focus groups (Closson and Henry, 2008b). The research aimed to explore the social adjustment barriers faced by White undergraduate students in minority settings, as well as how African American students perceived their White counterparts on the historically Black college and university (HBCU) campus. The research questions aimed to understand the extent of social adjustment barriers for White undergraduate students in minority settings and how African American students observed the White students on the HBCU campus. The participants were administered the Racial Identity Scales, The White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) (Helms & Carter, 1990), and the Racial Identity Attitude Scale-B (BRIAS) (Helms & Parham, 1985).

Through a priori categories and bivariate analyses, the researchers discovered that changes to the college environment were established much less openly among White



students in the HBCU setting than for Black students at PWIs. Closson and Henry (2008b) concluded that this group of participants, White undergraduate students, conveyed no concerns about attending an HBCU and only had positive experiences becoming accustomed to this social climate. Despite the small number of participants, the conclusion of this data revealed that White students adjust to different social environments easily without encountering issues from the majority population at an HBCU. They also found that social adjustment was a different experience for White students than for African American students. Still, their findings did not show that White students experienced any hesitation or anxiety while in school. Gonzales-Backen et al. (2015) noted in their research that individuals with strong multiple social identities tend to have high self-esteem and are best for psychological adjustments, which could result in an easier acclimation to a new environment.

### ***Social Identity and Gender***

Individuals identify with various social identity groups based on shared experiences and values with others, and these are developed through their experiences with family, school, and others around them (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). Even though many factors influence how a person categorizes social identity, gender, race or ethnicity, and social class, they have all been connected to developing adults in college.

Gender and its awareness of social groups are significant in a person's life. They have been known to be the most consistent topics in social identity, according to Graham-Bailey et al. (2019). Matters of gender inequality in an educational setting are still prevalent, even though women outnumber men on college campuses. PWIs are places

where racial disparities continue to be evident and have a disproportionately negative impact on racial minorities. Even with the rise of racial and ethnic diversity within higher education, instances of discrimination and racial tension have been experienced by students of color, which has resulted in isolation from larger campuses, a lower sense of belonging, and an adverse racial climate.

The variation in students' identification of these three social identity groups (gender, race, and SES) in college students was examined by (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). The research questions: (a) How do college students vary in their profiles of identity centrality across their gender and race? (b) How are students' centrality profiles related to their self-reported social identity membership groups? (c) How are students' profiles of social identity centrality related to their identity-related and intergroup social attitudes (consciousness of gender, race, socioeconomic inequality, intergroup relations, and social injustice action)?

A sample of 887 students at a large Midwestern university (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). The sample included 346 men and 541 women. The largest racial group was White, with 443 participants, and 206 Black/African American participants. There were 146 Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, 43 Hispanic/Latino, and less than five percent Arab American, Native American, and Biracial/Multiracial participants. Most of the participants reported that their socioeconomic group was middle class.

The results of this research showed that college students' ratings of the importance of their gender identities were moderate (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). They indicated that awareness of one's social identity does not necessarily promote a

relationship to other social identities. Overall, this study shows that the correlation between social identity and gender identity are not necessarily connected.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

More data is needed to understand social identity and its role for college students, especially those who attend a Historically Black College and University. Much of the current research addresses those enrolled at a Predominantly White Institution. It involves students of various races, with no comparison of only Black and White students and their experience of or differences between social identities. The Social Identity Theory SIT (Tajfel, 1982) and the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (Mahonen et al., 2013) will lead this study in concluding how an HBCU environment links or separates the social identity of Black and White students. Overall, White students who attend an HBCU have never expressed concerns about attending an HBCU. However, this study aimed to focus on the social identity of these two demographics. Mixed methods research was used in this study, using qualitative methods in group interviews. Quantitative methods included a self-esteem survey and a demographic sheet to collect the participant's ethnic identity, age, religious affiliation, gender, economic status, and birthplace. The quantitative portion of this study involved examining self-reported measures of social identity. At the same time, the qualitative section distinguished the bases of equivalent themes in social identity between Black and White students.

Chapter 3 discusses the mixed methods used in this study. The mixed methods approach was the best investigative tool for this study. Interviews alone did not provide enough data to comprehend how Black and White students get an overall perspective of

their social environment and awareness of themselves.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

This study sought to fill the gap in research concerning the social identity of White and Black students enrolled at HBCUs. This research focused on exploring the social identity of White and Black students attending an HBCU, aiming to enhance their college experience positively while navigating their social groups. It is hypothesized that most White and Black students will report differences in social identity. The research questions in this study were “Are there differences in self-reported social identity measures of White and Black students at an HBCU?” and “In what ways do White and Black students experience social identity at an HBCU?” A quantitative assessment was administered to examine the participants’ self-esteem. The CSES assessed the students’ social identity by examining social group memberships. Demographic data was collected, including ethnic identity, age, religious affiliation, gender, economic status, and birthplace. The qualitative analyses were used to identify (a) emergent themes in surveys conducted and (b) analyze observational data through group interviews of social identity. Chapter 3 outlines the study’s methodology regarding students who attend an HBCU. Mixed methods were used to (a) identify themes as to how White and Black students experienced social identity and (b) assess self-reported measures of how social identity is differentiated between the two groups of students.

#### **Setting**

This study examined White students who attend an HBCU compared to Black students who attend an HBCU. This setting is significant to this research as the focus is on students enrolled at an HBCU. These colleges are prominently located in the Black

community in central Alabama. They are ethnically diverse but were established for African American students and are primarily populated with African American students, which classifies it as an HBCU. Several students reside in the on-campus dormitories. Most of the student population meets the following criteria: (a) pursuing a bachelor's or associate degree, and (b) at least 19 years of age.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The primary research questions for this mixed methods study were:

- Quantitative: Are there differences of self-reported measures of social identity of White and Black students at an HBCU?
  - $H_0$ : There will not be a statistically significant difference between social identity of White and Black students.
  - $H_a$ : There will be a statistically significant difference between social identity of White and Black students.
- Qualitative: In what ways do White and Black students experience social identity at an HBCU?

Mixed methods studies “can strengthen the power of studies, inferences, and conclusions” (Rocco et al., 2003, p.603). This is the preferred design method for measuring social identity in this study. It allowed the participants’ experiences to be reflected in results based on the quantitative and qualitative findings. Adding the qualitative data will elucidate Black and White students’ experiences at an HBCU regarding their social identity. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, I evaluated variances in social identity between Black and White students and examined their respective

experiences. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used to investigate the same research hypothesis. Next, the qualitative data conversion included themes and codes from the interviews. The quantitative and qualitative data were then compared, contrasted, and analyzed for the final analysis.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the researcher was to attempt to measure and understand the relationships between the variables and thoughts of the participants throughout the research process as an unbiased observer. I paid careful attention to all participants and diligently recorded and documented their responses. No professors or instructors assisted with this study. I collected the information from participants and analyzed that data to determine themes and measured self-reported ideas of social identity. Every interaction with the student participants was managed with respect and confidentiality while remaining objective.

I educated myself on the proper procedures for observing and taking notes during an interview. Furthermore, I practiced the appropriate techniques for recording information with reliability and accuracy. I also ensured that all recording equipment was working before the interviews.

No personal or professional relationships existed between the researcher and participants, and no power dynamics existed over any participants, including instructors. I clarified to the instructors and administrators involved in participant recruitment that participation was voluntary. This emphasis on volunteering empowered participants to choose whether to be part of the study, thereby balancing any sense of power

dynamics. Ensuring that participants felt like equal partners in the research relationship was crucial.

My role as a researcher and observer required me to prepare each participant for the interview by ensuring they were comfortable. Each could be heard and seen clearly while using their computers for the virtual interview. I created and followed a guide throughout the interview to ensure that all questions were asked, and each participant interacted.

## **Methodology**

### **Participation Selection Logic**

The combined population of the higher education institutions located in central Alabama was more than 2,000 students. Individuals who attend these colleges obtain degrees in business and accounting communications, education, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. The population is ethnically diverse, with a significant African American representation. The campuses are residential, but they have many students who commute to school and learn virtually.

Purposive sampling was used in this study, and participants were selected based on specific characteristics, namely Black and White individuals. Given the comparison between these two groups, this method was chosen to address the research questions effectively. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that purposive sampling may limit how much findings can be generalized. I used Power 3.1 software to determine the appropriate number of participants. Cohen (1992) stated that for a study with a sample size of 26 with an  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a mean paired difference of .05, and a standard deviation



equal to 1.0, the power is estimated at .80 to detect a significant difference between the two independent groups. Based on the G\*Power calculation, this study's sample population needed to include at least 52 Black and White college students enrolled at an HBCU. The research design was mixed methods; therefore, 52 participants were sufficient for this study.

Potential participants were at least 19 years of age, classifying them as adults in the state of Alabama, enrolled at a central Alabama HBCU, and self-identified as White or Black. Their selection for participation was based on their providing student IDs before being given the link. Participants for this study were recruited by verbal invitation by me while on campus, in psychology classes, on Facebook, and by instructor invitations, which the institutions preapproved. Participants also provided their email addresses so I could contact them to obtain detailed instructions about the study and participate in the qualitative interview session.

The population sample included 52 students, 26 Black and 26 white students, from HBCUs located in central Alabama. The student population fits the demographics of this study as most of the student body is majority Black, the colleges or universities have been designated the title as an HBCU, and each college/university has enrolled students who identify as White or Caucasian. According to Mason (2010), for qualitative interviews, having a sample size of at least 10 participants per group was deemed appropriate for this study. Mason suggested that sample saturation in qualitative studies can impact data collection by preventing redundancy in information. This sample size provided sufficient data to analyze the qualitative questions.

### **Instruments for Qualitative Components**

The qualitative portion of the data was collected on Zoom via interviews. I electronically recorded the video sessions and manually recorded any participants' comments during the interview sessions. The recorded visual sessions helped me collect the information as accurately as possible from the interviews. The following questions were asked during the interviews:

- Why did you choose this environment for school?
- Which social groups at the college have you joined by choice? \What social groups at the college are you assigned to by others?
- What social groups at the college are most important to you?
- How do you think your college social group(s) differs from other groups?
- Are there social groups you avoid or don't think highly of at the college, and why?
- How does your social group at the college influence your identity or sense of belonging? (See Appendix A)

The qualitative questions were developed through an extensive literature review and identifying the gaps in the literature regarding social identity of students who attend HBCUs. The qualitative questions were also formulated to articulate the objectives of the research questions clearly. The questions were designed to collect data on the students' perceptions of how their environment affects their social identity. Other ideas for developing my questions were generated by my time as a student at an HBCU, as well as being an instructor at an HBCU. All the open-ended questions allowed the student

participants to express their social identity experiences at an HBCU. My experience as a student and a teacher has allowed me to observe students from both the student and instructor perspectives. These qualitative questions provided a better understanding of Black and White students' social identity at an HBCU. I established content validity by sharing my qualitative questions with five HBCU educators and two administrators who have worked in higher education for years. Their opinions were solicited to make improvements to the questions, and none needed to be adjusted.

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

I created a demographic questionnaire and administered it to participants electronically via Survey Monkey. The questionnaire had seven demographic questions regarding age, race, gender, region of birth, class standing, major, and housing (see Appendix B). A pilot study was conducted with two colleagues to ensure that questions were understandable. Both colleagues clearly understood the CSES, demographic survey, and qualitative questions. They expressed confidence that participants would encounter no difficulties or concerns in completing the study, suggesting minimal challenges during data collection.

### **Instruments for Quantitative Components**

#### ***CSES***

The Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES), created by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992), was administered to all participants. The CSES was appropriate for this study because it measured individual self-esteem and social identity differences. Researchers have used this instrument in three studies and have determined it reliable and valid

(Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) noted that this instrument can be “reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational purposes without seeking written permission.” I administered this survey via Survey Monkey.

The CSES consists of 16 items answered on a 7-point Likert scale. The seven points are 1- “Strongly Disagree,” 2- “Disagree,” 3 - “Disagree Somewhat,” 4 -“Neutral,” 5- “Agree Somewhat,” 6- “Agree,” and 7- “Strongly Agree” The instrument is divided into four subscales, which includes Membership Self Esteem (Items 1, 5, 9, and 13), Private Collective Self Esteem (Items 2, 6, 10 and 14), Public Collective Self-Esteem (Items 3, 7, 11, and 15), and Identity Importance (Items 4, 8 12 and 16). Reverse-scored answers are to items 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, and 15, 1=7, 2=6, 3=5, 4=4, 5=3, 6=2, 7=1. The four-item answers of the subscales will be summed for each subscale score and then divided by 4. Since the subscales measure a distinct construct, it is highly recommended not to create an overall or composite score for collective self-esteem. The quantitative survey, the CSES, allowed me to measure the quantitative amount of social identity from each participant. This instrument helped me determine the score of Black and White students’ self-reported social identity measures.

**Reliability of the CSES.** The reliability of the CSES was measured by conducting three separate studies (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). Study one included 1200 students given the 16-item CSES and the eight-item Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. This study indicated that the reliability of the scale and subscales are consistent and show substantial alphas and item correlations. The second study involved 83 students who were given the CSES, a demographic questionnaire, the Rosenberg (1965) Self-

Esteem Scale, the 23-item Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (1959), and the 50-item Coopersmith (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory. The six-week test-retest showed sufficient reliability considering the long test-retest period.

The final study was given to 180 students. They were each given a demographic questionnaire, the CSES, the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, Hui's (1988) 65-item Individualism-Collectivism Scale, the Cheek et al. (1985) 31-item Aspects of Identity Questionnaire III, the Wagner and Moch's (1986) 11-item measure of assessing Individualism-Collectivism in the workplace, Sampson's (1978) 15-item Internal Orientation Scale, the Maslach et al. (1985) 12 item Individuation Scale, and the revised CSES. The reliability of the subscales and the CSES revealed high Cronbach's alphas and adequate test-retest coefficients.

The results from these three separate studies suggest that the Collective Self-Esteem Scale is a valuable tool and consistent, as reliability revealed alphas ranging from .73 for membership to .80 for Public Self Esteem, with a total scale alpha of .85. The item-total correlations ranged from .45 to .66 for the subscales and from .37 to .59 for the total scale (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992).

**Validity of the CSES Related to the Study.** An examination of the validity of the CSES was completed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) at a large northeastern university with 1200 introductory psychology students. In this study, 755 White students, 30 Black students, and 43 Asian students participated. The sample was 51 percent female. The scale's validity was determined by the positive correlation with the other existing measures of personal self-esteem at  $r=.42$  ( $p<.001$ ) (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The

specific correlations validated the construct validity of the CSES with other measures. Furthermore, the public self-esteem subscale's validity showed that certain racial minorities, Black and Asian, reported lower levels of collective public self-esteem than Whites. The quantitative survey, the CSES, allowed me to measure the quantitative amount of social identity from each participant. This instrument helped me determine the score of Black and White students' self-reported social identity measures.

### **Procedures for Pilot Studies**

Participants in the pilot study were recruited through direct contact with two known colleagues. There were three participants at least 19 years of age. They completed the demographic questionnaire and interview questions. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that all questions could be understood and answered by the participants.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection**

After receiving permission from the Walden IRB, approval # 03-27-23-0487769, I sought college administrators' approval to conduct the study. (See Appendix F & See Appendix G) Participants offered their participation in this study through various channels, including my visits to their psychology classes, invitations disseminated by their instructors, coaches, and college administrators via electronic flyers, and distribution through social media platforms.

Once participants agreed to participate, they signed the electronic consent form (see (Appendix D) in Survey Monkey. They were immediately and electronically navigated to the demographic survey, followed by the CSES. The survey questions took no more than 15 minutes to complete and submit.

All questions and concerns were addressed via email. Participants were reminded of the confidentiality of all answers submitted. Once the study was complete, each student participant received a study summary via email. If there was any uncertainty or information that needed to be clarified, I asked each participant before the conclusion of their participation. One participant needed clarification regarding their name being published in the study. I reassured them that their name or personal information would not be included in any portion of the results or findings.

Virtual face-to-face interviews took place between Monday and Friday. The interviews were held via Zoom and lasted at most 20 minutes. Participants received another electronic consent via Survey Monkey for the interview questions at least two days before they were scheduled to interview. (See Appendix E). I used a pen, pencil, and blank sheets of lined paper to take notes during the interviews, including jotting down keywords, themes, and timestamps in response to participants' answers. The interviews were recorded and stored on a secure external drive. A field test was conducted with two colleagues to ensure that the demographic and interview questions were understandable. Data were coded, and the names of the participants were not included in the results of this study. All IRB guidelines were obeyed per the Walden IRB.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

#### ***Quantitative Component***

Ten students completed The Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES) to measure social identity. I exported the data from Survey Monkey to Microsoft Word and Excel. I organized and coded the data after correcting for errors, incomplete responses, and other

irregularities. The Statistical Package for Social Science version 26 software (SPSS v. 26), alpha ( $\alpha$ ) error probability of .05, was used to run the independent group's t-test to assess the difference of the mean social identity scores of both groups. The alternate and null hypothesis for the quantitative component was:

H10: There will not be a statistically significant difference between social identity of White and Black students.

H1A: There will be a statistically significant difference between social identity of White and Black students.

An independent group's t-test was chosen because the independent variables (Black and White students) were categorical variables coded dichotomously as either Black or White. The dependent variable (social identity) had four categories: membership, private, public, and identity.

### ***Qualitative Component***

Ten students were interviewed individually, five Black and five White. The coding for the qualitative components was gathered manually, and all descriptions and stories came from the student participants. Notes were organized from the virtual group interviews by assigning the information to the student participants' demographic details. The transcript allowed me to identify themes and related topics, evaluate all the data, and split the themes and topics into codes. The codes helped me understand and present the data in an organized manner. Cases were labeled and stored into themes based on their connections.

Delve, a software used for finding themes, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel,



helped me document, organize, save, display, and retrieve qualitative data. Unqualified student participants received recommendations on alternative colleges, online resources, and other research studies in which they may qualify to participate.

The quantitative data consisted of the self-reported social identity measures, while the qualitative data examined the students' experiences of social identity while attending an HBCU. The grouping of these two methods provided a better understanding and addressed the research questions. This study's findings were based on integrating this mixed methods approach to create a reliable conclusion based on the theories and hypotheses.

Microsoft Word and Delve were suitable for examining the data as they assisted me in entering, editing, organizing, saving, and retrieving the data variables. Microsoft Excel allowed me to generate the database files. Then that data was moved to the SPSS statistical program to conduct the independent group's t-test and gave descriptive statistics information by displaying the data in charts, tables, and graphs.

### **Threats to Validity**

How the participants answered the questionnaire, and the interviews may threaten the validity of this study. They were asked to answer questions honestly and not predict the desired outcome of the results. However, there were steps to protect the validity of the test and counter any responses that appeared to be predictable.

Validity dictates if the research is meaningful and worthwhile. Social identity becomes an essential attribute when students transition into college as they examine their new and old social groups (Chavous et al., 2018). Therefore, I anticipate this study will

impact other researchers worldwide who may replicate it. This investigation will be beneficial to future studies, not only for the HBCU community but also for Predominantly White Institutions with diverse populations. The replication of this study with different groups and new settings should have identical or similar results.

Internal validity for this study was essential to following the correct procedures when working with both variables. The student participants' experience, utilizing the wrong instruments for the analysis, discussions between the students outside of the data collection period, personal attributes, and an insufficient sample representation could cause inaccurate results within the study. Any information that I needed to understand was validated during the interviews.

The experiences of the student participants could have influenced internal validity. No questions appeared to cause the students to become upset while answering the survey. Based on the findings from G\*Power, I am confident that the sample of Black and White students at HBCUs properly represents the population. This ensures internal validity and selecting an appropriate research design to effectively address the research objectives.

Utilizing the CSES for the study also helped ensure internal validity. The research questions, hypothesis, theories, and sample population should represent the study's proper qualitative and quantitative questions. The triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for the measurement of convergent validity of the research to ensure integrity (Rocco et al., 2003). Student participants were reminded verbally at the beginning of the interview questions that no answer was right or wrong, and each

participant was asked to avoid participant communication outside of the study.

I consistently presented the study in a reliable manner by consulting with the colleges as often as necessary to maintain fidelity. I was not an instructor to any students participating in this study. Each interview question was phrased in a neutral approach to minimize any bias. I was absent while students answered the demographic survey and the CSES to help reduce further bias, as all surveys were conducted electronically via the Internet. No personal feelings were expressed to the participants. External auditing of the data helped document and reduce any biases I did not recognize. These provisions assisted in lowering the possibilities of threats to the quality of this study.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Establishing Credibility**

The research should be believable and connect the study's findings with reality. According to Stahl and King (2020), credibility refers to the coherence and consistency of a study's findings, indicating how well they align or establish a relationship. The results and conclusions of this study are reliable and sincere. The comments made by the participants about their social identity are presented authentically. Credibility techniques include the triangulation of methods, prolonged contact, multiple contacts, saturation, reflexivity, and peer review.

The triangulation of methods is used to validate the quantitative and qualitative data findings and is one of the methods for promoting credibility (Stahl and King, 2020). I examined participants' social identity discrepancies during the interviews and survey. Prolonged contact included my knowledge as an HBCU instructor. Working with college

students has increased my understanding of their environment. Replaying the audio-visual recordings, and frequently reviewing and reading the manually documented information for clarification by each participant. Any information that I did not understand was clarified during the interview.

Saturation was the suitable number of participants in the sampling size for the interview. Reflexivity was in relationship with my experience in higher education at an HBCU. I have a passion for education, teaching, student achievement, and success; therefore, I am aware of my biases in some situations. The peer review included assessing the results by Walden Faculty peer review teams, which checked the findings' credibility.

### **Transferability**

Transferability involves applying or replicating research findings across various contexts or settings. Patterns and descriptions observed in one context hold relevance to another. (Stahl and King, 2020). The conclusion included information that other researchers can use in their study. Data from the literature review and the findings were reported with the results. All data was accurate, reliable, and consistent with my study's findings concerning social identity and the student participants' perspectives. The results of this study are transferable to various HBCU scenarios in different locations, ages, cultures, and races.

### **Dependability**

The awareness that data collection and study results will undergo scrutiny by a peer should prompt researchers to carefully discern the facts of the study from their

subjective opinions, ensuring dependability in their findings (Stahl and King, 2020). This study's research questions supported the study due to the samplings, measurements, and interview procedures. The quantitative conclusion depended on the accuracy of the results from the survey. Once the data was collected from the interviews, it was organized into themes and then manually coded by using either Microsoft Word, Excel, or Delve software. The goal was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Black and White students' social identity. My dissertation committee, including the Institutional Review Board, examined my study for clarity and dependability.

The triangulation included quantifying the quantitative and qualitative data during the analysis process. The quantitative data consisted of the numerical results with descriptive words to explain the data. The qualitative data was measured by descriptive statistics, graphs, and tables representing the interview themes. These were compared for differences and similarities in the themes of the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### **Confirmability**

During the analysis, all quantitative and qualitative data underwent meticulous observation, integration, and comparison. Stahl and King (2020) also highlight that confirmability aims to approximate objective reality as closely as possible. Summaries were crafted for each question, and my notes were thoroughly analyzed to emphasize each participant's responses. I observed student participants' attitudes toward the interview process throughout the interviews. Guided by the research purpose and questions, I analyzed the participant's answers. Additionally, my dissertation committee offered valuable advice and guidance on interpreting my findings.

## **Ethical Procedures**

### ***Agreement to Gain Access to Participation-Includes IRB Application***

I applied to the IRB at Walden University to obtain permission to conduct this study. I complied with all ethical standards and behaviors that Walden University requires to conduct research. I was sure to follow all processes, procedures, and guidelines for this study. After gaining approval from the IRB, I conducted my research. I communicated and received permission from the HBCUs in my area to perform this research with their students. All students' ethics, privacy, and rights were adhered to during this study. The college administration was informed about the ethics, privacy, and proper treatment of the student participants. The college administration signed a form before the start of the research. Upon agreement to begin the study, I provided them with a copy of Walden's informed consent form.

The informed consent detailed the participants' requirements before, during, and after the research. It explained the data collection procedures and the rationale for completing this study. Furthermore, it specified why participants were chosen to participate in this study and its benefits. Last, Student participants were given their agreement to volunteer and partake in this study.

### ***Treatment of Human Participants***

While conducting this mixed methods research, I considered the fundamental ethical principles: beneficence, respect for the participants, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Protecting the student participants from any parts of the study that could

cause them harm is beneficence. The psychological aspects of this research could cause harm, and it was my responsibility to protect the participants from any harm during this study. Earlier events in the participant's life from recapping memories could cause harm. If the participants felt any harm, the informed consent allowed the participant to discontinue the study at any time.

I respected all the participants' beliefs, cultures, gender, and their choices. The participants were not manipulated or persuaded regarding the research. Informed consent was provided to the participants, as well as the outline of the study's requirements, the rights of the participants, and how I would protect those rights. All rights were followed from the beginning of the study until the data collection. The informed consent form defined my role and how participants would be selected during the research process. Furthermore, the study's purpose and the participant's risk level and involvement were outlined in the informed consent.

Treating all the participants fairly is justice. Every participant had access to the same environment. Justice on the informed consent stated the risks and benefits of the mixed methods research to the participants.

The Walden University IRB established the rules that outline the school's ethical standards that follow the federal regulations of the United States. No participant was exposed to any risk or harm, and all Walden regulations were required, including IRB approval.

### ***Ethical Concerns Related to Recruiting Materials and Processes***

I informed all potential participants that I was conducting a research study with

Walden University and told them that I was not an employee of the HBCU, government, or law enforcement organization. I informed participants that I am a college instructor at another higher education institution with more than eight years of higher education instruction. I told them that their participation in the study would take at most 60 minutes between the demographic sheet, survey, and interview.

No risk for participating occurred during this research. I informed them that their identity would be protected at every step of the study. There would be others to see the investigation, but no personal information or the organization's name would be exposed.

### ***Ethical Issues Related to Data Collection***

I upheld the participant's privacy by not sharing their personal information. All information collected from the participants correctly represented their exact words. I made sure that all participants understood every step of the study and made sure they were comfortable. I reminded the participants frequently that they could stop participating at any time during the study. I protected their feelings by respecting their responses and avoiding biases. Body language, facial expressions, and tone were avoided during the study.

Mixed-methods research can present various potential ethical issues. Ethical concerns include the most critical sections of the research design. The problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, data collection procedures, data analysis, and writing and reporting are areas where ethical matters can occur (Creswell, 2003). This research's main goal during data collection was to cause as little harm to others as



possible.

### ***Treatment of Data***

All information provided by the participants on the informed consent remained confidential between the participants and me. This study is available for other researchers and scholars to review and evaluate, but each participant's identity was never compromised. When collecting the quantitative and qualitative data, each participant was identified by number code. This number coding for the participants includes their age, gender, school classification, race, and their number. No information in the study consisted of anything that caused harm to the participants. “

### ***Data Storage***

All data was stored on several backup filing systems. They were created from the interviews and manually coded with qualitative themes. Three photocopies of the qualitative notes, codes, and data are in a safe kept at my home and saved on Microsoft Word and Google Drive. This information is stored on a USB flash drive and in my home safe. The data was shared with Walden University, my dissertation committee, and other departments of Walden University. All copies of this study will be kept in my safe for five years after the research study is completed, and then I will shred and destroy all data.

### ***Other Ethical Issues***

Other ethical disputes while conducting this research may include demonstrating integrity in all areas of the research process. All misconduct was avoided at each step of this study, and I always conducted my research honestly and remained ethical throughout

the process.

### **Summary**

I examined Black and White students who attend an HBCU in central Alabama and assessed their experience of self-reported social identity. A mixed-method, quasi-experimental design is the research design for this study. This research aimed to understand how social identity is similar and dissimilar between Black and White students at an HBCU. The instruments used in this study include the CSES for the survey and face-to-face, audio-visual, and virtual interviews. The descriptive findings of social identity may impact how these colleges and universities move forward with providing resources for the entire student body. My role as the researcher was to remain honest and ethical and to control my biases with the participants. Chapter 4 provides the methodology results and validates that the methodology described in Chapter 3 was followed.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this mixed methods study was twofold. The qualitative purpose was to examine the experience of Black and White students' social identity when attending an HBCU. The quantitative purpose of this study was to investigate the social identity relationship between White and Black students who attend an HBCU. The quantitative research questions and hypotheses addressed the differences of self-reported measures of social identity of White and Black students at an HBCU. The variables studied were the social identities of Black and White students enrolled at an HBCU. The qualitative research question that guided this study was "In what ways do White and Black students experience social identity at an HBCU?" Chapter 4 details the results of this qualitative and quantitative study and provides the results of this study.

### **Pilot Study**

Three participants in the pilot study were recruited through direct contact with known colleagues. Participants were at least 19 years old and completed demographic questionnaires and interview questions. The pilot study's purpose was to ensure that all questions could be understood and answered. Responses to the pilot study did not impact the main study, so all instrumentation, data analysis, and strategies remained the same.

### **Setting**

The setting of this study was at two HBCUs located in central Alabama. During this study, there were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants or their experience at the time of this study, such as traumatic events, changes in personnel, or policy changes.

### **Demographics**

Demographic data were collected on a total of 52 participants. Analysis of the demographic data revealed that 73.08% of respondents were age 18-25 ( $n = 38$ ). In terms of gender identity, 69.23% of the respondents identified as female ( $n = 36$ ). Data revealed that 3.85% of respondents were classified as a freshman ( $n = 2$ ) and 38.46% of the respondents were classified as a senior ( $n = 20$ ). Furthermore, the data revealed that 25% of the respondents live on campus ( $n = 13$ ), and 75% live off campus ( $n = 39$ ). Last, the data revealed that 84.62% of the respondents were born in the Southeast United States ( $n = 44$ ). See Table 1 for demographic data for the total sample. The demographic data on the subset of participants who completed the qualitative questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1***Demographics Data (N = 52)*

Characteristics	n	%
Age of respondents		
18-25	38	73.08
26-30	7	13.46
31-35	5	9.62
36 and older	2	3.85
Gender		
Male	16	30.77
Female	36	69.23
Class Standing		
Freshman	2	3.85
Sophomore	11	21.15
Junior	19	36.54
Senior	20	38.46
Residence		
On Campus	13	25
Off Campus	39	75
Birth Region within the US		
Southeast	44	84.62
Southwest	5	9.62
Midwest	1	1.92
Northwest	0	0
Northeast	0	0
West	0	0
Outside of the US	2	3.85

**Table 2***Demographic Data from Qualitative Subset (N = 10)*

Characteristics	n	%
Age of respondents		
18-25	8	80
26-30	1	10
31-35	1	10
36 and older	0	0
Gender		
Male	2	20
Female	8	80
Class Standing		
Freshman	2	20
Sophomore	1	10
Junior	1	10
Senior	6	60
Residence		
On Campus	2	20
Off Campus	8	80
Birth Region within the US		
Southeast	8	80
Southwest	2	20
Midwest	0	0
Northwest	0	0
Northeast	0	0
West	0	0
Outside of the US	0	0

## **Data Collection**

SurveyMonkey was used to collect data on a total of 52 participants. All 52 participants completed the survey. Participants were given the same link, granting them access to the demographic and quantitative questionnaires. Out of the 52 participants, 10 completed the interview questions, consisting of five Black and five White students. Using G\*Power, a tool for computing the statistical power of *t* tests, it was found that with a sample size of 26,  $\alpha=0.05$ , a mean paired difference of .05, and a standard deviation of 1.0, the estimated power is .80 to detect a significant difference between the two independent groups. According to this calculation, the study's sample population should ideally consist of at least 52 students, 26 Black and 26 White, at an HBCU. The study was posted on SurveyMonkey on April 4, 2023, and stayed available and accessible until November 1, 2023, when enough students completed the online survey ( $N = 52$ ). It took 211 days to reach that number. Chapter 3 outlined how data were collected, and there were no variations. There were no unexpected or abnormal occurrences, resulting in the study closing on November 1, 2023.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

First and second-level coding techniques were used to analyze the qualitative data (Hahn, 2007). Delve software was used for first-level coding, which assisted with large amounts of raw qualitative data labeled and focused (Hahn, 2007). An example of first-level coding is breaking the participants' responses into short phrases. Using these short phrases allowed me to combine the quotes and statements that stood out from each

participant. Second-level coding, or pattern coding, was completed several days after I completed the first-level coding. Upon completion of first and second-level coding, various themes were elucidated from the data: scholarships, academic achievement, sports teams, and fraternity/sorority. See Table 3 for a list of those qualitative themes. Figure 1 also visually represents these themes, with word size indicating the frequency of occurrence in the qualitative data.

**Table 3**

*Qualitative Themes*

Qualitative Themes	Number of times mentioned
Sorority/Fraternity	14
Choir	10
Team	9
Scholarship	8
SGA	2

**Figure 1**

*Qualitative Themes*



**Quantitative Data Analysis**

After data were collected, it was exported from SurveyMonkey to Microsoft Excel, where the data was cleaned before being transferred to SPSS 27 for data analysis.



Of the 52 surveys collected, three were incomplete and were missing data to complete the scoring of social identity. Those three surveys were only used for demographic purposes.

I performed an independent sample *t* test to compare the social identity between Black and White students at an HBCU. This statistical test was chosen to assess differences between two groups based on one continuous dependent variable and one dichotomous independent variable. Statistical significance was determined using a 95% confidence interval with  $p < .05$ . If the independent *t* test yielded statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ), any observed differences in the variable means are unlikely to be due to chance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. I included Cohen's *d* value to assess the appropriate significance of the *t*-test results. Following Cohen's general guidelines regarding effect size, a coefficient value exceeding .5 indicates a substantial or strong association (Cohen, 2013).

## **Results**

The results of the study are discussed in the following sections. I discuss the results of the research questions separately, followed by how the data merge to support each other, as this was a mixed methods study.

### **Qualitative Results**

The research question was "In what ways do White and Black students experience social identity at an HBCU?" Ten participants were involved in the interviews. Initial coding indicated that nearly all participants, except one, actively participated in diverse social groups related to their social identities. For instance, Respondent 1 mentioned her involvement in a sorority, the choir, and the Student Government Association (SGA).

Respondents 2 and 8 were both members of a sports team. During second-level coding, it became evident that engagement and affiliation in their respective social groups was influenced by factors such as the impact of high school coaches, as reported by Respondent 8; the availability of scholarships, as mentioned by Respondent 3; and familial encouragement, as indicated by Respondent 4. Respondent 2 stated, “I got a choir scholarship, and I was encouraged by some friends to run for an SGA office.”

Participants provided additional information about the social groups to which others assigned them and the attributes they believed led to these assignments. Respondent 2, for instance, mentioned that his height was a conspicuous and “easy” indicator that people used to categorize him for the basketball team. Another participant, Respondent 3, highlighted their White race as automatically placing them in the social group with other White students on campus. Additional insights came from Respondents 8, 6, and 10, who similarly noted that their race would lead others to assign them to the White social group. Participants generally expressed the significance of their social groups, particularly emphasizing the importance of groups associated with scholarships and academic achievements in response to the question “How does your social group at the college influence your identity or sense of belonging?”

In brief, the research outcomes suggest that Black and White students at an HBCU have comparable experiences with social identity. Furthermore, they perceive their social groups as being no different from others. Nevertheless, certain participants mentioned avoiding specific social groups due to a lack of commonality and interest. Despite this, all participants expressed a sense of belonging and actively endeavored to be

constructive and engaged members within their respective social groups.

### **Quantitative Results**

Quantitative data analysis explored the relationship between social identity and Black and White students who attend an HBCU. The research question answered was “Are there differences of self-reported measures of social identity of White and Black students at an HBCU?” The CSES assesses distinctions in collective rather than individual self-esteem through the utilization of four subscales on a Likert scale of 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Each subscale targets a specific aspect of self-esteem developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) and includes membership esteem, private collective self-esteem, public collective self-esteem, and identity centrality.

An independent group’s *t*-test analysis was done on each subscale (membership, private, public, and identity) from the CSES against Black and White students at an HBCU. G\*Power revealed that with a sample size of 26 with an  $\alpha = 0.05$  with a mean paired difference of .05 and a standard deviation equal to 1.0, the power is estimated to be .80 to detect a significant difference between the two independent groups. Based on the G\*Power calculation, this study’s sample population needs to include at least 52 Black and White college students at an HBCU. There were 52 surveys collected, three were incomplete and missing data, so they were not used to complete the final data analysis. The final number of surveys for data analysis was 49. Four separate *t* tests were run for each subscale mentioned above to answer the research question.

### ***Membership***

The subscale membership includes the four following statements from the CSES:

(a) I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to, (b) I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do, (c) Overall, my social groups are considered good by others, and (d) Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself. Black students ( $n = 24$ ) were associated with  $M = 4.47$  ( $SD = .60$ ), and White students ( $n = 25$ ) were associated with a  $M = 5.06$  ( $SD = .55$ ). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was analyzed to determine the assumption of homogeneity of variance. This test found that the significance ( $p = .978$ ) was above .05, resulting in no significant difference between the two groups. An independent sample  $t$  test comparing Black and White students revealed no statistically significant effect,  $t = 3.52$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Cohen's  $d$  was estimated at .577, a medium effect based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating there is no statistically significant difference between the social identity of White and Black students.

### ***Private***

The subscale private includes the four following statements from the CSES: (a) I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to, (b) In general, I'm glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to, (c) Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other social groups, (d) The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am. Black students ( $n = 24$ ) were associated with  $M = 4.50$  ( $SD = .69$ ), and White students ( $n = 25$ ) were associated with a  $M = 4.60$  ( $SD = .46$ ). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was analyzed to determine the assumption of homogeneity of variance. This test found that the significance ( $p = .095$ ) was above .05, resulting in no significant difference between the

two groups. An independent sample  $t$  test comparing Black and White students revealed a statistically significant effect,  $t = .600$ ,  $p = <.552$ . Cohen's  $d$  was estimated at .583, which is a medium effect based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating there is no statistically significant difference between the social identity of White and Black students.

### ***Public***

The subscale public includes the four following statements from the CSES: (a) I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to, (b) Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile, (c) In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of, and (d) The social groups I belong to are unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am. Black students ( $n = 24$ ) were associated with a  $M = 4.29$  ( $SD = .63$ ), and White students ( $n = 25$ ) were associated with a  $M = 4.21$  ( $SD = .53$ ). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was analyzed to determine the assumption of homogeneity of variance. This test found that the significance ( $p = .532$ ) was above .05, resulting in no significant difference between the two groups. An independent sample  $t$ -test comparing Black and White students revealed a statistically significant effect,  $t = .487$ ,  $p = .628$ . Cohen's  $d$  was estimated at .586, which is a medium effect based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating there is no statistically significant difference between the social identity of White and Black students.

### ***Identity***

The subscale identity includes the four following statements from the CSES: (a) I

often feel I'm a useless member of my social groups, (b) I feel good about the social groups I belong to, (c) In general, others think that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy, and (d) In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image. Black students ( $n = 24$ ) were associated with a  $M = 3.95$  ( $SD = .68$ ), and White students ( $n = 25$ ) were associated with a  $M = 4.29$  ( $SD = .58$ ). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was analyzed to determine the assumption of homogeneity of variance. This test found that the significance ( $p = .755$ ) was above .05, resulting in no significant difference between the two groups. An independent sample  $t$  test comparing Black and White students revealed a statistically significant effect,  $t = 1.89$ ,  $p = .065$ . Cohen's  $d$  was estimated at .633, which is a medium effect based on Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating there is no statistically significant difference between the social identity of White and Black students.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability serve as criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data. In this study, credibility was upheld through meticulously examining the qualitative data. The initial coding at the first level was scrutinized. Subsequently, after a few days, the second-level data coding was undertaken carefully to ensure alignment with the initial coding. Triangulation also enhances the credibility of this study, with the literature review supporting the study's variables and concepts. Both quantitative tools and the qualitative questionnaire supported this triangulation.

To ensure the transferability of the study findings, I meticulously documented the

study's design, methods, and procedures, along with conducting a thorough review of the study variables and concepts. The findings of this study can be applied to diverse scenarios within HBCUs, encompassing various locations, age groups, cultures, and racial backgrounds. To ensure dependability, the research questions were upheld by the study's sampling, measurements, and interview protocols. The quantitative analysis relied on the precision of the survey results. Following data collection from the interviews, I categorized the data into themes, which were subsequently organized manually using codes. To ensure confirmability of the qualitative data, I maintained journal notes that assisted in staying focused on the coding process, coupled with ongoing comparative checks. Advice and guidance from my dissertation committee was given throughout this process.

### **Summary**

According to the qualitative data collected from 10 participants, five Black and five White students who attend an HBCU, all but one actively engaged in diverse social groups. Black and White students at an HBCU share similar experiences with social identity, including avoiding social groups who do not share similar interests and commonalities. Additionally, they view their social groups as indistinguishable from others.

The CSES was utilized to analyze quantitative data, measuring individuals' levels of social identity regarding their memberships in inherent groups such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. The data analysis indicated no significant differences between Black and White students' membership esteem, private collective

self-esteem, public collective self-esteem, and identity centrality while attending an HBCU ( $p = .978, .095, .532$ , and  $.755$ , respectively). Consequently, based on these findings, no statistically significant differences exist in the social identity of Black and White students attending an HBCU.

In this chapter, I reviewed the study's setting, the demographic profile of participants, and the methodologies employed for data collection. I also provided data analysis and findings and addressed concerns regarding trustworthiness and validity. In Chapter 5, I will elaborate on the interpretation of findings, outline any limitations encountered during the study, provide recommendations, and explore the implications of the study.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This mixed methods study had a dual purpose: first, to explore the social identity experiences of Black and White students who attend HBCUs, and second, to investigate the social identity dynamics between White and Black students within the HBCU context. This research was conducted in response to the absence of data about the social identity of White students enrolled in HBCUs. Key findings include that Black and White students experience similar social identity at an HBCU. The qualitative responses from Black and White students at an HBCU revealed that they are involved in social groups, such as honor societies, sports teams, and the choir, and they value these communities. Quantitative data revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in social identity between Black and White students who attend HBCUs when measured by membership esteem, private collective self-esteem, public collective self-esteem, and identity centrality ( $p = .978, .095, .532, \text{ and } .755$  respectively). The qualitative data confirmed the findings obtained from the quantitative analysis.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Several interpretations result from this study. First, the findings align with prior research indicating that White students generally have a positive social adjustment experience at HBCUs (Henry & Closson, 2010). Additionally, the results suggest that both Black and White students reported no disparities in self-reported measures of social identity. One key finding confirmed by this study is that students, regardless of their race, choose to attend HBCUs for similar reasons. Closson and Henry (2008b) suggest that White students choose HBCUs due to admission requirements and scholarship

opportunities that may not be available at Predominantly White Institutions. Shorette and Arroyo's (2015) investigation highlights that sororities and fraternities are popular social groups in which White students participate. This study affirmed these findings, as numerous participants in this study also belong to Black Greek letter organizations (sororities and fraternities). Other observations were reiterated in my study, where Black and White students mentioned admission criteria, like scholarships, as influential in their college decision-making process. Other shared admission criteria for Black and White students included athletics and music opportunities. This emphasizes a shared influence of certain factors on college choices among students from diverse racial backgrounds and reveals the importance of a comprehensive support system in higher education, specifically HBCUs.

Furthermore, the lack of disparities in the self-reported measures of social identity between White and Black students in this study coincides with the conclusions drawn by Graham-Bailey et al. (2019). This suggests a shared sense of identity and belonging within the campus community, irrespective of racial background or gender, but rather influenced more by their experiences with family and peers. The collective sense of identity and belonging nurtures an inclusive environment supporting students' academic achievement and personal development.

Finally, this study did not uncover any evidence of reduced anxiety or paranoia, which was noted in the research of McIntyre et al. (2018). Their study proposed that levels of social identity were associated with lower levels of anxiety or paranoia. However, the study did reveal that Black and White students tended to be placed in the

same social groups as they would choose for themselves, driven by shared interests among group members, which resulted in a positive experience for the Black and White students. While no data were contradicted, there is an opportunity to expand knowledge by exploring how membership in these groups influences social integration and identity development in minority settings. Further research could explore interactions among members from diverse racial backgrounds within these organizations, examining how they navigate cultural variances and foster inclusivity.

People develop a significant portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups and that these groups influence their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others was highlighted by Tajfel and Turner's SIT (1979). In relation to this study, belonging to Black sororities and fraternities, sports teams, and the choir represents a form of social identity within these groups, as they share everyday experiences, values, and traditions. This results in positive social integration and identity affirmation, especially in a minority setting where the experiences present unique challenges. SIT also emphasizes the importance of intergroup dynamics, highlighting how individuals perceive and interact with members of other groups. Understanding how these memberships shape individuals' social identities, influence their interactions with others, and contribute to their overall sense of belonging.

The study's conceptual framework, rooted in the intergroup hypothesis, suggests that fostering intergroup relationships can diminish prejudice by establishing shared goals and intergroup cooperation. By investigating interactions among individuals from varied racial backgrounds within groups, future research can assess the manifestation of

Intergroup Hypothesis attributes and their impact on attitudes and behaviors.

Additionally, exploring whether power dynamics within social groups shape intergroup perceptions could be an avenue for further investigation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had a few limitations. The small, geographically limited sample from HBCUs in the South may not be representative of a larger population. Although direct quotes from participants were utilized in qualitative data collection to minimize researcher bias, there is an assumption that all participants were truthful during interviews and survey responses. Additionally, including participants solely from Alabama aged 19 decreased the sample size. Finally, the study examined only one type of social identity among college-aged students.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study indicate that Black and White students experience social identity similarly at an HBCU. Additional research could delve into the motivations behind White and Black students' decision to enroll in HBCUs. While participants offered diverse reasons, investigating more detailed rationales could offer valuable insights for HBCU administrators. Another recommendation is for HBCUs to maintain diverse, organized social groups where both Black and White students can interact. While most students in this population may adapt well to this environment, it remains essential for these institutions to offer support for students who may feel their social groups need to be adequately represented and valued. Further research in this area is needed to assist in understanding a broader range of these students to aid in their

transition to and from various social groups.

### **Implications**

There are a few implications for this study. Positive social change is fostered when colleges and universities maintain awareness of their student population and demographics and offer diverse opportunities accessible to all. As noted, the White student population at HBCUs is increasing yearly for various reasons, including sports (Stewart, 2009). For example, Respondent 8 indicated they chose to attend an HBCU because the golf coach noticed them at a tournament. Moreover, Respondent 8 noted positive experiences within their social circles and groups, occasionally interacting with other groups. These findings underscore the significance of continuing efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity on college campuses. They emphasize the ongoing necessity for initiatives that encourage cross-cultural interactions and establish supportive environments for all students, irrespective of their race.

A mixed methods approach allowed the research to speak from various perspectives. The quantitative approach presented a collective perspective on how Black and White students experience social identity, allowing the research to present a holistic view of social identity. The qualitative methodology presented themes from the participants that allowed the research to connect to the quantitative approach to social identity and the experiences had while at an HBCU. This mixed-methods approach provided a full perspective of social identity from the Black and White students at HBCUs. This study affirms that both Black and White students encounter comparable social identity experiences at HBCUs, and it indicates a positive correlation between

social identity and the social groups to which students belong. As the enrollment of White students increases at HBCUs, social identity will continue to be an essential topic in this community (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). Cross-cultural interactions should be promoted through organized events and activities that encourage collaboration and understanding. This can also be accomplished through the social groups that the participants indicated, such as the choir, sororities/fraternities, and sports teams. These groups are crucial in fostering community among students.

### **Conclusion**

Exploring the development of social identity among Black and White students at HBCUs is a topic that warrants ongoing investigation. Research indicates that self-reported measures of Black students' social identity and White students' social identity at HBCUs is a positive experience for both groups (Closson & Henry, 2008a; Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). Individuals with strong multiple social identities tend to possess high self-esteem and demonstrate superior psychological adaptability, potentially leading to a smoother acclimatization to a new environment (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015). As research on the social identity of Black and White students at HBCUs progresses and colleges and universities strive to establish a positive environment for all, HBCUs will maintain positive social identity experiences.

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### Appendix A: Qualitative Interview Questions

1. How did you choose this environment for school?
2. Which social groups at the college have you joined?
3. Who influenced you to join each social group?
4. What social groups at the college are you assigned to by others? What attributes do you think caused others to assign you to these social groups?
5. What social groups at the college are most important to you?
6. How do you think your college social group(s) differs from other groups?
7. Which social groups at the college do you avoid or don't think highly of and why?
8. How does your social group at the college influence your identity or sense of belonging?

## Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age: What is your age?
  - a. 18-25
  - b. 26-30
  - c. 31-35
  - d. 36 or older
2. Ethnicity (or Race): Please specify the ethnicity or race you identify with:
  - a. Black or African American
  - b. White or Caucasian
3. Gender: What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Transgender
  - d. Other
4. What region of the United States were you born?
  - a. Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Washington DC, and New Hampshire)
  - b. Northwest (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming)
  - c. Southeast (Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama, Virginia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, & Florida)
  - d. Southwest (Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, California, Wyoming)
  - e. Midwest (Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Michigan, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Ohio, & Iowa)
  - f. West (Colorado, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada, Hawaii & Alaska)
  - g. Outside the United States
5. What is your class standing?
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
6. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you currently living on campus (Residence Hall)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No