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Black Finesse Amidst the Political Science Paradigm: A Race-Grounded Phenomenology

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In this research, I develop a methodology that I call Race-Grounded Phenomenology (RGP). The scope of this study investigates how Black undergraduate students navigate the discipline of political science. An eclectic array of critical theories of race unveil the ways in which Black undergraduate students exhibit flair and tenacity, or what I call Black Finesse. The eclectic array of critical theories of race utilized in this study include critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and identity enactments. However, this study focuses on the Black student experience amidst the socialization of political science or what I call the political science paradigm. This study leans on catalytic validity as a measure to determine the value and validity of the study from the lens of the participants rather than relying on normative measures of validity. The study is focused within Colorado and draws participants from five four-year institutions of higher education. The implications and recommendations of the study calls for a shift in the political science paradigm to make Black minds, bodies, and souls matter in the discipline.

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Janiece Z. Mackey

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CHAPTER ONE: FOUNDATIONS AND BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I ground readers in the foundational aspects of the study. The study is centered on better understanding racialized Black undergraduate student experiences within the discipline of political science. I share my lived experience as a way to introduce readers to the study. I then provide context about the discipline of political science, describe phase one of my conceptual framework to ground the purpose of the study, and introduce key terms within the study. I conclude this chapter with a roadmap of the dissertation's subsequent chapters.

Positionality by Way of Introduction to the Study

I have been a political science student and educator as a Black female, wife, and mother. I reflect on my positionality because it allows for a full depiction of how I, as a Black woman, experience the discipline of and higher education. I am reflective in my writing, teaching, research, and service out of principle. If I expect Black undergraduate political science students to share themselves in vulnerable ways concerning race, I must model this vulnerability. As a Black scholar who centers race and identifies as a race scholar activist navigating political science, I am aware that my multiple identities simultaneously afford me privilege and result in marginalization. While my academic training allows me to navigate the discipline of political science in centering foundations of governance, policy, and activism, my Blackness and ways of knowing still place me outside of what students have internalized to be the "status quo of political science" or

what I call the political science paradigm. Thus, in conducting research in the discipline of political science, I have a heightened conscientization (Freire, 1970) of the invisible and visible hierarchies of what is deemed as knowledge experienced by me and students with whom I engage.

As the only Black adjunct faculty within the political science departments I have taught in, I understand that the opportunity to teach is a privileged one; teaching also extends my ability to innovate and recreate knowledge with critical theories of race and epistemologies that reflect the realities of Black students. However, centering race in the classroom requires a finessing and knack for understanding the classroom culture while "teaching in the line of fire" (Tuitt et al., 2009). Putting my body on the line to center race in classroom spaces and research has led me to many moments of cultural taxation (Tierney & Benisom, 1996) and racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004), but I do it because of my commitment to racial equity in higher education and the discipline of political science.

The ways in which I have been positioned as an outsider as a Black scholar are potential areas of transformation to consider in the pedagogy I have implemented and seek to continue implementing. I have reclaimed critical race epistemologies within the discipline by filling my syllabus with studies written by scholars of color, essays on critical race theory and critical whiteness, and activities that support race metacognition (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Thus, my outsider/insider status is spatial and temporal (Williams, 2016) because while I may be seen as an insider as a part of the academy, my critical race epistemology and Blackness situate me as an outsider to both the discipline

of political science and generally within higher education. Being able to navigate the outsider/insider status (Milner, 2007) through a spectrum rather than an either-or perspective allows me to provide a sense of comfort to Black students in navigating the tensions with discussions of Black identity within a political science context. My Blackness and Black Finesse within political science should reshape not only my thinking, but scholars' thinking around what outsider/insider status means. In this study, Black Finesse informs the ways in which the discipline can and should shift toward a commitment to racial equity. The ways in which I have chosen to shift the structures, politics, and agency within political science demonstrate the Black Finesse that I seek to unveil from the Black students I engage with in this study.

Political Science Pathways: Compositional Diversity from Undergraduate to Faculty

In this section, I focus on two areas. First, I describe the compositional diversity from the faculty to the undergraduate level as a way to depict what Black students may be navigating at varying levels in political science. Second, I frame how political science as a discipline has been discussed alongside identity. The foundational tenets of political science shape the way faculty navigate teaching, research, and service which is then imposed upon students at the graduate and undergraduate levels as the hidden curriculum of how to "behave," "survive," or even "thrive" within the discipline. Stanley (2012) discusses the ontology of political science and describes the essence of the discipline as two-fold.

> First…political science aims to construct arguments or explanations of ('real life') political events and phenomena by asking questions such as 'what caused x?' or 'how did y happen?'…[Second], political science does not focus upon actual 'politics' in the conventional sense. It instead concerns making sense of how

political scientists themselves understand and conceptualize politics. [Thus it] is necessarily self-referential, reflexive and 'meta' (and as such, to an extent 'parasitical') since it necessarily depends on the pre-existence of explanations. Thus…political science cannot…tell us much about politics itself, but can and should tell us about (existing explanations and approaches within) political science. (p. 94)

The foundation of political science is purposed to respond to political phenomena in a positivistic "what you see is what you get" way (Nueman, 2011). For example, I often experienced causation language espoused within the discipline from rhetoric like lower numbers of Black voters signifies a "lack" of civic engagement among the Black community. The discipline also recognizes the regurgitation of what "explanations and approaches" pre-exist. The reliance on already existing knowledge can lead to ahistoricism of current politics. Since there is a desire in the discipline to explain and regurgitate what political scientists consider from past scholarship, we must consider their inner-subjectivities and how their positionalities shape their research, teaching, and service. These underlying underpinnings of the discipline shape the status quo of political science or political science paradigm. The political science paradigm reflects the current ways in which political science structures, politics, and agency are enacted within the status quo. Because the discipline of political science is majority white, this study considers the implications of what this means for Black students and how they experience the discipline.

Faculty

In this section, I describe the compositional diversity of political science at the faculty level and the potential implications due to the lack of diversity. I consider leadership and faculty in political science departments and how they recycle politics

which reify and construct structures because these politics and structures may not be congruent with critical epistemologies of Black students. Mershon and Walsh (2015) speak to the racial composition of political science by stating:

> Female faculty of color…are still severely underrepresented [in political science]. In 2010, 86.6% of female political science faculty were Caucasian, 6.1% were African American, 4.4% Asian Pacific Islander, and 3.0% Latina…In 2010 African American females constituted 1.7% of political science faculty nationwide, a mere 161 women. (p. 441).

The aforementioned data reflects the limited racial diversity among faculty within political science and particularly the limited number of Black female faculty in political science. While compositional diversity is not the only indicator of epistemologies within teaching and learning, it must be considered. Hailu et al. (2017) remind us of varying principles of good teaching and learning from epistemologies to formative feedback. There is also an acknowledgement within that research that positionality and epistemologies shape factors such as classroom culture, retention, and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the limited diversity within the pipeline of political science may also be embedded within the perceptions of faculty of color within the field as well.

> Not surprisingly, white women, women of color, and members of other marginalized groups who enter into the political science academic pipeline as graduate students and who become junior faculty often encounter a hostile environment in the workplace and obstacles to career advancement. (Mershon & Walsh, 2015, p. 441)

The "hostile environment in the workplace" that faculty of color enter will not be mitigated by simply increasing the number of faculty of color because whiteness permeates higher education (Cabrera, 2018) as well as political science departments (Mackey, 2017). Just as there are epistemologies that shape higher education institutions,

epistemologies can be contextualized within specific disciplines as well. Furthermore,

students come into higher education and the disciplines they enter with their own

epistemologies. Particularly the epistemologies of Black students and their funds of

knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al, 1992; Kiyama, 2010) are often in tension

with the white dominant epistemologies of higher education and political science

contexts.

Graduate students

When discussing the implications of political science and identity, it is critical to

understand the sociopolitical standing of political science as a discipline. The

sociopolitical standing of the discipline informs decisions of graduate students. The ways

they engage and experience the discipline heavily depends on faculty behaviors and how

they choose to enact their agency. Understanding the context of the discipline can help

scholars and the discipline to better understand how students may make decisions

concerning whether or not to enter the discipline. Mellander (2016) conducted research

on the top graduate degrees that lead to jobs.

> The factors studied were: 1) Long-term outlook for job growth-PayScale
> projected growth based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2014 to 2024
> projections. 2) Median pay-the national median total compensation (base-salary
> plus bonuses, commissions, profit-sharing, etc.) at mid-career or after 10 or more
> years of experience. 3) Job satisfaction and stress-percentages who reported they
> were "extremely" or "fairly satisfied" with their jobs and who reported their work
> was "relaxing" or "not stressful." (Mellander, 2016, p. 1)

Political science is ranked among the top 15 graduate degrees. However, there

were only two social science disciplines listed in the top 15 graduate degrees. Political

science was one of them and the only other social science discipline listed in the top 15

graduate degrees was economics. Political science was ranked number 15 with a projected 2024 median salary of $116,700, projected job growth of 9%, and 78% of respondents reporting job satisfaction, yet only 48% of respondents reported political science as 'relaxing' and 'not stressful.' There are likely racialized implications underlying what respondents deemed as stressful concerning their job satisfaction that the discipline must understand in order to better engage and support the efficacy of graduate students of color. The graduate level is where students often make decisions concerning deepening their efficacy within their academic and career development or desiring to make a transition. There have been lot of doubts concerning social science degrees as a viable pathway via policy pushes toward science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). However, political science is one of the top 15 graduate degrees which may play a role in the decision-making of which graduate programs students choose. Monforti and Michelson (2008) found that the racialized gap between the matriculation from undergraduate to graduate study in political science is significant. "At the Ph.D. level…Latinos account for…4.1% of all degrees awarded, 5.3% for Asians, 8.8% for African Americans, and 81.8% for Anglos....part of the pipeline problem…is occurring between completion of the undergraduate degree and completion of the doctorate" (p. 161). The experiences of completing political science degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels are indicative of the ways in which graduate students in political science engage in the discipline. If Black students fail to see faculty who look like them and/or bring a lens that honors their lived experiences, they are likely to reject the discipline of political science and/or digest the political science paradigm. Thus, if

faculty center race in their ways of knowing in their teaching, research, and service, this can shift how graduate students engage in their future faculty or practitioner endeavors.

Undergraduate students

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has data by race and ethnicity and lists broad fields such as public administration and social sciences, but does not allow one to obtain disaggregated demographic in political science data. O*Net and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) have salary and basic information about the discipline of political science, but do not include racial demographic data within the research. Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton (2014) from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce produced a report on majors inclusive of race and gender outcomes by fields of study and majors entitled, *What's a degree worth: the economic value of college majors.* They categorized 171 majors into 15 different groups. Political science fell under the social science cluster in the aforementioned report. The diversity composition of political science is illustrated in the chart below:

Figure 1.1 Political Science 2014 Undergraduate Compositional Diversity
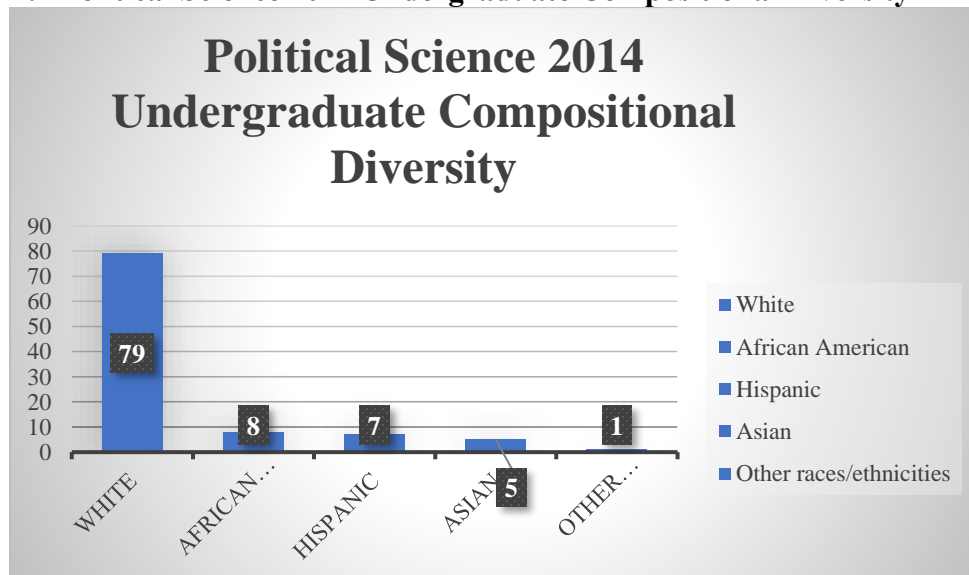
The compositional diversity of the undergraduate population mirrors the graduate level pipeline as well with the 79 percent of undergraduates as white in 2014 and 81 percent of PhD graduates as white in 2008. Because race is often seen as an issue of "the Other," (Gilbourn, 2005), white faculty tend to view the politics of race as a burden that Black students must bear. White faculty bring inner-subjectivities that must be considered and understood because their positionality allows them to shape the narrative of political science. Knowing that compositional diversity does not mitigate nor prevent racism (Museus, 2014), the governing association of political science and political science faculty must shift towards understanding the state of political science within the political science paradigm. Scholars have found that students of color face many barriers in navigating higher education regardless of their discipline of choice. These barriers include but are not limited to: financial aid (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Heller, 1998, 1999; Kane, 1994; Kim, 2004; Lisenmeier et al., 2006; Nelson & Frye, 2016), racism (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Chavous & Leath, 2018; Domingue, 2015, Museus, 2014), racial battle fatigue (Corbin et al., 2018; Smith 2004; Vaccaro, 2017), to curricular experiences (Esposito, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018). The experiences of Black students within political science have the potential to transform the discipline toward epistemologies and ontologies that humanize the student experience and potentially increase compositional diversity.

Race and Self-Efficacy

Political science departments must diversify their faculty rosters and research agendas to honor Black students. This study centers the need to increase not only

compositional diversity, but epistemological diversity within political science, self-efficacy and race must be discussed. Political science must consider the ways in which structures, politics, and agency are experienced within the discipline from the faculty to student level. Navigating political science alongside identity has been grounded in colorblindness practiced by institutions of higher education that do not acknowledge the whiteness embedded within the discipline from learning styles, to partisan identities, to civic identity and beyond. This may be due to the fact that the foundations of political science encompasses the systematic study of political institutions, behaviors, and activities "conveying basic descriptive knowledge about political systems and theories" (Dahlgren et al, 2006, p. 581). The framing of political science is often rooted in positivist epistemologies of political institutions (structures), politics, and agency as though they were not racialized (Mackey, 2017). For instance, when discussing the failure of policies that were meant to benefit people of color, many classroom discussions remain in the realm of pointing the finger at people of color as the reasons policies have failed rather than pointing to interest convergence (Bell, 1980) which situates white interests in policy over the interest of marginalized communities. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to better understanding the ways in which Black students navigate their racialized experiences in the discipline.

In order to center racial identity within a discipline, it is necessary to discuss what is called self-efficacy or self-confidence within a discipline. Self-efficacy is confidence in oneself to make decisions and is co-constructed by students and the culture of the disciplines they navigate. Social cognitive career theory "attempts to take a cognitive

constructivist approach to career development…such theories view people as proactive

shapers of the environment, not merely responders to external forces" (Lent et al., 2000,

p. 87). A social constructivist approach is critical to include because of the

acknowledgment that confidence within a discipline and/or academic and career

development is co-constructed. The co-construction of self-efficacy indicates that the

students and the actors within the discipline, like faculty, have agency in shaping their

experiences within a discipline. However, in knowing that experiences within a discipline

are co-constructed, the connection between political science and identity has been

grounded in the literature in colorblind ways from learning styles (Driver et al., 2008),

partisan identities (Abrams, 1994; Duck et al, 1995; Huddy, 1995, 2000), civic identity

(Citrin et al., 1990; Gurin et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1997; Scheuer, 2015) and beyond.

While there is an acknowledgement from the discipline that students may bring multiple

identities to communities of practice (Bauman, 1991; Wenger, 1998), there is not an

intentional understanding of how whiteness impacts these identities within the discipline.

     The discipline must intentionally center race and social justice as a part of its

mission and establish a pipeline of Black faculty to represent and honor the funds of

knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al, 1992; Kiyama, 2010) of Black

undergraduate students. Centering race and social justice means not simply "comparing

critical perspectives," but embodying these perspectives through critical epistemologies

like critical race theory and critical whiteness studies. Rollins and Valdez (2006) argue:

> [Y]outh whose families transmitted active rather than passive attitudes about
> discrimination would demonstrate higher self-efficacy. Results confirm that the
> transmission of active orientations was associated with a greater sense of personal

efficacy…it is apparent that racism influences self-efficacy development of minority youth. (p. 180)

It is not solely the responsibility of families to transmit knowledge concerning issues of race and racism, but of the disciplines themselves to give Black students the time and space to build self-efficacy in sharing their racialized experiences within sociopolitical contexts.

Significance and Contextual Framing of the Study

In this section, I will cover the initial frames of structures, politics, and agency through which I am endeavoring to better understand and illustrate the contexts of political science and Black students. The structures, politics, and agency framed within political science are often rooted in positivist epistemologies, as though they are not racialized because of the very ontology of the discipline (Stanley, 2012). Dahlgren et al. (2007) conducted a study in Sweden to better understand the ways in which juniors and seniors perceived the discipline of political science and their future professions. Demographic data was not cited within the study which reflects a colorblind perspective in political science research. They found that students believe:

> Learning political science is somewhat heterogeneous due to the dual nature of knowledge in the discipline. On one hand, there is a massive body of factual knowledge about different political systems and on the other there is comparison and critical analyses of political ideologies. (p. 628)

Comparative methods of simply considering critical perspectives are not enough to humanize and increase the efficacy of Black students in the discipline. Stanley (2012) indicates the need for ontological reflexivity within the discipline of political science by stating, "ontological assumptions should be reflected upon via engagement with

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conceptualisations of ontological dualisms, such as structure-agency and ideational-material" (p. 93). There is a need to conduct more studies purposed to better understand the ways in which Black students navigate their racialized experiences within the discipline. The significance of this research has potential implications for shifting political science as a discipline toward liberatory praxis (hooks, 1994) which reflects education for liberation. With a focus on structures, politics, and agency as a framework, I am able to depict how these frames used *within* political science can also be used to engage in ontological reflexivity in the discipline as well as to better support and engage Black students. Within this study, I am able to deconstruct how Black students experience the status quo of the discipline or political science paradigm. Yet, I am also able to reconstruct how we can shift teaching, research, and service within the discipline through the ways Black students enact structures, politics, and agency as Black Finesse amidst political science epistemologies.

Structures

Structures recycled in political science are often reflective of ideologies that are embedded within teaching, learning, and research within the discipline. I experienced the recycling of whiteness as a Black educator teaching American Political Thought, when my students anonymously revealed to me that they thought the course was supposed to be about American political thought and not race as though the two should not co-exist (Mackey, 2018). There is an incessant push to center whiteness in discourse, curriculum, and research. Maintaining "legitimacy" concerning the ontology of political science may be a culprit of the structures maintained in political science. Many scholars indicate that

graduate students and faculty have outdated, traditional notions of what it means to be deemed as legitimate as an academic (Austin, 2011; Gonzalez & Terosky, 2016; Sallee, 2014). Maintaining what is presumed to be legitimacy in a discipline that is grounded in the regurgitation of the status quo in political science is likely incongruent with the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al, 1992; Kiyama, 2010) of Black students. "There are strong disciplinary norms about the definition of a "quality" faculty member that typically favor White male candidates" (Kezar, 2008, p. 428). The discipline of political science discusses communities of practice which is a structure that reifies what is and is not deemed as knowledge within the discipline. The hidden curriculum or learnings that go unsaid depict, "A central source of identity formation in the community of practice…[and] is constituted through the recognition of mutuality in relations of participation" (Dahlgren et al., 2006, p. 572). It is my hope that white faculty and all political science faculty who are willing to commit to creating anti-racist structures will shift structures in political science toward racial equity to support Black students in navigating their political science education.

Politics

The politics of race is often the sole responsibility off Black and Brown students and faculty. I experienced this as a Black educator when my white students would become silent in class when discussing who should be engaged in race dialogue and in shifting policies toward racial equity. This notion of race as "Other" persists within the discipline of political science through multicultural celebrations of political participation as "in group" work (Miller et al., 1981; Tate, 1991; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990). This

research has the potential to shift the politics in political science from perpetuating race-related service (Banks, 1984) as solely the responsibility of faculty of color and also students of color. While race-related service is important to faculty of color, cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996) can lead to racial battle fatigue for faculty of color (Baez, 2000) within political science if white faculty are not willing to do the necessary self-work to engage in race-related service. Political science must create the structures necessary to allow for and demand race-related service to be a priority for not only faculty of color, but for white faculty as well. In political science:

> Not surprisingly, white women, women of color, and members of other marginalized groups who enter into the political science academic pipeline as graduate students and who become junior faculty often encounter a hostile environment in the workplace and obstacles to career advancement. (Mershon & Walsh, 2015, p. 441).

We must better support our faculty of color through our agency and politics to inhibit the "commodification of race or ethnicity to make an institution look good" (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 117).

Agency

When discussing oppression and the role of marginalized communities and that of whites, there is often a distorted notion of who does or does not have agency. As a Black educator, regardless of how I was taught political science, I choose to put my body on the line and "teach in the line of fire" (Tuitt et al., 2009) by centering race in humanizing and dignifying ways in teaching and learning spaces. Regardless of how much it may drain me to enact my agency within political science, I still have the abilities, knowledge, and Black Finesse to push against the normative forms of what is deemed as foundational to

the discipline. Baez (2008) amplifies agency in a study of 16 faculty of color in which six were Black faculty. Amidst the words and themes that surfaced in the study, "In addition to the word 'choice,' the faculty members used language that connoted a kind of 'free will,' and that academe (and the institution) could somehow be 'negotiated'" (Baez, 2008, p. 384). The negotiation of agency comes from what Baez calls "critical agency" in what we choose to teach, research, and how we choose to serve. Rather than simply regurgitating and recycling scholarship that does not reflect my critical race epistemologies, I choose to commit to transdisciplinary approaches to transform the discipline. Furthermore, I also acknowledge in my research, teaching, and service, that white folks also have a role in pushing toward racial equity within the discipline as well through their agency. Their agency may sound, look, and feel different because of the commitment of racial equity coming from a white body, but this agency within the discipline is still necessary. Baez (2002) indicates critical agency as "action that resists hegemonic practices which ensure and justify the social domination of some individuals by others" (p. 385). One of the ways this research is seeking to redefine agency within political science is through acknowledging that white faculty and students also have agency and furthermore a role in shifting structures and politics in political science toward anti-racist epistemologies.

By centering the lived experiences of Black students' identity enactments (Cross et al., 2017) or psychological negotiations within political science from the lens of those most impacted by normative structures and politics, political science scholars can begin to shift their agency toward a more humanizing teaching and learning environment that

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honors the lived experiences of Black students and scholars.. Increased knowledge of

how Black students experience an academic discipline can lead toward a heightened

understanding of how a discipline's curricular and pedagogical methods impact students.

Increased knowledge of Black student experiences within the discipline should lead

toward conversations around racial equity to increase efficacy and retention within the

discipline. We owe it to all students invested in the discipline of political science to

support their understanding and knowledge of how race has informed their experiences

within the discipline. Research indicates that students having language to grapple with

their vicarious experiences leads toward high self-efficacy (Rollins & Valdez, 2006).

Vicarious experiences are reflective of experiences associated with one's racial group of

discrimination and racism; in this case, experiences of Black students. Having a

colorblind approach toward issues of discrimination and racism does not allow for the

building of self-efficacy within the discipline of political science. Ambrose et al. (2010)

suggest, "if students are asked to generate relevant knowledge from previous courses on

their own lives, it can help to facilitate their integration of new material" (p. 15).

Purpose Statement

This proposed research endeavors to consider the structures, politics, and agency

within political science spaces and how they intersect with the experiences of Black

students. Hesli and Lee (2013), "document significantly lower levels of satisfaction

among racial minorities in political science departments" (p. 339). There must be a shift

towards linking the racialized experiences of Black students through the lens of

structures, politics, and agency embedded within the discipline in order to transform the

way the discipline operates and considers race-engaged work of ***all*** faculty rather than only faculty of color. Race-engaged work within the discipline must not be relegated as an issue solely for folks of color to navigate, but as a priority of the discipline itself. In order to increase the compositional and ideological diversity of political science and commit to racial equity, we must rethink the roles of faculty and students. This research is purposed to address the following research questions:

How are Black students defining political science as a discipline?

What are the ways in which structures, politics, and agency are embodied in political science?

What are the ways in which Black students create structures, politics, and agency amidst political science?

The image below illustrates phase one of the conceptual framework that represents how I am visualizing my research questions prior to the data collection and analyses.

Figure 1.2 Conceptual Framework: Phase One
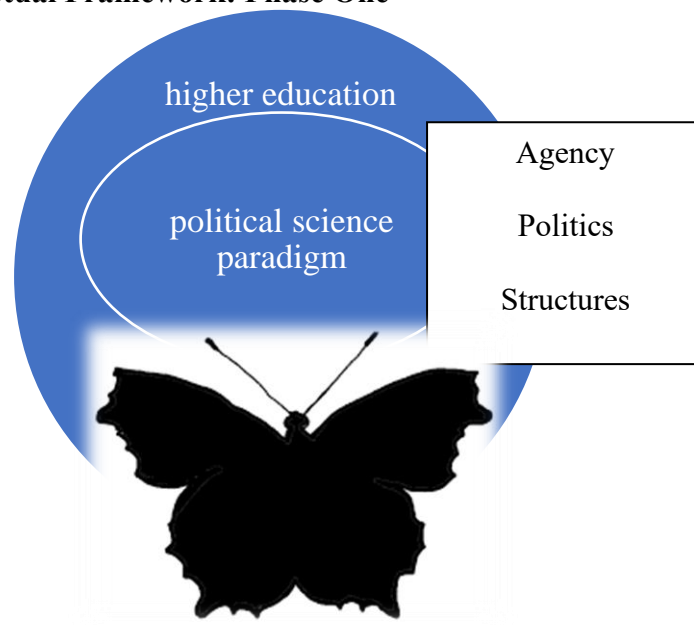
The inner circle of political science reflects political science as a discipline in the status quo which is what I would indicate as political science paradigm. I refer to the political science paradigm as one that lacks reflexivity and critical race approaches in its structures, politics, and agency. I want to better understand the convergence of how Black students (or the Black butterfly in the image above) engage within the political science paradigm through their own structures, politics, and agency which is what I define as Black Finesse. Black Finesse is the flair, knack, and innate brilliance that Black students bring with them as a way to navigate higher education and the political science paradigm. Placing the Black butterfly within whiteness allows me to depict the weight of race-engaged work falling on the shoulders of Black students in political science classrooms, although it should not be so. While the shifting of the discipline should come primarily from political science faculty, the shifting should be informed by Black students. Black students' ways of knowing and being should be honored and embedded within political science, but Black students should also be named as research partners in such a process.

Terminology

This section will outline a series of terms that are foundational to this study. I must acknowledge that there are varying lenses through which these words can be defined albeit positivist, interpretive, or critical (Neuman, 2011). I choose to define these terms from a critical-race theory lens which reflects notions of multiple racialized realities and the "why and how" of the phenomena.

Agency

Agency depicts, "actions that are possible within the context of disciplinary power [and that] might resist institutional structures, and in resisting those structures presents the possibility of redefining them" (Baez, 2000, p. 385). This definition of agency stems from a critical lens because of the inclusion and recognition of power and resistance alongside transformation.

Black Finesse

This Black Finesse space is the space that reflects the expertise, flair, knack, artfulness, and/or skill through which Black students navigate structures, and politics via their agency. I am privileging this space in my research because it acknowledges whiteness without centering whiteness. This space also speaks to Blackness alongside and in spite of racialized experiences; hence, individuality and personality as well (Cross et al., 2017).

Black identity

Identity is not static, but rather fluid. Thus, Nigrescence (Cross, 1971) or the psychology of being Black, will be used as the foundation for reflecting on Black racial identity.

Blackness

The suffix "-ness" means the state of being. Hence, Blackness depicts the state of being Black.

Black undergraduate student

While ethnicity is often depicted as African American in an American context for Black students, I am choosing to focus on race in this study. By focusing on race, I am choosing to use the term Black students or Black undergraduate students to depict the how they are navigating the discipline of political science while being Black. Undergraduate students may attend a community college, public, or private university or college.

Politics

Politics are "comprised of conflict, resistance, and competing values [that] often thwart efforts at change" (Kezar, 2008, p. 411). This definition shows politics are not neutral and have been used in ways to "thwart efforts at change" and, in this case, racial equity within the discipline of political science. The politics of race in the discipline and in higher education is often rooted in race as "Other," which places the burden of race engaged work on students rather than faculty and particularly white faculty. It is the incessant burden of faculty of color engaging in race-related service that can cause barriers for Black students desiring to enter the discipline of political science because of seeing faculty of color navigate racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004) and cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Political Science

Political science is a discipline within the social sciences. Political science is purposed to understand political phenomena. In understanding political phenomena. there

is typically a what you see is what you get lens and a regurgitation of political explanations that have already been used (Stanely, 2012).

Political science paradigm

This is a term I use to operationalize the socialization of political science which is the status quo of the discipline. The status quo of the discipline is founded and grounded in whiteness (Blatt, 2018). The socialization of political science refers to the ways in which political science engages in structures, politics, and agency within the status quo.

Race

"Race is a concept, a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the meanings and social practices that are ascribed to these differences" (Omi et al., 1994, p. 112).

Racialization

Critical scholars have asserted that "racialization refers to the process of constructing racial categories, attaching these racial labels to previously unclassified groups or social practices, and attaching race-based meanings to these categories and their corresponding populations" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 39). I have grappled with this definition as it has an undertone that suggests that "the Other" has been racialized rather than everyone being racialized. I would argue that everyone is racialized albeit in varying ways based upon their position in society. The differing ways of experiencing race is due to racial formation which "signifies the process by which economic, political, and social forces shape racial categories, the meanings that get attached to those categories, and

their importance" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 29). For this particular research, it is critical to note that all folks are racialized regardless of their racial identity, although their racialization leads to different experiences in political science paradigm. White faculty and chairs who teach and lead in political science must know that they are racialized as well. Furthermore, they have a responsibility to not only understand how they are racialized, but how it may impact the experiences of Black students.

Racial category

For the context of this study, it will be important for students to determine their racial category for themselves. With an understanding that being Black may or may not be a student's sole racial identity, it will be important for students to identify Black as a part of their multiple identities, as the context of the study will ask students to focus on their experiences within their Black identity. "Racial category construction: determining what race is, and how we construct racial categories" (Shih & Sanchez, 2009, p. 3).

Racial equity

Racial equity is a term that has been overutilized [again, I am not sure that this phrase should be used within the context of a scientific evidence-based study… You certainly could use it in your concluding remarks…] and very superficially at that.

> Racial equity does not simply refer to equal representation of different racial groups among those entering or graduating from higher education. We espouse a systemic definition of racial equity as racially equitable systems in which racially diverse perspectives are equally embedded in power structures, policy-making processes, and the cultural fabric of organizations (e.g., mission statements, strategic plans, curricula, etc.) at federal, state, organizational, divisional, departmental, and programmatic levels. (Museus et al., 2015, p. 13)

The aforementioned definition shows the ways racial equity should be operationalized within structures, politics, and agency of higher education and political science faculty. However, oftentimes racial equity is operationalized in ways that mimic multiculturalism or simply celebrating diversity and perpetuate anti-Blackness. Thus, I call for what I call *disaggregated equity* which distinguishes the needs of each racial group as it pertains to a phenomenon. Disaggregated equity must be centered to operationalize how racial equity acknowledges, validates, and supports the idea that Black students do not simply exist, but thrive in political science spaces and higher education.

Racial identification

Students had to identify with their Blackness in order to be a part of this study. Black identity had to be one of the salient identities for students to participate in this study because they must see and feel their Blackness in order to unveil their Black Finesse. Racial identification is "how we determine in which categories others belong, once racial categories have been constructed" (Shih & Sanchez, 2009, p. 3)

Structures

Structures can be framed as grounded in rigidity or as "temporal" [in] nature" (Baez, 2000, p. 384). Because of my disposition toward deconstruction and reconstruction within political science, I will frame structures as temporal because they depict "patterns of social activity reproduced across time and space" (Giddens, 1987, p. 11). Thus, while structures can be recycled, they are also amendable fluid.

Whiteness

"Whiteness is defined and operationalized on a continuum that necessitates nuanced definitions and understandings of Whiteness" (Mackey, 2017, p. 41). Whiteness can be considered a racial discourse (Leonardo, 2002), a phenotype (Allen, 2004), a social power and/or ideology (Matias & Zemblyas, 2014) and beyond. With this in mind, I come to this research with varying ways of defining whiteness, but I am specifically interested in the ways in which Black students experience and define whiteness within the discipline of political science.

Significance of the Study

This study centers race as a priori in order to understand the essence of the phenomena studied, but creating a framework entitled Race-Grounded Phenomenology. This study reveals the nuances of Black Finesse through an eclectic array of critical theories of race. In order to understand the nuances of Blackness and the ways in which Black Finesse is exerted in predominantly white spaces, an eclectic array of critical theories of race are necessary. Rather than focusing simply on whiteness, this study honors the emotional and intellectual labor of Black undergraduate students. Furthermore, this study employs a political science paradigm and Race-Grounded Phenomenology framework that can be applied to other disciplines within higher education and even other academic, civic, and governmental spaces to better understand the ways in which Blackness and Black agency can and should inform in traditionally white spaces.

Dissertation Roadmap

Chapter 1

  The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation of terms, significance, and articulation of the study.

Chapter 2

  The purpose of chapter two is to illustrate a theoretically framed literature review grounded in the eclectic array of theoretical frames I am using to ground this research study. The literature review is grounded in how the study brings together the eclectic array of critical theories of race to ground the entire research design of the study.

Chapter 3

  The purpose of chapter three is to lay out the methodology. The methodology and methods illustrate the research design and data collected to navigate the research questions.

Chapter 4

  Chapter four will unveil two findings from the research study focused on the purpose of political science and how Black undergraduate students are navigating the political science paradigm.

Chapter 5

  Chapter five illustrates theory to praxis for data analyses. This chapter is grounded in the development of the political science paradigm, Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm, and specific strategies grounded in identity enactments that were revealed by Black undergraduate students.

Chapter 6

Chapter six will unveil the significance, implications, recommendations, and limitations of the research study. The audience for this chapter is political science faculty, leadership of the national political science association, and institutional actors in position to shift structures, politics, and agency to humanize the experience of Black undergraduate students.

Chapter 7

Chapter seven reveals words of wisdom and ways to embody Black Finesse from the Black undergraduate student participants from this study. Their voices close out the this study to center their voices and shift authority of knowledge to them rather than to me as a researcher.

CHAPTER TWO: A THEORETICALLY INFORMED LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this section is to reflect upon how I use literature from varying fields and disciplines to support the focus and theoretical grounding of my dissertation. In this section, I reflect on how my research positionality informed the types of literature I chose to ground my research, discussion of Black identity, discussion of the literature through the frames of critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and Nigrescence or the psychology of becoming Black. Rather than focus on the gaps in the literature and how my study fills a gap in the realm of political science or academia, I will focus on how I am using the literature to substantiate the vision of my dissertation.

Positionality Informs Literature Discussion

My positionality informs the ways in which I read and engage with the literature to support my study. I must indicate that there is fluidity in my research positionality, so what I committed to as a scholar in the past has ebbed and flowed toward different research and theoretical interests. In order to be my authentic self, I should be able to bring my entire self, rather than parts of myself into research and praxis. Illustrating my research positionality demonstrates my critical epistemology toward research and praxis in general and also toward my own research. A critical lens shows a desire to understand the why and how (Nueman, 2011) behind how one reads, understands, and engages in research and praxis. Hence, my disposition is that research and praxis are informed by

our inner-subjectivities and do not exist inept of our inner-subjectivities. Below is a reflection of shifts in my research positionality from 2017 to 2019.

Figure 2.1 Early Research Positionality
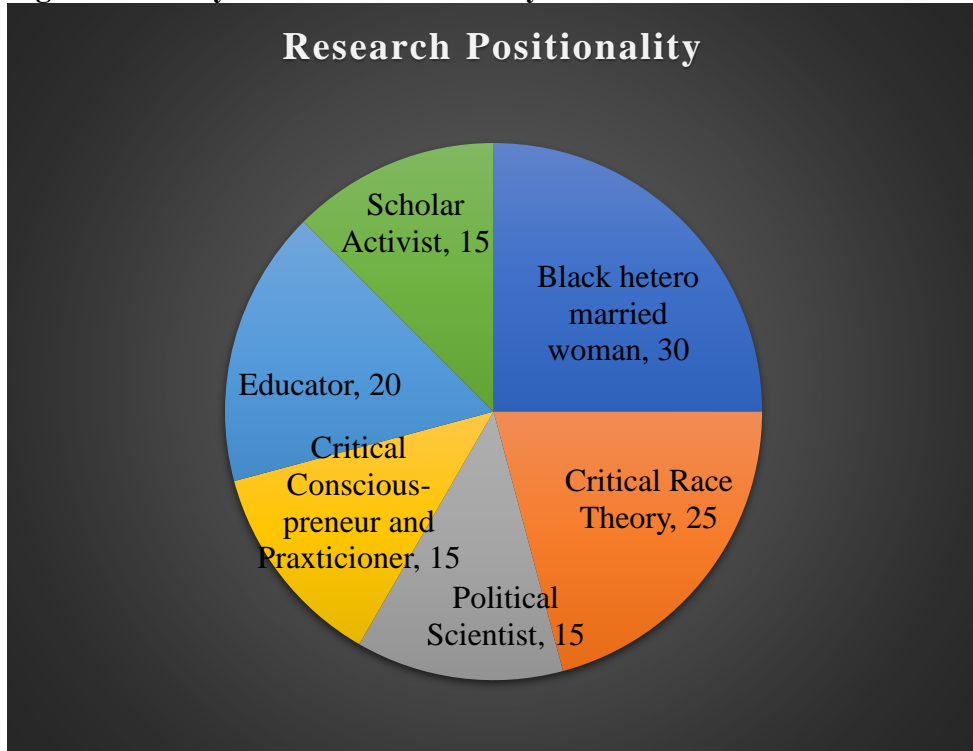
Figure 2.2 Research Positionality
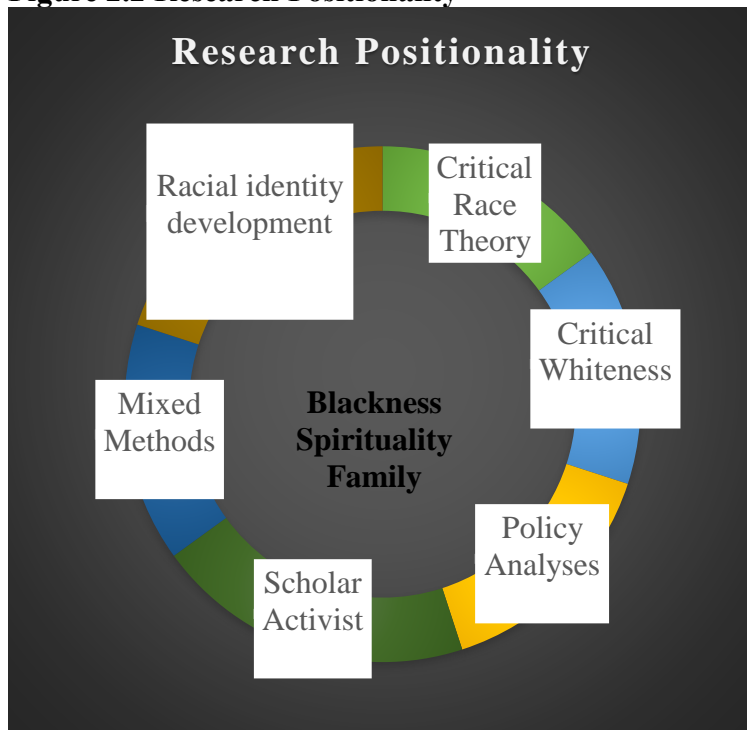
My research positionality in 2017 initially reflected percentages to depict how much of my research identities are invested in varying types of research and praxis. In 2019, I appreciated being pushed to think about how the fluidity of my research positionality shouldn't be bound to the rigidity or quantitative lens of numbers. From the graphs above, there is a shift from a major focus on critical race theory (CRT) toward the welcoming of other racial frames like racial identity development and critical whiteness studies. I have intentionally shifted from a sole focus on critical race theory in my research and praxis due to what I see as a romanticizing of CRT. The romanticizing of CRT has been experienced by me as an ability for white folks to name that institutional racism exists and that people of color have experiences based upon racism, but yet there has been a lag in their ability to understand the roles they as white folks have in dismantling white supremacy and racism. In light of this, I have leaned toward critical

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whiteness which supports whites to understand the ways in which their behaviors show up in systemic ways and how whiteness is maintained in systems. I have moved toward racial identity development theories as racial frames to utilize in research and praxis as a way to invite folks to engage in self-reflexivity while addressing and navigating race dialogue, research and praxis.

Literature Review from the Meta-Level Black Identity to the Micro-Level of Black Finesse Amidst the Political Science Paradigm

The shifts in my research positionality inform the way I have chosen to navigate the literature review, conceptual frameworks, and methodology of my research as well. I have decided to blend the three racial frames of critical race theory, critical whiteness, and racial identity development, particularly identity enactments or psychological negotiations for my conceptual framework as way to better understand the political science paradigm and Black Finesse. Political science paradigm is the phenomenon of how structures, behaviors, and agency are enacted within the discipline. Black Finesse is the space that reflects the expertise, flair, knack, artfulness, and/or skill through which Black students navigate structures, and behaviors via their agency. I am privileging this space in my research because it acknowledges whiteness without centering whiteness.

I will engage in the literature review based upon what is depicted in my conceptual framework. First, I will discuss Black identity on a macro level then turn to the concept of Black Finesse. I have chosen to book end this literature review with Black identity and Black Finesse in order to mitigate the centering of whiteness. While academia has influenced many Black scholars and student experiences, I would be remiss

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if I didn't validate and honor the experiential and ancestral wisdom of Black folks as a people outside of academia. Although Black students may choose to navigate political science and higher education, their Blackness should not be dismissed or devalued should they decide not to enter academia. Black identity must be valued, included, and reflected in the political science paradigm. At a meta level, I would argue the sociopolitical context affects higher education which, then, impacts fields and disciplines which, in turn, impacts the Black student experience.

Black Identity

In this section, I will cover early discussions of Black identity and the tensions that come along with the navigating the racialization of Blackness. I have chosen to do a section on Black identity because Black identity exists outside of the prism of whiteness. Black identity exists outside of racism. Within an American context, however, racism has shaped and continues to shape how Black folks navigate our Black racial identity and the formation thereof. The ways in which we, as Black people, choose to navigate our identity, among one another and in white spaces, has and continues to be a point of contention in the community because of assumptive roles regarding race engagement of the individual and the collective.

Early discussions of Black identity

Black identity has been discussed, theorized about, and most importantly lived for many centuries. Du Bois (1903) indicated that the most significant issue of the 20th century would be the color line which is evident through our lived experiences as Black folks. Du Bois discusses the veil as a dual consciousness that reflects how we, as Black

folks, perceive ourselves versus how others may perceive us. When discussing implications of navigating the veil, he indicates, "there was among us…a half-awakened common consciousness...from the sight of the Veil that hung between us and opportunity" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 41). What has often been a tension of navigating and discussing the racialization that comes with Black identity is who and/or what should hold the responsibility of liberation for Black folks from white supremacy. Du Bois (1903) indicated that "doctrine has tended to make the whites...shift the burden of the Negro problem to Negro shoulders...when in fact the burden belongs to the nation" (p. 35). In this research, I want to debunk the colorblind "Othering" notion that the sole responsibility of reconstructing ways for Black students navigating political science paradigm should be on Black students. However, Black students do carry a Black Finesse that should be respected and validated as ways in which political science as a discipline can shift toward racial equity and particularly disaggregated racial equity that doesn't lump all students of color together.

Measuring Black identity: Reference Group Orientation (RGO) and Personal Identity (PI)

Building from Du Bois' scholarly works, came many others who go on to discuss Black identity in an American context (Baldwin, 1974; Collins, 1990, 2002; Cross, 1971, 1978, 1995, 2018; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1980; Seale, 1970; Smith, 2004; Tatum, 2003; Tuitt, 2009, 2012, 2018; Williams, 2016). The aforementioned scholars come from varying disciplines including anthropology, education, psychology, and beyond. Among the scholars is a grappling with how Black identity is internalized and manifests. Because

racism is endemic to American society (Matsuda, 2009), there is a tension in and outside

of the Black community concerning how Black people navigate their identity

development and/or racial preferences. Racial preference has been studied and indicated

as a form of internalized racism and/or even irrelevant to racism. Cross (1991) provides a

table of studies that reflects racial preference studies from the infamous Clark and Clark

study in the 1930s that indicated white preference to the Harris and Braun 1971 study that

indicated Black preference (p. 57). The significance of the racial preference studies table

is that the majority were indicated as showing no preference or left to chance including

the Clark and Clark studies that many cite as indicating preference for whites. The

underlying tensions of Black identity and preference studies are what's identified as

reference group orientation (RGO) and personal identity (PI). "Studies of racial attitudes,

racial identity, racial self-esteem, racial evaluation, racial preference, or racial

identification are subcategories of the domain reference group orientation (RGO)"

(Cross, 1991, pp. 46-47). RGO is separate from PI which gets more at personality type

markers and individual efficacy. PI measures self-esteem, self-worth, self-evaluation,

ego-ideal, personality traits and introversion-extroversion (Cross, 1991, p. 42). The

combination of RGO and PI determine how psychologists measure self-concept also

known as the two-factor theory of Black identity.

The psychology of becoming Black: Nigrescence

In navigating his own Blackness and experiences as a scholar activist, Cross

developed the concept of Nigrescence. "Nigrescence [is] the 'process of becoming Black'

and the models on the psychology of nigrescence depicted the stages of the Negro-to-

Black identity transformation experienced by many Black adults in the Black Power

period" (Cross, 1991, p. 157). While Cross' model is most often cited, there are other

scholars who also engaged in Nigrescence models (Crawford & Naditch, 1970; Downton,

1973; Gerlach & Hine, 1970; Jackson, 1976a; Kelman & Warwick, YEAR; Milliones,

1973; Napper, 1973; Pinderhughes, 1968; Sherif & Sherif, 1970; Toldson & Pasteur,

1975; Thomas, 1971). Cross's 1971 model of Nigrescence depicts five stages of the

psychology of Blackness. The five stages are listed below:

> Pre-encounter: colonized mind
> Encounter: encounters dual consciousness and there is a noticing of difference due
> to a racialized experience
> Immersion/Emersion: just discovered Blackness, essentialization of Blackness, a
> leveling off of emotions happens at the end of this stage with a sorting through the
> strengths and weaknesses of one's Blackness
> Internalization: there is a decrease in the Black rage toward whites and a
> comfortability in one's Blackness
> Internalization-Commitment: feelings of Black pride; self-love [I am
> understanding not "self-love" but love of the self… I hope I am correct…] ; there
> is a shift from Blackness as a part of oneself to Blackness as a part of one's
> activism (Cross, 1971; 1991; 1995)

The five stages of Nigrescence reflect and build upon the scholarly work of Du Bois,

Baldwin and beyond. The Nigrescence model has also been indicated as cycles of Black

identity by Parhan (1989) to honor the ways in which Black folks ebb and flow within the

stages based upon contextual factors. From the five stages of racial identity development,

I found liberation in the ability to place language to my lived experiences of being Black

in America. More specifically, I found joy in being able to describe my racialized

experiences of being Black in academia and in navigating a discipline like political

science.

Ethnic Racial Identity (ERI): Identity enactments model

Due to the phenomenological methodology of this study, I wanted to center

racialized meaning-making for Black students as they navigate the political science

paradigm. Black students exhibit Black Finesse through their agency; they are not passive

participants in their learning amidst the political science paradigm. Agency coupled with

meaning-making of identity is supported in the literature (Brekhus, 2003; Boykin, 1975;

Cross et al, 2002; Khanna, 2011; Stevenson, 2013). With agency and race in mind, I

chose to focus this study on an Ethnic Racial Identity (ERI) enactment model because it

illustrates how identity "is enacted in everyday life as a set of behavioral and

psychological negotiations" (Cross et al, 2017, p. 2). Cross et al (2017) discuss identity

work and meaning-making as buffering, code-switching, bridging, attachment-bonding,

internalized racism, and individuality.

> The first set of enactments (e.g.; buffering, code-switching, and bridging), explore
> the intergroup dynamics of ERI enactments…the second set of enactments (e.g.,
> attachment-bonding and internalized racism) occur in intragroup settings and
> represent reference group management strategies. Individuality captures the
> personal identity component of the self that acts in tandem with social identity.
> (Cross et al, 2017, p. 104)

Cross et al.'s (2017) identity enactment theory allows for the full evolution of capturing

the ebbs and flows of navigating identity to reflect the challenges, but also the critical

hope (Stovall, 2016) embodied in agency by Black students as well.

The Racialized Dimensions of Higher Education

Critical race theory (CRT) is a lens that comes with certain assumptions

concerning higher education and moves us away from race neutral notions of higher

education experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1997; Museus, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002,

Tuitt et al., 2016). To unveil the state of education, I will discuss faculty of color, depict my disposition to persistence and retention and then examine the state of Black students in higher education. I find it pertinent to discuss the state of faculty of color because Black students who want to pursue academia may encounter similar hopes and challenges if there are not shifts toward racial equity. A focus on retention and persistence from a critical lens is necessary because the challenges Black students face in the discipline of political science are for the discipline to grapple with and disentangle. Faculty must not place the burden of liberation with the discipline of liberation solely on the shoulders of Black students or Black faculty. Lastly, the state of Black students in higher education will illustrate some of the challenges and hopes Black students are experiencing amidst academia.

Faculty of Color

Race in and outside of higher education is often discussed as an issue of people of color rather than that of whites as well. Thus, when race and racism are discussed in higher education contexts, there is a tendency to discuss it as an issue of compositional diversity. However, scholars have shown that compositional diversity does not mitigate issues of race and racism (Museus, 2014). Race has also been discussed an issue of identity politics (Soto, 2010) to relegate it as an issue of "controversy" that negatively impacts whites. Race and racism must be navigated by higher education institutions with a critical lens to acknowledge that multiple realities (Nueman, 2011) are occurring rather than simply one truth.

The emotional labor of race-related service (Baez, 2000) of faculty of color underscores the need for structural shifts that will require white faculty to share the burden of such labor. In order to mitigate race-related service as solely the responsibility of faculty of color, institutions must consider the ways in which structures are being reified in whiteness or adept to change. Colorblind approaches toward race-related service implies the structures operate from a racism without racism perspective (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Hence, the structures that impose cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996) on faculty of color for their race-related service is an issue of the faculty themselves rather than of the structures reified by the higher education institutions and departments. "While the neoconservative/neoliberal evocation of "color-blindness" might seem like a step in the right direction, it actually has the insidious effect of promoting and preserving "the continuing organization of social inequality and oppression along racial lines. Worse yet, it tend[s] to rationalize racial injustice" (Soto, 2010, p. 52).

Jencks and Riesman (1968) argue that it is faculty who use their agency to create homogeneity in their respective departments and seek legitimacy from one another. Homogeneity in faculty perpetuate notions of race-related service as the burden of faculty of color. The self-work of white faculty is critical to shifting the burden of race-related service, but white faculty have resisted this. Kezar (2008) argues faculty have been resistant,

> particularly regarding hiring faculty of color and curriculum revision…presidents noted that faculty seemed quite supportive of the diversity initiative as long as it related to students, but as soon as it began to focus on the issues closer to their identity, then they became increasingly resistant (p. 427).

Actualizing racial equity will take shifts in agency embedded in structures outside of notions of interest convergence (Bell, 1980).

Persistence and retention

Critical race theory (CRT) is a lens that comes with certain assumptions concerning higher education and moves us away from individualistic and siloed notions of retention and persistence (Ladson-Billings, 1997; Museus, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tuitt et al., 2016). Persistence and retention have been discussed in the higher education literature in a variety of individualistic and siloed ways. Reason (2009) reminds us that persistence "is an individual phenomenon" and "retention is an organizational phenomenon" (p. 660). While counter-spaces are necessary for Black students to persist in higher education and even in a discipline, the conditions through which they persist must be interrogated. A positivist lens of persistence and retention would lead one to simply look at the numbers of minoritized students who are not "successfully" navigating higher education, a field, or discipline and look toward the students rather than the imposed racialized realities from the institutions. A positivist reflection on persistence and retention would also look at data with a view that whites set a standard and/or norm of what it looks likes for other students to persist rather than unraveling the multiple racialized realities that minoritized students face. Neuman (2011) argues that a positivist lens, "is a 'what-you-see-is-what-you-get' or 'show-me' type of stance. Things are as they appear, created out of a natural order of the world. Thus race [and] gender just are" (p. 96). Thus, rather than having a positivist "what you see is what you get" depiction of persistence and retention, it is necessary to have a critical lens that

unveils the "why and how" behind our understandings, deconstruction, and reconstruction of persistence and retention.

Furthermore, an ontological nominalist lens demonstrates the multiple layers of reality and inner-subjectivities within a discipline must be reckoned with and a part of the solutions and innovations toward racial equity in a discipline as well. Siloed discussions of persistence and retention will hinder efforts to link students' lived experiences of a field or discipline and the structures imposed upon them. We must move toward a vision of education as a form of liberation (hooks, 1994). We must forsake neoliberal notions of retention and persistence that embrace individualistic notions of identity development and self-efficacy in a discipline or a field.

The State of Higher Education for Black Students

Higher education has played a major role in building the efficacy of civic literacy and engagement in the Black community from Ida B. Wells, Ella Baker, WEB Du Bois, Cornell West and beyond. While Black people have been educating themselves even prior to accreditation in institutions like Cheyney University, higher education has played a major role in building a sense of self to building a sense of collectivity. However, "about eight-in-ten blacks with at least some college experience (81%) say they've faced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity, compared with 59% of blacks who have never attended college" (Pew Center, 2016, para 2). Black students who pursue higher education may encounter critical theories that lead them to name their own racialized experiences; there are also those students who have felt frustrated due to a lack of language to name their racialized experiences.

As scholars committed to racial equity, we must acknowledge that whiteness can be

recycled to:

> maintain domination – control of whites over nonwhites – [because these
> processes] are built into the major institutions. These institutions either exclude or
> restrict the participation of racial groups by procedures that have become
> conventional, part of the bureaucratic system of rules and regulations. (Blauner,
> 1972, pp. 9-10)

As I navigated my undergraduate education, I was exposed to a few critical theories that

allowed me to understand race outside of myself. However, I was unable to name how I

was experiencing race in academia.

Over the past couple of decades, there have been some peculiar racial shifts in the

postsecondary enrollment. In 2000, there was no indication of post-secondary enrollment

of students with two or more races by longitudinal data from a 2018 National Center of

Educational Statistics report entitled *The Condition of Education.* From 2000 to 2010;

there was a major increase in Black student postsecondary enrollment from 31 percent to

38 percent. But, there was a slight decrease to 36 percent in 2016 for Black student

postsecondary enrollment. From 2010 to 2016, there was an increase in postsecondary

enrollment for students who identified as two or more races from 38 percent to 42

percent. Given the surge of enrollment of students who either identified as having two or

more races or had the opportunity to identify with two or more races, there has been a

tendency to lump all students of color together. As a Black critical conscious practitioner

(Mackey, 2015), I have been immersed in K-12 and postsecondary spaces in which racial

equity conversations have been centered around neo-liberalizing equity through one-size-

fits-all approaches. The one-size-fits-all approaches are often imposed on Black students

as a pathway toward their pursuit of education for liberation rather than intentional grounding in disaggregated equity. For this study, rather than lump all students together, I have chosen to shift the conversation of racial equity to disaggregated equity by focusing on Black undergraduate students in political science.

Framing Political Science Through Theoretical Frameworks

In order to contextualize the literature review, I created a figure below to visualize how the convergence of the theoretical frameworks make up the conceptual model of this study. Critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1985; Matsuda, 2009), critical whiteness studies (Gilbourn, 2005; Leonardo 2002), Nigrescence (Cross, 1971) and Ethnic Racial Identity enactments (Cross et al., 2017) will be engaged in tandem with the review of literature connected to the political science paradigm. The aforementioned theoretical frameworks depict the lenses through which I understand, digest, and organize the literature. Processing the literature through a theoretical lens allows for the tensions in the literature to be unveiled explicitly while building a foundation for the study as well. The literature review will focus primarily on political science paradigm and Black Finesse.

Figure 2.3 Contextualizing Theoretical Frameworks Through the Literature Review
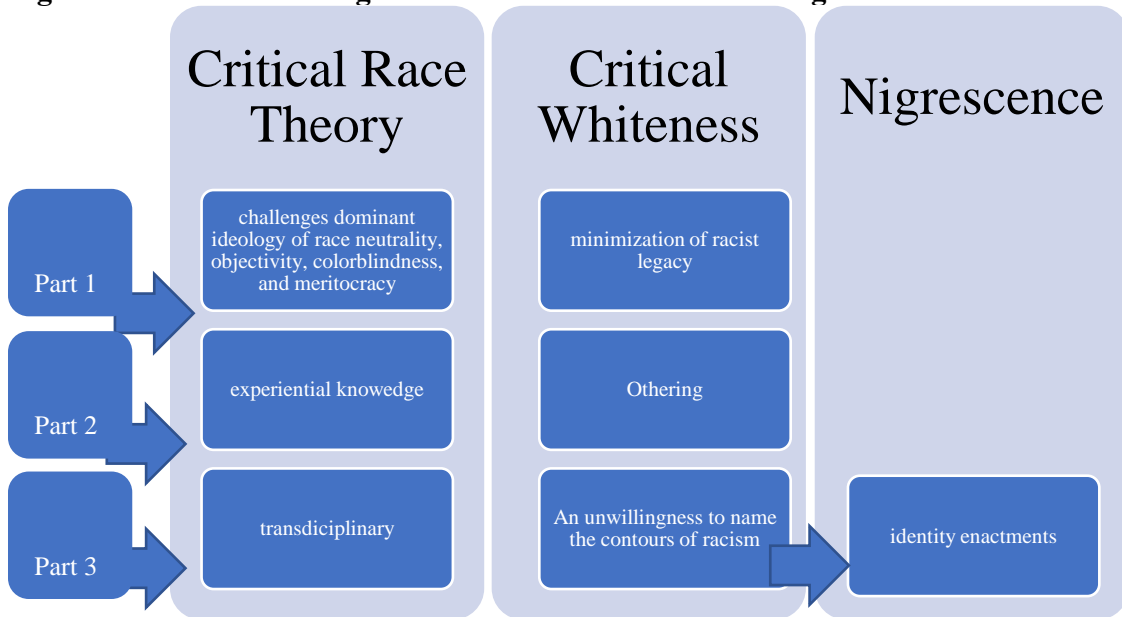
Part 1: Minimization of a racist legacy: Resist neutrality and colorblindness

One of CRT's tenets indicates that racism is endemic to society (Matsuda, 2009) and scholars have indicated how higher education institutions are built upon racism and white supremacy (Anderson, 1992; Bell, 1992; Cabrera, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 1999; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Museus, 2015; Steele, 1997; Wilder, 2013). As a scholar committed to CRT, I also adhere to the tenet that pushes for the resistance of neutrality, objectivity, and colorblindness. Literature in political science indicates,

> The sociocultural contexts, in terms of the academic disciplines and their differences in ontological and epistemological standpoints, also impact on the design and delivery of university courses, which in turn influence students' learning processes. (Dahlgren et al., 2006, p. 570)

The epistemologies of higher education institutions and disciplines inform the ways in which students navigate their schooling experiences. Epistemologies, curricular, and pedagogical tactics used in the discipline are not addressed via a lens of requiring faculty to engage in self-work concerning their practice which supports a colorblind approach in

the discipline of political science. The lack of self-reflexivity in the discipline of political science upholds, "The minimization of racist legacy": seeking to "draw a line" under past atrocities as if that would negate their continued importance as historic, economic and cultural factors (Gilbourn, 2005, pp. 488-489). The lack of self-reflexivity is also indicative of the very foundation of discipline because legitimacy is grounded in the regurgitation of pre-existing understandings of political theories rather than the creation of new ones that would seek to understand current political phenomena. Furthermore, the emotional labor of race-engaged research and service is often relegated to faculty of color (Baez, 2000). Banks' (1984) research on race related service indicates how, Black professors were "sucked into a plethora of activities often unrelated to their competence and interests. ... Scholarly work had to be accomplished in combination with the extra-academic responsibilities hoisted onto their shoulders and consciences" (p. 327). Thus, the burden on Black faculty is to allow white faculty to hide behind the gaze of neutrality and colorblind racism. Critical theories within political science are often rooted in notions of class and civic identity rather than unpacking the racialization of sociopolitical phenomena nor the discipline itself. Political science identity has been grounded in the literature in colorblind ways from learning styles (Driver et al., 2008), partisan identities (Abrams, 1994; Duck et al., 1995; Huddy, 1995, 2000), civic identity (Citrin et al., 1990; Gurin et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1997; Scheuer, 2015) and beyond.

Part Two: Validation of Experiential Knowledge or Reification of "Othering"

Research indicates that identities develop within a discipline or what scholars also call communities of practice (Bauman, 1991; Wenger, 1998). These communities of practice have epistemologies embedded within the discipline to reflect and reify what is constituted as knowledge within the discipline. What is validated and reified within a discipline can impact a student's participation, sense of belonging, efficacy, and trajectory within a discipline. "A central source of identity formation in the community of practice is participation; the identity is constituted through the recognition of mutuality in relations of participation" (Dahlgren et al., 2006, p. 572). Identity formation in the discipline must be reflective not solely considering the partisan or civic identities political science students may develop, but also how the racialization of the discipline influences the engagements of students of color within the discipline. Furthermore, political science has romanticized understanding the racialized experiences of students of color through the lens of "the Other" rather than coupling that with critical whiteness studies.

There are programs created for students of color like the Ralph Bunch program. Ralph Bunch has a history of chairing the political science department at Howard University, studying colonial history in West Africa, and being the first Black to earn the Nobel Peace Prize. The Ralph Bunch program provides undergraduates from marginalized communities to be introduced to doctoral work at Duke University in the summer for five weeks. While this program is absolutely noteworthy and a great bridging opportunity for students of color, there must be a reckoning of the how racial battle fatigue (Bell, 1992) within the discipline can prevent Black students from wanting to participate in such a program.

The literature also focuses on Black student retention and persistence in the discipline. For instance, Monforti and Michelson (2008) conducted a panel study concerning Latinos and Latinas [or Latinx students] in the discipline of political science. They found that students confronted issues such as having to seek out mentors, not receiving similar opportunities as their white counter-parts, having a lack of financial aid, difficulty finding a job afterward were illuminated in the panel study. Rather than digest and understand the challenges faced by students of color in political science through a racism without racists (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) lens, it is critical to honor their lived experiences with critical frameworks that seek to understand the why and how behind their experiences.

As students navigate the discipline of political science which is often grounded in theorizing about politics rather than an understanding of navigating politics, we, as scholars, must consider the impact this has on Black students. If Black students are constantly invalidated due to their racialized experiences and the standards of knowledge and reification of those experiences are grounded race as "the Other," undo racial battle fatigue will occur within their educational experiences. The ways in which the literature discusses students of color reflects a tenet of critical whiteness which depicts:

> The avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group: whiteness draws much of its power from 'Othering' the very idea of ethnicity. A central characteristic of whiteness is a process of 'naturalization' such that white becomes the norm from which other 'races' stand apart and in relation to which they are defined. (Gilbourn, 2005, pp. 488-89)

"Othering" can affect the perceived self-actualization of Black students as they transition from higher education to work-life post a political science degree.

Part Three: A commitment to being transdisciplinary to unveil Black Finesse

The students' inner-subjectivities of the discipline are critical to understanding how they may navigate the discipline. With a critical lens in mind and an acknowledgement that multiple realities exist, epistemologies and theories should outweigh and inform the "objective" knowledge provided in the discipline. It is epistemologies and theories that drive and determine the ways in which the knowledge of the discipline lands on Black bodies. Black students are constantly navigating colorblind higher education systems and disciplines such as political science (Mackey, 2017). Students may not have the language to speak to how the epistemologies of the discipline impose on their lived experiences. Kaufman and Feldman (2004) indicate that a symbolic interactionist perspective develops for college students through "situational contexts within which a variety of identities may be negotiated, experienced, and ultimately constructed" (p. 481). Symbolic interactionist perspectives are indicative of identity formation within the discipline of political science. A symbolic interactionist perspective indicates the literature in political science is acknowledging the agency that exists while navigating educational and professional socialization in the discipline. I understand the significance of a symbolic interactionist perspective through a critical race epistemology as a way to better understand the racialized experiences of political science paradigm that Black students are navigating as they exude Black Finesse.

For this proposed research, I use the identity enactments model which come from the field of psychology and sociology via deductive coding to humanize the racialized ways in which Black Finesse unfolds while navigating political science paradigm. The

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convergence of political science, education, psychology literature and beyond will be utilized to honor the lived experiences and experiential knowledge of Black students in political science. Identity enactments situate inter- and intra-racialized contexts for Black students which will allow for them to name when there is "an unwillingness to name the contours of racism [and when] inequity…is explained by reference to any number of alternative factors rather than being attributable to the actions of whites" (Gilbourn, 2005, pp. 488-489). Black people have always come up with ways to channel and challenge the ways in which their bodies are consumed in and out of academic spaces. Understanding the meaning-making of the psychological and behavioral ways that Black Finesse happens within the political science paradigm can inform the ways the discipline of political science should shift to better support, retain, and honor Black students' academic and career development.

Conclusion

To foreground the study, this chapter opens up with a framing of positionality toward a theoretically informed literature review. Black identity at a meta level is discussed to set up the discussion around Black Finesse. The chapter then acknowledges and interrogates the racialized dimensions of higher education from faculty to students of color. This chapter illustrated the ways in which the critical theories of race interplay with one another to serve as theoretical foundations for the study. The interplay of the theories were illustrated in three parts. Part one pushed against the persistence of minimizing the racist legacy in higher education spaces through a critical race theory lens of resisting colorblindness through notions of neutrality and objectivity. Part two centered the

validation of experiential knowledge to interrogate the ways in which Black students are othered in political science and higher education spaces. The knowledge and lived experiences valued in a discipline may shape the ways in which students engage and participate. Part three underscored the necessary commitment of being transdisciplinary to challenge an unwillingness to name the contours of racism. Furthermore, identity enactments, which comes from the discipline of psychology, allow for a transdisciplinary approach to unveil and honor the Black Finesse that students exhibit within the political science paradigm.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This section outlines how my positionality informs methodology and methods, the Colorado state context in which the exploratory research study is conducted, the conceptual frameworks used to guide this study, and the underpinnings of the methodology used to inform decisions made for the research boundaries. The sites for this exploratory study are five four-year institutions inclusive of public and private institutions. This chapter brings together the ways in which methodology informs methodological decision-making. I reflect on how my positionality informs my decision to conduct what I call Race-Grounded Phenomenology (RGP) and how the data-collection methods and analyses are informed by this methodological approach.

Positionality Informs Methodology

As I consider my positionality in developing this research, I have contemplated my own self-reflexivity and self-reflexive wokeness. Self-reflexivity involves grappling with the tensions of what it means to vulnerably look at oneself and question why you are researching what and/or whom you are researching. From internal and external environments, I have navigated, my research agenda, and shifted my foci overtime. Where do the tensions of populations chosen to research come from? Are there tensions and inner-subjectivities that are inhibiting you from drawing in closer to that or whom you fear most or are most vulnerable to? These are questions that I asked myself as I was contemplating through what it means to engage in self-reflexive wokeness. Self-

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reflexivity is the notion of being able to name for instance your insider/outsider status (Milner, 2007). Self-reflexive wokeness, I argue is the process of becoming awakened to a particular identity or identities that shape the integrity through which you self-reflect and navigate research. Hence, I consider self-reflexive wokeness as what happens after self-reflexivity. Self-reflexive wokeness shifts researchers from simply naming one's insider/outsider status to embodying what the salience of those identities means for not only you as a researcher, but for your participants. I see self-reflexivity as a foundation to engaging in self-reflexive wokeness.

Figure 3.1 Self-Reflexive Wokeness

Self-reflexivity

Self-reflexive wokeness

1. talk about experiences with the phenomena

2. how these past experiences shape interpretations of phenomena (Creswell, 2009, p. 216)

how identity salience and lack thereof informs self-reflexivity
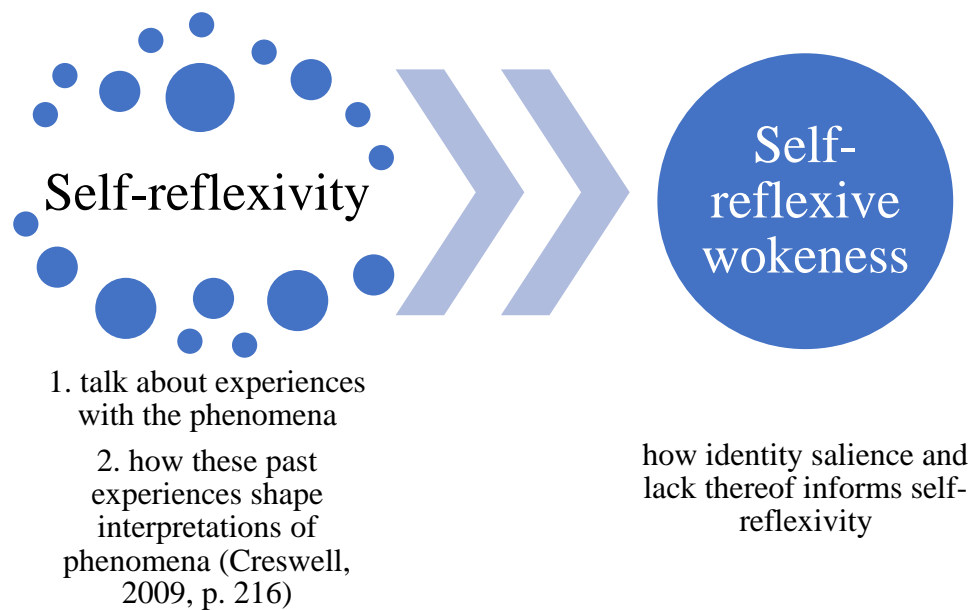
For instance, my journey of self-reflexivity wokeness came from a tugging on my Blackness and shedding the complacency and comfortability of amassing racial equity. It is one thing for me to name my racial identity as salient, and yet another to dig into the vulnerability of what that means for my research. What I mean by self-reflexive

wokeness is the notion of walking, leading, and researching in my power with the combined synergy of the brilliance and vulnerability it takes to walk in one's Pláticas (Espino et al., 2010) or Blackness (Tuitt et al., 2018). To be Woke means to be awakened, aroused, and/or stirred up. To become awakened or stirred upon in one's identity often happens from a series of events and beyond the first stages of identity development (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1995; Kawai, 2005; Lomawaima, 1995; Nelson & Youngbull, 2015; Phinney, 1992; Poon et al., 2019; Tatum, 1997). Engaging folks once they are awakened is critical because there is often a lot of vulnerability experienced before getting to a point of confidence in navigating self-reflexive wokeness.

During many conferences like the American Education Research Association (AERA), Association of the Study for Higher Education (ASHE), Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA), and American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), I have been among scholars who are renowned for walking in their truths as they relate to their racialized experiences. These are folks I have adored because of their ability to ground their praxis in their racial identities. I believe these scholars I adore, who commit to the praxis of racial equity, walk the walk rather than simply pontificate about self-reflexive wokeness. I found myself in deep reflection in these conference spaces because it is a time of not only attending sessions, but also looking in the mirror at my own research and praxis. There was an increased deep reflection in these conference spaces for me for a myriad of reasons, but a major reason that I am able to engage in deep reflection in conference spaces is due to the ability to center myself and reground myself in epistemologies that speak to my desire to engage in racial equity in praxis. Because I

am less known in these conference spaces, I feel less required to speak and turn to quiet wonder. As I am on campus or navigating the nonprofit ecosystem, I am constantly in a state of performing for others rather than able to simply sit, reflect, and learn. While I have been able to center Blackness within my organization's work, I have not given myself the opportunity to experience my own personal liberation of researching via my Blackness. I have not given myself the freedom to explore Black identity in my own research agenda because of often feeling pressures to center students of color in one-size-fits-all ways rather than considering disaggregating racialized experiences.

I am reminded of Dr. Tuitt who brought me in to be on a panel entitled "The Souls of Black Folks in the Ivory Tower," which is based upon his dissertation and was built upon throughout his tenure in higher education. He has remained committed to the souls of Black folks, such as the joys, challenges, barriers, and triumphs Black folks face. I initially strayed from committing my dissertation research, in particular, to Black folks because of internalizing a false notion that a rigorous dissertation would complicate race simply via including other folks of color. I almost expected him, and other Black scholars, to put their bodies on the line for Blackness for me or even on the behalf of me and young Black scholars. I then wrestled with why I have strayed and felt the uneasiness of centering my own Blackness in my research while expecting and needing this centering from others. While I feel cocooned in the Black Finesse and creative genius of Drs. Cross, Zion, Jefferson, Joseph, Kirshner, Kiyama, Nelson, Robinson, Tuitt, Williams, and beyond, I felt so unsafe cocooning myself in my own self-reflexive wokeness embedded in my own racial identity.

The sense of a lack of safety in engaging in a process of self-reflexive wokeness stems from the vulnerability and the emotional labor it requires. It is fairly easy to contemplate and pontificate about the umbrella of students of color. But, when looking in the mirror at my most salient identity, Blackness, I have to sit with all the emotional challenges and joys that come with that. Confronting my dual consciousness (Du Bois, 1903) which reflects how I view myself and how I presume white scholars perceive me led me to thinking through how I position myself as a scholar. While I have used, cited, and celebrated Black scholars and their liberatory frameworks and scholarship, I have simply absorbed the scholars' truths to be externally used via citations and only internally used to sooth my wounds. I have not yet considered centering Blackness in ways that amplify Black Finesse which exhibits the flair, knack, and intellectual prowess used when navigating predominantly white spaces. I have not allowed my vow to Blackness to be taken to the next level through my scholarship for the next generation of Black scholars. How can I expect my faculty mentors to continue to put their Blackness on the line and all they have sacrificed in doing so and not do this myself?

I communicate to white people about how, I argue, we as Black folks, are most vulnerable among those who represent our own racial identities. In racial identity development theories, the middle stages are when Blacks and white folks navigate the most discomfort with interracial relationships (Cross, 1970; Helms, 1990). Thus, white folks are most vulnerable emotionally with their own which is why a savior approach is more digestible and I am also most vulnerable with my own which is why it felt safer to lump people of color together for my research rather than sit in the inner-subjectivities of

what self-reflexive wokeness means for my own Blackness. The self-actualization of racial identity development comes from being able to sit within one's Blackness or whiteness and include this into their everyday decision-making and activism. I have then questioned whether I have been reciprocal in my Blackness for and with Black souls in the academy. Have I considered the cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon,1996) that lands on the bodies of my faculty mentors as they hold space for Black scholars like me who have been implicit in fearing the centering of my own Blackness? These are questions that I have grappled with and that I am beginning to come to terms with from many internal conversations and listening to my inner-subjectivities. I have become more cognizant and sensitive to the needs of faculty who commit to race-engaged praxis. I have been endeavoring to better understand the ways in which they are situated in academia and how their commitment to race-engaged work impacts not only their scholarship, and faculty journey, but their social and familial relationships.

In grappling with these questions for quite some time, I have decided to focus on how Black students exude Black Finesse amidst political science paradigm or that state of political science. In order to center disaggregated equity, rather than a broad stroke of the equity doses many of us have digested, I must focus on Black students rather than students of color. Lumping students of color together can lead the discipline of political science into one-size-fits-all approaches. I have been arguing against lumping all students of color together in my organizational efforts at the K-12 level, yet have been not argued for this in my scholarship. I vow to marry my Blackness again and return to the honoring,

celebrating, soothing, and digging deeper into self-reflexive wokeness for Black souls, including my own.

Colorado Context

I was born in Colorado where I navigated all my educational training from K-12 through graduate education. I have experienced my political science education, civic education, and leadership within Colorado's context as well. As a Black woman, I have constantly navigated political science education, and civic leadership often as the only or among one of a few Black folks in these spaces. Colorado is a purple, libertarian, neoliberal state. Colorado is a state that typically does not simply vote Democratic or Republican. The state's politics are more grounded in voters voting to preserve their own liberties at the expense of others. Education funding for instance is an area that this is typically seen with the ways in which funding is localized at the district level. Voters have consistently shut down ballot measures to increase funding at the state level through the increase of taxes.

Research conducted by Cronin and Loevy (2012) has shown that Colorado voters want public services like education to exist and be funded, but they do not want to pay for it. The politics of wanting public goods in place, but people needing to fend for themselves to attain it depicts a neoliberal mindset.

> Neoliberalism is a conservative perspective that stresses the importance of individual self-interest and free market operations as the basis for the most efficient and just form of society…Neoliberal policies are typically characterized by a desire to cut back state-funded provision, an individualized perspective that views success as a reflection of merit and hard work, and a belief that private provision is inherently superior. Neoliberalism typically works through colour-blind language that dismisses the saliency of race-specific analyses. (Gillborn, 2014, p. 27)

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Navigating this neoliberal state context as a Black woman who studies political science leads to racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004) because of constantly attempting to shift mindsets toward collective liberation rather than deficit discourses toward Black folks navigating the smog of neoliberalism in the state. I often navigate the politics of race in civic and educational spaces as simply an identity to be celebrated, but not centered or engaged toward racial equity.

Colorado has a problem that has continued to persist for too long: the Colorado Paradox. The Colorado Paradox refers to the division of people who have higher education degrees (people that move to Colorado) and those who have limited access to it (those who have been born and raised in Colorado). Many folks who migrate to Colorado comprise the population that contributes to Colorado as one of most educated states in the nation. However, youth who grow up in our Colorado K-12 systems are not accessing higher education at the rates they should be which creates the Colorado Paradox. A Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) report entitled *Colorado Rises* (2018) indicates, "In spite of its recognition as one of the most highly educated states, Colorado ranks at or below average in student persistence and completion" (p. 17). Particularly, students of lower income and of color are not accessing higher education in Colorado as much as they should be to mitigate the Colorado Paradox which is why mitigating racial/ethnic gaps in persistence and retention is major focus on the report as well. In fact, the second strategic goal of the report is to erase equity gaps. The *Colorado Rises* report indicates:

> The story for African Americans in Colorado is even more sobering. While their 39 percent attainment rate currently is higher than that for Hispanics and has increased slightly since 2012, their 10-year completion rate has actually decreased, making the gap even more challenging to address. (p. 15)

Colorado must make financial and strategic investments in interventions that can support Black students to not only access higher education, but also persist through higher education. Colorado must also reckon with the fact that the pipeline of Black political science students drops significantly from the undergraduate to the graduate level which is why I have chosen to focus on Black undergraduate students. The data chart below depicts how few Black graduate students are conferred political science degrees. The data was retrieved April of 2019 from IPEDS.

Table 3.1 Political Science Master's Degrees Conferred by Black Students

College Name	2017 MA	2016 MA	2015 MA	2013 MA	2012 MA	2011 MA
Colorado College	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colorado State University-Fort Collins	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan State University of Denver	0	0	0	0	0	0
University of Colorado Boulder	0	0	0	0	0	0
University of Colorado Colorado Springs	0	0	0	0	0	0
University of Colorado Denver/Anschutz Medical Campus	1	3	1	1	1	1
University of Denver	0	0	0	0	0	0

University of Northern Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	3	1	1	1	1

As shown in Figure One, the number of Black graduate students earning a master's degree in political science is significantly low over a seven-year time span. There were zero Black PhDs in political science from these institutions. The figure below reflects the number of bachelor degrees conferred to Black students from the same institutions as Figure One. The numbers at the undergraduate level while higher, are still not significantly higher. The number of Black students earning bachelor's degrees in political science at each of the listed higher education institutions are less 10 or less.

Figure 3.2 Political Science Bachelor's Degrees Completed by Black Students in CO Higher Education Institutions

Political Science Bachelor Degrees Completed by Black Students in CO Higher Education Institutions

	Colorado College	Colorado State University -Fort Collins	Metropolitan State University of Denver	University of Colorado Boulder	University of Colorado Colorado Springs	University of Colorado Denver/Anschutz Medical Campus	University of Denver	University of Northern Colorado
■ 2017 BA 1st	0	7	2	2	1	5	2	2
■ 2016 1st BA	1	3	1	4	2	3	1	2
■ 2015 1st BA	0	1	3	2	2	5	3	1
■ 2014 1st BA	0	2	4	4	3	6	1	1
■ 2013 1st BA	0	2	0	7	1	1	1	0
■ 2012 1st BA	0	5	3	10	1	3	0	2
■ 2011 1st BA	0	2	4	6	3	3	0	0

Name of Institution

■ 2017 BA 1st ■ 2016 1st BA ■ 2015 1st BA ■ 2014 1st BA
■ 2013 1st BA ■ 2012 1st BA ■ 2011 1st BA

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study seeks to understand (if and) how Black students enact their Black

Finesse. Through critical race theory (CRT), critical whiteness, and identity enactments, I

seek to understand the complex nature between systems of whiteness in political science

and racialized individual and collective experiences of Black undergraduate students. In

order to center Black Finesse yet acknowledge the existence of whiteness, I am privileging the space where identity enactments and critical race theory connect in this study. I rely on critical whiteness as ways to expose the ways in which the political science paradigm operates.

Critical Whiteness Studies

While whiteness has been named and deconstructed by many scholars (Cabrera, 2014; Harris, 1993; Leonardo 2002, 2011; Matias, 2013, 2016), critical whiteness studies is a derivative of critical race theory (Yosso, 2005). The manner in which structures, politics, and agency are imposed on Black students by the political science paradigm will be deconstructed through critical whiteness. There are three defining characteristics of whiteness. First, there is "an unwillingness to name the contours of racism: inequity…is explained by reference to any number of alternative factors rather than being attributable to the actions of whites" (Gilbourn, 2005, p. 488). This first tenet of critical whiteness studies is indicative of whites not wanting to attribute nor identify themselves to a race that has created and is embedded within white supremacy (Helms, 1990). There is an individualistic notion of identity rather than seeing oneself as a part of a racial group. Second,

> the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group: whiteness draws much of its power from 'Othering' the very idea of ethnicity. A central characteristic of whiteness is a process of 'naturalization' such that white becomes the norm from which other 'races' stand apart and in relation to which they are defined. (Gilbourn, 2005, p. 488)

This second tenet encompasses comfort in engaging in approaches to racial equity that places the burden on the shoulders of people of color rather than white themselves. This

burden is what leads to cultural taxation in race-engaged service (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). The third tenet is "the minimization of racist legacy": seeking to 'draw a line' under past atrocities as if that would negate their continued importance as historic, economic and cultural factors" (Gilbourn, 2005, p. 489). This tenet reflects the continued dissonance experienced and imposed by whites to dismiss the truths of the racialized experiences of people of color. Furthermore, there is a lack of acknowledgement of the ways in which whiteness operates currently in tandem with the past.

For the purposes of this proposed research, I challenge the ways whiteness is maintained and unquestioned in political science spaces unconsciously because the bearers and creators of knowledge within the discipline are primarily white. Students learning how to resist assimilation may be sanitized and therefore, their actions reduced in transformation if funneled through the prism of whiteness. However, critical whiteness will not be used to explain how Black students conceptualize their racialized experiences, but instead to deconstruct the discipline of political science. I believe that Black students are likely to experience and be introduced to whiteness in the discipline of political science before they have the opportunity to meet critical frameworks like critical race theory or critical whiteness. Thus, discourses, processes, and research in political science can churn problematic discourses that do not acknowledge the roots of racism, question objectivity, nor validate the racialized experiences of Black students. White faculty must grapple with how their white identity is connected to whiteness to engage in anti-racism. With whites being the majority at the student and faculty level in political science (Mellander, 2016; Mershon & Walsh, 2015), the discipline may be perceived to be

recycling whiteness via curriculum, pedagogy, and discourse. Ladson-Billings (2017)

warns:

> student learning is translated as assimilation and narrow forms of success…and
> the goal of supporting students' critical consciousness is either distorted (viewed,
> as often as it is, through the prism of whiteness) at best, or conveniently left out
> altogether at worst. (p. 142)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a methodology, theory, and lens that stems from Marxism which has more

of a class analyses concerning issues of power. CRT centers race alongside issues of

power. CRT was birthed from legal studies (Crenshaw, 2002; Crenshaw et al., 1995;

Delgado, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT allows scholars to not only center race

in various disciplines, but also to deconstruct the manner in which race and racism

manifest itself. In prior developments of CRT, there were five, six (Dixson & Rousseau,

2005), and now eight constructs that serve as guides for praxis (Dixson & Rousseau,

2006). In this research, I focused on three CRT tenets: to challenge dominant ideology of

race neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy; to emphasize experiential

knowledge or counter-stories; and to bring about social change. I depended on these three

areas to address the behaviors or politics concerning race within political science. The

challenge to race neutrality is critical to this proposed research because while race is a

social construct, Black students may experience racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004) yet

still exhibit agency in navigating the discipline of political science. Experiential

knowledge or Black Finesse of Black students can unveil promising ways in which we

can better support their self-actualization in the discipline of political science. Rather than

indicate whites as the norm within this research, Black Finesse will be normalized within

this study. Lastly, adherence to social change will be discussed in this research through the lens of agency as a way to push against political science paradigm. Understanding race within self-actualization within political science will reflect theories from the psychology such as identity enactment theory to resist ways in which Black students may be positioned by political science.

Identity enactment theory

Nigrescence is the theory of Black identity development that Cross developed in the 1970s. Nigrescence was birthed out of the civil rights movement as a way to better understand how Black folks were navigating their identity, agency, and social change during a time in which there was a push for racial equity. As racial equity and racism continues to be embedded in society and particularly education (Ladson-Billings, 1998), identity enactment theory becomes a very relevant way to better understand the essence of how Black students navigate interracial and intraracial interactions. Identity enactment theory (Cross et al., 2017) reflects ways in which I will codify Black Finesse and/or the Black undergraduate students' racialized experiences amidst the political science paradigm. Cross et al. (2017) discusses identity work and meaning-making as buffering, code-switching, bridging, attachment-bonding, internalized racism, and individuality.

> The first set of enactments (e.g., buffering, code-switching, and bridging), explore the intergroup dynamics of ERI enactments…the second set of enactments (e.g., attachment-bonding and internalized racism) occur in intragroup settings and represent reference group management strategies. Individuality captures the personal identity component of the self that acts in tandem with social identity. (Cross et al., 2017, p. 104)

Cross et al.'s (2017) identity enactment theory allows captures the challenges and critical hope that Black students navigate. The ideologies, politics, and ways Black

students produce race engaged work must be celebrated and should inform the necessary

shifts toward education for liberation needed within the discipline of political science.

Envisioning a Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are used to bring depth and grounding to a study.

Conceptual frameworks reflect "the overarching argument for the work-both why it is

worth doing and how it should be done" (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017, p. 8). In developing a

visual model of this research, I envisioned a butterfly to represent a Black undergraduate

student. The butterfly navigates the smog of whiteness in the atmosphere which

permeates higher education, structures, politics, and agency within political science.

Figure 3.3 Conceptual Model
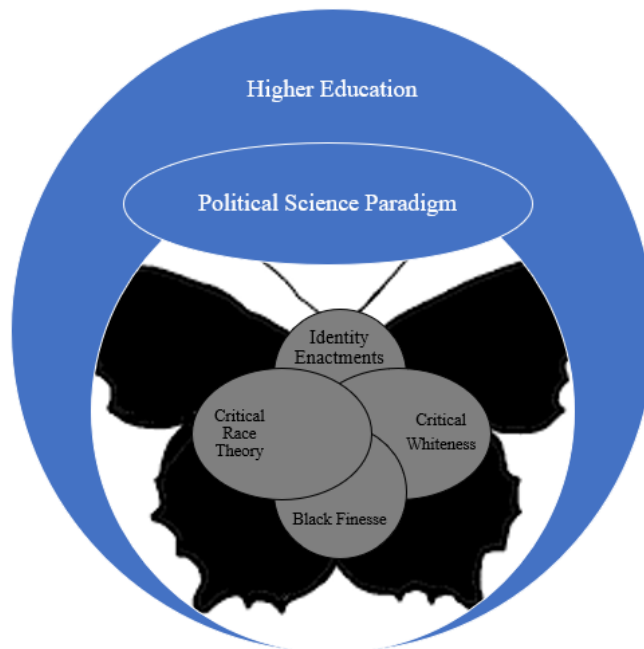
©Janiece Mackey

Critical whiteness theory is necessary to move the discipline to reflect upon its

very ontology, or state of being, that continues to protect and manifest whiteness.

However, the butterfly still manages to navigate, cope and self-actualize in political

science spaces. But, understanding the "why and how" (Neuman, 2011) behind how a Black student navigates the discipline needs to be further explored. There are many theories that can support the deconstruction and reconstruction of understanding how Black students exhibit Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm. However, I decided to use the eclectic array of critical theories of race which are critical whiteness, critical race theory, and identity enactments to illuminate how students navigate structures, politics, and agency in political science. There is a need to better understand how Black students navigate the discipline of political science with a conceptual framework that deconstructs *and* humanizes their racialized experiences in the discipline given the significant decline in numbers from the undergraduate to the graduate level. Critical whiteness studies will be used to deconstruct whiteness embedded in structures reified in political science. Critical race theory will be used to name the behaviors or politics of race experienced in political science by Black students. Identity enactments will be utilized for deductive coding to illuminate actions students exert to demonstrate their agency in political science.

There are three identity enactments that reflect how Black folks navigate white spaces (bridging, buffering, code-switching) (Cross et al., 2017, p. 104). The other two identity enactments represent intra-group relations among Black folks, which are internalized racism and bonding. In order to center Black Finesse and, yet, acknowledge the existence of whiteness, I am privileging the space where identity enactments and critical race theory connect. The Black butterfly represents a Black undergraduate student navigating political science paradigm and higher education which are both embedded in

whiteness which is why they are written in white. However, as Black scholars, we must honor our ancestors and truths to validate that Black identity exists outside of higher education and political science paradigm. Black identity exists and continues to exist outside of academia. Acknowledging Blackness outside of academia is pertinent for my research, and in general, because it is the ways in which Black Finesse is exhibited outside of academia that will inform how Black undergraduate students navigate political science paradigm. The ways in which students innately experience and choose to exemplify their Blackness should be valued and inform the discipline of political science in order to increase their self-efficacy and honor their brilliance.

I have coined Race-Grounded Phenomenology (RGP) as a methodology that unveils and honors Black Finesse within the political science paradigm. Methodologies inform the ways in which researchers navigate their research questions from conceptualization to data analyses. The following image illustrates the elements in a Race-Grounded Phenomenology:

Figure 3.4: Race-Grounded Phenomenology

Methodology

There are many methodologies that could be used to navigate my exploratory phenomenological study. Methodology frames the way one understands and engages in the methods of a study. I wanted to conduct a study that would lead me better understand whiteness within political science, but I wanted to prioritize the phenomenon of how Black students exhibit Black Finesse and interrogate whiteness. My commitment to the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory, critical whiteness, and identity enactments means that I enter this study with an a priori lens concerning race. Race informs understanding the essence of phenomenon.

Toward a Race-Grounded Phenomenology

I have decided to frame this study as a Race-Grounded Phenomenology (RGP) rather than simply a phenomenology. RGP led me to center race in this research and push against notions of neutrality. Centering the experiences of Black undergraduate students in political science has the potential to shift whiteness as the norm in their racialized experiences in the discipline. Centering not solely Black bodies, but epistemologies that honor Black bodies in political science can push against the whiteness that persists in the discipline through the regurgitation of white scholars. This shift toward centering Black scholars and epistemologies needs to happen to not only contribute to the compositional diversity of political science, but to what is learned and translated to the field of literature from the discipline. Moustakas (1994) explains "how identity is achieved and how it relates to temporality has been a continuing theme in transcendental phenomenology" (p. 6). While I am focused on the racialized experiences of Black undergraduate students in political science, their lived experiences are not monolithic. In Race-Grounded Phenomenology, I acknowledge that race is imposed and experienced simultaneously. Varying positionalities of students will determine the ways in which they experienced their Blackness, disciplines, academia, and the community in general. Race-Grounded Phenomenology allows for the complexities of understanding the experiences of Black undergraduate students in political science, while particularly centering race as the lens through which we come to understand these experiences. RGP allows me to lean on centering race to understand a phenomenon rather than the phenomena being race in and of itself.

Tensions in Differing Phenomenology

There are a couple of different types of phenomenology that could lead researchers to prioritize certain research boundaries over others. First, there is hermeneutical, psychological, and transcendental phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on "interpreting" the "texts" of life concerning the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, p. 285). I have an appreciation for this type of phenomenology because of the ability to "interpret" the "texts of life" of Black undergraduate political science students. Second, there is psychological phenomenology which has more of a procedural approach toward "psychological themes for meaning" (Creswell, 2009, p. 286). The psychological approach centers epoch or bracketing oneself out of the research (Moustakas, 1994). This type of phenomenology relies heavily on descriptions to understand the essence of the phenomenon which doesn't allow for the researcher to be infused in the meaning-making. Lastly, transcendental phenomenology is discussed as a synonym for psychological phenomenology in that researchers must "set aside pre-judgements regarding the phenomenon being investigated" (Creswell, 2009, p. 286). So, transcendental phenomenology takes epoch to another level concerning the researcher's inclusion of self in the researcher. Because I am coming into this exploratory study with an a priori lens, psychological or transcendental phenomenology is not a good fit for this study. However, the section below depicts various aspects of phenomenology that fit and that I am at tension with, which led me to develop Race-Grounded Phenomenology.

Why Phenomenology?

There are many reasons I was drawn to phenomenology. Phenomenology is a methodology grounded in understanding phenomena or the essence of a phenomenon. There are four reasons phenomenology is a unique fit for this study. First, phenomenology supports researchers to "grasp…the **very nature of the thing**" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). The ability to grasp the very nature of Black Finesse is a central component of my study. While I am interested in political science paradigm, I do not want to center it and particularly whiteness as the primary object of study. Second, phenomenology philosophically prioritizes the reality of an object when perceived from the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Steward & Mickunas,1990). Because the reality or nature of political science is only perceived within the meaning of the experiences of Black undergraduate students within this methodology, it is a unique fit since I desire for their experiences to shape the reality or nature of political science as a discipline. Hence, political science paradigm and Black Finesse will be defined and framed through the lenses of the Black undergraduate students engaged in the study. Third, phenomenology depicts, "common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2009, p. 81). My hope is that this study can contribute to shift the politics, policies, and practices that protect whiteness within the discipline of political science through the honoring and unveiling of how Black undergraduate students navigate political science paradigm. Lastly, rather than bracket out my interpretations of the participant descriptions, I, as a researcher, aimed to "[mediate] between different

meanings" (van Manen, 1990, p. 26) of the student's political science experiences. Van Manen's (1990) approach to phenomenology, particularly honors the voice of the researcher as able to "mediate between the different meanings" of the participants rather than simply relying on descriptions as suggested in transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The ability to bring myself into the interpretations of the descriptions shared by Black undergraduate students allows me to be authentically and vulnerably engaged in the research.

Methods

Methods are the ways in which a study is conducted. The methods stem from the methodology which serves as a guide for how a researcher goes about collecting data. The methods must match and meet the needs of not only the methodology and researcher, but that of the participants as well. My data collection will be shared via discussions of my sampling strategy and engagement strategy. The five higher education sites of study with a sample size of 10 across those institutions will be discussed alongside how I will outline what I call rap sessions with participants on three different occasions to build out this Race-Grounded Phenomenology. The decisions along the way from sample to how rap sessions are conducted are discussed based upon the methodology.

Sample

Because of an overarching desire to better understand the support needed for Black students to continue political science at the graduate level, I focused on Black students at the undergraduate level in political science. I confined this research to

Colorado due to my experiences as someone who was born and raised within the sociopolitical climate of Colorado.

I initially planned to engage students from two universities, but via the snowball method, ended up engaging students from five universities. Because of the low numbers of Black undergraduate students referred via the snowball method, it was necessary to open up the criteria. I relied heavily on snowball sampling which reflects relying on participant referrals for new participants (Creswell, 2013). I engaged in criterion sampling which requires participants to "meet some criterion…for quality assurance" (Creswell, 2013 p. 158). The initial criterion or parameters include: must self-identify as Black, be an undergraduate student who is majoring in political science, must have taken a minimum of three courses within political science. I ended up doing an amendment to my IRB to expand the criteria to include students who minored in political science and from two institutions to five.

I had prior relationships with Gold university which supported my ability to find participants, but I did not know these participants. While I did not redact this institution, I am naming my relationship with political science in nexus with this institution. There are multiple sampling strategies I used: purposeful, snowball, and criterion. Purposeful sampling is relevant for this studying given my proximity or past experience in navigating the discipline within a Colorado context. I could choose to conduct rap sessions with students I have taught previously in political science classes, but I grappled with privileging some voices over others. Ultimately, I chose to do rap sessions with students that I had not taught in political science to mitigate sampling bias. In order to be

strategic with recruitment of participants, I planned to first connect with the centers on campus that support Black affinity groups and students of color. I ended up being referred to each of the participants from my fellow colleagues, and the students themselves. Given the nature of the study, the sample size was a small group of individuals who experienced the phenomenon of navigating political science as a Black student. Creswell (2013) corroborates the aforementioned type of sampling by stating, "The exploration of this phenomenon with a *group of individuals* who have all experienced the phenomenon. Thus, a heterogeneous group is identified that may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15" (p. 78). Though Black students may have commonalities across their racialized experiences, Black students are not a monolith. I was able to retain all 10 students in the study.

Description of Participants

The participants were given a face sheet in order to obtain their demographic information. The ways in which the demographic information is defined was not discussed with the students. So, for example, first-generation student was not indicated as only pertaining to one side of the family being the first to go to college across both sides of the family. Furthermore, race and ethnicity were not distinguished for students either. Because of these demographic definitions being up to the student's perception, the table below indicates stated ethnicity, race, gender, etc.

Table 3.2 Participant Demographic Information

Student Chosen Pseudonym	Stated Ethnicity	Stated Race	Stated Gender	Stated First Generation?	Stated Year in Undergrad	Stated # of Political Science Courses Taken (as of 2019-2020)	Higher Education Institution Pseudonym
Denise	African American	Black	Female	No	2nd	2	Gold University
Dolores	Black	African American	Female	Yes	Freshman	3	Plains University
Eleanor	Ewe	Black	Female	No	2nd	5	Hills University
George	Nigerian	Nigerian or African American	Male	No	Senior	15-18	Hills University
Juana	Moroccan, Cameroonian, Spanish	Black	Female	Yes (on dad's side)	3	8	Gold University
Nina	American	Black/African American	Female	No	Senior	10	Knoll University
Situ	Ethiopian	Black/African American	Female	Yes	Senior	12	Central University
Tim	Ghanian, French, and German	Biracial Black and White	Male	Yes	Senior	15-20	Central University
Tubby	Nigerian American	Black	Female	Yes	Freshman	3-4 (2 due to concurrent enrollment)	Plains University

Whitney	Black	African American	Female	No	3	4		Gold University

From the demographic table, the varying ways in which ethnicity and race was identified by participants illustrates the versatility within not only this pool of Black students, but also Black folks as a people. This data point within itself pushes against the notion of Black folks as a monolith. While the participants knew that identifying as Black was a criterion to participate, there were only two students who noted their ethnicity as Black and six identified their race as Black. Six students identified African roots within their ethnicity like Ghana, Cameroon, and Ewe, for example. The first generation demographics were split across the participants with five identifying as first-generation and the other five not identifying as first-generation students. Four of the students were seniors; two were in their third year of undergrad; two were in their second year; and the remaining two were in their first year of undergrad. One student, Whitney, minored in political science and one student, Tubby, decided to be undeclared after our first two rap sessions of the study and thus is no longer majoring in political science.

Rap Sessions

When engaging in the field to conduct research there are many traditional methods that can serve as a foundation, but also adding newer and more humanizing methods are critical as well. With this in mind, I conducted multiple rounds of what I call rap sessions. Rap sessions (not to be confused with rap music) are engagements in which people come together around a common interest and create something together. This is different from participatory action research (PAR) because I have already come up with

the research questions. Whereas, in PAR the research questions are co-created and there is co-creation through the entire research process. I wanted to call my field engagements with participants rap sessions in an effort to honor that it is not just me as the researcher creating meaning-making of our shared interest, but instead we are creating together. Rap sessions emerged from hearing this term in the K-12 space in which we conducted fishbowls with students in order to unearth issues and inner-subjectivities. Rap sessions reflect an informal space in which youth do not have to perform or adhere to traditional classroom norms, but instead can simply be their authentic self. Shared vulnerability is also a part of rap sessions as well. While I had to be mindful as a researcher to not share so much on the front end as it may mitigate the prism through which participants share, I would not ask participants to do anything I would not do. At the end of the rap sessions, I shared my thoughts, reflections, and experiences that connect with what participants have shared in that session based upon their inquiry and feedback. Being in dialogue with participants rather than "interviewing" reflects what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) call collaborative interviewing. Collaborative interviewing reflects "the researcher and the participant approach equality in questioning, interpreting, and reporting" (Creswell, 2013, p. 173). Collaborative interviewing or what I call rap sessions allows agency or power to be reciprocal in the data collection process and mitigates "the nature of an interview [to set] up unequal power dynamic between the interviewer and interview" (Creswell, 2013, p. 173).

I used two devices to record the rap sessions one being my phone and the other my tablet which both have an audio recording application. COVID occurred as I was

collecting data and I then had to use zoom as a platform to conduct interviews. I then

recorded via zoom and my phone as a second device. I stored the data in a google drive to

prevent the loss of data and used a thumb drive with password protection to protect

privacy of participant data. The manner in which participant's data was protected was

centered and framed at the beginning of each rap session to assure participants that I was

navigating this study with integrity and fidelity.

Timing and Planning of Rap Sessions

Though I am entitling the interviews with students rap sessions, I am modeling

the frames and boundaries of the rap sessions through the lens of Seidman's (1937/2006)

three-pronged interview series. The three-series rap sessions will consist of learning: life

stories, experiences with the phenomenon, and meaning-making of the phenomenon. My

IRB was approved in the fall of 2019 which is when I began the rap sessions. I completed

the rap sessions the following spring of 2020. I conducted many of the rap sessions

within a week of each other. The timing between rap sessions "allows time for the

participant to mull over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the

connection between the two" (Seidman, 1937/2006, p. 21). The structured rap sessions

conducted for a range of 60 to 90 minutes allowed for enough time to honor the life

stories, experience with the phenomenon, and meaning-making process collectively

through a focus group for the final rap session. These sessions were structured rather than

semi-structured because of the commitment to center race. Race-Grounded

Phenomenology requires me to structure the rap sessions in such a way that allows for a

"both and" approach to having an a priori lens. While I entered the study with racial

epistemologies in mind, I still wanted to have a "fresh look" at how the students perceive their experiences with the phenomenon to see if they center race organically, or if they do not, until it is centered from my line of inquiry. In light of this, I had "listen fors" and "if thens" (Mears, 2009) in the columns left and right of the questions for the rap sessions to guide and reflect upon how and when race enters the rap session.

Rap Session One

For the first rap session, I conducted a one-on-one dialogue with a structured open-ended interview protocol. I utilized face sheets (see appendix A) which are forms used to capture information that complements the rap session with demographic information such as race, ethnicity, number of political science courses taken, etc. This was only provided at the first rap session. The first rap session focused on life stories from the participants' K-12 experiences in and outside of schooling, but within that time frame. Understanding their schooling, familial experiences, and their reflections on identity was the focus of this first rap session. I centered race within my initial interview protocol to have a Race-Grounded Phenomenology approach with students. However, to have an openness alongside my a priori lens, I did not ask the questions that center race in the initial questions. Mears (2009) notes, "This emphasis on the humanity of the participant brings the potential richness in perspective, but it also poses challenges in dealing with inequality and the range of differences that are encountered" (p. 100). The emphasis on Blackness led me to make a decision to center race in my rap sessions and even in the framing of the recruitment. At the end of the rap session, participants were invited to share their understanding of race while growing up through art. They were

asked to illustrate or draw how they navigated race growing up. To close out the rap session, participants were invited to share questions, feedback, or concerns.

Rap Session Two

The second rap session specifically focused on the participants' experiences with race and political science. The initial structured rap session questions focused on the discipline of political science. Race was not mentioned until the initial political science questions were asked in order to see if race even came up in the discussion from the participant first. I then asked questions explicitly concerning race to better understand Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm. They were asked to engage in this line of inquiry through artistic methods in this session with an invitation to draw or illustrate their experiences with race in political science. To conclude the second rap session, students again were offered an opportunity to engage me with feedback, questions, or concerns.

Rap Session Three

The third rap session consisted of a focus group to bring the participants together to create a sacred and relational space (Nelson, 2018) in which they could build community with one another as Black students navigating political science paradigm. A portion of the time together was spent on how they navigated Black Finesse amidst political science paradigm. Before COVID, I intended to have the focus group in person, but we ended up having to do it via Zoom. Six of the ten students were able to participate. While I provided google docs and a couple of prompts for students to draw responses, there was inconsistency with who submitted their drawings after the focus group and who

used the google docs. With this in mind, the focus group was reviewed and transcribed to pull themes as a way to give acknowledgements to the participants themselves and future Black political science scholars. The artistic methods of inquiry for this rap session were grounded in how they saw Blackness in political science and also sharing wisdom with future Black undergraduate political science students the drawing, illustration, or writing.

Post Rap Sessions

After conducting the rap sessions, I coded the data using pseudonyms chosen by the participants in order to protect their identities. Rap sessions were transcribed through Temi, which is an online transcription service. I quickly wrote my field notes of my thoughts and reflections about how the rap sessions went and also what was most salient to me from them. Field notes can focus on an array of reflections captured immediately after a rap session from spatial relations, time and chronological reflections, personality and interactions (Warner & Karner, 2010, p. 111).

Self-Reflexive Wokeness

Self-reflexive wokeness required me to engage with my inner-subjectivities and to center race in my field notes. In order to capture my own racialized experience with each rap session, I asked myself the following questions:

Field notes grounded in self-reflexivity:

What was my experience like with this interview?

(Rap Session One) How did her experiences from rap session one shape my interpretation of her experiences with race and her childhood?

(Rap Session Two) How did her experiences from rap session two shape my interpretation of her experiences with race in political science?

How do my identities shape my interpretations of her experiences?

Overall mood and feelings in my body

After re-listening to the rap sessions and reflecting on field notes, I engaged in session reflections to prepare for the focus group. The session reflections were a way for me to member check with the participants rather than simply giving them their transcribed rap sessions. Engaging in session reflections allowed me to maintain a phenomenographic method (Dahlgren et al., 2006) which allows for participants to participate in the meaning-making process of data analyses. This type of method is at tension with some of the components that have been deemed pertinent to phenomenology and normative views of research processes. There are tensions within bracketing, horizontalization, member checking and coding which will be described in the section to follow below.

Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss some of the tensions and data analyses decisions in navigating a Race-Grounded Phenomenology from bracketing, member checking, coding to validity and shifting research toward value as a form validity. Components of the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and data analyses are discussed alongside shifts in research toward more critical qualitative research indicators. Data analyses within the frame of Race-Grounded Phenomenology is inclusive of multiple forms of phenomenology like hermeneutical phenomenology and Van manen's (1990) approach, "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei (2012), phenomenographic methods

of data analyses (Dahlgren et al., 2006), and shifting value of objectivity in validity through catalytic validity (Lather, 1991).

Bracketing

Creswell (2013) indicates

> In some forms of phenomenology, the researcher brackets himself or herself out of the study…to identify personal experiences with the phenomenon and to partly set them aside so that the researcher can focus on the experiences of the participants in the study. (p. 78)

As someone who approaches research with a race-grounded lens, and as someone who was once a Black undergraduate who studied political science, I would argue my dual consciousness (Du Bois, 1903) informs how I approach, analyze, and illustrate research. Creswell (2013) acknowledges bracketing, or epoché, is a challenge of phenomenology and indicates, "perhaps we need a new definition…[and] the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study" (p. 83). There was a fusion of my positionality and lived experiences in the research to enrichen the research and also create reciprocity with my participants. Fine et al. (2003) remind us to "interrogate in our writings who we are as we coproduce the narratives we presume to 'collect'" (p. 72). I produced a positionality statement for each chapter to bracket out how I engaged in my thinking concerning that portion of the study.

Horizontalization and Member Checking

Horizontalization enabled me to "highlight significant sentences, or quotes, that provide and understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomena" (Creswell, 2013 p. 82). In order to have an approach grounded in agency and reciprocity to the research and not simply extract knowledge from participants, I engaged in a

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phenomenographic approach to the analyses which allows for horizontalization to create shared understandings with participants. I did this via session reflections. I leaned on a phenomenographic method of member checking as well. A phenomenographic analysis approach allows for the participants to reflect upon how a phenomena is perceived not simply by the researcher, but by themselves (Dahlgren et al., 2006). A phenomenographic process reflects my disposition towards how knowledge should be generated and engaged with in the discipline and that is with agency in mind. Ensuring students know that they have agency in how they navigate a discipline and knowing they have authority on the knowledge generated from them, shifts power. Navigating the "essence of a phenomenon" while centering race should be done in a communal fashion within a community of learning rather than solely in individual engagements. This type of process incorporates reciprocity within research which requires a relationship of interdependence between the researcher and participants. The notion of interdependence is important to this Race-Grounded Phenomenology because I am endeavoring to shift the ways we are often socialized to navigate race in academia which tends to be rooted in individualism (Tinto, 1988).

A phenomenographic analyses approach was critical to this type of research concerning individual and collective identity because the participants' experiences with identity enactments in political science should not simply be seen solely through my lens, but also through their inner-subjectivities as well. The ways in which the participants digest, perceive, and reflect upon this study is critical since racial formation and the racialization of identity enactments will not be experienced in a monolithic fashion

despite participants shared racial identity. Because of potentially being socialized into a colorblind discipline and higher education environment, the ways in which we reflect upon the data may be perceived differently. Hence, we may have different levels of racial literacy and consciousness as we engage with the study. However, regardless of the varying levels of racial literacy and consciousness, the participants inner-subjectivities of how they are experiencing race in the moments of analyzing the data should be acknowledged and validated.

Coding

While emergent codes were included in the research, I utilized identity enactments theory (Cross et al., 2017) for deductive coding. This type of intentional focus on how one reviews and analyzes interviews is reflective of critical hermeneutical methodology. Hermeneutical phenomenology "describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the "texts" of life (hermeneutics)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). The lived experience that my research is "oriented toward" or grounded in is race. The "texts of life" in the Race-Grounded Phenomenology stem from the artistic inquiries embedded within each rap session. In the rap session protocols, I included "listen fors" and "if thens" (Mears, 2009) in order to ground race in the data collection which then leads to what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) call "thinking with theory" (While race is grounded in my study, "thinking with theory" allows me to see the congruence or incongruence in the participants experiences and the theories under study such as Cross et al.'s (2017) identity enactments theory. In order to further unpack a critical race hermeneutical lens, I utilized Cross et al.'s (2017) identity enactments theory

in order to develop the identification of meaning units or clustered meanings of how students of color navigate political science.

Nicolazzo (2015) claims:

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) claimed traditional approaches to coding, which collapse data into generalizable patterns and themes, foreclose the possibility of seeking multiple meanings across all data. For the present study in which participants and I were engaged, approaching data analysis in this traditional way meant these tensions, nuances, and dissonances were overshadowed by the development of supposedly stable and unified themes that persisted across the data. (p. 51)

With the identity enactments theoretical coding, I was able to reflect the breadth and versatility of meaning making of identity and Blackness for the students interviewed from the tough racialized experiences, rich community making, and agency that may happen within the discipline of political science.

Validity

Polkinghorne (1989) indicates, "validation refers to the notion that an idea is well grounded and well supported [by asking] does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?" (p. 57). To determine the "accuracy" the participants lens and "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) was foundational. However, the ways in which the "structural descriptions" are developed were not be indicative of objectivity nor bracketing out my experiences as a researcher. Creswell (2013) reminds researchers of Polkinghorne's (1989) indicator that "the interviewer influence[d] the contents of the participants description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the participants' actual experience" (p. 259). This indicator outside of Race-Grounded

Phenomenology may be perceived as in violation of validity because of me as a researcher entering the research with an a priori lens and an openness to participant's lived experiences. Fine (2004) suggests, "We and they enter and play with the blurred boundaries" (p. 72). Blurring the boundaries is necessary for rap sessions for this Race-Grounded Phenomenology because I am prioritizing the value of the process and practice of rap sessions to the participants over objectivity.

Centering Value as Validity

Catalytic validity measures the value and effectiveness of a Race-Grounded Phenomenology approach. Catalytic validity illustrates "the degree to which [a process] re-orients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1991, p. 68). At the end of each rap session, the participants were asked about the emotions that arose from the rap session, what feedback, questions, or concerns they had, and if they needed anything between then and the next rap session. With catalytic validity in mind, Black students are more likely to experience this study in a way that demonstrates reciprocity or an interdependence upon one another for support. I wanted to expose them to humanizing notions of navigating political science that prepares them to demand shifts toward an education for liberation. Race-Grounded Phenomenology requires an acknowledgement of the emotionality that may arise from sharing about the essence of navigating Blackness within political science paradigm. In order to build rapport and relationality with participants, I produced a short video with a short blurb about the study in order to recruit participants. This helped potential participants become familiar with me before an initial meeting. I met participants at a

location that was most comfortable for them where we are able to record without too much background noise. I captured sensitivities and inner-subjectivities reflexively during each rap session.

First, I ensured that I did not ask students to do anything that I would not do myself. While I did not want my study to dictate their narrative, the act of sharing my positionality, I believe, led them toward a willingness to share vulnerably and with radical honesty (Williams, 2016). Second, I engaged in reciprocity with students to indicate my integrity and desire to create an interdependent relationship rather than a dependent one. I believe that students should be able to not solely feel like I am extracting knowledge from them, but they should be able to lean on me as well for academic and career support as well. I volunteered myself for any academic and/or career engagements that they deemed as relevant for me to support their journey for helping to support mine. Furthermore, the third rap session consisted of all of the participants coming together after two rap sessions for them to build community together. All participants were invited to write a letter or create a drawing to future Black undergraduate students who will study political science at their particular higher education institution for the final chapter of the dissertation. They were asked to infuse what they would like future Black undergraduate students in political science to know. This portion of the final rap session was a part of the arts-based inquiry for the session. The participants were invited to my dissertation defense as well.

Pausing to Reflect Toward Forthcoming Data Findings

As a Black race scholar activist, I have the ability to read and feel race in certain ways because of my lived experience and training in critical theories of race. While my Blackness informs that understanding, I have a depth of understanding of race within and outside of Blackness. I navigated the data collection phase with moments of pause, exhaustion, liberation, and wonder as I endeavored to center race-grounded questions of participants and race-grounded reflections after each rap session. I shared vulnerably around my racialized experiences through collaborative interviews to ask questions of myself. A phenomenology of race would allow me to bracket myself out of the data collection and data analyses phases. Given the collaborative interviewing I engaged in with participants within the Race-Grounded Phenomenology, I required myself as the researcher to specifically share my racialized experiences. As students shared racialized experiences from their childhood in rap session one and their political science experiences in rap session two, I reciprocated the emotional labor to model self-reflexive wokeness. Finally, in the focus group, I ensured that students had the opportunity to be honored for stepping into such a research design that required them to center race despite other identities potentially being of same or more salience.

Preconceived Notions Toward Data Findings and Analyses as a Race Scholar Activist

My ways of knowing as race scholar activist permeate the ways in which I analyze data and thus I refute notions of neutrality and/or objectivity. With critical race theory being one of the critical theories of race, it is pertinent to refute neutrality and

objectivity. Hence, I will transparently center my racialized preconceived notions that I had prior to analyzing the data. I came into this study with the following preconceived notions:

1) Folks who have limited experience with the discipline are less critical of the discipline.

    a. This was quickly disproved in that students who also had a lower amount of experiences with political science courses were critical of the discipline. Their familial and racialized experiences informed their level of criticality more than the number of courses they took within political science. This aligns with the methodology Race-Grounded Phenomenology as well which indicates race informs the essence of a thing and in this case political science paradigm.

2) Race is salient in experiences regardless of whether or not ethnicity is a complimentary or more salient identity.

    a. This study confirmed along with prior research (Bagley & Young, 1988) that students who identify as African and/or have African cultural roots have experiences informed by the ways in which they are racialized. Situ demonstrates this in the images at the end of this chapter and indicated, "This [image] would be my childhood in Kenya not thinking about race…2016 I would say….it kept escalating from there, but before then it was a pretty simply topic."

b. Situ's experience, along with other participants who identified as Ethiopian, Nigerian and beyond demonstrate the salience of race within an American context, but also within a discipline built within an American context.

c. "Most Kenyan, Nigerian, and Ghanaian international students have been reared in racially homogenous contexts, [so] are less likely to have had negative experiences related to discrimination or racism prior to coming to the United States (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996). However, upon coming to the United States, race may become a highly salient issue for many of these students as a result of living in a predominantly White society (Adeleke, 1998)" (Constantine et al, 2005, p. 58)

3) There is a desire to have community rather than be alone not only in the discipline, but in the higher education journey.

a. My lived experience as a Black woman who has navigated traditionally white institutions and literature speaks to the notion that Black folks and people of color desire to have counter-spaces which "are academic and social spaces that nurture a supportive environment where their experiences were validated and viewed as important knowledge" (Yosso, 2006, p. 120).

b. Eleanor discussed navigating political science alongside other Black students and what it means to her. "I remember my first... friend...she still my friend…we were in my first poli sci class...this one girl said something like eastern countries not being civilized and we like the Black women psychic connection was like whooaa...we started talking after class...so she is still one of my really good friends to this day."

4) There is versatility in the ways in which students navigate race in the discipline from feeling they don't have a strategy at all to intentionally having strategies.

   a. Black racial identity development otherwise known as Nigrescence (Cross, 1971) indicates the developmental stages or phases through which Black folks navigate race. These phases, while not linear also inform how Black folks and particularly Black undergraduate students in this case think of strategies in navigating race and/or potentially the lack thereof needed to navigate political science paradigm. The spectrum to not feeling a need for strategies to relying on strategies was indicated in the data. Dolores, in her image about navigating race in political science stated, "I'm just being a student like everyone else." Whereas Denise indicated, "I literally just did that thing of confronting or not confronting." However, the lens of not having a strategy at all could be deemed a strategy in and of itself.

5) The participants' childhood experiences inform their navigation of race.

   a. Because of the need for Black families to talk about race because of its salience in an American context, the ways in which families discuss race informs the ways in which students perceive their racialized experiences amidst schooling experiences and, in this study, political science paradigm. This was confirmed by Whitney whose images of navigating race as a child to navigating race amidst political science paradigm were paralleled. She was very grounded in her Blackness. "Umm this is me with

the same mindset I guess that I've always grown up with, which was like

represented by the pan African colors."

6) Political science is embedded in whiteness which is indicative of notions of

neutrality "seeing both sides."

    a. Students spoke to the ways that political science upholds notions of

       neutrality and imposes this expectation on students as well. George, in the

       second rap session when discussing how race shows up in political

       science, recalled a student desiring to center race in a project and the

       professor told the student in front of the entire class that she must have "an

       axe to grind." George reflected by stating, "it was a research studies class

       a classmate of mine wanted to do a study about how….people change their

       vote after a public shooting has occurred in their town or county and I

       remember the professor...she said this to a lot of people...I think you just

       have an axe to grind."

    b. This can become problematic particularly when researching and

       considering issues of racial justice. Many critical theories of race would

       indicate neutrality is a myth and thus to not be on the side of racial justice

       is to maintain the disposition of the oppressor. Many quotes have been

       made for decades that indicate the necessity of abandoning neutrality

       otherwise one would be taking the side of the oppressor. Here's just a few

       below highlighted by Parsa (2018):

i. "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." — Dr Martin Luther King Jr

ii. "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

iii. "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." — Elie Wiesel

iv. "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." — Paulo Freire

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with how my positionality shaped the development of the methodology I entitle a Race-Grounded Phenomenology. I demonstrated my inner-subjectivities of centering Blackness in this study and underscored what I call self-reflexive wokeness as a way to push on researchers to not only center race for participants, but for ourselves. I depicted the many ways in which there were convergence and tensions with the varied designs of phenomenology. I described the ways in which the study was conducted from the theoretical frames to specific methods. I closed the chapter with a reflection as a race scholar activist grappling with preconceived notions I had before sharing findings and data analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA FINDINGS AND ILLUSTRATION

The purpose of this section is to share my positionality toward data illustration and findings. I will demonstrate the ways in which the data collection answers the research questions with data findings through written words and artistic forms. There are two significant finding presented in this chapter. The first finding underscores why Black undergraduate students pursued political science as a minor or major. I then shift toward how the participants are defining the discipline of political science. The second finding is grounded in the ways that participants navigate the discipline of political science. The ways in which agency, politics, and structure are centered in the discipline of political science and among Black undergraduate students are discussed as well. Before providing further context for the data collection and findings, I want to re-center the research questions answered in this study:

How are Black students defining political science as a discipline?

What are the ways in which structures, politics, and agency are embodied in political science?

What are the ways in which Black students create structures, politics, and agency amidst political science?

Positionality Informs Data Illustration and Findings

My positionality as a Black woman and race scholar activist grounds the criteria or guidelines through which I desired to create and expand boundaries for data illustration. I wanted to create boundaries around what data is focused on to honor the collaborative space and trust that were created between the students and me within the rap sessions. While students knew that their words would be transcribed and recorded, there was still a speed of trust and rapport built because of the radical honesty (Williams, 2016) that I built into the collaborative interviewing process. With this in mind, rather than focus on certain facets of their vulnerability shared in the rap sessions, I only share statements of vulnerability if it contributes to answering the research questions. I did not want to exploit and/or simply espouse Black pain for the consumption of the reader for academia. I also expanded the boundaries through which I illustrate the data findings, by choosing to emphasize the creative drawings composed by the students within rap session one and two. Centering drawings allows the written word to be broken up for the reader, but also allows for the depiction of versatility in knowledge sharing to be admired as well. As a race scholar activist who has experienced what it is like to have my ways of knowing and sharing of knowledge questioned, I chose to push the bounds through which knowledge is often consumed in higher education, but particularly political science.

Finding One: Why Political Science and What is Political Science from the Lens of Black Undergraduate Students

This section is broken into two sub-findings under finding one. Finding one A centers on why Black undergraduate students decided to pursue political science as a minor or

major. Finding one centers on "the what" and/or defining of political science as a discipline through the lens of Black undergraduate students. Finding one illustrates the agency, politics, and structure discussed in earlier chapters within the discipline of political science. Below are themes that manifested from the question "What led you to study political science" in rap session two. How students come to desire the discipline of political science shapes their expectations of the discipline.

Finding One A

This sub-finding is grounded in what led Black undergraduate students in this study to pursue political science. I discuss the themes that emerged from wanting to understand why these students chose political science were:

Theme One-Everything is Political

There were students that approached their thinking and reflecting of why they pursued political science under the notion that everything is political. If everything is political, everything is embedded in politics. As Black folks are bodies, they are always politicized, which would lead to an epistemology that everything is political regardless of where we decide to put our bodies and even regardless of what we choose to study. Eleanor was pensive about this notion of everything, even the choice of a discipline, being political. "I used to want to be a journalist, which is still political, right?" Navigating daily racialized and political experiences leads us to have a heightened understanding of race and politics at a younger age especially within traditionally white contexts. Whitney reflected this by stating, "Like everything around us is all in politics."

Theme Two-I Grew Up Political

Many of the Black undergraduate students spoke to experiences with family, community and/or schooling that displayed their civic engagement and political activism. Politics was deemed as a natural part of their upbringing. Dolores indicated, "I was always interested in politics." Nina discussed the normalization of political discussions in her household by stating, "Growing up, it was just normal to be having conversations around politics at the dinner table even just like with my grandparents in stuff everyone is just aware of everything." The normalization of politics and being political stems from the student's familial capital (Yosso, 2005). Tim indicated, "I was very aware with politics at a young age. Um, my mom, um, is very politically engaged. Furthermore, identity is political. Who we are racially shapes our political lens as well." Tubby whose family is from Nigeria indicated, "I always paid attention subconsciously." There is also an education that comes along with growing up political for the Black undergraduate students as well. Whitney discussed her parents' influence on her by sharing, "My mom was, um, she was African and [majored in] African American studies, so we just always talked about history."

Theme Three-Social Justice

With growing up political shaping much of the Black undergraduate students' experiences, they had a fire from within to pursue political science to make a difference. They desired to make an impact and further understand how to make that impact by studying political science. Denise explicitly used the term social justice when asked why she pursued political science. Denise said, "I was really interested in social justice work." This connection to social justice and making a difference in the community stems from

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childhood was revealed to be experienced before college as well. Eleanor discussed how the sociopolitical context led her to become engaged in politics as early as grade school. "I started getting into politics in grade school particularly um high school. It was around all the shootings of Black men. I participated in protests and die-ins and walk-outs…I was like activism is political." The desire to center folks from marginalized communities was felt among other participants as well. Whitney indicated, "I always wanted to talk about, I guess like indigenous cultures or people who aren't really represented in the best light." There was also a desire to engage in a reclaiming of space through pursuing a political science degree as well, particularly for students who had connections to Africa through their immediate families. Situ indicated, "I want to go back to help people." She identified herself as a proud Ethiopian. Tubby also had a desire to reclaim space by interrogating narratives that have been imposed on Nigeria. Tubby shared, "Just coming from two different types of government so like the Nigerian government everyone knows it's corrupt…having to hear that and knowing the US is not the same type of issues."

Theme Four-The How of Politics

With a desire to make a difference, and make an impact in the community, Black undergraduate students came to the discipline with a desire to better understand the "how" of politics from the discipline of political science. Denise reflected on her journey to deciding to major in political science by stating, "I thought that [political science] would probably be the best degree to help me do that." George, who has a Nigerian father, had a desire to better understand international politics, particularly from the African continent. "Um I think I was really interested in learning about other

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countries…most of the political aspects of them." Situ who shared a desire to go back to Ethiopia simply stated, "I can do political science to see how that works." Whitney thought political science would be a good complementary minor for her. "Um, just like see how, what I could do to be a part of that, which is why I chose anthropology and I thought political science tied into that nice."

Theme Five-Someone Said It

This theme is extremely salient for me as someone who pursued political science as a major because a faculty member during my orientation week suggested I pursue political science. I didn't even know what a major was when I walked onto the college campus as an undergrad. I indicated that I wanted to study law and was ushered toward political science as a foundational major that I'd benefit from pursuing. Advising matters. George fell into the pursuit of political science due to sharing his career interests at a career fair. "What led me to like really take on political science was probably a career fair I went to…it was in high school." For other students, there was closer familial connection to political science that made it feel like a degree that would be a good choice for their career path. Nina indicated, "Both of my parents were political science majors in undergrad." Furthermore, Situ had a sibling who influenced her to pursue a political science degree based upon her experiences within a class even though she was not pursuing the degree herself. Situ stated, "My sister…was taking a class and took international government with one of the professors and always talked about how she liked the professor…And I was like let me try that."

Understanding the lens from which Black students come to the discipline shapes the ways they desire to learn from the discipline. This thematic data should shift the ways political science scholars and educators teach, research, and serve within the discipline. Much of the students' preconceived notions stem from their racialized lived experiences. There seemed to be this notion that they needed the discipline of political science to teach them technocratic knowledge of politics, governance, policy and beyond. But, what seemed salient from the students' comments was a confirmation of what they already knew to be true. Why? Their lived experiences with race and racism, which is a form of knowledge, was confirmed and reified in political science spaces.

Finding One B

This finding is centered on how Black undergraduate students in this study defined the discipline of political science or what I have defined as the political science paradigm.

Agency

In order to unveil the agency amidst the political science paradigm, I will highlight the bases from which images created by students depict agency, meaning action or inaction, of faculty in political science. The illustrations or images were drawn based upon the prompt given in rap session two which focused primarily on understanding the discipline of political science through the lens of Black undergraduate students. The prompt given to them to illustrate from was, "Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms." The images highlighted will reveal the way agency operates from the lens of Black undergraduate students. Agency within the

discipline of political science was illustrated in a couple of ways. First, agency was illustrated in a way that showed the absence of the faculty as to say that the Black students are not supported due to omission. Second, agency was shown by the Black undergraduate student having to negotiate all of the emotional and intellectual labor without faculty support. This first image is from Juana. Juana attends Plains University. She had been exposed to political science through concurrent enrollment and was a junior. She had taken eight political science courses. Her image show that while the professor is in front of the classroom, the facilitation is being exerted from her. The professor, or who she labels teacher, is using their agency through omission meaning that they are choosing to not engage in race dialogue. The omission of the professor allows for the protection of whiteness since they are not giving any emotional or intellectual labor to the classroom space concerning race dialogue. The image below by Tim encapsulates the ways in which agency was depicted consistently across the participants. Tim is biracial, Black and white male, and was a senior at Central University at the time of the study. He indicated he had taken between 15 to 20 political science courses.

Figure 4.1 Tim Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
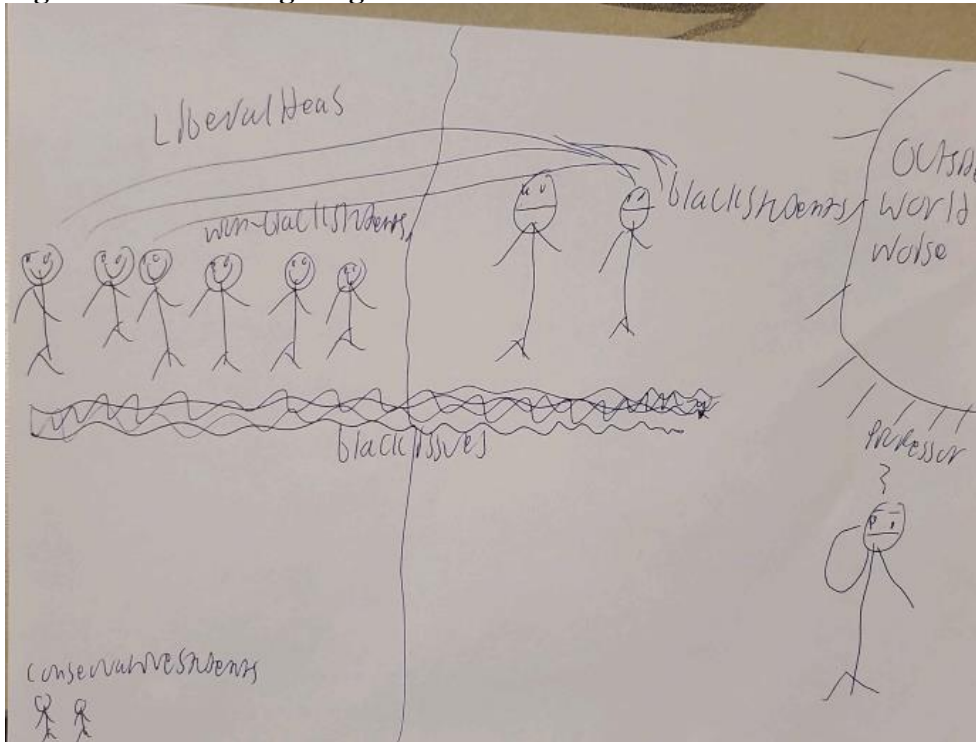
The above image shows that while the professor is present, their agency is not used in a way that brings about harmony in the classroom. The students are left to fend for themselves as race dialogue happen. Tim depicted himself with one other individual on the side of Black students because he indicates that even other students of color do not know how to understand issues in a way that has a focus on the Black community. With the professor not using their agency to facilitate these dialogues, Tim is often the student or one of two students to facilitate these dialogues even though he is not being paid as the educator in the space.

Politics

As noted in Chapter One, Stanley (2012) was referenced because of the author's indication of political science not being grounded in "politics itself," but rather as a

regurgitation of what has been. The discipline is espousing what it was intended to from its roots. Burgess, who is deemed the father of political science, envisioned the school of political science as "training ground for public administrators….its graduates were to supply enlightened public servants to replace the machine bosses and patronage appointments controlling many of America's government institutions" (Blatt, 2018, p. 16). As mentioned above, many students indicated a desire to know the "how" behind the world of politics in order to go into the world to be who they espouse to be. Situ indicated, "I want to go back and help people...I can do political science to see how that works." Whitney also wanted to have a better understanding of "the how" by indicating, "I minored in it because I wanted to understand it better, I guess." However, the birth and transmission of political knowledge for the purpose of "enlightened governance" did not and still does not have Black bodies in mind. The politics of race plays out in ways that are taxing for Black undergraduate students as they are often the ones to try to ensure there is an understanding of the politics of race rather than the professor who, in this image, is positioned as the one who is in the front of the classroom to facilitate. Juana identifies as a Cameroonian, Moroccan, Spanish female and attends Gold University. She had taken eight political science courses. She drew the image below that shows the politics of race happening in the classroom and being the one to facilitate and navigate the politics with inept support from the professor who is positioned to share knowledge in the space.

Figure 4.2 Juana Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
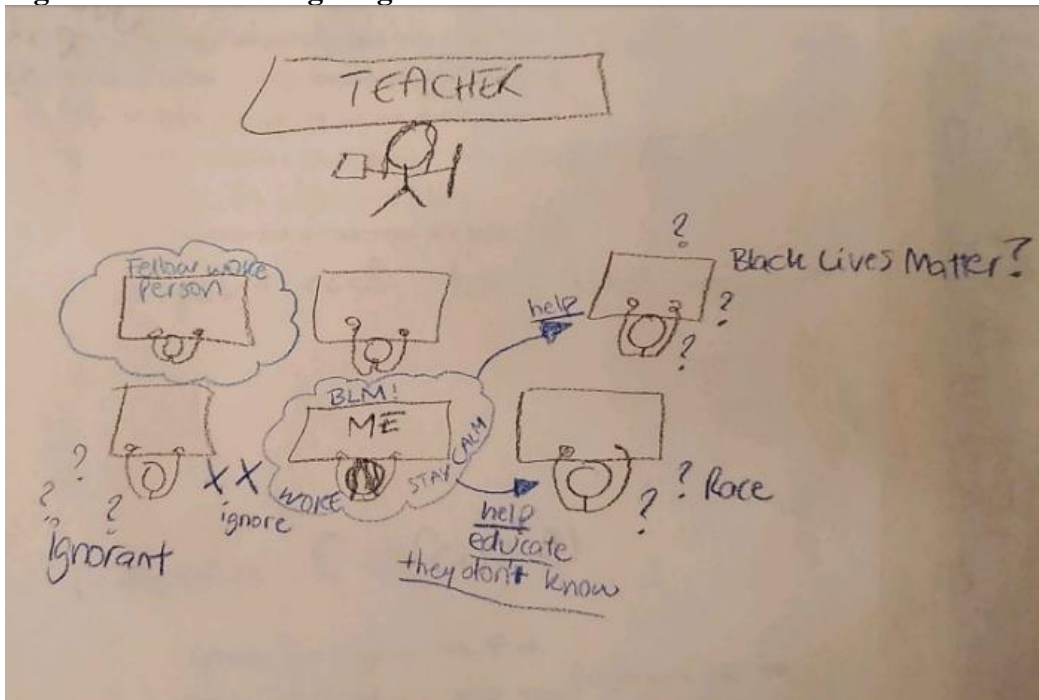
The students may have learned some new lingo or language to use to better

understand issues of politics, governance, and justice from an "objective lens," but that

does not change the fact that race and racism is forever present within our lived

experiences outside of schooling and exacerbated in political science spaces. The

culmination of this knowledge within political science leads to the pronounced statement

of Audre Lorde (1983) concerning using the master's tools to dismantle the master's

house. Even if the answer were yes, which I am not saying it is, the access of the

technocratic political science ethos comes at a cost to our Black bodies.

Structures

In order to answer the research question concerning how Black undergraduate

students are defining the discipline of political science, I gathered the data from rap

session two. I specifically looked at data depicted above from the question, "What do you

see as the purpose of political science?" In underpinning what students perceive as the purpose of political science, I found that they grappled with naming it for what it has been to them versus what it should be from their lens. Thus, when I discuss political science, that is the naming of the discipline. When I state or address political science paradigm, that is the culture of the discipline and space that that has been created. The experience of the regurgitation of knowledge within the discipline was depicted beautifully by Nina. Nina identifies racially as a Black/African American and identified her ethnicity as American. She attends Knoll University and was the only participant from this private higher education institution. She is a senior and had taken 10 political science courses.

Figure 4.3 Nina Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
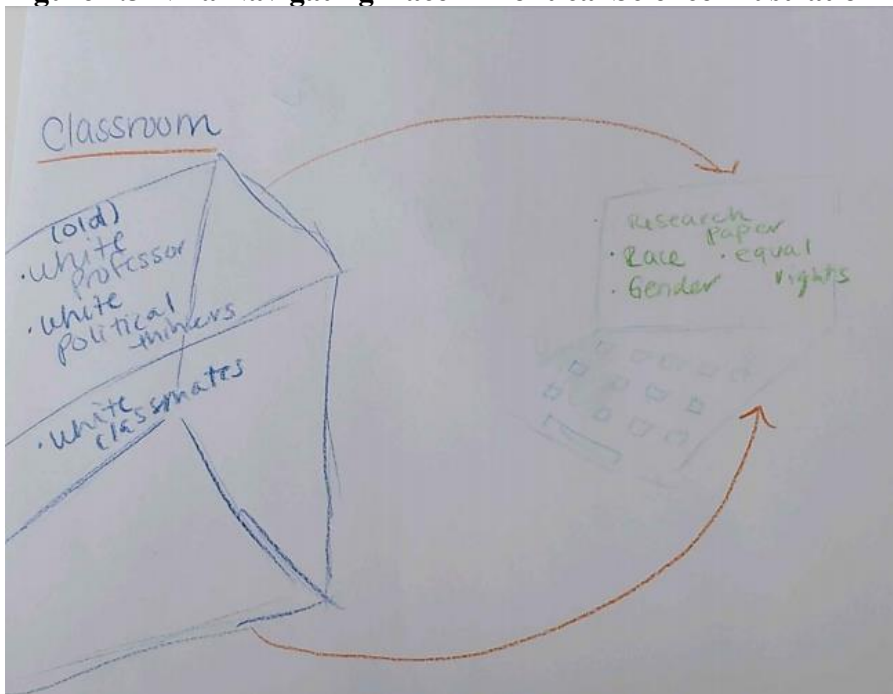
Nina illustrates the ways in which structures in political science are maintained and how she is distant from that structure. She shows how this structure is being imposed

upon her by the arrows coming from a space of whiteness albeit the professor, the curricula and fellow students.

Agency, Politics, and Structures as a Basis for Understanding the Political Science Paradigm

The reasons Black undergraduate students chose to pursue political science inform their expectations concerning the ways they experience agency, politics, and structures within their discipline. The agency, politics, and structures that exist within the political science paradigm were defined by the students. I intentionally asked them in rap session two "What do you see as the purpose of political science?" In order to frame the ways in which Black undergraduate students defined the discipline of political science, I examined their responses through an ontological, epistemological, and axiological lens.

First, the ways in which the students named their perceived realities or ontology of political science were grounded in notions of understanding change and systems. Denise reflected on this by simply stating, "Change one way or another." Tim went a little bit deeper while reflecting on the purpose of the discipline's existence as "Understanding how government works and political parties and um, and um politicians there's the community." The purpose of political science's existence was also framed by systems thinking. Eleanor spoke to this perceived reality concerning the purpose of political science by stating, "Help us make sense of systems we built." Juana further corroborated the notion that political science exists for the purpose of understanding, "How the system...its formation just kind of managed to use like social and economic motives."

Second, students shared the ways of knowing or epistemologies of political science in ways that confirmed that agency is in fact used within the discipline. Situ stated, "A lot of time it depends on who the professor is." Based upon earlier discussions in chapter one concerning the "objective lens" of political science or the centering of neutrality concerning issues of politics, a student corroborated this finding in the literature by stating political science, "Claims to be a nonbiased level-headed look at systems of government." Eleanor indicating that a claim is being made in the discipline to be level-headed speaks to the tension many Black undergraduate students feel and experience concerning political science ways of knowing. From her epistemological lens she refutes neutrality, so this is at tension with the epistemology imposed through the agency of faculty. The ways of knowing within the political science paradigm centered on how whiteness has maintained the agency, politics, and structures therein. The epistemology of whiteness was explicitly depicted by Situ who shared, "Most of the classes I took in political science department it was like Eurocentric." George highlighted the whiteness embedded within the epistemologies espoused by political science through examples of whose ways of understanding and seeing the world are emphasized. George reflected that political science focuses on "Political philosophical aspects like going back to Aristotle, Hobbs or any of these way back philosophers." George's reflections on what ways of knowing are centered shifts toward what is valued within the political science paradigm.

Third, students shared the ways in which they perceived the morals or axiology of the discipline to be grounded in certain types of theories and ways of being. For instance

Dolores indicated, "Rational choice" as a theory of understanding that is valued in the discipline. Rational choice speaks to the valuing of having an objective lens concerning decision-making. The way to engage in rational decision-making is indicated by Eleanor. She stated, "It's supposed to help us move into a politics where we understand facts and figures." George further elaborated on ways in which students are taught what to value by sharing, "Understanding not only just like the events we have gone through but the historical context." Placing the lens of valuing rational choice and history together leads some of the students to believe that certain ways of governance are valued as well. Whitney espoused the discipline values, "Um, I guess just…democracy and capitalism." The tension with valuing rational choice, history, and certain types of governance, which happens to value the United States governance structures, is not fully honoring the values, ways of knowing, and existence of Black students. While Tubby shared the discipline values, "Understanding people through a political lens," the political science paradigm or the status quo of the discipline will not be able to honor Black bodies and ways of being as it currently exists.

Lastly, what the students desired from the discipline and the axiology, epistemology, and ontology being imposed upon them came into tension with their experiences their ways of knowing and understanding of the world:

Figure 4.4 Black Undergraduate Students' Ways of Knowing Amidst Political Science Paradigm

"I don't think it's an interrogation of any sort which is where my problem lies in it"-Eleanor
"And I think it's really important to like realize how many social movements and like economic catastrophes have come from the formation of the government using those things like, you know, slavery and racism"-Juana
"You need to study the ways in which the system is broken"-Nina
"The professors I liked were the professors who could relate it to other places and like real time and like what is going on right now"-Situ
"I like to think people are inherently selfish"-Tubby
"I think the political world is always changing because it's driven by people"-Tubby
"I think political science or the way that I want to go about it is…helping people who are, aren't really considered like a part of the system"-Whitney

The above figure is shown in Black to honor the Black Finesse and/or ways of being from the Black undergraduate students. The writing being in white shows the tension experienced among the political science paradigm. The students statements in the above Black box shows the ways they were trying to either qualify their desire to stay in political science and/or what they wish political science would value and honor. As a way to try to honor why she stays in the space was captured by Whitney so beautifully. Whitney underscored "I think political science or the way that I want to go about it is…helping people who are, aren't really considered like a part of the system." Eleanor explicitly shared her tension with what she experiences and the ways the political science paradigm should shift. She desires for political science to abandon notions of neutrality and to commit to better understanding the root of the issues that Black students and

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communities face. She shared, "I don't think [there's] an interrogation of any sort which is where my problem lies in it." Nina further shared a desire for political science to do better about educating about the system in ways that speak to the roots behind the "why" systems operate the ways in which they do. "You need to study the ways in which the system is broken." Curriculum and research around the "why" concerning political systems would require naming the agency and politics the actors who maintain structures not only in political science, but higher education and the broader sociopolitical context. Juana spoke to the need for this reckoning to happen by saying, "I think it's really important to like realize how many social movements and like economic catastrophes have come from the formation of the government using those things like, you know, slavery and racism."

Finding Two: How Black Undergraduate Navigate the Political Science Paradigm

Finding Two A: Race Transcends Political Science Paradigm

The ways in which Black undergraduate students exhibit Black Finesse often stems from their racialized experiences. The ways in which students identified their race and ethnicity were indicative of the ways they desire to be perceived, but also an acknowledgement of how their bodies are read. The table below from Chapter Three was shortened to give a reminder of how the students identified their race and ethnicity.

Table 4.1 Participant Race and Ethnicity Identified

| Pseudonym	Stated Ethnicity	State Race	Higher Education Institution Pseudonym
Denise	African American	Black	DU-Gold University
Dolores	Black	African American	CSU-Plains University
Eleanor	Ewe	Black	UCCS-Hills University
George	Nigerian	Nigerian or African American	UCCS-Hills University
Juana	Moroccan, Cameroonian, Spanish	Black	DU-Gold University
Nina	American	Black/African American	CC-Knoll University
Situ	Ethiopia	Black/African American	Metro-Central University
Tim	Ghanaian, French, and German	Biracial Black and White	Metro-Central University
Tubby	Nigerian American	Black	CSU-Plains University
Whitney	Black	African American	DU-Gold University

The majority of the students spoke to their ethnicity as being grounded in countries outside of the United States. Their ethnicity also may guide their varying ways of knowing. Race was the most salient factor in their experiences navigating the political science paradigm.

Finding Two B: Ways Blackness is Represented Amidst the Political Science

Paradigm

Blackness, as defined in Chapter One, is the state of being Black. Blackness is a

social construct, but also a state of being. The ways in which the versatility of Blackness

comes to life is through Black Finesse. However, the ways in which Blackness is

represented in the political science paradigm is rigid, monolithic and deficit laden. The

image illustrated by Eleanor, who attends Hills University and is a junior, reveals the

myriad of ways in which Blackness is represented amidst the political science paradigm.

Figure 4.5 Eleanor Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
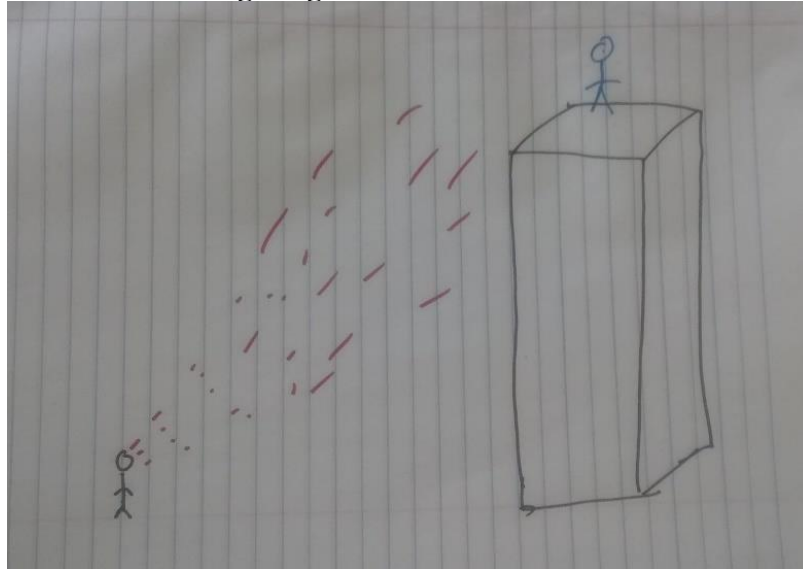
Eleanor described her image as follows –

a little person here and there's the podium. They all stand on with their self-

righteousness representative of like the department. And it's just like kind of the

shouting, you know…like just emptiness, I guess. And like also like I'm doing all

the work in order to like reach them…It just…consist of me doing a lot of the

work and, um, being   honest…just a lot of shouting.

The image speaks to the taxation of our Black bodies within the political science paradigm. While Eleanor is brilliant and I applaud her for pushing on the political science paradigm, it also illustrates the performativity of Blackness within the political science paradigm. The expectations and honoring of the performativity of Blackness is however restricted within the political science paradigm. Situ shared a desire to experience "African American history as American history," and shared, "mention how many people died for this and look at this from racial perspective...how many school kids were killed like and not only mention two people [in] Black history...MLK and Rosa Parks...and they just do that so it's not only male." Eleanor and Situ spoke to the representation of Blackness being silenced, omitted, suppressed, "Othered," and limited to the ideologies embedded within the political science paradigm. It is critical to denote that the names of Black folks mentioned in political science are those who the faculty deem as digestible activists meaning they place a valuing of the ways in which Blackness was performed by MLK and Rosa Parks. However, by only mentioning their names it also silences and invisibilizes the labor of many other Black folks who contributed to many social justice movements inside and outside of the Civil Rights movement as well like Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, James Baldwin and beyond. Because of the imposed and limited representation of the versatility of Black Finesse, this lens is also imposed on Black students in and out of the discipline as well. There is often an expectation for Black students to perform their Blackness which can further perpetuate false dichotomies around who is labeled as race-conscious, race-engaged or even Black enough to experience and navigate race.

Finding Two C: Coping Mechanism by Black Undergraduate Students Amidst the

Political Science Paradigm

The versatility of Blackness is expressed through Black Finesse. The flair, knack,

and embodiment of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) relied upon by the Black undergraduate

students to survive the political science paradigm speaks to the myriad of ways in which

coping mechanisms were illustrated by the participants. I present the coping mechanisms

of the Black undergraduate students through mantras I created based upon the strategies

they revealed to navigate political science. I honored their individuality while creating

clusters of meaning within four categories alongside their individual mantras.

Table 4.2 Participant Thematic Mantras

Theme Number	Pseudonym	Mantra	Themes
One	Eleanor	I grew into loving my Blackness because it wasn't easy	I center growth over comfortability
One	Situ	I go out of my way to read about us	I center growth over comfortability
Two	Juana	I use "the look" to survey race in the room	I consider allyship
Two	Tim	I engage in the nuances of race by seeing both sides	I consider allyship
Three	Denise	Unless they're willing to listen, I personally don't have time for that	I protect my emotional wellness
Three	Dolores	I shouldn't have to try so hard to not be that.	I protect my emotional wellness
Three	George	I focus on positive teaching experiences	I protect my emotional wellness

Three	Tubby	I focus on my love and passion for learning	I protect my emotional wellness
Four	Nina	I was raised to hold my own	I remain committed to my Blackness
Four	Whitney	Knowing I'm Black and woman centers me	I remain grounded in my Blackness

While themes are often derived in findings in order to make clusters of meaning within a phenomenological study, I wanted to first honor and value the individuality of each participant's Black Finesse exerted in traditionally white spaces. Honoring their personal identity and individuality allows me as a researcher to push against the notion that Black folks are a monolith. Cross et al. (2017) discuss identity enactments as ways that Black folks strategize and navigate predominantly white spaces. Personal identity is also discussed alongside identity enactments, but personal identity is not defined as an identity enactment. Personal identity or individuality is "meant to depict shifting to a mindset of just being oneself…. Thus, while the category individuality is not an ethnic-racial enactment experience, its inclusion illustrates when ethnicity or race is or is not being enacted" (Cross et al., 2017, p. 7). The aforementioned definition of the category individuality, within Blackness, shows that race is still embedded within the experience of Black folks despite their desire to perform race and/or strategize around race in any given moment. While I will not present every image within this chapter and how it is connected to particularly identity enactments, the illustrations of each participant's strategies are in Appendix E. The students all shared a desire to protect their emotional wellness while pushing against comfortability for growth and considering allyship. Being

grounded in their Blackness was an anchor for each student, though it may not have been

illustrated from their images. The following image by George encapsulated the myriad

themes and mantras shared. George was a senior at Hills University at the time of the

study.

Figure 4.6 George Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
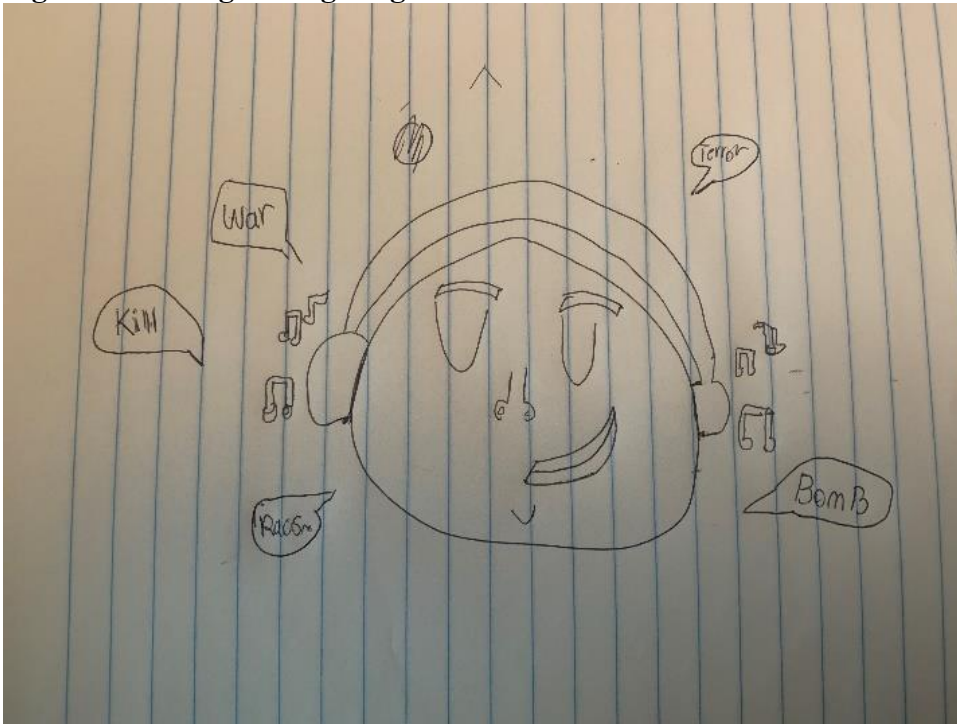
George, while acknowledging the political science paradigm experience around

him, chose to depict himself wrapped up in his Blackness. Just as butterflies cocoon

themselves in order to grow and protect themselves, George cocoons himself to protect

his emotional wellbeing. The image shows his awareness of race and the issues that come

up concerning race and racism that he could engage with, but he chooses to first protect

his wellness. Just as butterflies are aware of the wind, flowers, and environment around

them, there is a specified time in which they choose to come out from cocooning. George

centers his agency by wearing headphones to display he has a right to choose when he comes out from cocooning himself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared the study findings through the voices of Black undergraduate students with very little analyses. Sharing the Black undergraduate students' voices to answer the research questions allows for their experiences and lenses to be centered. Their voices and illustrations are the foundation from which Chapter Five will begin to unpack and discuss how their experiences connect to a broader conversation around Black Finesse in higher education. Their initial reasoning for entering the discipline of political science alongside their views of the discipline were depicted to demonstrate implications for the forthcoming chapters for political science professors and future Black undergraduate political science scholars to consider. The ways in which they navigated race as children and within the discipline shows literally and figuratively their agency and self-determination amidst the political science paradigm.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSES FROM THEORY TO PRAXIS

This chapter centers how my positionality informs my data analyses discussion and how the findings coincide with the butterfly metaphor. This chapter situates findings from my study within a broader literature context as well through three areas of discussion: developing the political science paradigm, developing Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm, and honoring how Black Finesse informs identity enactments. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a reminder of the mantras introduced in Chapter Four to book end the chapter with Black Finesse.

Positionality Informs Theory to Praxis

In chapter Three, I introduced this concept of self-reflexive wokeness which is different from self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity is a reflection upon one's experiences with a phenomenon and how one's experiences determine one's lens of a phenomenon. Self-reflexive wokeness, I argue, is required for a Race-Grounded Phenomenology. A Race-Grounded Phenomenology requires one to be able to center race despite saliency of other identities. One must not only commit to centering race throughout the study for participants and research questions, but for oneself as a researcher as well. In chapter Three I indicated, "What I mean by self-reflexive wokeness is the notion of walking, leading, and researching in my power with the combined synergy of the brilliance and vulnerability it takes to walk in one's Pláticas (Espino et al., 2010) or Blackness (Tuitt et al., 2018)." The commitment to a Race-Grounded Phenomenology requires internal and

external considerations in not only the research design, but the discussion of data findings as well.

Discussion Element One: Developing the Political Science Paradigm

This section speaks to Finding One in Chapter Four concerning why students pursued political science and the ways they defined political science. The ways the Black undergraduate students experienced political science and defined political science is what led to the development of the political science paradigm. Paradigms are useful as they can illustrate patters through a model. The patterns embedded within the political science paradigm speak to the agency, politics, and structures embedded via a visualized ecology model.

The development of the political science paradigm is significant because it displays the socialization process that is endured by not only Black students, but white students. The socialization into the political science paradigm allows for the maintenance of the agency, politics, and structure to be rooted in the status quo. Hooghe (2004) discusses socialization from a Parsonian perspective which is rooted in stability rather than a shift in the status quo. The Parsonian theory personifies the ways in which the political science paradigm espouses and maintains whiteness and the status quo as shared in Finding One in Chapter Four.

> Current socialization research is fundamentally different from the one that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. In that earlier era, it was emphasized that socialization should serve as a mechanism to ensure political stability. In this respect, political socialization studies were quite heavily influenced by the Parsonian paradigm. In Parsons' world, socialization ensures stability, it does not lead to social change or modernization. (Hooghe, 2004, p. 235)

As indicated by Hooghe (2004), socialization processes can be shifted just as the political science paradigm can be shifted. However, in order to shift the political science paradigm, it first must be illuminated. In order to build out data analyses for the research question of "What are the ways in which structures, politics, and agency are embodied in political science?" I decided to depict political science paradigm through a Venn diagram of the axiology, epistemology, and ontology. The axiology illustrates the values espoused by a theory or discipline, in this case the morals and values the discipline of political science. The epistemology refers to the ways of knowing and/or lens(es) through which the world is seen, in this case the ways in which the discipline of political science shows students to "see" the world. Ontology is the state of a thing or the reality of something, in this case the realities of political science. The combination of the axiological, epistemological, and ontological lens of political science manifests the political science paradigm which is the culture of political science experienced by students and Black bodies. The Political science paradigm is constructed by the scholars of the discipline.

Figure 5.1 Political Science Paradigm
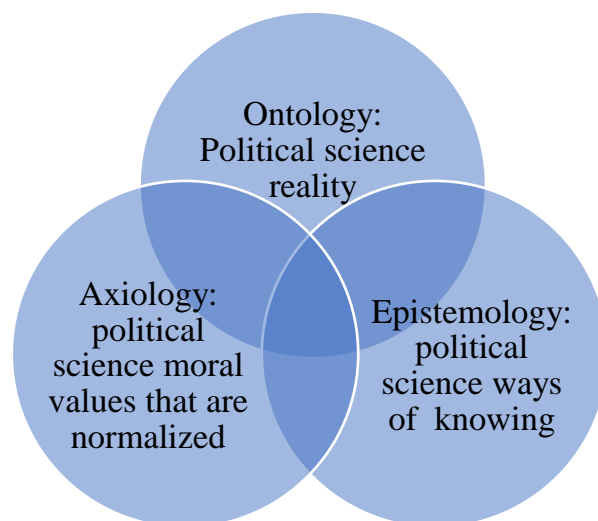
The imposed and a priori framing of these comes from a positioning that these items are socially mediated and constructed. In order to further ground the political science paradigm and the ways in which students are defining the discipline of political science, I will build upon the image of political science paradigm with the voices of students. The axiological pull from the data indicates the moral values students espouse to witness of the discipline of political science. The epistemological pull from the data indicates what they believe the discipline is based upon their ways of knowing. The ontological pull from the data indicates the nature of being and existence of the discipline. The nexus of these three angles gets at political science paradigm and/or the essence of political science through the lens of Black undergraduate student experiences and ways of knowing. The figure below depicts the ways in which political science paradigm is operationalized through the lens of Black Finesse. Black Finesse is not simply bound to an understanding of race in political science, but Black Finesse is grounded in the ways of knowing that the students developed from their familial capital (Yosso, 2005), prior racialized experiences, individuality and beyond. The Black undergraduate students have navigated whiteness in and outside of political science paradigm as a matter of survival not choice. The box of the epistemological lens of Black undergraduate students are in a Black box in white writing to depict the salience of their race despite navigating whiteness.

Whiteness Embedded in the Political science paradigm

Whiteness within the political science paradigm stems from the structures, politics and agency embodied in the discipline of political science. Mediums of structure within

the discipline can be classroom dialogue and syllabi inclusive of assignments and assigned readings. These structures are grounded in behaviors or politics of the professor based upon their training, identities, and epistemologies. Thus, the ways in which professors choose and/or do not choose to use their agency within the discipline leads toward the ways in which whiteness within political science paradigm is preserved. Whiteness is the foundation of political science (Blatt, 2018), and as shared in the findings by the Black undergraduate students, much of the faculty identify with their whiteness through the conservation of structures, their politics, and agency. Rather than faculty using their agency to humanize and honor the bodies and ways of knowing and being of Black students, they used their agency to recycle and socialize students into whiteness. The political science paradigm maintains whiteness from its historical context as well. I will walk through the ways in which the current essence of political science is grounded in its historical context and whiteness. As a reminder there are three overarching defining components of whiteness:

1) "an unwillingness to name the contours of racism: inequity…is explained by reference to any number of alternative factors rather than being attributable to the actions of whites." (Gilbourn, 2005, p. 488)
2) "A central characteristic of whiteness is a process of 'naturalization' such that white becomes the norm from which other 'races' stand apart and in relation to which they are defined." (Gilbourn, 2005, 488)
3) "The minimization of racist legacy': seeking to 'draw a line' under past atrocities as if that would negate their continued importance as historic, economic and cultural factors." (Gilbourn, 2005, p. 489)

First, Black undergraduate students shared the ways they experienced "an unwillingness to name the contours of racism" in political science. The naming of the contours of racism should stem from the professor's agency through class discussions, assigned

readings, and required assignments. Rather than students learning about the "what" and/or ontology of political science through critical theories of race, they are left with normative, "unbiased" (Eleanor) views. However, students denoted professors refusing to name the contours of racism by centering other identities like gender or class through their syllabi. Students further named that the professors would not value students naming the contours of racism either through explicit push back or by allowing racism to be spewed by other students with no redirection of dialogue. Second, the naturalization of whiteness within political science was shown in figure one with students indicating their epistemologies are rooted in a Eurocentric lens. Because whiteness takes up so much space within the students' political science experiences, scholars of color and even certain social movements rooted in race like the Civil Rights movement and beyond are treated as an after-thought. Third, while there is a valuing of history in political science, there is still an ahistorical lens of history present within the discipline which leads to a tension and frustration for Black students who desire to have their truths and current day racialized experiences valued and named as continual because of white supremacy.

Illuminating the Political Science Paradigm Through the Lens of Black Undergraduate Students

The image below depicts the axiology, epistemology, and ontology of political science that Black undergraduate students deem as the socialization of the discipline. This political science paradigm is informed through the lens of Black Finesse. The axiology situates the values and morals experienced by Black undergraduate students in political science. The ontology speaks to the realities of the discipline through the lens of Black

undergraduate students. Lastly, the epistemology centers the ways of knowing that Black undergraduate students experience in political science. Those three cornerstones (axiology, epistemology, and ontology) contextualize the political science paradigm. The black box depicts what Black undergraduate students desire from the discipline based upon their ways of knowing and seeing the world. The statements within the Black box speaks to how their ways of being and knowing clash with the political science paradigm. When I asked students about the purpose of political science, there was a constant grappling across each student to simply name what they believe the discipline is in tandem with their experiences of and with it. Black Finesse is the lens through which researchers and political scientists must come to understand the political science paradigm. The ability for Black undergraduate students to engage in identity enactments within the political science paradigm depicts their ability to have a fuller picture of the political science paradigm. Whereas political science professors, who have been predominantly white within this study, may not be able to see ways in which the axiology, epistemology, and ontology intersects to create political science paradigm. In light of this, there is an arrow that says Black Finesse informed to illustrate that the political science paradigm was co-created by the creative genius of myself as a race scholar activist alongside the Black undergraduate participants who shared their wisdom and truths.

Figure 5.2 Black Finesse Informed Political Science Paradigm

"Change one way or another"-Denise

"Help us make sense of systems we built"-Eleanor

"How the system...its formation just kind of managed to use like social and economic motives"-Juana

"Understanding how government works and political parties and um, and um politicians there's the community"-Tim

Ontology: Political science reality

Axiology: political science moral values that are normalized

Epistemology: political science ways of knowing

Black Finesse Informed

"Rational choice"-Dolores

"It's supposed to help us move into a politics where we understand facts and figures"-Eleanor

"Understanding not only just like the events we have gone through but the historical context"-George

"Understanding people through a political lens"-Tubby

"Um, I guess just government, democracy and capitalism."-Whitney

"Claims to be nonbiased level headed look at systems of government"-Eleanor

"Political philosophical aspects like going back to aristotle, hobbs or any of these way back philosophers"-George

"A lot of time it depends on who the professor is"-Situ

Most of the classes I took in political science department it was like eurocentric"-Situ

"I don't think it's an interrogation of any sort which is where my problem lies in it"-Eleanor

"And I think it's really important to like realize how many social movements and like economic catastrophes have come from the formation of the government using those things like, you know, slavery and racism"-Juana

"You need to study the ways in which the system is broken"-Nina

"The professors I liked were the professors who could relate it to other places and like real time and like what is going on right now"-Situ

"I like to think people are inherently selfish"-Tubby

"I think the political world is always changing because it's driven by people"-Tubby

"I think political science or the way that I want to go about it is...helping people who are, aren't really considered like a part of the system"-Whitney

Discussion Two: Developing Black Finesse Amidst the Political Science Paradigm

As discussed in Chapter Three, I chose to engage in a hermeneutical lens grounded in critical theories of race. A hermeneutical lens "describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the "texts" of life (hermeneutics)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). I found that with my artistic methods, I was able to take the hermeneutical lens to a deeper level through heuristic inquiry.

> Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14)

I have placed value on the Black Finesse at the center of this Race-Grounded Phenomenology. I have illuminated the personal narratives and experiences of the Black undergraduate students to bring their meaning making to life.

Back to the Butterfly

In order to conceptualize a Race-Grounded Phenomenology, for this particular study, I decided to reflect upon how the Black butterfly navigates various contexts. The Black butterfly in this study represents the Black undergraduate student who is navigating their racial identity in tandem with other Black students. As they navigate the political science paradigm, which is reflective of the socialization created within political science from an axiological, epistemological, and ontological lens, they exert Black Finesse to create agency and strategies for themselves. For the data analyses, I focus specifically on the Black butterfly (Black undergraduate student) exerting Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm. While the Black undergraduate students didn't use language

like critical whiteness studies, they demonstrated their awareness of the ways in which whiteness operates within the discipline by describing the political science paradigm. Because they are Black undergraduate students navigating a traditionally white context at the state, city, higher education and even within political science ecosystems, they are often forced to come face to face with whiteness. Because Black undergraduate students are forced to reckon with whiteness, that is why critical whiteness studies, critical race theory and identity enactments are on the Black butterfly rather than on the layer of political science paradigm. Black Finesse informs how the students use the tools of critical whiteness studies, critical race theory, and identity enactments. There is a comfortability that has happened to simply name racism as endemic via critical race theory, but there needs to be the use of critical whiteness from stemming from the positionality of white faculty.

Figure 5.3 Reintroducing the Conceptual Framework
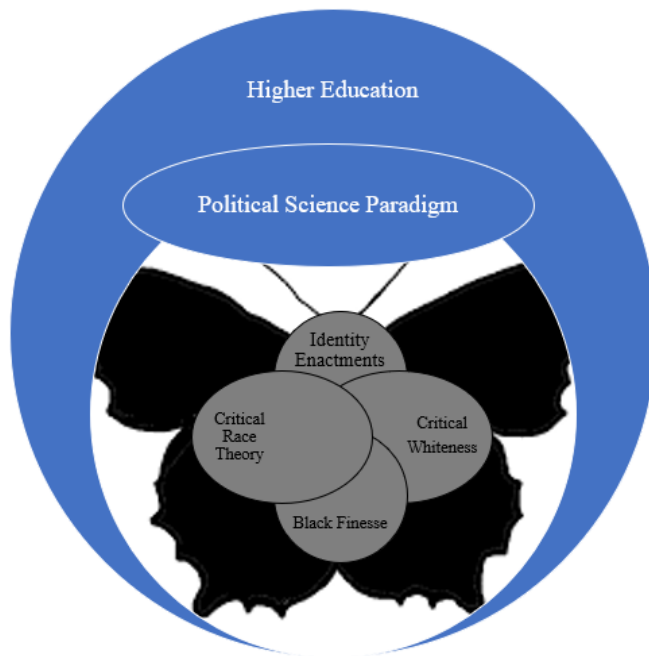
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Discussion Three: Strategies of Black Finesse via Identity Enactments

This section focuses on the research question: "What are the ways in which Black students create structures, politics, and agency amidst political science?" In order to answer this question, I utilized Cross et al.'s (2017) identity enactments model to code the images from rap session one and two. The identity enactments model honors the often invisibilized psychological ways and sometimes performative ways in which Black folks navigate intergroup (folks outside the Black community) and intragroup (within the Black community) relationships and encounters. Personal identity or individuality is discussed by Cross et al. (2017) as not being one of the five identity enactments because of it being a way to capture how Black folks focus on oneself despite and alongside racialized experiences; it is a focus on the self. The table below demonstrates the five identity enactments and the grounding of personal identity and/or individuality from Cross et al (2017).

Table 5.1 Identity Enactments Defined

Intergroup	Defined	Intragroup	Defined
Bridging	"Bridging reflects identity settings where intergroup contacts and friendships are transacted… Rather than silenced, denied, or made invisible, differences are usually part and parcel of the friendship; part of the attraction is the other's difference." (p. 6)	Attachment Bonding	"An individual achieves belonging, affiliation, and commitment to one's ethnic-racial group as a consequence of repeated bonding and belonging experiences… Attachment-bonding involves identity work because it does not unfold automatically, as it requires knowledge, practice, choices, and perspective" (p. 6)
Code Switching	"Code-switching sites are perceived by the	Buffering	"The task becomes 'buffering' oneself from

		Internalized Racism	"Forms of internalized racism and oppression can vary from negative attitudes that result in miseducation (learning negative facts about one's group that are inaccurate) to acceptance of views regarding the superiority/inferiority of skin color." (p. 7)
	ethnic-racial person as mainstream institutions where basic desires, wants, and needs can be fulfilled, as long as the person transacts relationships, performs tasks, or demonstrates mastery in accordance to the culture, norms, and expectations of the mainstream institution." (p. 5)		the full thrust of the insult, which means to prevent it from taking full effect—to 'blunt' and reduce the sting, hurt, or pain. Thus, while complete shielding may be impossible, buffering is a realistic outcome." (p. 4)

Personal Identity Individuality (not an identity enactment)
"Meant to depict shifting to a mindset of just being oneself…. Thus, while the category individuality is not an ethnic-racial enactment experience, its inclusion illustrates when ethnicity or race is or is not being enacted." (p. 7)

The above chart demonstrates how Black Finesse, Black folks being themselves, does not require whiteness to exist. While race informs the ways in which Black Finesse may be performed or illustrated, Black Finesse can be exerted without the centering of whiteness and should be acknowledged even in the presence of whiteness as a way to decenter whiteness. The students' ways of navigating race in political science showed up through each identity enactment modes but also with a grounding in themselves. Each identity enactment is happening often simultaneously which means that identity

enactments are often not happening in absence of one another, it is just a matter of when it is happening. For instance, a student may be engaged in buffering in one class session, but choose to engage in attachment bonding during that same and/or another class session.

In honoring the permanence of race from my epistemological disposition and the lens of critical race theory (Dixson & Rosseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006), I envision the following series of images as the ways in which identity enactments occur and then are embodied by the Black undergraduate student. Black Finesse and/or personal identity is not an identity enactment, but rather embodied within the Black butterfly or Black undergraduate student. Black Finesse is the embodiment of the Black undergraduate student inclusive of and outside of the racialized experiences they must navigate in an American society, traditionally white higher education contexts, and political science paradigm. The Black Finesse embodied within the butterfly is reflective of the individuality of the Black undergraduate students who are who they are despite of, and inclusive of, racialized experiences. While we are all racialized, Black Finesse stems from Black students' abilities to be grounded in oneself while simultaneously engaging in identity enactments. Personal identity or individuality is not considered one of the identity enactment experiences and is more about Black folks being rooted in themselves despite and/or alongside race as an identity. "While the category individuality is not an ethnic-racial enactment experience, its inclusion illustrates when ethnicity or race is or is not being enacted" (Cross et al, 2017, p. 7). With

this in mind, the Black Finesse I have been speaking of is attributed to each student's knack, flair, and confidence of self that they exude.

This section will provide some framing for Figure 5.3 below. The black butterfly, is symbolic of the Black undergraduate student. The first image of the Black butterfly, or the Black undergraduate student, is positioned away from the personal identity enactments to honor Blackness outside of psychological negotiations concerning race engagements. I find it important to position the Black undergraduate student or butterfly alone as well as a symbolism and homage of honoring Blackness within this study. There is then a shift in which the butterfly meets these psychological negotiations called identity enactments. While this study does not research an order or the ways in which the identity enactments intermingle, there is a claim made here that the identity enactments are co-existing. The identity enactments co-exist whether they are utilized simultaneously or not. The Black undergraduate students illustrated the co-existence of identity enactments in their drawings. Once the butterfly has connected with the identity enactments there is a desire to further understand and play with these psychological negotiations. After some familiarity, the butterfly acquires the identity enactments as daily ways of being and negotiating, particularly in the political science paradigm for this study.

Figure 5.3 Black Butterfly Embodying Identity Enactments
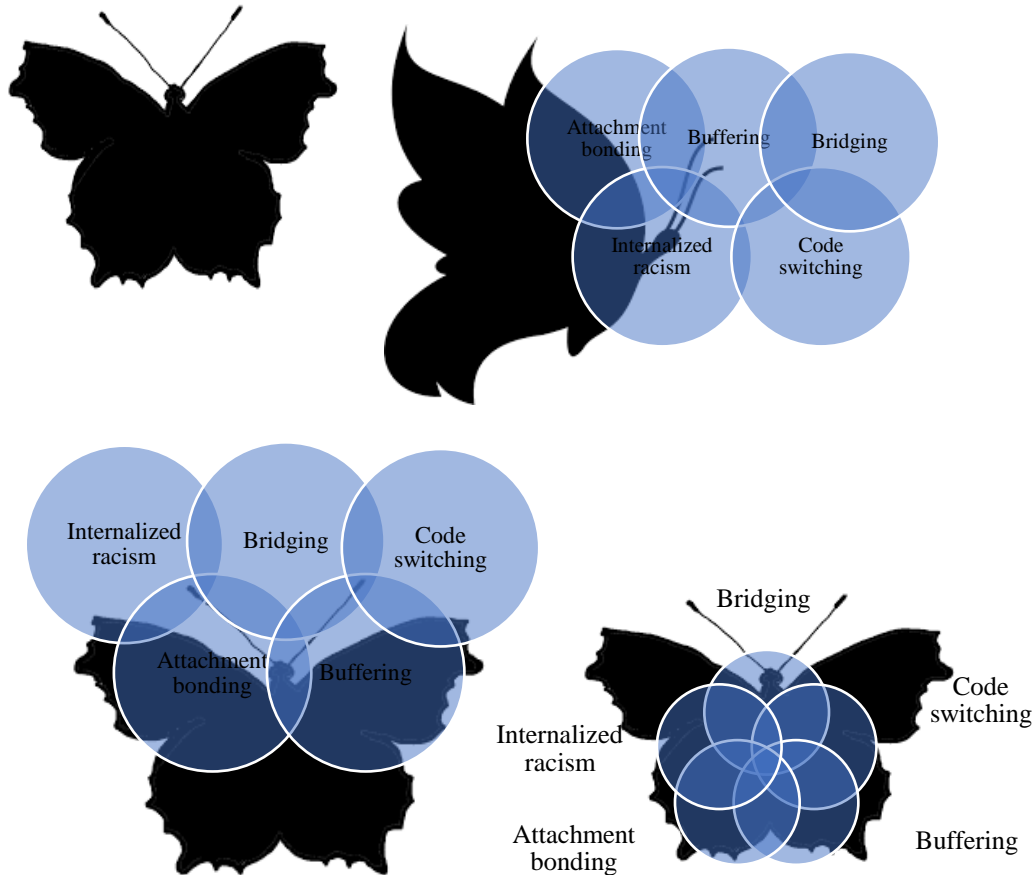
©Janiece Mackey

Making the Invisible Visible

There are personality traits and attributes that each person embodies, but for

Black students, many of them are attributed to racialized experiences. With this in mind,

some of the students illustrate that they are not necessarily enacting identity enactments,

or that they don't have a strategy, but I would argue that is a strategy within itself. Rather

than looking at a student's varying ways of navigating race or perception of not

navigating race from a deficit lens or labeling them as "experiencing" internalized

racism, I coded these experiences as a part of them being honed into their personal

identity despite their racialization. Quintana & Vera (1999) indicates that cultural awareness enhances ones' ability to engage in buffering.

I chose to underscore and amplify what Black undergraduate students chose to illustrate in their drawings in response to the question "Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms." Thus, rather than focusing on what else was indicated in the interview outside of this question, I am underlining what was illustrated by the Black undergraduate students with a desire to make what is often invisibilized visible. I desire to make visible the psychological impact and negotiations Black students navigate as they experience race amidst the political science paradigm. I also am only focusing on the artistic illustrations as well to honor the language and ways in which they indicated they maneuver amidst the political science paradigm. Below is a chart that depicts the frequency of the codes by participant. The X codes indicate if these codes showed up in the students' illustration in rap session one in response to the prompt "Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up." The Y codes are indicated if these codes showed up in the students' rap two illustration in response to the prompt "Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms."

Table 5.2 Identity-Enactment Codes from Rap Session One and Two

Pseudonym	Intergroup (outside the Black community)		Intragroup (within the Black community)			Personal Identity/ Individuality
	Bridging	Code Switc-hing	Attach-ment Bon-ding	Buffering	Internalized Racism	
Denise	XY	XY	XY	XY		Y
Dolores		Y		XY	XY	Y
Eleanor		Y		XY	XY	XY
George				XY	XY	XY

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Juana	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY
Nina		Y	Y	XY	XY	Y
Situ			XY	XY	XY	XY
Tim	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY
Tubby		X	X	XY	XY	XY
Whitney			XY	XY	XY	XY

While this study is not focused on the ways in which students navigated race in their childhood, the coding process depicts how such navigation spoke to and informed the ways in which students navigated race in political science. Furthermore, the second section of the table above has more intragroup identity enactments codes which demonstrates the ability of these Black undergraduate students to decenter whiteness as they create agency for themselves amidst political science paradigm. While each of the participants' images alongside identity enactment discussions are not depicted in this chapter, Appendix E describes examples of how the codes were reflected in the students images alongside their words specifically concerning how they create agency amidst political science paradigm. Whitney, who attends Gold University, demonstrated how the ways she navigated race in her childhood informs the strategies and psychological negotiations she makes amidst the political science paradigm.

Figure 5.4 Whitney Navigating Race as a Child Illustration
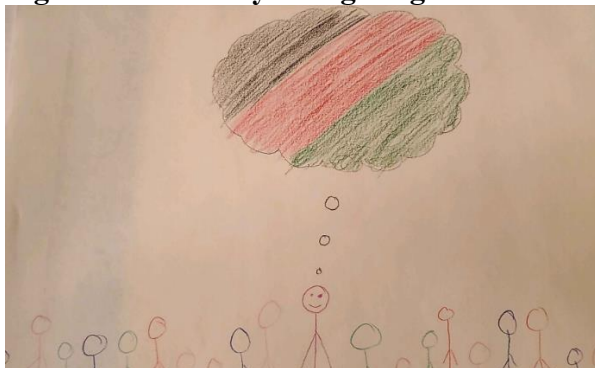
Figure 5.5 Whitney Navigating Race in Political Science Illustration
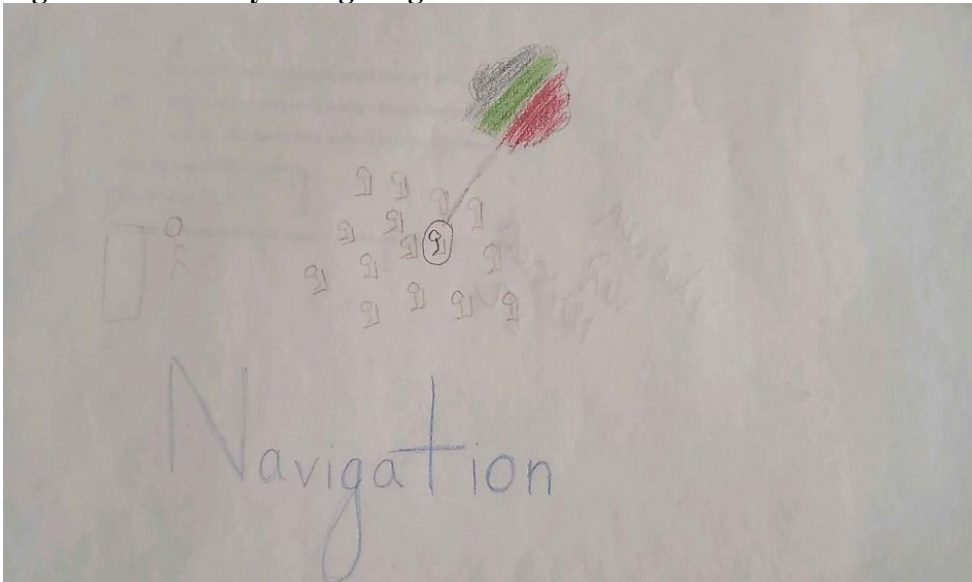
The two images above show Whitney rooted in her Blackness which informs the

ways she chooses to exert her Black Finesse and identity enactments (psychological

negotiations). Whitney's verbal explanation further underscores the ways in which her

Black Finesse informs her identity enactments within the political science paradigm.

First, she uses words like "same mindset" drawing upon her familial upbringing

informing her current decisions in the political science paradigm. "Umm this is me with

the same mindset I guess that I've always grown up with, which was like represented by

the pan African colors." Furthermore, I chose to highlight Whitney's illustrations as well

to debunk the notion that Blackness must be performed for others' consumption. Whitney

chose to exhibit her Black Finesse by not performing her Blackness in ways that are often

depicted within the political science paradigm as represented in Finding Two in Chapter

Four. Whitney chose to illustrate herself not performing her Blackness for the

consumption of her peers or professor, but rather for the centering and wellness of

herself.

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Um, and then I put navigation under it 'cause I don't really have any strategies but

I think it is just about…determining your next step based…on others….And so

just like in the classroom, um, obviously my main focus is always just to like be a

part of the classes and get the grade…. Um, but I guess just like the way that I

interact with students, with the professors, um, that always lets me know how I

should act from that point on. I guess.

Whitney stated that she doesn't "really have any strategies," which could be perceived as

problematic to folks in and out of the Black community because of the often performative

ways in which we are expected to perform our Blackness. However, Whitney's very

intentional decision to center her Black Finesse in ways that honor her is a depiction of

reclamation and pushes against surface levels of understanding concerning race.

Whitney's illustrations also push on the representations of Blackness shared in Chapter

Four as well which has a focus on honoring the performativity of Blackness in ways that

preserve whiteness rather than honoring versatile ways of embodying Black Finesse.

Conclusion

This chapter started and ended with Black Finesse. The chapter began with the

centering of my positionality and how it informed the mental leaps from theory to

practice and ends with analyses of how Black undergraduate students create agency for

themselves amidst political science paradigm. Two areas of discussion were presented

within this chapter. The first was grounded in the development of the political science

paradigm. The students' Black Finesse, which is inclusive of their epistemologies,

informed our co-created abilities to envision the political science paradigm. While the

Black undergraduate students were not asked about the axiology, epistemology, nor

ontology of political science, their experiences and reflections of the discipline defined

political science paradigm which is the socialization of the discipline. The second area of

discussion honored the ways in which Black undergraduate navigate the political science

paradigm via identity enactments or psychological negotiations. I illustrated the agency

of Black undergraduate students in ways that concentrated on their Black Finesse rather

than engaging whiteness to navigate the political science paradigm. As shown in Chapter

Four, each Black scholar's experiences with race and racism in their childhood was given

a mantra that depicts the ways in which they adopted identity enactments to navigate race

amidst the political science paradigm. I close this chapter with a reminder of how each

Black undergraduate student exhibits their Black Finesse:

Table 5.3 Reintroducing Participant Mantras

Pseudonym	Mantra
Denise	Unless they're willing to listen, I personally don't have time for that
Dolores	I shouldn't have to try so hard to not be that.
Eleanor	I grew into loving my Blackness because it wasn't easy
George	I focus on positive teaching experiences
Juana	I use "the look" to survey race in the room
Nina	I was raised to hold my own
Situ	I go out of my way to read about us
Tim	I engage in the nuances of race by seeing both sides
Tubby	I focus on my love and passion for learning
Whitney	Knowing I'm Black and woman centers me

From the aforementioned mantras developed, one may assume these Black undergraduate scholars are centering and protecting their wellness amidst political science paradigm. However, further research and studies should be conducted to corroborate and investigate assumptions concerning wellness of Black undergraduate scholars amidst the political science paradigm.

CHAPTER SIX: SIGNIFICANCE, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss how my positionality informs the significance of the study alongside implications and recommendations for future research. Finally, implications are provided based upon the data analyses presented with an audience focus of political scientists and higher education faculty who have created the socialization of political science paradigm. To center the significance of the study, I further discuss theory to praxis. I begin with sharing the ingredients necessary to pollinate what I have called a Race-Grounded Phenomenology, speak to the necessity of using an eclectic array of critical theories of race, and how this study's conceptual framework can be applied to other disciplines, policy, and nongovernmental arenas. For the implications, I discuss how my findings are important for research, policy, and practice. After the implications, limitations are presented based upon the boundaries delineated for the study. For recommendations, specified actions are discussed as a culmination of the research study.

Positionality Informs Significance, Implications, and Recommendations

As a race scholar activist committed to self-reflexive wokeness, I am committed to centering the significance, limitations, and implications in race. While there may be other intriguing findings and/or depictions of other identities, my commitment to self-reflexive wokeness led me to ground this section in race as well. From my vantage point, race informs all experiences in schooling and informs the ways in which other identities are experienced as well. From theory to praxis, I am committed to theoretical and

conceptual frameworks that are theories of race through a critical lens. To be a race scholar activist is to be able to navigate the nuances of how race and racism operates through an eclectic range of theories and methods to unveil Black Finesse amidst the political science paradigm.

Significance

There are a few areas in which this study brings significance from theory to praxis. First, this study utilizes an eclectic range of critical theories of race in order to allow for more nuanced understandings and truths to be revealed from the participants experiences. The combination of theories used to underpin this study were: critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and identity enactments. The aforementioned theories devised each step of this study from theory to praxis from the methodological decisions, methods engaged into the findings and analyses as well. Using an eclectic of critical theories of race allows for the a priori lens to be present to set up the methods and data collection through multiple lenses. "No one theory can possibly characterize all aspects of a given phenomenon" (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2002, p. 120). With a desire to make Black Lives Matter in traditionally white spaces in higher education (Tuitt et al., 2018), I envisioned a study that was developed with an eclectic combination of critical theories of race to illuminate the ways in which whiteness is maintained within the political science paradigm while emphasizing and honoring the beautiful complexities of Black Finesse. Furthermore, the data analyses can then offer more humanizing and nuanced ways in which Black students and/or other students from traditionally marginalized racial backgrounds experience race and racism. But, more importantly, utilizing an eclectic

array of critical theories of race allows for Black Finesse to be centered while

simultaneously interrogating whiteness. The valuing of Black Finesse in traditionally

white spaces is necessary to inform the way these spaces shift away from further

perpetuating whiteness in agency, politics, and structures. Critical race theory indicates an

acknowledgement that racism persists, so that is a given common sense understanding

from my disposition as a researcher, but more importantly even from the epistemologies

of the participants. With this in mind, a way to honor this common-sense fact (as Juana

indicated through "the look"), we owe it as researchers and faculty to our participants to

not produce studies that confirm the status quo.

> Equating racial preference with deep structure personality constitutes a *simplistic* psychological model for explicating black behavior; yet, black people are a complex textured people deserving of an equally complex explanatory model, regarding how they function and survive *within and outside* the black community. (Cross, in press, p. 10)

We must shift toward producing research that pushes on the status quo and

simultaneously honors Black Finesse. Pushing the status quo and honoring Black Finesse

requires refuting simplistic understanding of race and racial frames. Using an eclectic

combination of critical theories of race pushes on a discipline that regurgitates knowledge

rather than interrogates the politics of that knowledge (Stanley, 2012).

Second, while this study revealed the socialization of the political science

paradigm through the lens of Black Finesse, the conceptual framework used for this study

can be applied to other disciplines, areas of study, and/or policy, nonprofit, governmental

spaces and beyond. This framework allows for whiteness in a space to be acknowledged

and interrogated, but more importantly allows for whiteness to be defined through the

lens of Black Finesse. As a race scholar activist, I believe that those who are most impacted, should be the ones to define not only whiteness, but also solutions and implications to the racialized circumstances imposed upon our bodies.

Figure 6.1 Reintroducing Conceptual Model
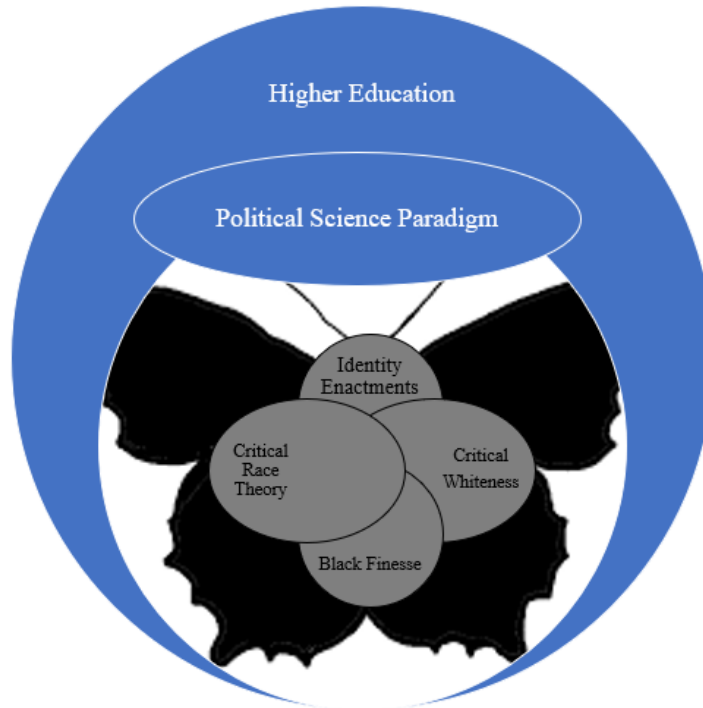
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Lastly, the building of a methodology entitled Race-Grounded Phenomenology is a contribution to the field as there are certain ingredients that have been identified that require a deeper commitment to race-engaged work than other methodologies. A phenomenology of race is different from a Race-Grounded Phenomenology because of the epistemological commitment to center race as the conduit to understanding the essence of a thing and to even derive clusters of meaning. This methodology of Race-Grounded Phenomenology speaks to the philosophical discussion in the literature indicating that, "In Bernasconi's new phenomenology of social reality, our present

experience of the world is connected with the complex history of oppression. His critical philosophy of race gives rise to a political phenomenology, which takes into account history" (Zeynep, 2017, p. 132). Hence the centering of the history of oppression within a phenomenological context is now new. However, a Race-Grounded Phenomenology does not allow for a researcher to simply research race short of looking inward and researching oneself through self-reflexive wokeness. Methodologies are ecosystems that require certain methods to create boundaries for the use of the methodology. The following depicts Race-Grounded Phenomenology as a methodology.

Figure 6.2 Reintroducing Race-Grounded Phenomenology
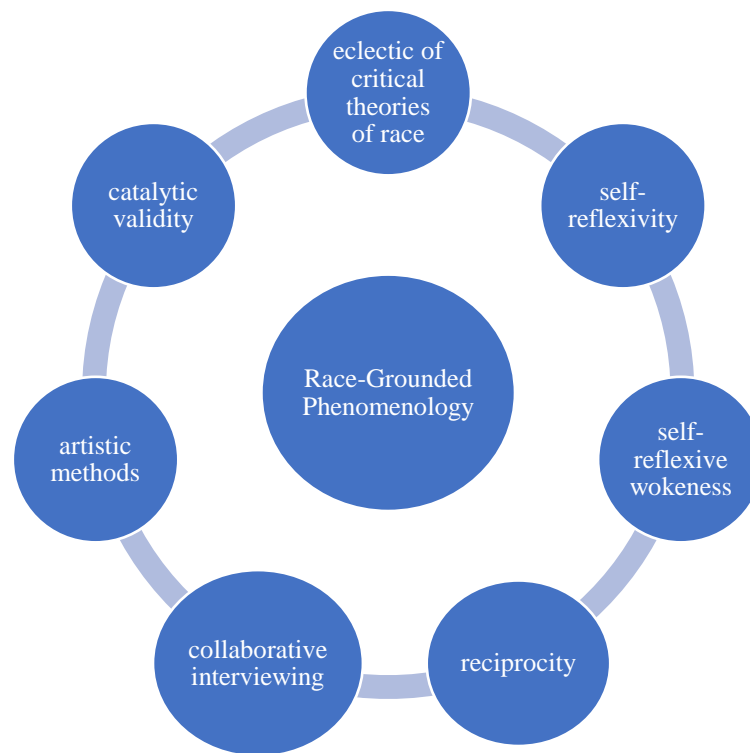
Race-Grounded Phenomenology requires a commitment on behalf of the researcher in order to create a humanizing research environment for the participants who are often sharing vulnerably of themselves, especially from traditionally marginalized

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racial backgrounds. Rather than solely requiring an expectation of vulnerability on behalf of the participants, the researcher must also exhibit this through self-reflexive wokeness and collaborative interviewing. Collaborative interviewing allows the researcher to share of themselves in ways that honor the truths shared by the participants. Artistic methods allows truths and knowledge outside of the written word to be valued and validated.

> Art has to be a kind of a confession...the effort it seems to me is; if you can examine and face your life, you can discover the terms with which you are connected to others, and they can discover, too, the terms with which they are connected to other people. (Baldwin, 1989, p. 21)

Particularly as Black students often feel a pressure to perform verbally, artistic methods allows them to be expressive in ways that channel other forms of wisdom and often times unveil other racialized experiences that may not have surfaced with only verbal engagement. Finally, a commitment to catalytic validity (Lather, 1991) allows for the goodness of a study to be grounded in the reflections and experiences of the participants. As a reminder, catalytic validity is "the degree to which [a process] re-orients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1991, p. 68).

Implications and Recommendations for Research, Policy, and Practice

This section discusses implications contextualized with literature and then presents a recommendation at the end of each implication. Three recommendations are provided in this section which are as follows: make Black Lives Matter in political science undergraduate students to honor Black minds, bodies, and souls; fall in love with centering race in humanizing ways in political science; and finally to make visible the

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ways in which political science faculty center race in humanizing ways to shift the political science paradigm.

Implication One

The first implication stems from the ways in which Black undergraduate students entered the discipline of political science. There were five themes revealed in Chapter Four that demonstrated the reasons they decided to pursue political science as a minor or major. There are a myriad of reasons that led Black undergraduate students to consider choosing political science as an arena of study. The Black undergraduate students within this study demonstrated an ethos grounded in a desire to shift away from the status quo yet the status quo is what they experienced from the political science paradigm. A reminder of the themes that were discussed in Chapter Four reflecting why Black undergraduate students chose political science were as follows:

Theme 1: I grew up political

Theme 2: Social justice

Theme 3: The how of politics

Theme 4: Someone said it

Theme 5: Everything is political

The themes presented speak to a desire to engage in a discipline that centers agency, politics, and structures in a social justice lens short of neutrality. The discipline ought to be rooted in a sense of neutrality, race as other, and placing value on technocratic wisdom over social justice causes spirit murdering (Williams, 1987) within the discipline and higher education. Williams (1987) "examine[s] racism as a crime, an

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offense so deeply painful and assaultive as to constitute something I call 'spirit-murder'"

(p. 129). Eleanor spoke of this feeling in her body as she navigated the political science

paradigm, but stating how "political science kills her soul." Because of the racial battle

fatigue (Smith, 2004) endured by Black undergraduate students they are unlikely to

participate in programs like the Ralph Bunch program which is meant to support

undergraduate's transition to political science graduate education.

There have been many discussions in the literature that speak to the intersections

of race, career choice, and career efficacy. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was a

theory developed in order to unveil the factors that play into a student's decision making

processes as it relates to career choices. Lent, Hackett, and Brown (2000) suggest:

> General social cognitive theory, SCCT focuses on several cognitive-person
> variables (e.g., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals), and on how these
> variables interact with other aspects of the persona and his or her environment
> (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social supports, and barriers) to help shape the course of
> career development. (p. 36)

The aforementioned quote reflects the myriad of factors that contribute to a student's

decision-making processes. A student's confidence in performing tasks within a career

field are also based upon how professional tasks are performed within a field as well.

Thus, career self-efficacy is co-constructed between students, faculty, and practitioners.

This notion of co-construction of career self-efficacy is embedded social cognitive career

theory as well because the "theory also attempts to take a cognitive constructivist

approach to career development…such theories view people as proactive shapers of the

environment, not merely responders to external forces…"(Lent et al., 2000, p. 87). The

co-construction of career self-efficacy makes it necessary to center the agency of the

faculty within political science to interrogate and humanize the socialization by which Black students navigate political science education. With this in mind, there must be a shift in the axiology of what knowledge is valued.

Implication Two

The second implication stems from the political science paradigm which unveiled the socialization of political science. The axiological, epistemological, and ontological experiences imposed upon the bodies of Black students creates a smog of whiteness that they must navigate incessantly. The smog of whiteness entails what Leonardo (2002) calls a "collection of everyday strategies." utilized by faculty albeit via an unwillingness to name racism, minimizing the legacy of racism and/or evasions of race dialogue and beyond (Frankenberg, 1993). The very making of political science was and is rooted in whiteness (Blatt, 2018). The very acknowledgement of this is a start to begin to undo the ways in which whiteness is perpetuated within political science paradigm. The creation of the political science paradigm allows for the visualization of socialization that is often normalized and invisibilized. The political science paradigm unveils the ways institutionalization occurs within the discipline. Bernasconi (2013) notes that "systemic violence is that which we train ourselves not to see because our comfort depends on that" (p. 82). As indicated by prior chapters, whiteness is protected within the political science paradigm.

The students illustrated the ways in which faculty experience comfort from using their agency to "not see" and engage in race dialogue in humanizing ways that honor Black bodies and minds in political science classrooms. In order to disrupt this comfort of

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the political science paradigm, critical whiteness must become a field of interest. Critical whiteness studies shifts away from the romanticizing race conversations to be about the "Other" and instead makes the issue of race and racism about our common humanity. The common safety in race dialogue as race as "Other" allows for the protection of whiteness rather than the critique of it. Race as the issue of the "Other," or in this case, Black undergraduate students "frames the issue of racism as the problem or realm of non-whites who are dissatisfied with their lot in life rather than a concern for the humanity of all people, including whites" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 33). Should faculty choose to use their agency by utilizing critical whiteness studies as one of many guiding critical theories of race, there could be a shift in the politics and structures embedded within the current political science paradigm. The potential shift would be away from superficial notions of race and racism being about the few Black leaders named by participants in the rap session to race and racism being about whiteness that persists in political science classrooms and the sociopolitical contexts students study.

Implication Three

Implication three is grounded in honoring the often invisibilized ways in which Black undergraduate students make psychological negotiations to navigate race amidst the political science paradigm. Before students even show up in the political science paradigm, they have already had to make certain decisions and concessions for how they desire to navigate race. As a Black body in and outside of traditionally white spaces, race and racialized experiences are occurring. Nigrescence theory (Cross, 1971) also known as

Black identity development, speaks to five stages that Black folks navigate as they make meaning of their identity. The five stages are:

Stage 1: pre-encounter

Stage 2: encounter

Stage 3: immersion/emersion

Stage 4: internalization

Stage 5: internalization-commitment

While the stages of Black identity development are listed in a linear fashion, this does not mean that the stages are only experiences in a linear fashion (Cross, 1991). Instead there are ebbs and flows amidst the stages as they are contextualized in varying spaces (Parham, 1989). Tubby's lived experiences speak to this as she shared she attended a middle school for gifted and talented students that was not that diverse where she indicated she "struggled the most…out of all [her] schools just because there was only like a good five Black kids. And like three of them were mixed and there were like assimilated in white culture… they were what you would like call white washed." She further explained, "I was challenged academically, but socially it was harder." She then went to a diverse high school and then back to a traditionally white space at Plains University. She was again met with the same psychological negotiations in her political science classroom where she navigated the ebbs and flows of Black identity development and identity enactments. Below is a reminder of the identity enactments Black undergraduate students adopted to navigate race amidst political science paradigm.

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Table 6.1 Reintroducing the Identity Enactment Codes

Pseudonym	Intergroup (outside the Black community)		Intragroup (within the Black community)			Personal Identity/ Indivi- duality
	Brid- ging	Code Switching	Attach -ment Bond- ing	Buf- fering	Inter- nalized Racism	
Denise	XY	XY	XY	XY		Y
Dolores		Y		XY	XY	Y
Eleanor		Y		XY	XY	XY
George				XY	XY	XY
Juana	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY
Nina		Y	Y	XY	XY	Y
Situ			XY	XY	XY	XY
Tim	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY	XY
Tubby		X	X	XY	XY	XY
Whitney			XY	XY	XY	XY

The above table illustrates the Black undergraduate students' ability to focus on their own intragroup work rather than intergroup work (outside of their race). While I applaud the students for having what the literature would call an achieved ethnic identity, there needs to be an illumination of the psychological decisions students have to make before even getting to the point of being able to center their wellness, which is what this study presupposes. As Rollins and Valdez (2006) state:

> Students with higher levels of ethnic identity also have better reasoning ability and higher academic grades. Other research shows that individuals with an achieved ethnic identity have more positive self-esteem, have better psychological health, and most important, have better coping skills to deal with racism. (p. 182).

Rather than simply maintaining comfortability around race-engaged curriculum and dialogue by grounding race in the other, there needs to be a deconstruction of the political science paradigm that creates the conditions by which Black students have to make psychological negotiations in political science classrooms. Simply focusing on an

achieved ethnic identity as a conduit toward increased efficacy within the political science paradigm perpetuates the notion of race about the "Other" rather than pushing on the agency, politics, and structures embedded within the political science paradigm.

Recommendations

Recommendations Rooted in Pedagogical Practices

First, political science must Make Black Lives Matter within the agency, politics, and structures exuded to shift the political science paradigm. Below is a reminder of the themes that were discussed in Chapter Four concerning what brought Black undergraduate students to political science.

The themes are shown in the image below:

Figure 6.3 Recommendation One Visualized

Everything is political → I grew up political → Someone said it → Understand the "how" → Social justice

Implication One: Make Black Lives Matter in political science.
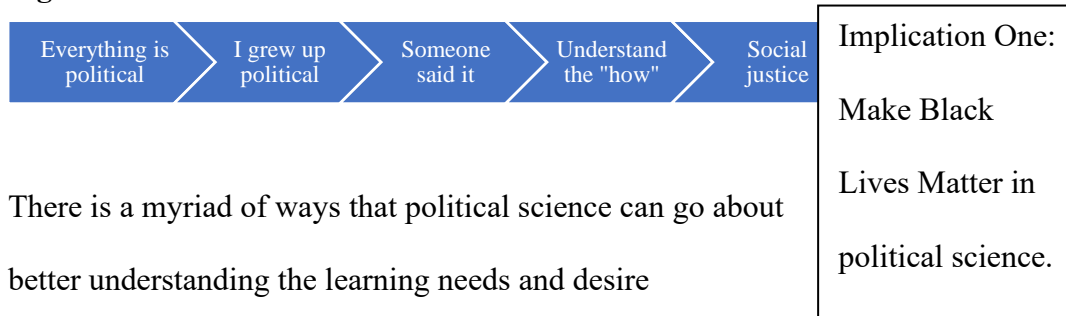
There is a myriad of ways that political science can go about better understanding the learning needs and desire of Black undergraduate students to ensure the faculty are fulfilling a commitment to making Black Lives Matter (Tuitt et al., 2018) in higher education and specifically in political science. Tuitt et al. (2018) assert:

> Faculty seeking to ensure that *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms will want to consider embracing the following critical and inclusive pedagogy principles related to (a) intentional praxis, (b) voice and the lived experience, (c) interdisciplinary and diverse content, (d) anti-racist equity mindedness, (e) identity-affirming and socially just learning environment, (f) courageous transparency, and (g) resilient emotional labor of love. (para 9)

Making Black Lives Matter in political science should be streamlined from the student to faculty level which would then shift the political science paradigm and the ways in which teaching, research, and service are valued and codified within the discipline. Making Black Lives Matter in political science can potentially increase the number of Black students at the undergraduate and graduate level which is depicted in Chapter Three.

Recommendation Geared to American Political Science Association (APSA)

Second, just as Eleanor said she "grew into loving Blackness because it wasn't easy," leadership from the professional organization must model falling in love with centering race in humanizing ways toward racial equity even though it's not easy. Faculty who submit research to present and share research at APSA and the regional associations must create themes around the matter-of-factness that political science, higher education and America are embedded in colonialism and whiteness. Furthermore, these associations must create conference themes that create a desire to engage as a discipline in a collective conversation around the political science paradigm illuminated and co-created with Black undergraduate students from this study. Black undergraduate students deserve reciprocity for as Tubby put it a "love and passion for learning." Black undergraduate students also deserve reciprocity for their knowledge sharing concerning race and racism. Black bodies should not be solely responsible for the knowledge sharing concerning race and racism, from the level of undergraduate students to faculty, as this can create cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996) and racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004). The image below shows how political science paradigm was illustrated in prior chapters with the recommendation for the professional organization.

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Figure 6.4 Recommendation Two Visualized

Ontology:
Political science
reality

Axiology:
political
science moral
values that are
normalized

Epistemology:
political
science ways
of knowing

Recommendation Two:

Political science must fall

in love with centering race in

humanizing ways toward racial

equity even though it's not easy.
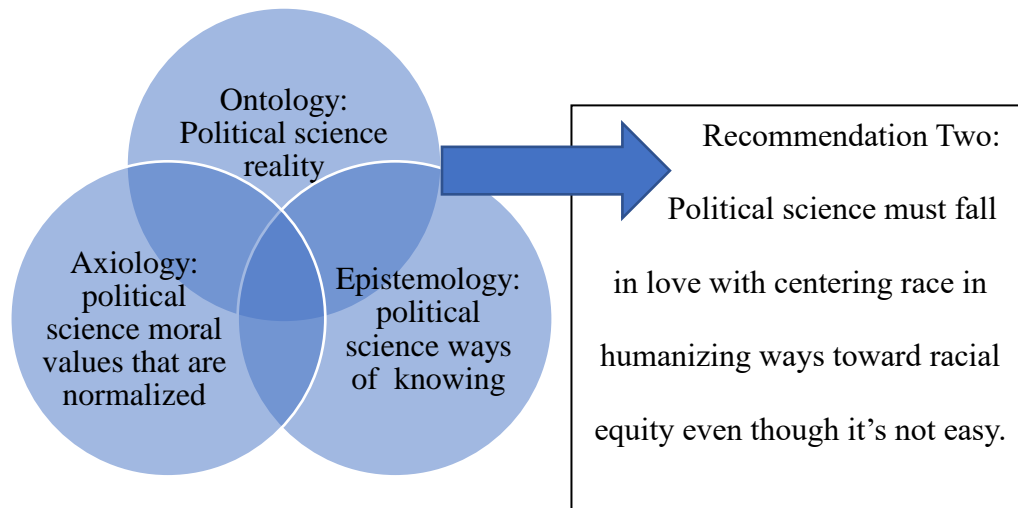
Recommendation Rooted in Research

Third, I, as a race scholar activist, have demonstrated the ways in which I center my positionality to inform this research study. I have also shed light on the ways in which Black undergraduate students make psychological negotiations via identity enactments. I have depicted the ingredients necessary for a Race-Grounded Phenomenology which can be translated to future studies conducted by political science faculty to begin the necessary internal work to demonstrate the psychological negotiations they make concerning navigating race dialogue in political science classrooms. Conducting research studies through Race-Grounded Phenomenology has the potential to operationalize racial equity within the discipline to shift the political science paradigm. Below is a reminder of the image presented in Chapter Five that depicts how Black undergraduate students embody Black Finesse which informs the ways they choose to adopt identity enactments.

Figure 6.5 Recommendation Three Visualized
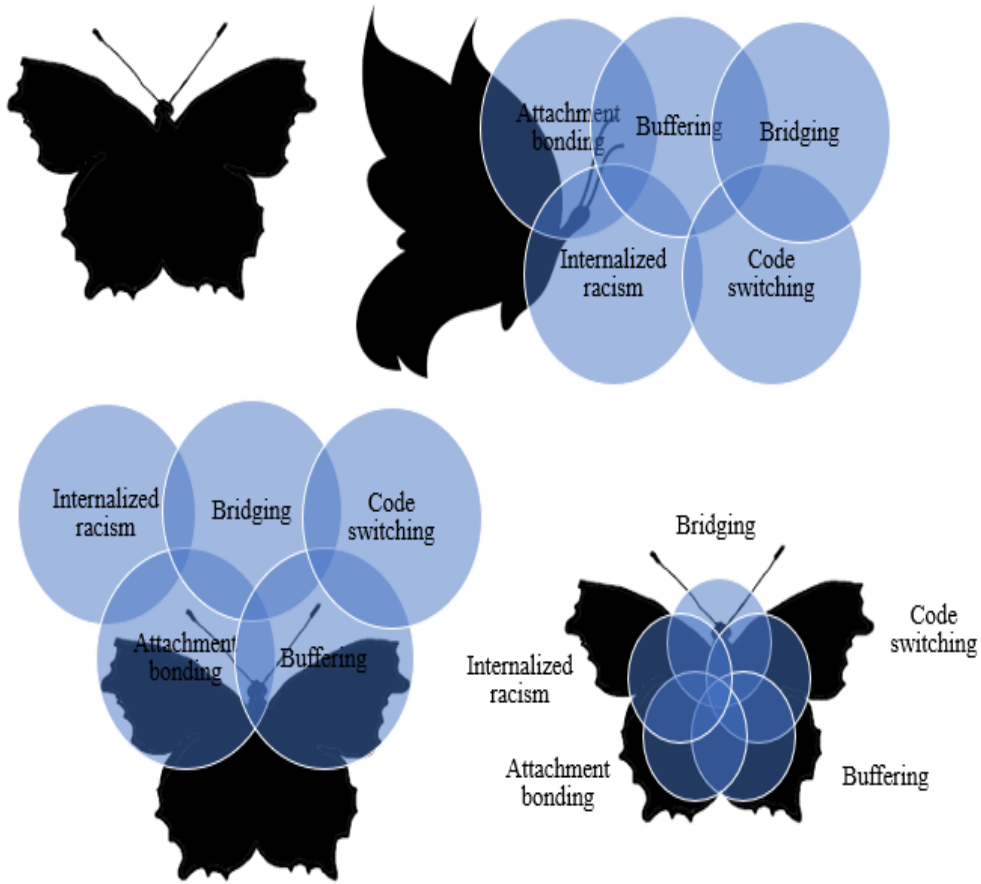
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Recommendation Three:

Make visible the ways in which faculty in political science navigate race to shift the political science paradigm imposed on Black bodies.

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Future Research

Rather than discussion limitations of this work, I will name these as considerations. I intentionally made certain theoretical, methodological, and analytical decisions which I would surmise grounds the study rather than limits the study. First, this study does not focus on the ways in which ethnicity and/or migration status play a role amidst the political science paradigm. Some may see the study being bounded in Blackness as a limitation, but I see this as a strength as the versatility of Black Finesse was presented. Race was also salient despite the students' ethnic identities. This study did not go in depth regarding the racialized experiences of Black students in political science, though these experiences were revealed artistically and via the defining of the discipline. Future research must focus on further ways to make the often invisibilized power of Black undergraduate students visible through utilization of further artistic inquiry. Artistic inquiry can allow for imagery to be placed within building amidst political science paradigm to have reminders of how to Make Black Lives Matter in political science and beyond higher education contexts. Rather than having murals and images of white faculty and white donors, there should be mural of Black Finesse demonstrated and displayed upon the walls of political science hallways to honor the constant psychological negotiations they make, but also the labor and brilliance they are constantly sharing amidst political science paradigm.

Second, this study is bounded to the context of Colorado rather than pulling from a wide range of states. While the study has expansiveness of context within the state of Colorado at four-year institutions albeit public or private, not all four-year institutions

were represented by the participants in the study. Furthermore, because the study focuses on four-year institutions, community colleges were not included to capture the experiences of Black undergraduates in those contexts. However, because I was born and raised in Colorado along with all my political science experiences being within the state of Colorado, I see creating a geographic boundary as a strength of the study. Future research should dig deeper into the nuances of the political science paradigm across Colorado higher education institutions. Furthermore, future research should consider better understanding of the political science contexts in which faculty are Making Black Lives matter through the lens of Black Finesse.

Third, this study is only focused on Black experience in political science at the undergraduate level rather than the graduate or the faculty level. In order to honor the depth and richness of the students' experiences, I preferred to go deeper in this study rather than extend it to other levels (i.e., graduate or faculty level). Adding more levels for consideration could potentially place me in a position, as a researcher, to compare – a situation which I endeavored to resist. Centering race to understand a phenomenon requires a focus and narrowing of inquiry for depth, rich and thick descriptions required in understanding the essence of a phenomenon in phenomenology. Future research should consider an identity enactment model that can be applied to the faculty of political science to better understand the psychological decisions they are making as they navigate race in the discipline of political science. Better understanding the negotiations made by faculty will allow for more robust interrogations and conversations around what support faculty need to Make Black Lives Matter in classrooms. Reciprocity for the labor given

by Black students must be considered and faculty within political science must reciprocate their labor and earn their salary to not simply maintain political science paradigm, but to undo it.

Fourth, I chose to conduct a Race-Grounded Phenomenology rather than other qualitative methodologies to better understand the culture of political science. However, I strove to prioritize the experiences of Black undergraduate students and how they engage in Black Finesse while simultaneously interrogating the political science paradigm imposed upon them. Since this was an exploratory study, doing a Race-Grounded Phenomenology is a foundation for building longitudinal and/or ethnographic studies focused on Black Finesse. There needs to be future research on the testing of the Race-Grounded Phenomenology model presented in this research across varying contexts and disciplines to better understand the challenges and potential of the methodology. The methodology while grounded in Black Finesse for this study, should be tested to better under the nuances of race across varying racial contexts and from differing marginalized racial backgrounds.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CENTERING DEVOTION AND VOICES OF BLACK

POLITICAL SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARS

This chapter focuses on the reflections and voices of Black undergraduate political science scholars from this study. In order to develop this chapter, I focused on data from the focus group conducted with the Black undergraduate scholars within this study. Not all students were able to participate in light of the sociopolitical context and compounding pandemics. The public health crisis of COVID 19 and the incessant institutionalized violence on Black bodies were co-occurring simultaneously. While I want to acknowledge the co-occurrence of these public health pandemics, I will not use this moment to simply prose pain. The pain of navigating the political science paradigm is acknowledged, but the light and beauty that ebbs and flows from the Black Finesse of the Black undergraduate political science scholars is professed.

Future Black Undergraduate Political Science Scholars

The poem below was created from quotes of the Black undergraduate political science students who participated in the focus group. The poem begins with I statements to indicate the individuality within the group and then shifts toward a collective "we" indicating the collective power and ability to engage in collaborative healing amidst the political science paradigm.

In navigating the political science paradigm, "I've only ever taken one African politics class and that was the only one ever offered. And it was actually never

offered again after that. So, um, it was just very disheartening [that] we're…usually…the only Black person in class or not have professors in political science department that look like me. I was kind of stunned that there wasn't a whole not black students. I just didn't feel welcomed in that space. It would have meant so much to me to just have…one professor in political science that looked like me to like, instead of just reading black political thinkers as like one section. But, I had to remember to feel just like a right to be there, just as much as any other student." While we have individualized experiences a Black undergraduate scholars, there are collective strategies and emotions that come from navigating the political science paradigm vary and all should be validated and humanized. Emotions and emotional strategies we use have been "passionately, angrily, critical, eager reflective, active, defensively different, open minded, and curious." In order to remain grounded in who we are and our Black Finesse while you navigate the political science paradigm, we "use… knowledge in a way that actually benefits the people. [We] learned how to protect [ourselves] through using…race [to] connect to other people." There are a myriad of strategies we use amidst the political science paradigm to center our Black Finesse. For instance, "try to…write a paper and focus that on Black people…people of color [and] Black women. Bring…curriculum [that] matters to [you]. But also trying to find allies in those classes. And also sometimes… there's times where [we] can't always rely on identity to see who's actually like an ally or not." Sometimes taking a break from the political science paradigm is necessary for your soul and

to rejuvenate because "I felt like I definitely had to inform all my peers about, you know, everyday issues in the Black community. I could never take more than one political science class in a row. I would have to switch it up, take classes, um, in the feminist and gender studies department or take classes in the race studies department or take classes with a Black professor in a different department just to like get out of that environment and like…be able to like navigate race." In the political science paradigm, "you definitely have to be like way more prepared at times…than other students, like just emotional really. And just like actually academically as well. Cause you're forced at times to just be like this Oracle event of information for them to where I did. I just don't feel like we have to be that. Black people aren't a monolith. [Stay] dedicated because through this time… people are really kind of willing to try and put you in a box and it's going to be like your duty just to like fight against that and also just stay true to yourself." In order to remain grounded in amidst the political science paradigm we center our essence which, "can't really be defined…Black people specifically have been defined by others so much that it's time for us to kind of live beyond the parameters that other people believe us to exist in." Claim your space in the political science paradigm because "from that essence…you…[gain] the confidence just to be, I guess, within your own space and to take up space. [Our] essence of blackness is joy and the earth…deeply rooted within [ourselves] of who [we] are and where [we] come from. [We are] beautiful, intelligent, creative, innovative, resilient, and strong. Challenges are…inevitable …you are valid, your

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voice matters. You have a space here and you deserve to be here.

Remember…why you are fighting. You will exceed. You're not alone. And you

can make a difference."

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Appendix A: Face Sheet Questions (Warren & Karner, 2010)

Chapter Three

Age:

Year in Undergrad:

Race:

Ethnicity:

Gender:

Do you consider yourself a first-generation student? If so, why?

Do you have parents or immediate family majored in political science?

Do you have extended family majored in political science?

Political Science Minor or Major:

Other Majors:

Other Minors:

Number of Political Science courses taken up to this point in undergrad:

Appendix B: Rap Session Protocols

Chapter Three

Rap Session One: First Individual Engagement

Listen for….	Life Story: Racial identity and epistemology questions	If thens….
	Initial Grounding Questions	
Listen for the energy and emotional state of being able to participate in the rap session	1) May I type and record while we share out time together so that I may honor your voice and wisdom? 2) How is your school year going? 3) Let them know we are going to chat about childhood experiences for this rap session	If they share about a lot of trauma from thus far in the school year, THEN remind them that they can opt out of the study and/or reschedule for another time if they'd like
Listen for K-12 experiences at each level… Listen for if there were any identities that were of salience and if so which ones… Listen for how skills and strategies were used to navigate their Blackness	1) Let's chat about your childhood. Can you please share some significant times in your childhood? 2) What was significant about these moments in your childhood? 3) How did you think of identity as a child? 4) Were there moments that helped you better understand your identities as a child? 5) What are different ways you witnessed your family navigate race? 6) How did you come to learn about race in your childhood? 7) Have there been positive engagements you've had with race growing up? 8) Have there been negative engagements you've had with race growing up?	If do not hear about varying levels of K-12 elementary, middle, and high school, THEN ask for to hear about those years

	9) Are there strategies you have used to navigate race growing up?	
	Arts Based Inquiry for this session	
Look for time shifts, location, who was present, the ways agency was or was not used	1) Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	If they do not indicate a time frame, THEN ask them to indicate a guestimate of time frame (elementary, middle, high school age)
Catalytic Validity Debrief	1) What feelings are surfacing for you after this rap session? 2) Do you have any questions, comments, feedback, or concerns to share? 3) Anything I can do to be of support between now and the next rap session? 4) They choose their pseudonym	If I hear anything about trauma or fatigue, THEN remind them that they can stop the research at any time and that I can be of support to resources regardless of their decision

Rap Session Two: Second Individual Engagement

Listen fors…	Experience with the Phenomena	If thens….
	Initial Grounding Questions	
Listen for the energy and emotional state of being able to participate in the rap session	1) Ask how their week is going 2) Let them know we are chatting about experiences within political science for this rap session	If they share about a lot of trauma from thus far in the school year, THEN remind them that they can opt out of the study and/or reschedule for another time if they'd like
Listen for IF issues of identity as a reason for major and minor choices Listen for IF race as a part of discussion concerning understanding political	1) What led you to study political science? 2) Were there other minors and majors you considered before deciding on political science?	If do not hear anything about the "who" (students, professors, etc.) regarding race engagements, THEN ask about students and professors

science prior to explicitly asking about race	3) Do you have a lot of friends who are studying political science? 4) What do you see as the purpose of political science? 5) Has what you have learned in political science informed your thinking about political issues? If so, how so? If not, why not? 6) Are there political science professors who stand out to you? If so, why? 7) Please describe your experiences with race in political science classrooms…. 8) Are there strategies you use to navigate race in your political science classes?	If do not hear about responsibility concerning race engagements, THEN ask about their thoughts on who they believe is responsible concerning race dialogue in the classroom
	Arts Based Inquiry for this rap session	
Look for if it's one or more political science classes, presence of students, professors, and agency	1) Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	If only one classroom is emphasized, THEN ask why
Catalytic Validity Debrief	2) What feelings are surfacing for you after this rap session? 3) Do you have any questions, comments, feedback, or concerns to share?	If I hear anything about trauma or fatigue, THEN remind them that they can stop the research at any time and that I can be of support to resources regardless of their decision

	4) Anything I can do to be of support between now and the next rap session?	

Rap Session Three: Focus Group

Listen fors…	Meaning Making	If thens…
	Initial Grounding	
Listen for the energy and emotional state of being able to participate in the rap session	1) Let them know since pseudonyms will be used, they can feel free to use their real name if they choose 2) Begin with an affirming quote for opening circle 3) Ask how everyone is doing	If they share about a lot of trauma from thus far in the school year, THEN remind them that they can opt out of the study and/or reschedule for another time if they'd like
	1) What has been your experience in political science thus far? 2) Please share the top three ways that you engage in your political science classes 3) What are ways you try to build bridges in your political science classes? 4) What are ways you navigate race in political science 5) How do you think Black students are positioned in political science?	
	Arts Based Inquiry for this rap session	

Look for if they are drawing upon their Blackness in political science or that of other Black students	1) Please illustrate or draw how Blackness operates in political science 2) Please draw, illustrate, or write to future Black undergraduate political science students. What do you want them to know before studying political science at your higher education institution? 3) What would you title your drawing or letter… My drawing or letter is a drawing or letter of….	
Catalytic Validity Debriefing	6) What feelings are surfacing for you after this rap session? 7) Do you have any questions, comments, feedback, or concerns to share? 8) If there are any areas in your educational journey that I can support you with, please let me know. 9) You will be receiving a follow up email/text/call from me to share in the meaning making of this research. 10) You will be receiving an invitation to my dissertation defense,	

	and would love for you to attend.	

Appendix C: Why Political Science and Purpose of Political Science

Chapter Four

Table: Why Political Science and Purpose of Political Science

Pseudonym	Why political science (What led you to study political science?)	Purpose of political science (What do you see as the purpose of political science?)
Denise	"I was really interested in social justice work, so I thought that would probably be the best degree to help me do that" "I first thought of it at college fairs...like my senior year college shopping"	"I think it's trying to instill change one way or another, but that change is different for every person"
Dolores	"I was always interested in politics" "I wanted to major in political science, but I wasn't sure if I would get a job in it"	"Explain the decisions made by like the people not just in the United States, but in the entire world. What they are motivated by We talk a lot about values...and what leads them to make those decisions and the process of like rational choice...why were there dictators"
Eleanor	I started getting into politics in grade school particularly um high school. It was around all the shootings of Black	"I think political science is there to help us make sense

	men. Um Like I participated in protests and die ins and walk outs….even though I was like activism is political. I started getting involved in my school politics which is school board and being on the community design team for Empower community high school also political…. I also watched news an entire summer every day like 24/7...it was 2016 too it was an eventful year…. I used to want to be a journalist which is still political right "I really loved community and getting involved in community" "I took my global politics class my senior year….and I was like yo this is it"	of the systems that we built" Um I think political science in the way it is taught is like just kind of an overview of thinkers and history of the ways in which systems have been made and continue to be I don't think it's an interrogation of any sort which is where my problem lies in it" And this is very much from what I learned right" It's very esters and very western European thinkers...maybe they'll throw in like a black guy in there for some sparkle Political science claims to be level headed nonbiased look at systems of governments economies It's supposed to help us move into a politics where we understand facts and figures, and understand documentation and just what we are working in"
George	"Um I think I was really interested in learning about other countries...most of the political aspects of them" "What led me to like really take on political science was probably a	The purpose of political science to me is first it is just a general understanding of like governance...understanding not only just like the

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career fair I went to..it was in high school"

Somebody from the state department come talk to us...about like being in the foreign service and being a diplomate and int'l politics

"Int'l politics really wasn't offered, so being able to learn that in college was like wow this is very interested"

We only learned the American political science perspective" | events we have gone through but the historical context within them and how unique they kind of are"

"As like a basis definition political science is the total understanding of governance and um the ins and outs that go with it"

I asked about the ins and out

"I mean it could be the political philosophical aspects like going back to Aristotle, Hobbs or any of these way back philosophers that we study in the field or even like Machiavelli or anything like that

I feel like it intersects in so many ways like with law...sociology as well

Understanding like the context of things you have um I guess you have to take it from different people's lenses...or I think you have to"

"Understanding the political aspects of society and how that kind of like interacts with people's everyday...their community their school education" |

		"Having a small group of people in charge or like a true democracy"
Juana	"So one of the moms was like….. I'm a lawyer. And I was like, Oh, you're a lawyer. That's what I want to do. Like what do you think was the best major for you to go to law school with? And she was like, honestly, I think political science was really helpful for me and writing papers and understanding some of the issues...So then I just was like, all right, I'll just do political science."	"Basically for me it's more divulging like the history of our political system and not just how like our democracy can form with the government and all of its duties, but how the system like in its like and its formation just kind of managed to use like social and economic motives to influence how the government like runs. And I think it's really important to like realize how many social movements and like economic catastrophes have come from the formation of the government using those things like, you know, slavery and racism and like all these things that were factored into it to make the government the way it is today and why we have these problems today because of the history of how the government was formed in the past."
Nina	"Both of my parents were political science majors in undergrad" "Growing up it was just normal to be having conversations around politics at the dinner table even just with like	"Politics is embedded in every single aspect of your life and we need to study how politics are functioning"

	my grandparents in stuff everyone is just aware of everything"	"Being able to vote and having your voice heard"
	My parents just saying like politics surround every aspect of your life like you may not be into politics, but your landlord is"	"You need to study the ways in which the system is broken...you need to be aware of those"
	"It's something that I think is necessary"	
Situ	"I ended up transferring to Metro at that time I didn't know what I was going to major in, so I just took general classes" "My sister…was talking a class and took international government with one of the professors and always talked about how she liked the professor" "And I was like let me try that" "I ended up talking to the professor she was taking...and that's when I realized political science was what I wanted to major in" "One thing that stood out to me…was I knew I wanted to do something related to going back and helping people" "If I do major in political science...then law came in...I can go and work for the united nations" "I want to go back and help people...I can do political science to see how that works"	"I feel like depending on...a lot of time it depends on who the professor is" "The professors I liked were the professors who could relate it to other places and like real time and like what is going on right now" "And looking back to the history aspect of it" "Most of the classes I took in political science department it was like eurocentric in a sense" "It was mostly like western that's it" "Nato and pretty much that was it" "The classes that I really enjoyed were internationally related"

		"The classes were mostly related to the history were the classes I really like" "In political science we tend to not look at the history aspect" "If we go back to history the same thing that happened is happening right now"
Tim	"Well, um I come from, I come for a very politically active family not necessarily active as in um, protesting or you know, talking in first government field, like interest groups for say about more active as in like, you know, now my ancestors and relatives who are in the military. Um, I do have a distant cousin who was the governor of Texas, um, criminalized he got caught up in the scandal, um, back in the 80s cause. He was given a lot of illegal money to um, Southern Methodist University. Um, I have an uncle who works for the department of defense and stuff. Um, but you know how they, I was very aware with politics at a young age. Um, my mom, um, is very politically engaged. Um, she knows what's going on. The next sunrise, she knows who's our senators, the house representatives, governor all that" "I was young, um, as I can remember or whatever that, you know, I was paying attention to elections."	Uh, for myself it's, um, on understanding how government works and political parties and um, and um politicians there's the community, um, the community itself, cause um, all four aspects plays a factor into why we have knowledge. The knowledge that we have, you know, the reason why we have these socials movements and stuff."

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	“I just always been interested in politics all my life. You know, I'm not in political science because of Trump”	
Tubby	“Um I guess I never really just I always kind of think of political systems like which was interesting um just something I always paid attention to subconsciously” “Just coming from two different types of government so like the Nigerian government everyone knows it's corrupt always blah blah blah... having to hear that and knowing the US is not the same type of issues as far as corruption goes but like civil issues, so it's just always something like the day to day you think about.” I asked about the rhetoric of Nigerian government being corrupt and her responses was: “It's just something I just felt I experienced” “There's not a lot of comparative government here”	“I think the political world is always changing because it's driven by people” “I like to think people are inherently selfish so kind of just understanding the systems of powers within different people kind of understanding.. I don't know like...I think just better understanding people through a political lens.”
Whitney	“Like growing up I didn't really understand politics that much. I think just my parents never really had the time to like explain it and stuff. So yeah, I just, I minored in it because I wanted to understand it better I guess.”	“For me, I think political science or the way that I want to go about it is just, um, helping people who are, aren't really considered like a part of the system. Um, yeah. So I guess just like, again, those underrepresented groups or

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	"My mom was, um, she was African and African American studies, so we just always talked about history. Um, and so I kind of wanted, I always wanted to talk about, I guess like indigenous cultures or people who aren't really represented in the best light. Um, and just like see how, what I could do and be a part of that, which is why I chose anthropology and I thought political science tied into that nice, nicely just because politics is literally everything like, and you could tie it to gender to race. Like everything around us is all in a politics and the way that a society functions."	marginalized communities. Um, and I think political science just helps you understand government law, why our society functions the way it functions." "Um, I guess just government, democracy and capitalism."

Chapter Four

Denise Images from Rap Session One and Two
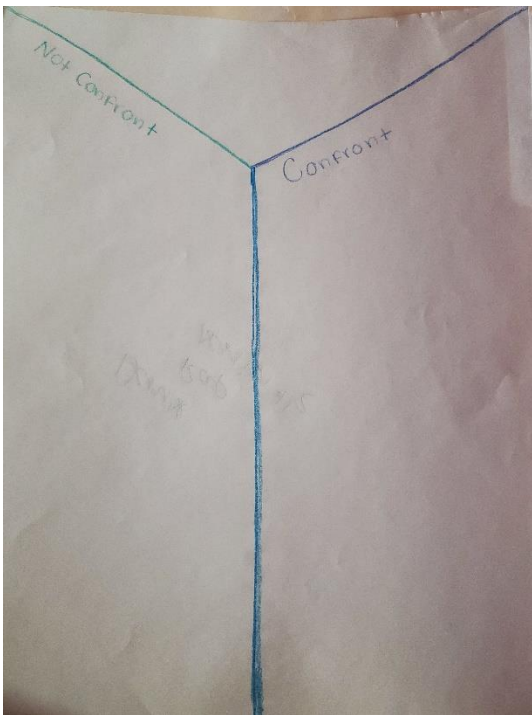
Denise attends Gold University which is a private institution and had taken two political

science classes at the time of our initial rap session. Below depicts her framing of her

images for rap session one and two:

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"I realized there wasn't one way I was really taught to navigate...so I drew a bunch of lines" There was no one direction toward it...confusion"	"I literally just did that thing of confronting or not confronting"

Dolores Images from Rap Session One and Two
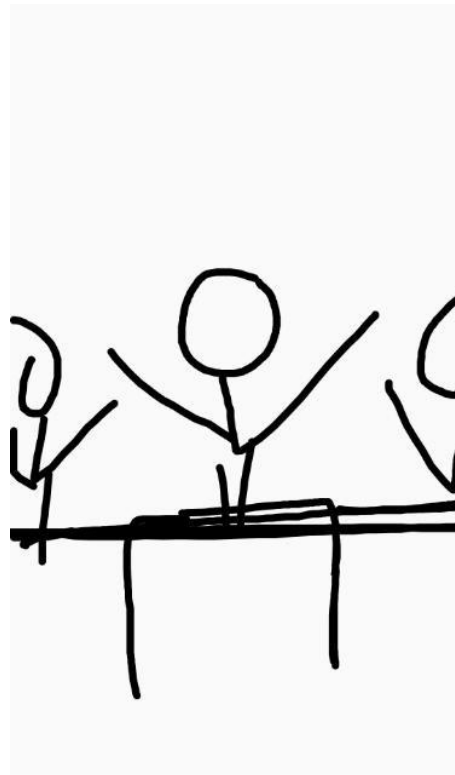
Dolores attends Plains University which is a public state higher education institution. She

was in the midst of her third course in political science when connecting with this study.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"It's me ignoring Black"	"I'm not really just because I'm just being a student like everyone else"

Eleanor Images from Rap Session One and Two
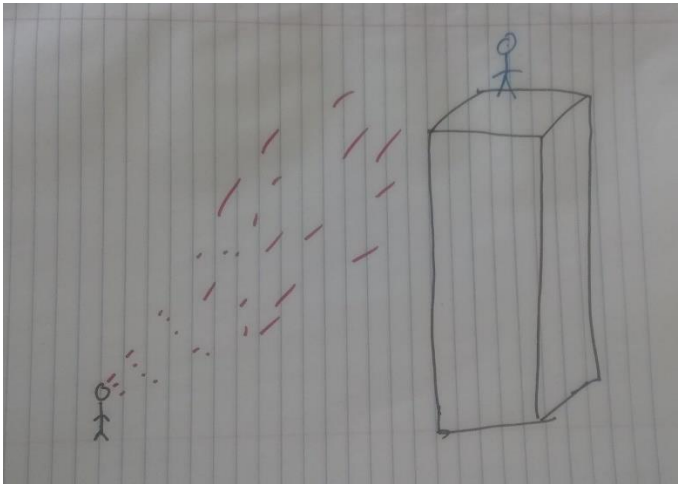
Eleanor attends Hills University and is a junior. She took five political science courses at

the point of connecting with this study.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"I think about the race track thing" "I used to see these on cartoons of like systems of oppression being a race track" "I was drawing me trying to jump over the road block" "At the end I realized there's more of the road blocks, so I tried make the	"Yelling and professing about race and the words getting lost in the shuffle and the professor on their platform" "Me as a little person and there's the podium they all stand on with their self-righteousness" "Communication just emptiness and also I'm doing all the work to reach them

| end of it like more red like it's a continuous journey of jumping "

"I think what Angela Davis says always act as if you can radically change the world"

"Always be in action that way whether or not the direct possibility is there"

"There's bigger road blocks, but you just gotta keep jumping" | "Just a lot of shouting"

"The little person on top here I guess represents the whole thing including the professors" |
|---|---|

George Images from Rap Session One and Two
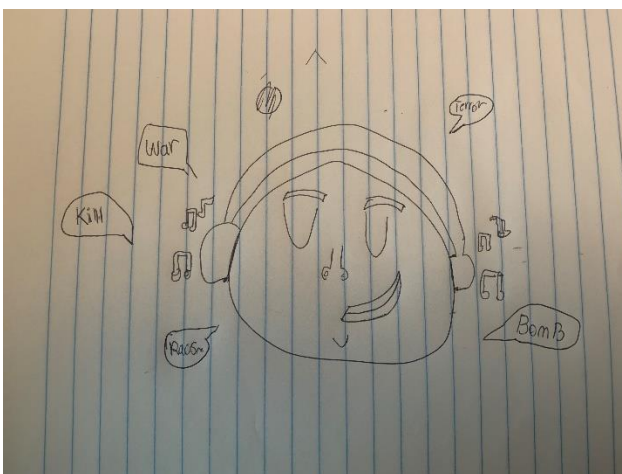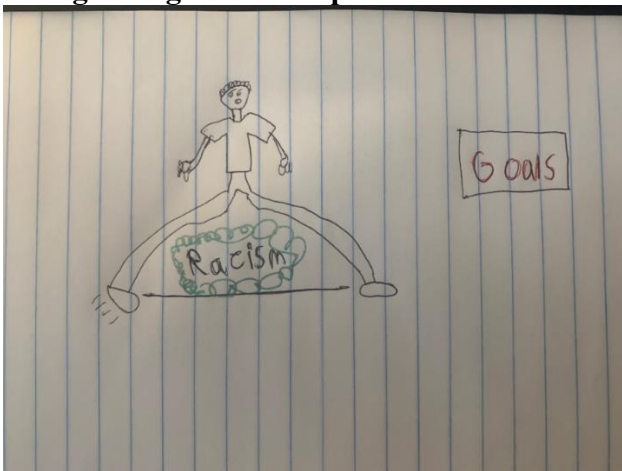
George attends Hills University. He knows Eleanor and was referred by her to participate in the study. He is a senior and had already taken 15 to 18 political science courses.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"That's me and racism and just like stepping over it in stuff" "People were trying to get me to react in a certain way" "I well felt like they were just trying to get in the way of what I'm trying to do" "Why would I let what someone else has to say get in the way" "I never put too much thought into my reaction to like race" "It's always on them not on me"	"That's like me like with headphones on right kinda like signifies I'm in my own world, but there's these little blurbs here that say like kill and war and terror and bombing and stuff like that and racism" "I'm in classes sometimes students say to me like your always very positive about situation and that's not how it is in the real world" "I remember being told…studying political science can be very depressing at times because you hear a lot of bad things that happen" "People would say like these bad things around me, but I don't feel like it truly affects my personality at the end of the day because I know what I believe in" "I'm not gonna let what they're saying just like affect how I view the world and what I can speak too"

Juana Images from Rap Session One and Two
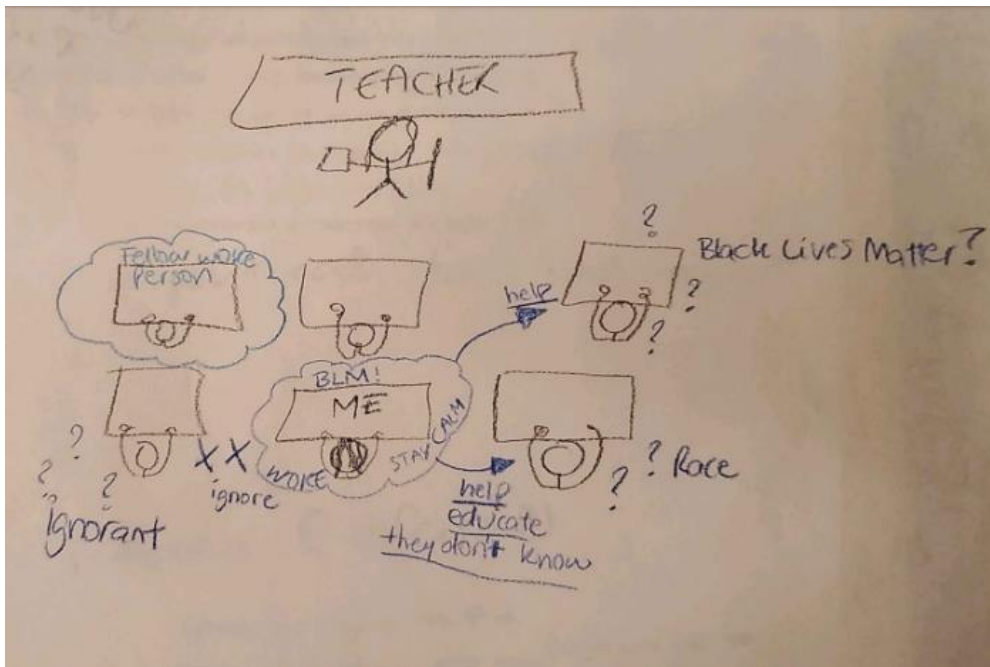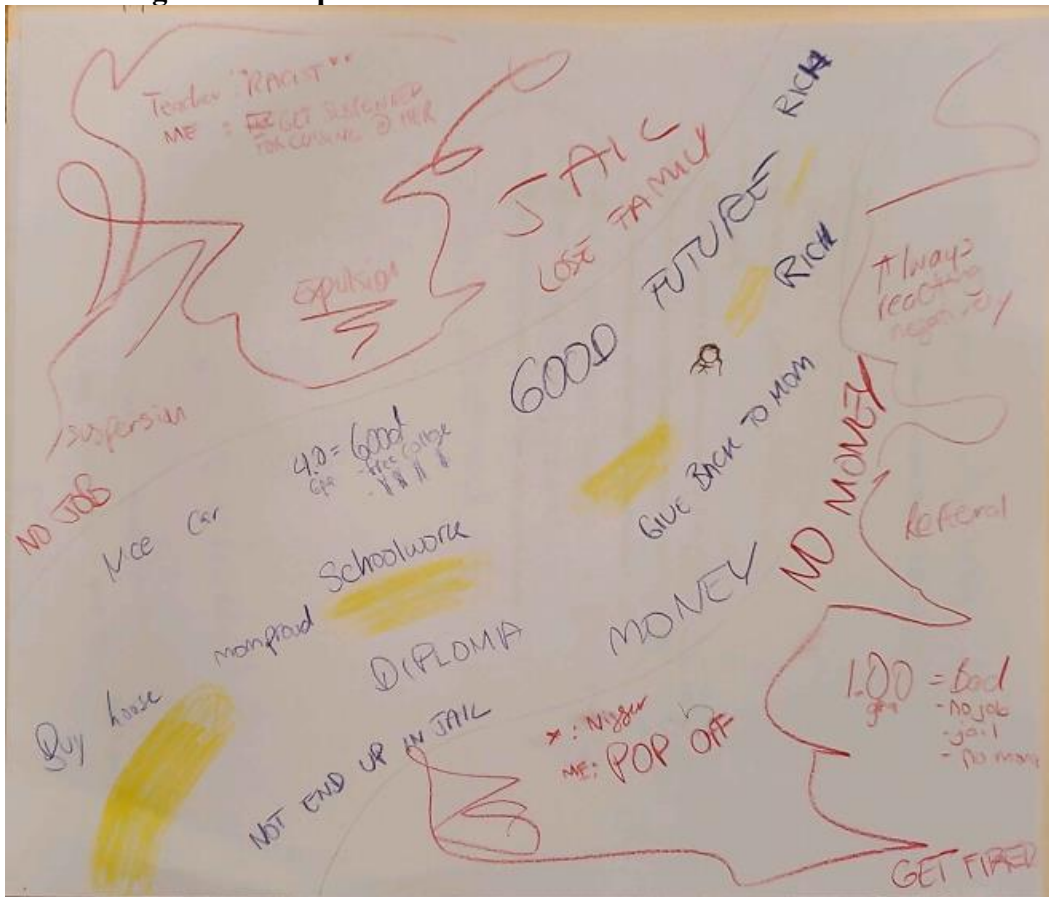
Juana attends Gold University. She had been exposed to political science through

concurrent enrollment and is a junior. She had taken eight political science courses.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"Alright so I figured like this is a path and on a side are obstacles that you have to get through you can choose to stay on your path or you can choose to get lost in all the noise basically just like people are racist people are trying to bring you down umm and then your reactions to those situations can bring you down your own specific umm actions yeah that can inhibit your experience to a good life and every day is a choice and you have to continually make the right choice and follow down the right path."	"So this is specifically like me in a classroom. I kinda took the scene from the congressmen classroom and kinds have six desks and a teacher up front and this is me with like basically with a bubble like saying like this is a woke person you calm Black Lives Matter these are truths we know these facts and another woke person with bubbles around them because they are woke as well and then we have four other desks one is umm this student whose questioning like Black Lives Matter, but in an innocent enough way for me in my bubble I can stay calm know that Black Lives Matter and help him and then there's another person whose questioning race, but in a way that's like a bit able to be helped so I'm in my bubble knowing myself able to help them educate them like they generally don't know stay calm and then the last one we have umm you know we have that one student in the class whose ignorant who just asks questions and not knowledgeable or maybe is knowledgeable but just wants to be ignorant and then we have me like be in my bubble just ignoring him like this is a person cannot be helped in the moment don't waste your time"

Nina Images from Rap Session One and Two

Nina attends Knoll University and was the only participant from this private higher

education institution. She is a senior and had taken 10 political science courses.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"Umm a road to not dealing with race." "A car going in the opposite direction because I don't think I really umm I think I wanted to do everything to avoid navigating race and talking about race growing up."	"Umm I drew the classroom and the aspects of a typically political science classroom. White political thinkers and my classmates and I drew arrows to my laptop it's kind of just taking experience from that classroom and then trying to write a paper that encompasses things that matter to me like bringing in Black women and race and people not heard into a paper about that and talking about what they don't talk about in the classroom"

Situ Images from Rap Session One and Two
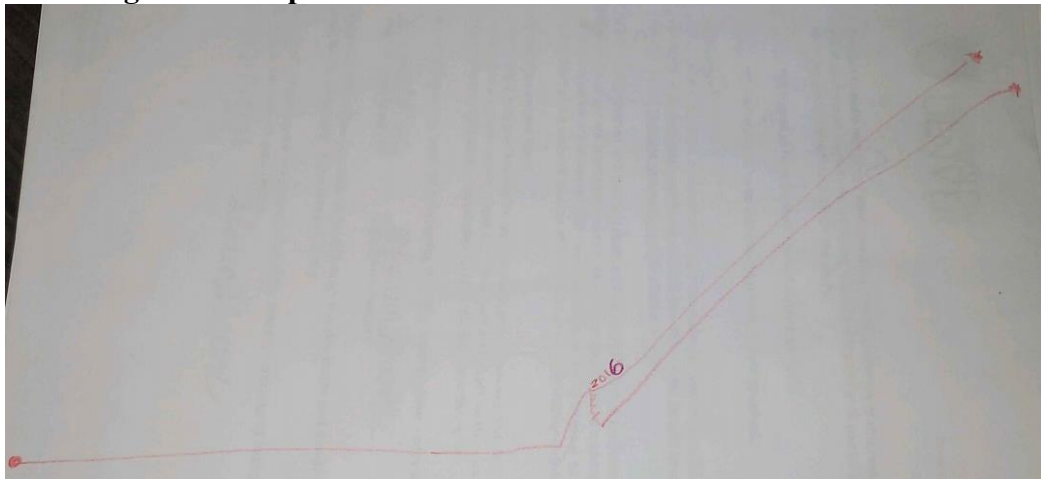
Situ attends Central University which is a state college and had taken 10 political science

courses. She had just graduated as we connected for this study.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"This would be like my earlier age and I'll go all the way so I would say simple straight." "This would be my childhood in Kenya not thinking about race move to America probably a little" "Then 2016 I would say….it kept escalating from there, but before then it was a pretty simply topic."	"I would put it like this…I don't know if this makes sense. I would put it like a road right…for example a clear road would be nicely…like if you're driving you're driving smoothly." "I was hoping this is what it would be if I was taking political science that I wanted to be taught in terms of like." "Every single time they would say something it's like you can point out the racial perspective of it" "It's like it wasn't smooth. It was rough like I have to do all the stuff myself and never like don't get help through the department with race related stuff it's me having to go through this stuff all by myself " I" was expecting it to be smooth like I was expecting you to teach me I was expecting you to go ahead and point those stuff out I was expecting you to go ahead and tell me like how many like I don't even know how to explain it but I wanted it to be smooth" "African American history is American history period but you make me feel like my identity didn't play a huge part in anything" "If I didn't know anything about it I would assume white people did everything for us. Does that makes sense"

	"If you don't mention how many people died for this and look at this from racial perspective...how many school kids were killed like who did this and not only mention two people to be like Black history...MLK and Rosa Parks...and they just do that so it not only male" "Like we didn't do anything like we didn't fight for anything…we're there and it's like we don't want to do anything" "I was expecting it to be smooth but it's not" "The worst thing is I have to go through this by myself and nobody there to assist me in political science particularly"

Tim Images from Rap Session One and Two

Tim is a senior at Central University and indicated he had taken between 15 to 20 political science courses.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"I see, you know, the good and the bad on both sides. I do my best to take the good from each side but you know, but you can't forget about the bad from both sides either."

"You know, there's some common things. I kind of like explain that I've seen in both communities, you know like, you know the ghettos [inaudible] can and stuff and upper income is rare because Blacks and the Hispanics you know, you know they're not, you know, they gain | "So like this is like non Black students. And then I guess you said this to me, like usually the one other if that Black student and like the other Black students, I had class with liberals where like I said, like most people in the class are liberal for the most part."

"So you know, we have our, this connection and you know, similar beliefs, you know, when it comes to liberal ideas."

"But then when it comes to Black issues it becomes very static, you know, |

their [inaudible] and white people, you know, like you know, some are rich but you've got the trailer park trash as well is where then also you know why people also can be very narrow minded about sympathy but very open minded as well and you know they both know racism exists in both communities and stuff. So, I've always got to look at both sides but, I would say for the Black community I feel like whole and at home more on the Black side than I did with white. So you know, that's why I put the community more on the Black side than I did the white because you know I feel more of the community in Black America in Denver thank in white America."

messages and all these ideas or disagreed on, and that's when, you know, you start to see the differences, um, between the Black students and non-white students not always maybe having the knowledge correct like that feeling like identity, politics."

"You've got the conservative students, that are in the corner because, you know, they're very small numbers and they're not too controversial or like in that Congress class, um, we have the conservative student and he never commented on social issues or I don't know what his ideas are on race or anything like that. So, you know they have small numbers and they never say anything provoking or support of race really so they can't use this. And then, um, I have the professor there because you know, professors, their more knowledgeable on the topics. And so but at the same time, I've never had a Black professor at CCD, or Metro so they don't have any idea I know they have more knowledge on like Black issues, but sometimes they can be clueless because I know none of them you know they didn't grow up with the Black community."

"All other professors I have all of them grew up in a predominantly white community and the stuff, so they don't really have a hands on experience with um, the Black community."

Tubby Images from Rap Session One and Two

Tubby attends Plains University where she is in her first year of college, but had taken college classes before via concurrent enrollment.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms
"Umm so I feel like the assimilation." "Everything was measured in a European standard so even within the black community and everywhere else really. So, when I was younger I would always get my hair relaxed." "In West Africa bleaching is actually really big." "I used bleaching cream when I was younger…my mom would bring them back from Nigeria up until I was like 10…I was never sure what that was." "Not feeling like being Black was enough right so whether it was like through a mirror or tv or other people though music…books or literature stuff like that." "You see it everywhere it's kind of still there Always being compared to whiteness…that's what this is."	"Ummm so it's just like a classroom and there's me and I'm then I'm just thinking you learning from silence."

Whitney Images from Rap Session One and Two
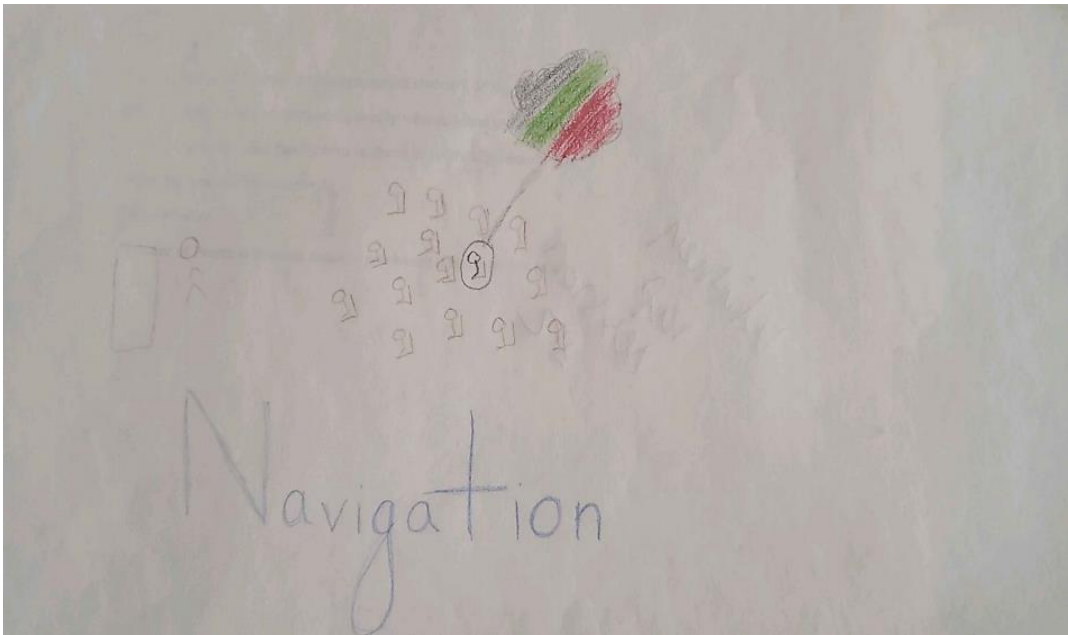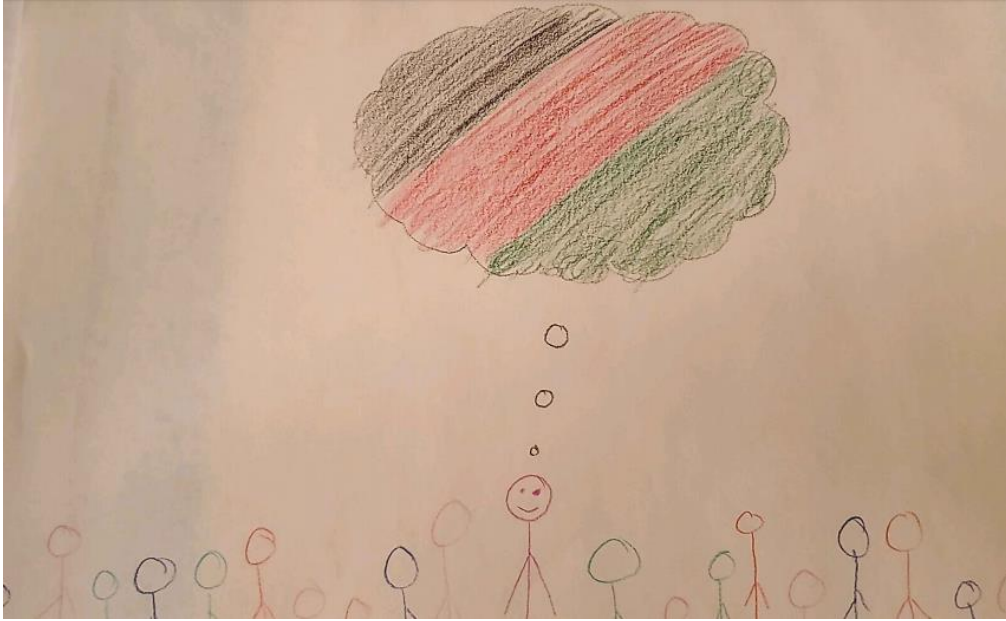
Whitney attends Gold University and has political science as a minor. She is in her junior

year and took four political science courses.

Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms

"This is me using kind of African colors." "Just like seeing everybody else's, I dunno, differences and like differing opinions." "And me just kind of like maintaining my own love for my, my own identity. Um, and just like my family, and Black people."	"Umm this is me with the same mindset I guess that I've always grown up with, which was like represented by the pan African colors. Um, and then I put navigation under it cause I don't really have any strategies but I think it is just about, um, moving or like, um, determining your next step based… on others. Like, um, yeah. And so just like in the classroom, um, obviously my main focus is always just to like be a part of the classes and get the grade." "Um, but I guess just like the way that I interact with students, with the professors, um, that always lets me know how I should act from that point on. I guess."

Denise Images from Rap Session One and Two

Denise attends Gold University which is a private institution. Denise spoke of having a

myriad of experiences with race in her childhood. The positive ways in which she

experienced it spoke to the need for Black students to have an echo chamber in which

their psychological, physical, and verbal manifestations of race are validated and honored

albeit by other Black students (attachment bonding) or white allies (bridging). It is the

relationships built for her that lead her to decide if she will choose to confront or not

confront because as she indicates, "Unless they're willing to listen I personally don't

have the time for that."

Rap Session One: Unless they're willing to listen, I personally don't have time for that	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"I tried before even in high school to censor myself...and all that did was make me more miserable."

"I had a lot of problematic experiences with race my whole life...but I wasn't able to understand that was problematic."

"I remember feeling tense and not able to just talk...without feeling like I had to censor myself to make someone else feel comfortable"

"I was in the social justice [living learning community] LLC…..she gave me space to just talk about it...she's also white too..she gave me resources...there was never a part where I felt invalided."

"Unless they're willing to listen I personally don't have the time for that." | "I literally just did that thing of confronting or not confronting." | Bridging

Code Switching | Attachment Bonding

Buffering |

|			
"If they're not trying...you're the one that has to change... maybe that's a let go." "I would honestly say I didn't start to like take care of myself in that way like a little bit more until senior year freshman and sophomore year...I'd say there wasn't that much support."			

Dolores Images from Rap Session One and Two
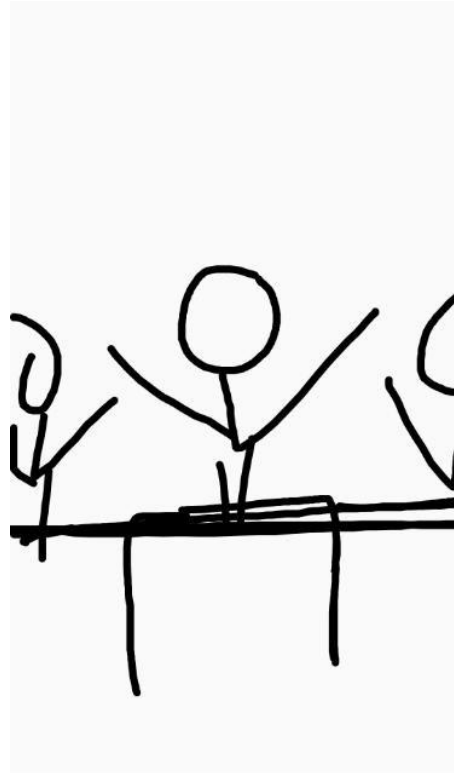
Dolores attends Plains University which is a public state higher education institution. She is double majoring in political science and journalism. She comes from a family of immigrants from Senegal who migrated here in the late 90s. She was born two years after her parents arrived in the United States. She speaks to the constant endeavor growing up

to "try not to be the stereotype" and that she "shouldn't have to try so hard not to be that."

Her seeing herself as "just being a student like everyone else" requires to incessantly

engage in code switching, as she endeavors to refute internalized racism and buffers

against negative notions of Blackness.

Rap Session One: I shouldn't have to try so hard to not be that.	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"My family is from Senegal in West Africa." "I didn't really think about identity as a child..being Black wasn't that big I guess." "I was around a lot of diverse people…I always felt comfortable." "My parents when I was a kid we used to watch cops almost every night and most of the cops arrested were Black and Latinos…at a young age I kind of associated being Black as being criminals….I was in elementary school." "My parents…would say maybe you shouldn't hang around Black people so much…my parents had that kind of racism in them just because of the media at the	"I'm not really just because I'm just being a student like everyone else"	Code Switching	Buffering Internalized Racism

time….that kind of shaped me I guess" "I ignored my parents and did whatever I wanted to not associate race with just criminal activity." "I never been profiled or stereotyped." "When Trayvon Martin happened…that would be a negative engagement with race…I was in middle school." "Not thinking I was different like downplaying my Blackness…trying not to be the stereotype…like loud…ratchet and ghetto." "I shouldn't have had to try so hard not to be that..I don't think it's not necessarily a bad thing."			

Eleanor Images from Rap Session One and Two
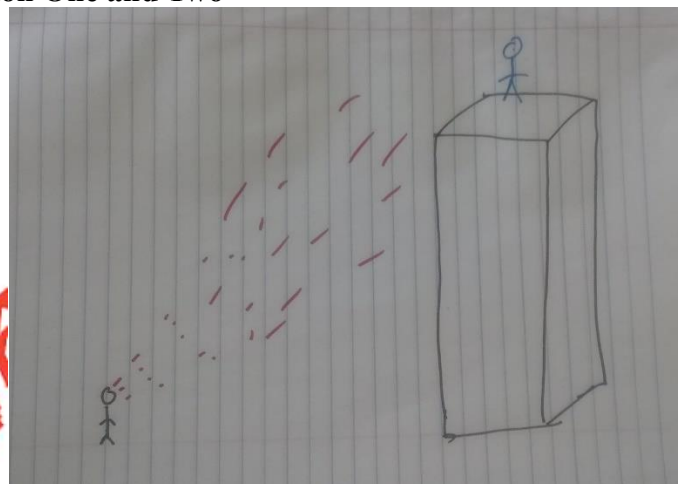
Eleanor attends Hills University and is a junior. Her parents immigrated with her to the

United States when she was four years old. She identifies her ethnicity as Ewe. She

speaks her personal negotiation of understanding racial structures in the United States by

indicating her parents "believe in the American dream," but she "don't believe coming to

the US opens all doors." She discusses how she "grew into loving Blackness because it

wasn't an easy journey." She could have refused Blackness and love for Blackness, but

she anchors herself in it as she engages in code switching with her professors while

buffering against internalized racism.

Rap Session One: I grew into loving my Blackness because it wasn't easy	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"Immigrating to the United States I was four in 2003 and so that changed the entire course of my life." "When I was a teenager, I started like doing protest stuff. I started realizing like I have some kind of power in the world um and so that would change the trajectory of my life and what I thought was possible for me." "I don't believe coming to the US opens all doors." "I grew into loving Blackness because it wasn't like an easy journey."	"Yelling and professing about race and the words getting lost in the shuffle and the professor on their platform" "Me as a little person and there's the podium they all stand on with their self-righteousness" "Communication just emptiness and also I'm doing all the work to reach them	Code Switching	Buffering Internalized Racism

"Loving Blackness is reflective of the people around me." "Being in classes that were unapologetically social justice...unapologetically loving who I am where I was able to express that anger frustration, but like love and all the emotions and able to talk about trauma and really have that be something was...that I can be open about."	"Just a lot of shouting" "The little person on top here I guess represents the whole thing including the professors"		

George Images from Rap Session One and Two
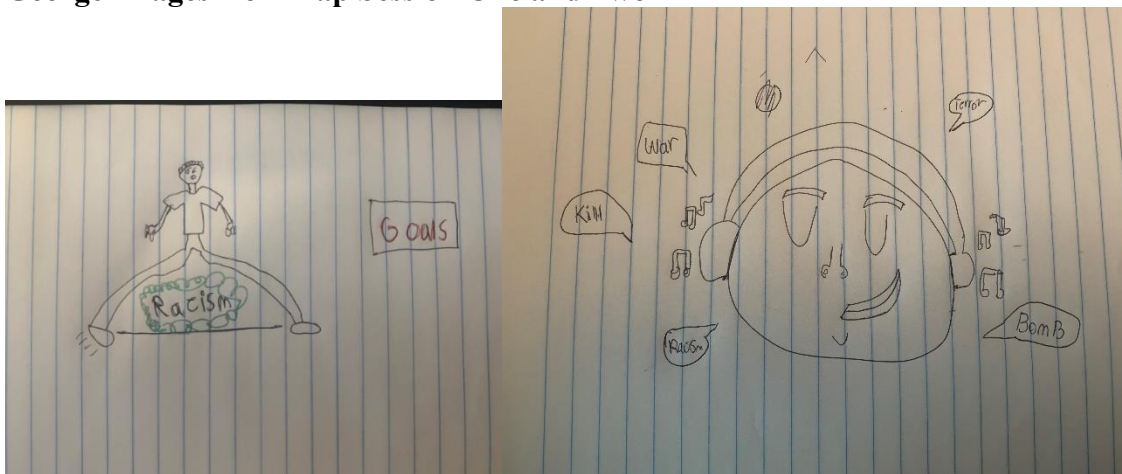
George attends Hills University and was a senior at the time of the study. He has a father who is Nigerian and his mother is from what he called the agricultural south. His fascination and grounding in his Blackness is where he chooses to exert his energy. He was exposed to racism through the experiences of his parents as a child and relished in the positive experiences of race. As he notes, "I gained satisfaction about teaching my friends African culture…Those teaching moments are always positive." With his emphases on positive teaching moments, it makes sense that he didn't illustrate any

identity enactments that transact with whiteness in his image for rap session two. He

drew the whiteness happening around him, but cocooning himself with his headphones.

His cocooning in his Black Finesse allows him to buffer against threats of deficit notions

of race and internalized racism.

Rap Session One: I focus on positive teaching experiences	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"My father is originally from Nigeria. He came here around 20 or 18 to go to school and my mother is originally from the Tennessee Arkansas area. So, I feel like it really had an impact on me knowing my identity was like seeing the contrast of my father's side and mothers' side of the family." "They would always tell us through stories how they navigated race." My dad's an architect and was working at an architect firm..I think he was trying to get the promotion and he was told you don't fit in with this crowd of people..I mean it was blatantly race based."	"That's like me like with headphones on right kinda like signifies I'm in my own world, but there's these little blurbs here that say like kill and war and terror and bombing and stuff like that and racism" "I'm in classes sometimes students say to me like your always very positive about situation and that's not how it is in the real world" "I remember being told…studying political science can be very depressing at times because you hear a lot of bad things that happen" "People would say like these bad things around me, but I don't feel like it truly affects my personality at the end of the day because I know what I believe in"		Buffering Internalized Racism

My mom…was just being that person to always like call it out and never just wait you know and it was so opposite of how I feel I reacted to those things." "I don't feel like it's my duty to stand out in that moment like you've done this you've done that." "I feel like that's certainly not how it's translated now to me." "I was afraid of being that person in stuff especially where I was brought up...I just didn't like drawing attention myself." "I gained satisfaction about teaching my friends African culture." "Those teaching moments are always positive."	"I'm not gonna let what they're saying just like affect how I view the world and what I can speak too"		

Juana Images from Rap Session One and Two

Juana attends Plains University and identifies as a multi-ethnic Black female who is Cameroonian, Moroccan, and Spanish. She grew up in the suburbs where she indicates she names as predominantly white spaces. She speaks to being "one of three kids…that were Black" which increased her exposure to problematic experiences with race at a young age. She develops this notion of "the look" to survey how race and racism is being perceived amidst political science paradigm. The illustrated all five identity enactments to depict how she navigates race. She showed students of varying epistemologies concerning race and her being grounded and calm while making constant decisions as to which identity enactment they are deserving of based upon "the look" experience. She describes the experience of the look as, "After a certain remark you if there's another person of color or even if you don't know there's a person of color you, you kind of feel in your body like that wasn't right and you kind of look around to see if anyone else is like, Oh that's not right."

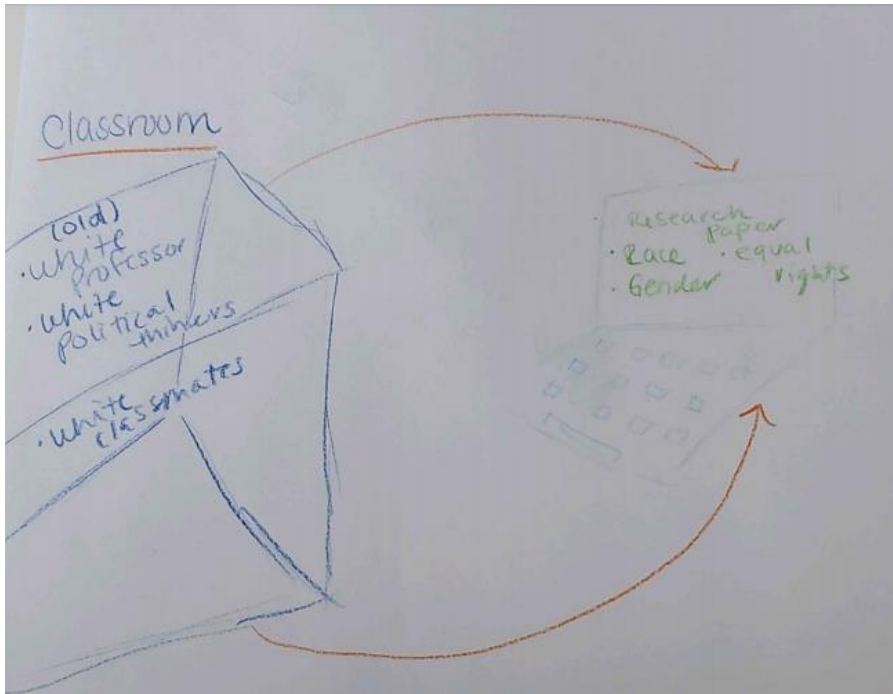| Rap Session One: I use "the look" to survey race in the room	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"We were one of three kids at the whole charter school that were Black." "My mom kind of explained to me like, you know, like sometimes we're not treated fairly…that's when I really got exposed idea of like..it can happen to my sister because we	"So this is specifically like me in a classroom. I kinda took the scene from the congressmen classroom and kinds have six desks and a teacher up front and this is me with like basically with a bubble like saying like this is a woke person	Code Switching Bridging	Attachment Bonding Buffering Internalized Racism

have the same characteristics." "I used to get a lot of referrals and suspensions when I was a kid because I went to that school and because the same behaviors that other kids did when I did it, it wasn't the same…And so I think in that way, after, you know…it makes you realize like, I cannot behave that same way. And so I kind of toned it down. I think that's also why I got more shy as I got older was because I was, you know, being overly cautious." "After a certain remark you if there's another person of color or even if you don't know there's a person of color you, you kind of feel in your body like that wasn't right and you kind of look around to see if anyone else is like, Oh that's not right." "I've been at predominantly white institutions since I was a kid….They allowed slavery so they don't really think it's problem. But most people have common sense. Kind of are just like what the heck? And you know, we'll look and just be like, does anyone else thinking what the heck like? And I think that's the look.	you calm Black Lives Matter these are truths we know these facts and another woke person with bubbles around them because they are woke as well and then we have four other desks one is umm this student whose questioning like Black Lives Matter, but in an innocent enough way for me in my bubble I can stay calm know that Black Lives Matter and help him and then there's another person whose questioning race, but in a way that's like a bit able to be helped so I'm in my bubble knowing myself able to help them educate them like they generally don't know stay calm and then the last one we have umm you know we have that one student in the class whose ignorant who just asks questions and not knowledgeable or maybe is knowledgeable but just wants to be ignorant and then we have me like be in my bubble just ignoring him like this is a person cannot be		

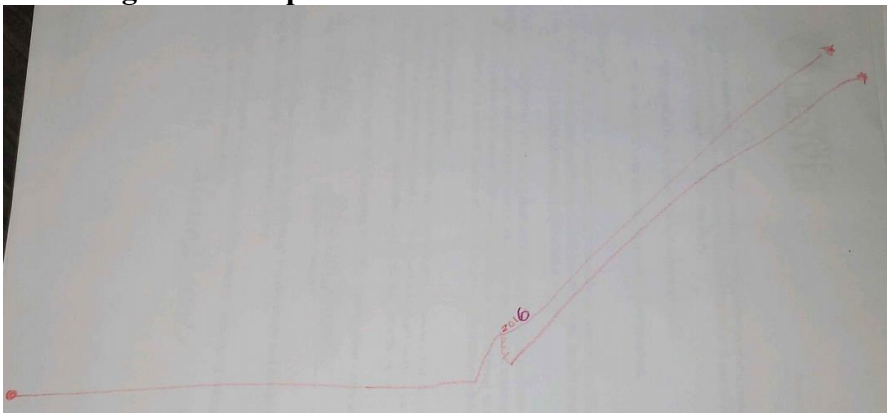|	helped in the moment don't waste your time"		

Nina Images from Rap Session One and Two

Nina attended Knoll University which is where she graduated from. She was a senior at the time of the study. Nina grew up with a father who is a professor at the institution she attends and a mother who navigates predominantly white spaces professionally. She reflected distancing herself from race as she grew up by indicating, "I didn't want to draw attention to myself." This informed her adolescent experiences and her choice of methods illustrated in her second image of how she navigates race amidst political science paradigm. She was "raised to hold her own in [predominantly white spaces]." In light of this, she drew whiteness as reflective of the curriculum, professor, and students and herself on the other side of the image writing a paper grounded in the experiences of Black women and equal rights which depicts her engaging in attachment bonding via research while refuting internalized racism and buffering against whiteness. Her choosing to illustrate writing a paper as a method of navigating race shows her commitment to
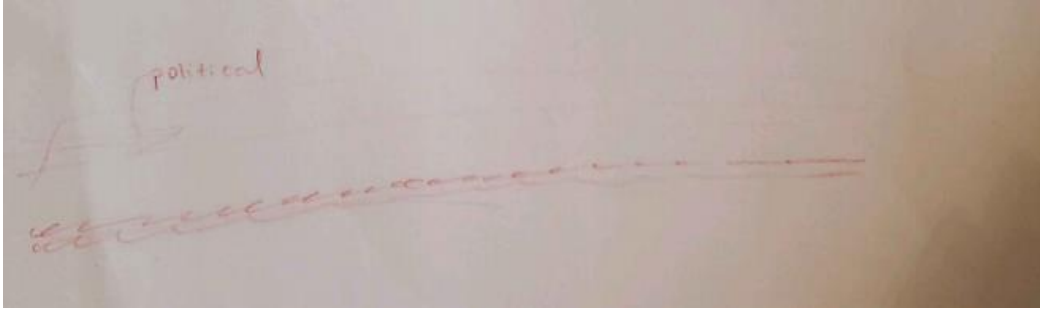
code switching. With the arrows of coming from whiteness being imposed upon her there

is no reciprocity and thus no bridging occurring.

Rap Session One: I was raised to hold my own	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"I didn't want to seem different." "I didn't want to draw attention myself." "Aim [program] for students they thought needed extra help. I was so upset with my mom because she came to the school….mom was like they only did this because she was the only black student in the class...and I just wanted to ignore that." "My mom is usually the only woman and the only Black woman in the room." "She kinda raised me to hold my own in spaces like that." "Seeing how my dad operates in the academia space…I think he's maybe one of three or four Black faculty on this entire campus." "My dad even though he's been teaching here for five	"Umm I drew the classroom and the aspects of a typically political science classroom. White political thinkers and my classmates and I drew arrows to my laptop it's kind of just taking experience from that classroom and then trying to write a paper that encompasses things that matter to me like bringing in Black women and race and people not heard into a paper about that and talking about what they don't talk about in the classroom"	Code Switching	Attachment Bonding Buffering Internalized Racism

years will always wear at least a blazer…because he feels he needs to present himself a certain way."			
"I don't think I felt really comfortable talking about race until freshman year in college because even in high school I was pretty much the only person of color."			
"First summer program…part of it was we were talking about politics and colonization and at one point…one was an archeological class…we looking up slave artifacts…I just felt…I think it was my first time being right up front with slavery…my white classmates were like oh this is so cool."			
"I don't think I told anyone about…I just tried to have fun with them."			

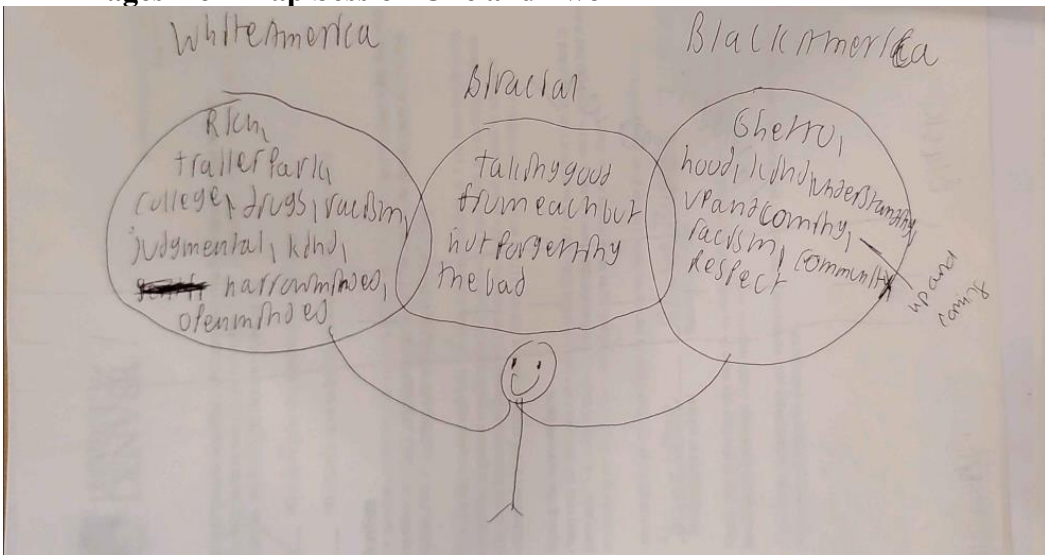**Situ Images from Rap Session One and Two**

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Situ attended Central University where she graduated at the time of the study. She identifies as a proud Ethiopian who has the ethnicity of Oromo. She migrated to the United States with her parents for high school and discussed reflecting on the ways in which she was miseducated in her home country of Kenya and her in the United States. She reflected on her schooling experience in Kenya by stating, "When I went to school back home we never learned about the segregation or anything in the US." However, she was miseducated in the United States as well. She indicated, "I didn't think into race…not until my 2nd year of classes...It wasn't me taking my political science classes. It was me taking my Africana studies classes." Because of the miseducation she experienced concerning Black identity, she indicated, "I would go out of my way to read about it." She puts this effort and energy into her political science studies to confront whiteness which is the friction shown in her 2nd image. The friction of her having to do it by herself is the tension she has in navigating race in political science. Though the friction is there, she focused on her journey and didn't illustrate her confronting whiteness.
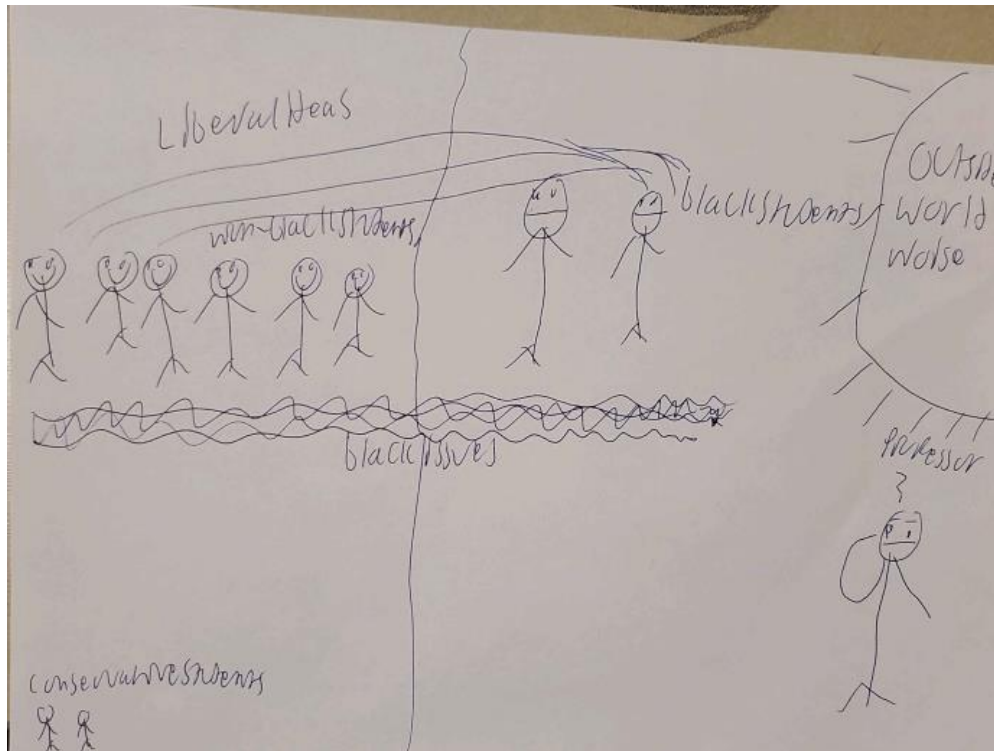
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Rap Session One: I go out of my way to read about us	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"When I was in Kenya I kinda like learned Somali." "In terms of identity, I would say I would say...Oromo because my ethnicity is Oromo." "Learning there's other ethnicities besides Oromo…made me feel happy...after that I realized there's different cultures and ethnicities in Ethiopia." "That's one thing I was so proud of is calling myself Ethiopian." "Race wasn't a huge topic or like a huge discussion to talk about until ...After we moved to the US [in 2014]." "Back home in Kenya there was nothing about race, there was a lot about ethnicity." "2014 2015 the whole Black Lives Matter movement was going that's when I learned about race identity in America."	"I would put it like this…I don't know if this makes sense. I would put it like a road right…for example a clear road would be nicely…like if you're driving you're driving smoothly." "I was hoping this is what it would be if I was taking political science that I wanted to be taught in terms of like." "Every single time they would say something it's like you can point out the racial perspective of it" "It's like it wasn't smooth. It was rough like I have to do all the stuff myself and never like don't get help through the department with race related stuff it's me having to go through this stuff all by myself "		Attachment Bonding Buffering Internalized Racism

"When I went to school back home we never learned about the segregation or anything in the US." "We took us history [laughed]...yet the only thing we talked about even with emancipation was Abraham Lincoln and that was it. That's what we learned [in high school]." "I didn't think into race…not until my 2nd year of classes... It wasn't me taking my political science classes, It was me taking my Africana studies classes" "I would go out of my way to read about it." "We had to go deeper we had to go to the library in 5 points." "Learning about those people who kept their language and kept their culture."	"I was expecting it to be smooth like I was expecting you to teach me I was expecting you to go ahead and point those stuff out I was expecting you to go ahead and tell me like how many like I don't even know how to explain it but I wanted it to be smooth" "African American history is American history period but you make me feel like my identity didn't play a huge part in anything" "If I didn't know anything about it I would assume white people did everything for us. Does that makes sense" "If you don't mention how many people died for this and look at this from racial perspective...how many school kids were killed like who did this and not only mention two people to be like Black history...MLK and Rosa Parks...and they just do that so it not only male"		

	"Like we didn't do anything like we didn't fight for anything…we're there and it's like we don't want to do anything" "I was expecting it to be smooth but it's not" "The worst thing is I have to go through this by myself and nobody there to assist me in political science particularly"		

Tim Images from Rap Session One and Two

Tim is a senior at Central University and was a senior at the time of this study. He is a biracial, Black and white, male who because of his identity indicates that he can see "both sides of a situation." Him seeing both sides, Black and white, as a part of his identity and racialized experiences and trying to constantly grapple with both sides leads him toward a desire to understand nuances of race and racism. His desiring to understand the nuances of race and racism is illustrated in his strategy and even understandings of race amidst political science paradigm in his image from rap session two. The desire to understand and navigate the nuances of race and racism likely led him to reflect all the identity enactments in his image for rap session two.
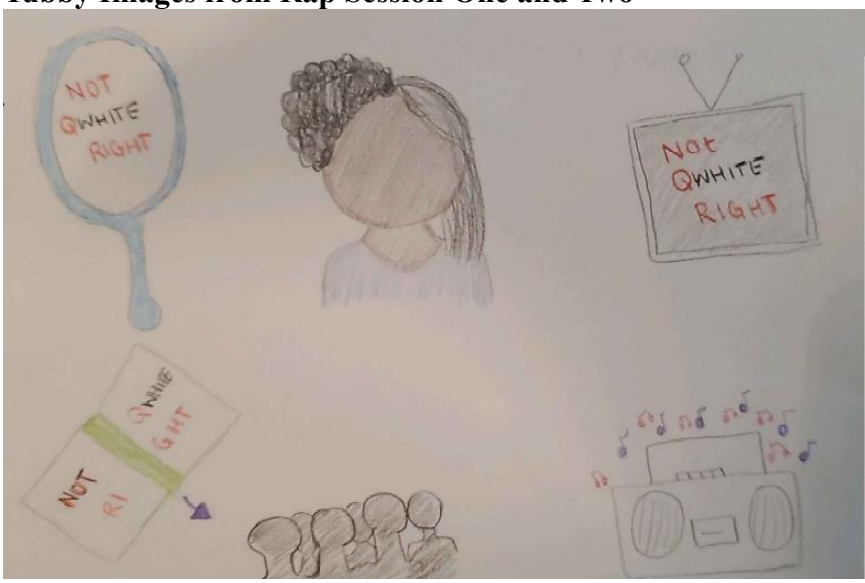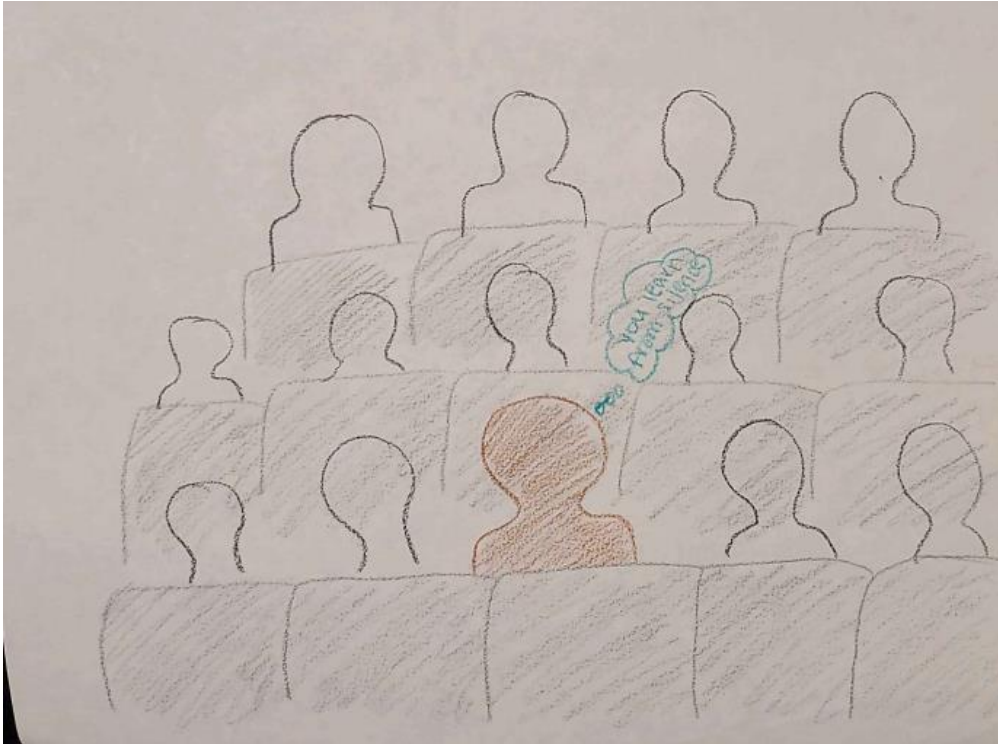
Rap Session One: Please draw or illustrate how you navigated race growing up I engage in the nuances of race by seeing both sides	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated in Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"Once [Colorado elementary school name] got shut down I really learned about race at that point….got turned into a charter school." "Being um, half the minority and half majority, I see both sides of a situation. "I see, you know, like black people, all the minorities has faced all this discrimination, you know, whether it's socially or from the government. So you, I definitely, you know, you know, try to tell white people like, you know, you know, you got to see from their side of the perspective, you know, it isn't as easy as you think is to um navigate in this country. You know, you have to worry about the privilege, you know, you have specific measures you know just to keep minority communities down, whether it was red lining and or um	"So like this is like non Black students. And then I guess you said this to me, like usually the one other if that Black student and like the other Black students, I had class with liberals where like I said, like most people in the class are liberal for the most part." "So you know, we have our, this connection and you know, similar beliefs, you know, when it comes to liberal ideas." "But then when it comes to Black issues it becomes very static, you know, messages and all these ideas or disagreed on, and that's when, you know, you start to see the differences, um, between the Black students and non-white students not always maybe having the knowledge correct	Bridging Code Switching	Attachment Bonding Buffering Internalized racism

introducing drugs like crack."	like that feeling like identity, politics." "You've got the conservative students, that are in the corner because, you know, they're very small numbers and they're not too controversial or like in that Congress class, um, we have the conservative student and he never commented on social issues or I don't know what his ideas are on race or anything like that. So you know they have small numbers and they never say anything provoking or support of race really so they can't use this. And then, um, I have the professor there because you know, professors, their more knowledgeable on the topics. And so but at the same time, I've never had a Black professor at CCD, or Metro so they don't have any idea I know they have more knowledge on like Black issues, but sometimes they can be clueless because I know none of them you know they didn't		

	grow up with the Black community." "All other professors I have all of them grew up in a predominantly white community and the stuff, so they don't really have a hands on experience with um, the Black community."		

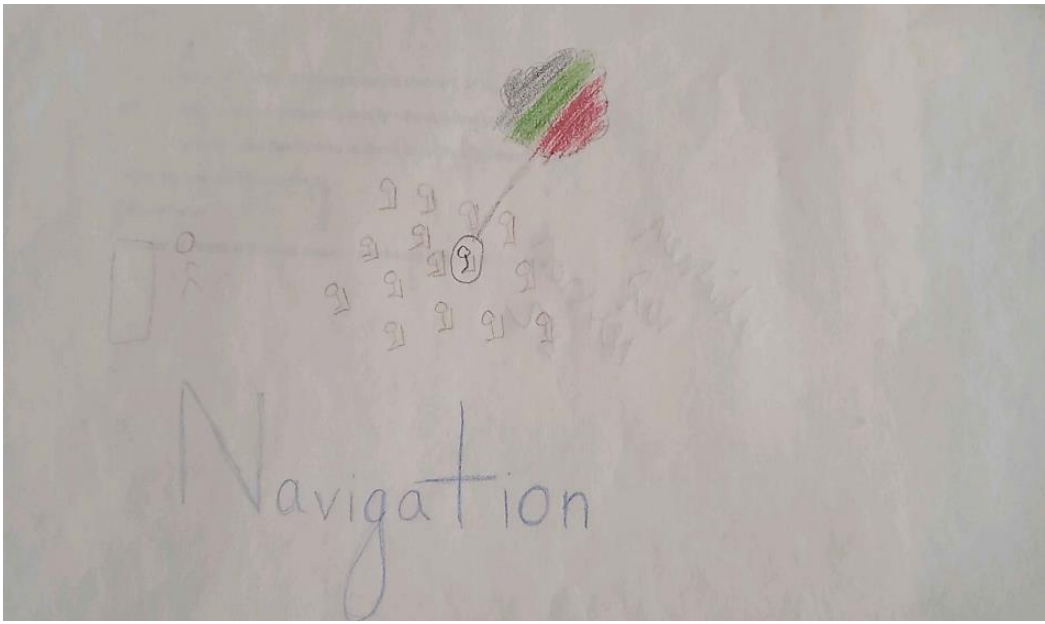**Tubby Images from Rap Session One and Two**

Tubby attends Plains University and was exposed to political science via concurrent enrollment. She navigates race in political science by focusing on her "love for learning." She shared after our two rap sessions that she decided not to major in political science anymore which is indicative of her centering her wellness and love for learning as a part of how she desire to navigate her college degree. This is likely why she illustrated in her second image that she navigates race in silence amidst political science paradigm because of her focusing on refuting internalized racism and buffering against whiteness. While she depicts whiteness among her, she doesn't show herself actively engaging in whiteness which is why bridging and code switching are not present. Her refusal to code switch is indicative of her centering her energy in her love for learning.

Rap Session One: I focus on my love and passion for learning	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated from Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"Moving here to the US, so I came here in 2005…coming from west Africa Nigeria. "I was young enough to be molded into being American I guess." "The idea of race never really occurred to me…Aurora is really diverse." "I don't look like them like these are smart white kids." "I don't feel like I had much of a race issue in school." "School was always a good place for me." "I always just had a love for learning…I just loved being in school." "Anything I didn't know I wanted to know more about it." "I think I struggled the most in [name of GT school in Aurora] out of all my schools	"Ummm so it's just like a classroom and there's me and I'm then I'm just thinking you learning from silence."		Buffering Internalized Racism

just because there was only like a good five Black kids." "And like three of them were mixed and there were like assimilated in white culture..they were what you would like call white washed." "I was challenged academically, but socially it was harder." "Now I see the ignorance in what they say…just taking it in and not letting emotion speak." "So, that was like in high school not letting emotion speak." Now in college, it's just kind of more like…most of the white people that talk to me..always want to be like woke." "Sometimes I'm like the internet is free and put yourself in spaces where you can be educated. "I'm fed up…It's not my place to kind of educate…like all the time."			

"Not speaking for everyone comes in…in college."			

Whitney Images from Rap Session One and Two

Whitney attends Gold University and has political science as a minor. Whitney grew up

grounded in her Blackness. She attended an elementary school that was predominantly

Black and Brown, but her parents also intentionally centered race as a part of her child

rearing by ensuring as she said, "I was Black and I'm a woman." Her parents also

exposed her to whiteness at an early age as well through the sharing of their experiences

as well. She reflected, "When they come back from work it was always what white

people did." On the flip side, her parents also emphasized Black Finesse via for instance

reading the autobiography of Malcolm X. Her being steeped in Blackness came through

in her second image in which she illustrates students among her, and whiteness among

her, but with a central focus on her attachment bonding to Pan African though to buffer

internalized racism.

Rap Session One: Knowing I'm Black and woman centers me	Rap Session Two: Please draw or illustrate how you navigate race in your political science classrooms	Codes Illustrated from Rap Session Two	
		Intergroup	Intragroup
"My parents always stressed that I was Black and I'm a woman." "They talk about how much white people screw us over." "When they come back from work it was always what white people did." "Because my parents were able to tell me I'm Black it never phased me." "I was ready like autobiography of Malcolm X, so I was more educated and informed."	"Umm this is me with the same mindset I guess that I've always grown up with, which was like represented by the pan African colors. Um, and then I put navigation under it cause I don't really have any strategies but I think it is just about, um, moving or like, um, determining your next step based… on others. Like, um, yeah. And so just like in the classroom, um, obviously my main focus is always just to like be a part of the classes and get the grade." "Um, but I guess just like the way that I interact		Attachment Bonding Buffering Internalized Racism

	with students, with the professors, um, that always lets me know how I should act from that point on. I guess."		