Mentorship at the HBCU:

An Alternative Approach to Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

Critical pedagogues across a multitude of disciplines continually search for effective pedagogical tools

and practices that can efficiently create a student-centered empowering critical classroom. In the

decades since its inception, critical pedagogy has been criticized for falling short of this goal and "no

longer blundering for a change... [just] simply blundering (Durst). "Mentorship at the HBCU: An

Alternative Approach to Critical Pedagogy" will seek to identify the ways in which Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have employed critical practices in order to achieve the goals of Critical

pedagogy. Through interviewing alumni of HBCUs to collect and analyze perceptions of the mentorship

that occurs within the "HBCU experience," this thesis will identify the ways in which pedagogical tools

unique to Historically Black Colleges and Universities enact "the core terms of critical pedagogy...student

empowerment, social justice, liberation, democracy, and responsible citizenship" (Thomson-Bunn). The

goal of this project is to understand what tools HBCUs have utilized in order to create a system that

successfully empowers (primarily disempowered African-American working class) students and how this

empowerment simultaneously achieves the goals laid out by the "Dewey-Freire model of education"

(Shor).

1. <u>Introduction</u>

> *The classroom practices of critical educators may engage with actual, historically specific struggles…but the overwhelming majority of academic articles appearing in major educational journals, although apparently based on actual practices, rarely locate theoretical constructs within them. (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 300)*

Although Elizabeth Ellsworth and many other scholars have continually pointed out the lack of definition, praxis, and theory within critical pedagogues' current approach to the critical classroom, what is implicit in critiques such as these is a desire to retain the ideals and goals of the pedagogy despite current practices' approach to achieving them (Durst, Ellsworth, Thelin, Thomas-Bunn). The ideal of creating a classroom that empowers students to understand, practice, and advocate for social justice, liberation, democracy, and responsible citizenship should not be devalued because of the difficulty achieving such a hefty goal (Thomas-Bunn 2014). As William Thelin puts it:

> Some scholarship suggests that critical pedagogy should be abandoned for more pragmatic goals. While the democratic and political sensibilities of critical pedagogy require more from the instructor, classrooms that on the surface do not appear to work in teaching students should not be seen as signs that the pedagogy is not worth the extra effort. (115

While effort, here, is describing the tasks of creating, organizing, and instructing a critical classroom, it should not be lost that the "worth," or value of such effort is what is being questioned. What is considered more valuable than the effort required to create the critical classrooms, and how many individual shortcomings constitute a systemic failure are questions that outline the power dynamics involved in the multifaceted organization of pedagogical approaches.

Often, this valuing, or rather devaluing, of critical education is validated through a proclaimed absence of plausible achievability. The attempts of those who have tried and fallen short are used as evidence of failure as opposed to being viewed as the ways we might "move towards a better understanding of blunders themselves and what they tell us about critical teaching and learning" (Tassoni & Thelin 111). Blundering, or finding limiting factors that expose the shortcomings of a critical approach or practice, or encountering a counter-productive interaction with a critical classroom, is integral to the challenge of achieving the goals of critical pedagogy despite current shortcomings. Ideals such as "student empowerment and challenges to the status quo obviously [can] not run seamlessly and still be what they [claim]" (Tassoni &Thelin 112). The valuing of this type of education, then, must be embedded in a desire that transcends traditional understanding of pedagogical trial and error, but instead sees pedagogical errors as opportunities. Therefore, this thesis will understand the gap between current practice and theory that Ellsworth points out, not as an error, but as an affordance to us scholars which allows us to propose theoretical constructs that could inform a different approach to the critical classroom to better achieve the goals of critical pedagogy.

Taking advantage of this affordance, I will argue in this thesis that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have utilized and continue to utilize mentors and the concept of mentorship to achieve the aforementioned goals effectively. Samuel DuBois Cook points out the ways in which HBCUs were designed to intentionally achieve these goals by saying that "from their very inception, Black institutions of higher education were agents of empowerment– intellectual, economic, social, political, constitutional, legal, and cultural–with a vision of and commitment to social, political, constitutional, legal, and cultural change" (Cook 2006). Although there are a multitude of approaches to empowering students as such, embedded within

the HBCU mission is a duty of the members of these institutions to mentor attendees. While

discussing overlapping features and enactments of a corpus of HBCU mission statements, Travis

Albritton found that

> The academic mission of HBCUs has been undergirded by strong recognition among
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> administrators and faculty for the need to empower young Black men and women no
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> matter where they fall along the academic spectrum. As such, since their formation,
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> HBCUs have functioned as centers where students can find the necessary resources to
>
> strengthen their academic skills. The tasks of faculty at these institutions have been both
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> academic enrichment and career preparation. This dual focus speaks to the fact that early
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> HBCU administrators accepted the fact that any efforts to advance the race must involve
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> a willingness to demonstrate a commitment to support students with a wide range of
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> academic capabilities. (312)

Coupling the knowledge of the origins of these institutions along with an understanding of their

theoretical frameworks exposes the similarity of goals the HBCU system shares with critical

pedagogy. Understanding the African theoretical constructs the art of mentorship is built on, and

acknowledging the historical and current employment of the art of mentorship in non-traditional[1]

institutions in general, but at HBCUs specifically, can highlight the elements of the approach that

allow for their productivity and effectiveness in creating the critical classroom. I will not argue

that these institutions and the individuals within them never experience blunders; however, by

exploring their exigency, their mission, their purpose, and their goals, I hope to identify how they

have been able to, as a whole, achieve goals that are perceived as idealistic in the scholarship of

critical pedagogy.

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[1] Non-traditional here is referring to academies of higher education that are not the predominately white research
tier 1 institution.

The productivity of HBCU mentorship has been previously investigated and qualified based on its ability to contribute to the successful matriculation of African American[2] students (Palmer & Maramba , Palmer & Gasman , Craig , and Fries-Britt & Turner); however, none have analyzed this pedagogical practice as a tool that creates a critical classroom. Through collecting perspectives of alumni (via interviews) who potentially were mentored by these institutions, I aim to identify how instructors, faculty, and staff utilized mentorship at their institutions, what effects it had on alumni when they were students, and whether or not it made a lasting impact on their lives during and beyond their attendance of an HBCU.

Through intersecting the problems and approaches of critical pedagogy with pedagogical theory and practices of mentoring at HBCUs, this work has the potential to identify tools that may help institutions to help students to become critical thinkers who feel empowered to enact change on communities both inside and outside of the academy. It has the potential to inform first year programs of alternative approaches to introducing students of different backgrounds to scholarship and becoming an academic. It has the potential to diversify the conversations of voice, identity, and agency in the classroom. By bridging the largely exclusive conversations of critical classroom practices with the largely excluded voices of othered academic spaces such as the HBCU, this work aims to disrupt the conversations of futility and substitute them with the hope of possibility.

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[2] It is important to note that some of the studies being referred to focused solely on African American male students, but not all were gender based which is why this element is omitted here.

2. Literature review

2.1 Problematizing Traditional Education

Before we can understand HBCU mentorship and its application to the goals of critical pedagogy, we must first have an understanding of the critical approach to education and its emergence within the American higher education system. Approximately one hundred years ago John Dewey asked "Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by a passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice?" (Dewey). Dewey points out that although pedagogues were continuously toting and promoting an education that valued "an active and constructive process," they continued to employ practices that reinforced a unidirectional ideology of education (Dewey). He argued that the source of the disconnect between the purpose of education and the practices of educators is the rift between what societies expect of educators and what educators aspire to achieve. Dewey also points to the dichotomous beliefs that educators hold as their principles–the desire to disseminate knowledge to passive receptors and the desire to inspire action–as a source of the misinterpretation of purpose. According to Dewey,

> There cannot be two sets of ethical principles, one for life in the school, and the other for life outside of the school…The moral responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to society. The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain specific work,--to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society. The educational system which does not recognize that this fact entails upon it an ethical responsibility is derelict and a defaulter. (1909)

With this, Dewey introduced the idea that American education is intrinsically purposed to do more than supply information to a receptacle, an idea that was adopted and furthered by Paulo Freire who deemed this practice "the banking method" (Freire 72).

Freire more explicitly identifies how what Dewey called traditional education positions teaching as "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (72). He argues that this narrow understanding of and approach to education limits students to "receiving, filing, and storing deposits" and envisioning knowledge as "a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (Freire 72). Freire (73) argued that the banking concept of education is an oppressive structure based on the following identifiable elements of this approach:

(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;

(b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;

(c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;

(d) the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;

(e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;

(f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;

(g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;

(h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;

(i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;

(j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

Not only are these each describing some aspect of traditional education that validate the power of the teacher over the student, but Freire also acknowledges the choice in the matter. Seeing these qualities as avoidable oppressive hindrances, Freire chose to frame specific practices that work towards the creation of a liberating approach to education. He defines a liberating education as one that "consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information. It is a learning situation in

which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors—teacher on the one hand and students on the other" (Freire 79). He goes on to explain that a liberating education, or, "education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people." (Freire 79). In fact, "the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seem[s] to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization" (hooks). This denial of humanity, and the desire for liberation from the limitation of actions–the positioning of students as objects only and not actors–"is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity" (Freire 80). This yearning to eliminate the dehumanization of students that can, has, and does occur in the traditional approach to education (the banking concept) is the catalyst that caused a shift towards a more critical, engaged, and liberating education.

2.2 The Shift to Critical Pedagogy

The shift in perception of educational practices that followed John Dewey and Paulo Freire's criticism of the traditional approach inspired the creation of what we today call critical pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy can be defined as education that

is not simply concerned with offering students new ways to think critically and to act with authority as agents in the classroom; [but] it is also concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and

disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take

responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit. (Giroux).

In saying this, Giroux is explaining that "the primary preoccupation of critical pedagogy is with social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and social relations" 212). These and other studies have built on the Dewey-Freire model of education with intentions to create an education system that "represents a paradigmatic shift from retrograde, oppressive and reactionary approaches" (Orelus 2015). This paradigm shift can be identified by the field's focus on empowering the marginalized, decentralizing the oppressive, and building communities with equal access to power both in and outside of the academy (Giroux 109). This shift seeks to re-structure education so that it is not only concerned with the absorption of empirical knowledge, but "is dedicated to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power" in order to "expose and to contest oppressive forms of power as expressed in socio-economic class elitism, Eurocentric ways of viewing the world, patriarchal oppression, and imperialism around the world" (Kincheloe). This shift is cemented in the belief that "the humanist, revolutionary educator cannot wait for [liberating education] to materialize. From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (Freire 82). Concisely stated, "Critical Pedagogy is interested in the margins of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and marginalization" (Kincheloe). This shift, then, pushed those who were championing it to form the goals–specific desired outcomes in the restructuring of education– and practices that could achieve said goals. Synthesizing the aforementioned definitions of critical pedagogy, along with others, Heather Thomson-Bunn identifies the core goals of critical pedagogy as "student

empowerment, social justice, liberation, democracy, and responsible citizenship" (Thomson-Bunn). As social justice, liberation, and democracy are related in that they focus on students' freedom to critique, alter, or depart from presupposed social and societal structures, I shall combine them under the term critical awareness. Although Critical Pedagogy is discussed as one singular approach to education, in fact it is a conglomeration of approaches united by shared goals. As bell hooks describes it, "Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom" (67). While this performative act may be seen as ambiguous and undefined, it is important to understand that, "amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (Dewey). In order to understand and foster this connection, critical pedagogues explore the ways that "the academy" can become a place that encourages and develops:

> habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse (Shor 7).

The sort of exploration is enacted through a variety of approaches in a variety of spaces all of which I cannot historicize. Therefore, I shall explore two such approaches being taken to achieve these goals that most align with my eventual objective of introducing the HBCU to this scholarship.

One of these approaches is the use of dialogue as a tool to produce critical thought that is rooted in communal citizenship. As Freire puts it, "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them" (1970). He goes on to explain that "founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogues is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction of terms if dialogue—loving, humble, and full of faith—did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world" (Freire 79). Building from this, Lankshear and McLaren defined the term critical literacy as a practice which "emphasize[s] the social construction of reading, writing and text production within political contexts of inequitable economic, cultural, political, and institutional structures" (Bishop 52). Synthesizing the work of Hilary Janks (177), Elizabeth Bishop posited that there are–

> four possible orientations for future approaches to critical literacy education based on different perspectives on the relationship between language and power: (a) to understand how language maintains social and political forms of domination; (b) to provide access to dominant forms of language without compromising the integrity of non-dominant forms; (c) to promote a diversity which requires attention to the way that uses of language create social identities; and (d) to bring a design perspective that emphasizes the need to use and select from a wide range of available cultural sign systems. (57)

This approach to dialogue, ideally, will create a classroom in which dialogue can be repurposed from a tool that imparts knowledge, to one that discussed and debates power, and access to that power. It becomes a liberating tool that empowers students to engage critically.

That engagement, however, can be disrupted by the hidden curriculum's influence on all classroom practices and discussions. The hidden curriculum has been defined as the "unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life" (Giroux 124). It guides the understanding of what is acceptable in any academic setting and can therefore be used to "accept[] uncritically the existing relationship between schools and the larger society" (Giroux 124). Used in this traditional way, the hidden curriculum "serves to reproduce stability and cohesion in the wider society," even when the pre-existing structures are anti-liberating and oppressive. Giroux argues that, "the liberal perspective on the hidden curriculum begins from an entirely different assessment of the relationship between power and social order in the classroom" (Giroux 125). It instead investigates

(a) the actual and hidden content of schooling; (b) the principles that govern the form and content of teacher-student interaction; and (c) the importance of seeing educational knowledge as commonsense categories and typifications selected from the larger culture and society that teachers, students, and researchers use to give meaning to their action. (Giroux 125)

This critical approach is crucial because "underneath their explicit and official purposes, curricular and pedagogical processes are organized in the interest of elite groups, and that they function to preserve social structure and hegemony" (De Lissovoy). By subverting this purpose,

one can acknowledge the traditional approach as a "violation" "motivated rather than the mere by-product of a more fundamental imperative of reproduction or normalization" (De Lissavoy).

However, this subversion of the mass-reproduced normalized academic approach to dialogue and the hidden curriculum is often forgone in the non-critical classroom as are most approaches and practices supposed by critical pedagogues. The absence of these tools allow the traditional approach, its subjectivities, and oppressive nature to define practices, tools, and relationships within the classroom. The shift to critical pedagogy is championed by the desire to insert alternative approaches that combat the grip that traditional education has on the classroom.

2.3 Critique of Critical Pedagogy

Unfortunately, many Critical Pedagogy scholars have found difficulty in successfully creating such a classroom, particularly on any large and repeatable scale. Academic factors such as administrative goals, course descriptions, syllabi, assessment, and much more constrain instructors who might otherwise better achieve the goals of critical pedagogy. In fact, these constraints have led some scholars to question the feasibility of the Critical Pedagogy classroom. Heather Thomas-Bunn summarized Maxine Hairston challenging the effectiveness of Critical Pedagogy thusly: "a political pedagogy must be considered in terms of its effects on students— not its ideal or envisioned effects on them, but its practical effects, given the structure of power present in an academic institution." Russell Durst points out that "Critical Pedagogy has been a part of composition for nearly twenty years now. It's fair to ask: At what point are you no longer blundering for change? At what point are you simply blundering"(111)? More direct to the

critiques, some scholars feel as if the lack of definition, praxis, and success[3] warrants a departure from critical pedagogy.

Heather Thomson-Bunn highlighted one of the biggest discrepancies in the definition (or difficulty in achieving a functioning definition) of critical pedagogy by pointing out that "the current discourse of critical pedagogy circulates almost exclusively among academics; students rarely play an active role in defining key terms and ideas" (Thomson-Bunn). She identifies the inevitability that "whether we want it or not, we have a certain degree ([she]'d argue a high degree) of power over our students, by virtue of being the ones who get to define critical pedagogy and all that it entails" (Thomson-Bunn). Because critical classes "introduce students to concepts such as 'critical thinking,'…this generally means that students are introduced— implicitly or explicitly—to what their teacher has decided that being 'critical' means" (Thomson-Bunn). Gabel furthers this critique by offering that "unfortunately, when critical pedagogy describes its subjects, people with diverse abilities[4] generally are not in the discourse and their absence causes problems for the practical implications of critical pedagogy" (179). This lack of representation in definitional power can have impactful negative effects on students and teachers alike. Using the first-year writing classroom as an example, Thomson-Bunn warns that that the goals of Critical Pedagogy are "the abstractions that lurk in the corners of our classrooms. [They] all reach beyond what many people (including students) might define as aspects of good writing, all have a sociopolitical dimension, and all might be imagined and enacted in vastly different ways" (Thomson-Bunn). This sea of ambiguity can, and does, create a disconnect between the

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[3] Success here is referring to the ability to prove achievement of a/the goal(s) of critical pedagogy, and to credit an approach/tool to said achievement. On the other hand, praxis is merely referring to naming and identifying a tool/approach (based in the theory) to be used regardless of its "success."

[4] In using the term "abilities," Gabel is referring to students' and teachers who are disabled. Because this is not my specific use here, I will not go into the topic, but I do not want to disempower the focus of her critique.

goal and desire of the teacher, and the expectations and desires of the students; so much so that neither party agrees on the purpose of the class (Thomson-Bunn). If we (as instructors) seek to identify the aspects of our pedagogical approaches that our students had a hand in identifying, and those that they did not, then we are doomed to subject them to possible perceptions of themselves as either allied with, or in opposition to, our pedagogy, one of which can be detrimental to participation, enjoyment, and potentially achievement (Thomson-Bunn). The question that the topic of defining critical pedagogy comes down to is: "Do we actually have faith in our students' ability to make good choices for themselves through a classroom governed by a participatory pedagogy?" (Thomson-Bunn 2014). The problem is "diversity, difference, and division are not uncommon, and trust opens us up to the possibility of antagonism and rejection and can potentially create a classroom environment that feels counter-productive" to the nice and tidy expectations of our ideal classroom (Thomson-Bunn 2014). This complication, in absence of trust (or faith as Freire would call it), creates the traditional top-down approach to education in which students are supposed to accept the instructor's knowledge about the topic (in this case critical knowledge). However, if faith and trust are employed, the students have the right and the power to derail and resist any plan or approach that the instructor has prepared due to the sharing of power. Unfortunately, trust, faith, and empowerment are ambiguous abstractions with loose definitions and ephemeral approaches; all complicated factors to truly comprehend, let alone apply to a classroom.

These complications highlight one of the largest and most common critiques of critical pedagogy. Many teachers/instructors believe that Critical Pedagogy is a wonderful ideal, but that it is practically unattainable because the approaches and tools to doing so are incredibly vague and somewhat oxymoronic. Elizabeth Ellsworth goes as far as to say that–

Critical pedagogues have acknowledged the socially constructed and legitimated

authority that teachers/professors hold over students. Yet theorists of critical pedagogy

have failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulating the

institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students, or of the

essentially paternalistic project of education itself…Strategies such as student

empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the

authoritarian nature of the student/teacher relationship intact. (298)

Ellsworth describes this as a use of rhetoric to disguise a lack in practice; as a sleight of hand

maneuver that encourages the audience to focus on the goals and theory while ignoring the

outcome (289). She argues that Critical Pedagogy, in its very origins, is flawed in that it is based

on the ideals of "emancipatory education" which delineates those in need of emancipation, and

the emancipator. Although Critical Pedagogy is supposed to combat traditional top-down

education, this notion of emancipator presumes the existence of "a teacher who knows the object

of study 'better' than do the students" (Ellsworth 299). The issue here is this presumption can be

incredibly false especially when the topics are oppression, marginalization, and any other form

of critical knowledge and/or experience. Depending on the experiences of the students and the

teacher, students may know much more than the teacher about oppression, marginalization, and

emancipation. Therefore, the approach to creating an emancipatory, anti-oppressive classroom

through creating student empowerment and facilitating dialogue become problematic.

Beyond this, the lack of definitions and proven praxis lends to an overall disbelief in the

viability of this pedagogy. Russel Durst argues that although critical pedagogy brings to the

forefront confrontations with and discussions of ideological topics, that does not, and in his

experience, did not mean that students would be eager or willing to interact with such topics.

Durst, along with others who tried to employ critical pedagogy, found that students shied away, complained, and even departed due to the imposing enactment of critical pedagogy (Durst 112). Durst would rather "a less-confrontational pedagogy, reflective instrumentalism, which accepts students' pragmatic reasons for attending college, seeking to establish common ground between teacher and student" (112). His approach would also "build social consciousness, seeing these two goals as complementary, not mutually exclusive" (112). This would give way for students to receive an education in what they came for (which he found was overwhelmingly "career-oriented goals" and not "political implications" (Thelin 119). Gabel poses this question:

> Can we locate a pedagogy wherein discourse is as liberatory as possible, where caring yet vulnerable and risky relations exist, and where pedagogical participants are narrators of their own texts?...It would seem that critical pedagogy offers the best chance of reaching the goal of a fully inclusive pedagogy that accommodates opportunities to write the self and live in free relation to others. (178).

And although it would seem that way, critics, including Gabel continue to identify the ways in which this approach falls short of its goals. While the question Gabel poses is not only valid, but is warranted, the assumption following the question is evidence of what I will argue is one of the most egregious and harmful overlooks and presuppositions in not only the realm of critical theory and pedagogy, but in any research pertaining to "the university."

2.4 "The University" vs "Alternative Institutions"

When discussing higher education, at some point the phrase, "the university" will be used. While seemingly harmless, the amount of oversight in the generalization of educational practices and strategies is incredibly harmful to the progression of many concepts; critical pedagogy being one. Although scholarship has been aware that "when we discuss critical pedagogy...we are usually talking about a theory that moves beyond the walls of the academy

and does so as part of its central purpose," very seldom do we look to these marginalized or excluded spaces for assistance in composing and/or editing our theoretical frameworks, our practical approaches, and even our understanding of those marginalized or excluded groups themselves (Thomas-Bunn). Often, our scholarship on critical pedagogy (a field whose central focus is on marginalized, oppressed, decentralized, disempowered groups) is theorized, composed, and edited by non-marginalized people (Gabel 183). This, in and of itself, is not a problem; however, the fact that the definitions of the practice and its failures and successes are not inclusive of all places and spaces in higher education in which this approach to education is taking place is problematic for those places and spaces, and for the field itself.

I myself have come across the phrase "the university" numerous times throughout my graduate academic career[5]. Each time (both inside and outside of the field of composition), this phrase was being used in alignment with how David Bartholomae defined it in his work "Inventing the University." The University, in the eyes of my contemporaries, was a shared imaginary space in which we assumed the demographics of the students and the faculty, as well as their desires, successes, failures, difficulties, and effective aiding approaches and tools. It functions as a generalizing category that bridges knowledge barriers for more productive conversations about academic education. Scholars at my institution and at others, the media, and non-academic population use this term to describe not only an imaginary generalized space, but also, an imaginary universal student who knows nothing upon entry to the University, comes into contact with the most prestigious of institutions, and leaves an expert ready to champion his/her knowledge. Bartholomae defines students as hopeful champions of knowledge who lack the experience and exposure to do so and therefore becomes an imitator who can speak the language

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[5] This is especially important in that I am only a third-year M.A. student who has only been in rhetoric and composition for two years.

enough to fake it. In describing students who "have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse…as though were easily and comfortably one with their audience," Bartholomae assumed (1) that students are intrinsically foreigners whose only hope is to adapt, or be adopted by "the university," and more importantly (2) that all institutions of higher learning of all shapes and sizes deployed this practice with the same goals and outcomes (1986). Unlike these presumptions, this was not my experience at my undergraduate institution, Dillard University. Because I attended a Historically Black University, the presumption that I would have to assimilate was replaced instead with an expectation that I explored and understood who I was. The expectation that I learn "the university's" discourse was replaced by conversations about the necessity to maintain a multitude of voices for both cultural-historical and financial-economic reasons. For me, as a HBCU alumni, and for many others at alternative institutions (e.g. community colleges, liberal art colleges, private religious colleges, etc.), the overarching assumptions of what education does, what education looks like, and the limitations and opportunities of education do not necessarily match those of the presupposed university.

The perpetual mentioning of "the university" in education research is almost always in reference to one specific type of university: the tier one predominately white[6] research institution. This generalization of academic spaces has blinded much of the research guiding critical pedagogy in that, the discussion being had about effectiveness, practices, and tools are being had at these predominately white research tier 1 institutions, about these institutions, concerning only the goals and the missions of this type of institution. The goals of critical pedagogy, however, are being explored, debated, and (I will argue) sometimes met by alternative institutions in general, but at Historically Black Institutions specifically. Before I argue this

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[6] Using predominately white is in reference to PWIs or predominately White intuitions as opposed to HBCU or historically Black institutions.

point, I want to quickly point out some of the other alternative institutions that are, and have been, doing this same kind of work with (what further research will be needed to argue is) success.

- Liberal Arts Colleges

The oldest and most prestigious colleges in America (Harvard and Yale for example) once considered themselves Liberal Arts Colleges. Although many of these colleges have since abandoned the Liberal Arts both as an approach and as a title, the American approach to Liberal Arts education (which has been greatly adapted by most liberal art education around the globe) has focused and continues to focus on offering an intimate education to its students. Loren Pope described these institutions thusly:

> The focus is on the student, not the faculty; he is heavily involved in his own education. There are no passive ears; students and faculty work so closely together, they even coauthor publications. Teaching is an act of love. There is not only a mentor relationship in class but professors become hiking companions, intramural teammates, dinner companions, and friends. Learning is collaborative rather than competitive; values are central; there is a strong sense of community. They are places of great synergy, where the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. Aspirations are raised, young people are empowered. (122).

Even within this definition, which makes no reference to a critical approach, it becomes apparent that the Liberal Arts approach is closely aligned with the goals of critical pedagogy. Philip L. Harriman forewarned educators in 1935 that,

> The greatest danger confronting the liberal-arts college is that it, too, will develop fixed principles. Such a procedure is contrary to the ideals of the movement and indicates a

failure to profit by the lessons of the history of higher education. The liberal-arts college

seeks to give its students the best education to meet the demands of a changing social

order. As soon as its ideals crystallize into formal principles and a static curriculum, it

then ceases to reflect the spirit of Plato, Alcuin, Hippocrates, Vesalius, and the many

other pioneers in progressive education. (64)

Although it is debatable whether or not this prophecy has been met, what is apparent here is the

fear of an oppressive and anti-liberating approach to education. Harriman exposed an intrinsic

desire to maintain the fluidity of education; the focus on educating the students to meet changing

social demands free from solidified values materialized in curriculum. This desire to educate

students to be aware of the current critical spectrum alongside the situating of students at the

center mirrors the goal of critical pedagogy even here at the birth of the American academy.

-Alternative schools (The Highlander School)

I will define alternative schools as adult-educating institutions that have an origin and

exigency vastly different than that of the tier one research institution. Examples of these would

be land-grant institutions that were founded in order to specifically educate and advance the

uneducated; private religious institutions that were founded on the principles of imparting not

only academic knowledge, but moral and spiritual knowledge and practices as well; and culture,

ethnicity, race based institutions that seek to empower (not only, but specifically) groups that are

and have been othered by the majority. Dale Jacobs says the purpose of the institution is "to

empower poor and working class people by helping the draw upon their own experiences to

address the particular problems facing their communities" (128). Looking into one such example,

the Highlander Folk School, the alignment with the goals of critical pedagogy is again apparent.

John M Glen begins his book about Highlander by stating that

The Highlander Folk School was the product of a personal and intellectual odyssey by its cofounder, Myles Falls Horton. During the summer of 1927, while conducting a vacation Bible school in the small Cumberland Plateau town of Ozone, Tennessee, Horton discovered that bringing local adults together to discuss their common concerns and to find their own solutions was a far more effective way to address community problems than a conventional education program. (1)

From its very conception, the focus of the eventual recognized school was the wellbeing, empowerment, and critical awareness of the community. The school spent the fifty years after its founding making large impacts on the local communities and their labor unions, supporting racial integration in the American South, and even educated many of the Civil Rights Leaders, most famous of which was Rosa Parks (Glen 1988). Students at Highlander took classes in music which tended to focus on local folk music, economics which was specifically applied to its application in the local communities for the students and their families, language which sought to understand the Appalachian dialects and their origins, and many other community specific courses. In fact, Glen recorded that "a psychology class was formed after the wife of a neighboring farmer complained about her unruly children [and] a cultural geography class was started after neighbors looked at snapshots taken by Horton and West in Europe" (4. Every aspect, not just of this school, but of many alternative institutions are individualized and optimized to empower the students and the communities of their students. Through engaging in a truly communal practice of education, these institutions value the critical approaches ability to empower students to affect and change communities.

- Community/Junior and Vocational/Trade Colleges

The last type of institution I want to pay homage to is the one that is most accredited today: the Community (or Junior) college. "Community colleges in the United States have been

described many ways over the years, as 'democracy's college,' the 'open door college,' and the 'people's college'" (Pusser & Levin). Although they date as far back as the turn of the twentieth century, Community Colleges became a major contributor to the education of Americans mostly due to WWII veterans' access to higher education via the G.I. bill. With such a large previously disempowered group suddenly gaining the economic power to attain further education, the higher education system needed a more accessible and practical system that could educate and train a diverse student population. They were, and still are, diverse in that, while some are seeking to "transfer" into a university upon graduation, others are taking advantage of vocational training, and some are testing their aptitude to survive the academic sphere. The accessibility and affordability creates a space in which it is nearly impossible to assume the reason for participation. Pusser and Levin found that "community colleges must enable all students to take their rightful places in the public sphere, and to become critical thinkers and engaged citizens capable of claiming places in the broader political economy and making contributions to the wider society" (Pusser and Levin). This need to be inclusive of "all," create a type of institution that casts a wide net and offers entrances to as many fields as possible as opposed to the largely inaccessible historical existence of "the university." This inclusivity and focus on adapting to the needs of the masses creates a space that is student focused and student empowering.

- So What?

The importance of pointing these approaches to education is to make it clear that, although this project will focus solely on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, they are by no means the only marginalized educators nor the only producers of critical education. However, they are one, of an endless multitude, that by their own accounts, successfully achieve the goals that some scholars of "the university" would have us believe are unattainable.

Understanding and denouncing this limitation by acknowledging the vastness of the audience of this topic is important because underestimating the size can lead to limiting generalizations about both the participants and possibilities. Because of the exclusion of African American bodies, ideals, and ideas from the majority–from the spaces in which white bodies, ideals, and ideas were being shared, reinforced, and solidified–knowledge of and about Historically Black approaches to education are only now beginning to permeate "major" scholarship. Expediting this process, especially on the topic of educational reform, is crucial because of possible implications (as a result of shared knowledge) on not only the field of critical pedagogy but also the First Year experience, the humanities, and any other classroom/educational space that aspires to the critical.

2.5 The HBCU Approach to Education

This leaves us with the question: Why HBCUs specifically? And here is where I must admit my own bias. As a proud Dillard-ite (an alumni of Dillard University), I have a strong belief in the value of not only my institution, but all HBCUs that have historically strived to critically develop students of color (particularly socio-economically disempowered African-American students). I do believe that a focus on any approach to education identified above could be substituted with my focus on HBCUs and make the same arguments, but it is my personal relationship to the system of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that draws me to these institutions specifically. However, I am not the only person who has acknowledged that "HBCUs have long been developers of minds, purveyors of dreams, and the pipeline to opportunity and success" (Wingate 111).

The origin of the HBCU is wrapped completely in an understanding of the historically racist structure of the American education system. As Louis B. Gallien, Jr. state, "the history of higher education for African Americans in the United States has been one of legal denial, uneven

access, separate institutions, and recent quarrels over affirmative action" (13). Many HBCUs

were founded with federal Land-Grants offered under the Morrill Acts, taking advantage of the

post-Civil-War opportunity to educate former slaves (Cook 5). Others, however, were privately

founded, often relying on the assistance of the religious[7] institutions that helped found them. Dr.

Cook points out that "Private Black colleges and Universities, despite the heavy odds against

them and persistent, painful financial burdens and woes, generally survived and succeeded.

Many of them are well into their second century of service and contribution to better lives…not

only [in] the Black community but also [in] the South, the country, and the world" (6). From the

very beginning, HBCUs were emancipatory institutions working outside of the scope of the

academy at large, without the influences of other system of education, with a different purpose

than other systems of education. While "the university" was focused solely on furthering

knowledge amongst the land-owning elite, HBCUs (decades before Dewey's first publication)

were focused on using knowledge as an emancipatory tool for the "elite" and "disempowered"

alike (Cook 8). As Cook so eloquently puts it:

> "In talking about HBCUs as institutions of empowerment and social and historical
>
> change, let it be clear that we are not ascribing omniscience to their founders and other
>
> original constituencies in terms of what these educational vessels and incubators would
>
> become. We are dealing with the evolution and development of institutions, ideas, ideals,
>
> expectations, aspirations, and hopes. We are talking about the seeds planted, cultivated,
>
> and harvested in the gardens and fields of the continuum of human experience and
>
> adventure" (8).

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[7] Dillard University, for example, is a Methodist University.

This imagery of planting the seeds and working the land captures perfectly the ideals embedded inside of the HBCU's approach to education. These ideals are not only embedded in the theoretical understanding of the approach, but are materialized in text form in what is deemed the HBCU mission.

The missions recorded within the mission statements of various Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)all have a few things in common, one of which is an attention and dedication to the growth and development of students over and beyond intellect and academics. "While all American higher educational institutions have had as a part of their mission research, teaching, and service, all historically Black institutions have, since their founding, stressed the importance of developing the whole person, intellectually, morally, ethically, and spiritually," according to Elaine Johnson Copeland (53. Unlike the mission statements of many research tier one Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) which have only recently, if at all, mentioned non-academic development of students, examinations of HBCU mission statements have shown that "they are concerned with cultural values, ethics, character development, civic responsibility, leadership, and service to the community" (Copeland 53). The concerns within the HBCU mission statement communicate the mission (the values and goals of the institution) in order to achieve the three main purposes of the mission statement. First, they provide instructions and create borders that define and outline actions that conform to and conflict with institutional ideologies; second, they inspire unity, direction, and purpose for members of the institutions; third, they communicate the historical and current values of the institutions to external constituents (Hartley & Morphew 456). Using these purposes, we can understand the ways in which mission statements, and the missions they record, guide practice at HBCUs.

Understanding this, however, does not erase the need to validate the use of mission statements as a reliable source of information pertaining to an institution. I will argue that, when investigating HBCUs and their missions, one must take the "glass half-full" approach and see them as instructional and impactful written records of a more abstract mission (Hartley & Morphew 459). This is because the guiding missions of HBCUs effectively function as Giroux's "hidden curriculum" in that they expose the actual content of the education by intentionally including intellectual, moral, ethical, and spiritual, knowledge; they form the student-teacher relationship by encouraging personal and intensive investments in and development of students; and they give meaning to actions based on the cultural context of creating aware and involved students/citizens who focus on community engagement and leadership . The HBCU mission differs from Giroux's definition of the hidden curriculum, however, in that it is visible, apparent, and even heralded, working as active participants in creating the academic atmosphere and community as opposed to passive behind-the-scenes directors. In fact, the "hidden curriculum" is actually not hidden at all within HBCUs, but instead is intentionally at the forefront of the system bringing attention to the inherently political and social structures of not only education, but knowledge itself. In fact, as Henry Ponder (111) puts it, the mission statements of HBCUs have these common themes: fostering leadership, education of the whole person, communication–oral and written, value of liberal education, knowledge and appreciation of different cultures, service to community, and moral and spiritual values, none of which are explicitly dealing with empirical knowledge, but instead are values and goals that can be applied at will. This is because the inherent understanding of the purpose of the HBCU mission is to create "a culture of ethnic consciousness," which…includes campus orientation, residential experience, student support services, pedagogy, expectations, territorial integrity, and campus

leadership" (Shaw 92). All of the research points to HBCUs being foremost focused on student development and growth within every facet of the education process including, but not limited to, administration, pedagogy, and classroom practice as defined within the mission of the institutions.

Enacting this "ethnic consciousness" in the HBCU classroom is a matter of engaging students in what Mary Louise Pratt (91) would call the "contact zone." She defines the contact zone as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 91). The inherent socio-political nature of an HBCU education necessitates that the classroom at such an institution is a contact zone at all times focusing on and dealing with the cultural aspects of the topic. It goes without saying that the empirical knowledge of the individual course is always present and presented to the class; however, the centralization and preservation of the "humanistic flavor that promotes integrative learning and civic responsibility" is also always present, is equally as important, and is uniformly integrated into every course regardless of department or school at Historically Black Colleges (Shaw 95). Acknowledging that the majority of HBCUs still maintain a predominately Black student population, and that "minority communities possess traditions of cultural appropriation and resistance which have enabled them to engage in [some of] Mary Louise Pratt's…'literate arts of the contact zone;'" what exists beyond racial homogeneity is the persistence of HBCUs through attention to and understanding of the needs of their student population to create and maintain[8] a system of higher education that not only offers a baccalaureate (and the academic and intellectual knowledge needed to achieve such a degree),

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[8] Barring financial difficulties in HBCU maintenance that are mostly out of their control.

but also, a cultural, social, political, spiritual, and moral education that enlightens and empowers

critical thinkers, and often, community leaders . The point being, getting to know students and

creating an institution that is flexibly built upon the needs of those students is not something

afforded to any group, but is a transferable value that has potential to create the critical

classroom. HBCUs get to know the cultural, spiritual, and family backgrounds of their students

in order to learn more about the needs of their students (Ponder 113). As Ponder puts it,

> Today colleges and universities are expected to do more for their students. HBCUs accept
>
> this challenge willingly,…they accept students where they are academically and proceed
>
> to educate them to the level where they ought to be at graduation. These institutions feel
>
> this responsibility to their students, their parents, their alumni, the community, the nation,
>
> and the world. (113)

This dedication and feeling of responsibility falls largely on the shoulders of the individuals

(usually, but not always instructors) who spend a large chunk of their time building these bonds

with the students. These mentors and their practices, to be defined in the next section, are the

keys to identifying and understanding the ways in which HBCUs have been effective in

achieving the goals of critical pedagogy.

2.6 Mentors and Mentoring at the HBCU

> *Research suggests that the more successful African American college students had a*
> *mentor (or group of mentors) who encouraged and critique their work and followed them*
> *through their graduate school experience and beyond…African American students*
> *continuously maintain that they respond best to professors who care about them. This*
> *feeling of care and concern is a serious issue in the retention and eventual graduation*
> *rate of African American students across the country. (Gallien, 2005, p 9-10)*

I start with Gallien's words because I think it's important to begin with an understanding

that the practice of mentorship at HBCUs is more than an academic and intellectual endeavor. It

is an act of affect and emotion, of dedication and sacrifice, and of community building and

preservation. Much like Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* focused on elements such as love, faith, trust, and belief, the HBCU mentor operates to make better the academic, intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional student, what is commonly referred to as "the whole person/student" in HBCU scholarship. Before discussing how this is done, I want to first examine where these ideals originate and on what frameworks they are built.

As a way to respond to the aforementioned critique of critical approaches' lack of theoretical framing, I will briefly discuss the three pan-African frameworks that are present in the act of mentoring. The first is the concept of "othermothering." Othermothering is the action when members of an oppressed community care for and nurture non-related younger and/or less experienced members of the community as if they were family or children (Mawhinney 214). Othermothering is often associated with minority and otherwise oppressed women who have children of their own, but is enacted by other non-female and non-mother members as well. As Mawhinney (212) records, "the concept of othermothering grew out of a survival mechanism during slavery when children and biological parents were separated at auction, and 'fictive kin' would take on mothering responsibilities for the orphaned children." This practice has not only survived within local and familial communities, but has embedded itself in many African-American spaces such as the Black church and HBCUs. It has been not only an applicable approach to the student teacher relationship at HBCUs, and has never gotten the backlash in these spaces that it has in the mainstream academic sphere. As made apparent by Mawhinney's (217) five expectations of the HBCU teacher, HBCUs embrace and even, to the point of expectance, a sense of closeness and caring. These five expectations are as follows:

> **1. Pedagogical Commitment**. The teacher's role is to insure that learning is occurring in the classroom. There is a commitment to providing extended time and care in creating lessons, while also setting high and achievable academic standards.

2. Relatedness. Similar to Vogt's (2002) work, relatedness is the approachability of the teacher and providing time for building the relationship. In my case of othermothering, race plays an added role of relatability.
3. Advocacy. Often connected to relatedness, advocacy is the teacher being the voice for the student when needed.
4. Expression of Care. The teacher shows care of the student and the relationship through emotional and physical expression. Emotional expression is through providing genuine praise. Physical expression is through giving hugs when needed, connected to Vogt's (2002) definition of a cuddly teacher.
5. Financial. The teacher providing the resources needed for the student. This can be for support inside and outside the classroom.

Even with these five lofty expectations of the teachers, only one expectation is held of the student which is "academic commitment" (Mawhinney 212). This misaligned level of effort is supposed to mimic that of the parent and child in which one party clearly exerts drastically more effort and energy into the relationship. This framework allows for approaches that are understanding and accepting of flaws, deficiencies, struggles, shortcomings, unpreparedness, and ignorance so long as they are coupled with commitment and effort. At the same time, the looseness of students only being held accountable for one goal means a strict adherence to that goal with possible consequences of disappointment and disapproval, factors that are only disciplinary in close "mothering" relationships. If the student fulfills their expectation of commitment and effort, then the mentor takes upon themselves everything else to fill whatever gaps stand between the student and their potential growth and goals.

The second framework is village pedagogy. According to Otto D. Harris (337), a village pedagogy occurs when "the members of the community have mutual commitments, celebrations with one another, shared heritage, and relationships beyond the classroom." Unlike othermothering, this is no more taxing on any one member, but instead is the framework by which communities seek, create, work towards, and celebrate racial, cultural, and any other relational unifying qualities. HBCUs specifically, create this village pedagogy "by carrying

out…collective missions" that "contribute to the progression of Black community, Black culture, and Black life" (Harris 339). Through this, mentors at HBCUs are able to create a community, a network that both cares for, hold accountable, and celebrates others connected. This is important in creating the spaces in which individuality, as well as community expectations and participation are made clear, practiced, experienced, and celebrated.

Lastly, is Kufundisha, the Swahili word meaning "to teach." This framework was first employed as a means to outline approaches to teaching Black Studies. Neville and Cha-Jua were able to succinctly summarize the seven components of the Kufundisha Model for Black Studies Pedagogy[9] in which they break down its initial approach for the singular subject. In this breakdown, Neville and Cha-Jua explain that Kufundisha is the framework in which instructors, based on a combination of African-centered pedagogy and critical pedagogy,

> Make explicit their teaching philosophies and also the goals and objectives of the discipline and course. Kufundisha contends that Black Studies instructors should use a variety of teaching techniques to explore the similarity and diversity of African-descended people. The model encourages instructors to infuse issues of race, nationality, class, and gender throughout the teaching process, from construction of the syllabus to evaluating and revising the course. (448)

While specific to a single study, the core ideals within this approach can be universally applied. In fact, Monica White is able to make the topic more global by applying the framework to another topic–sociology–but also, the HBCU system. She acknowledges that–

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[9] See appendix 1

By taking into consideration the social characteristics of the student population,

Kufundisha models an egalitarian student/teacher relationship and includes components

that address classroom dynamics such as learning environment, teaching philosophy,

methods of instruction and evaluation, and selection of texts and readings (White 387).

White continues in showing that practices based in Kufundisha provide "valuable insight on the

relevance of student identity on radical teaching pedagogies in ways that encourage social

change" (450). She argues that models based in Kufundisha emphasize "the search for ways to

empower students, to raise levels of consciousness, and to find ways to combine theory with

social action or praxis (White 383). This approach, to create a classroom that affects not only

student's knowledge of topical information, but also pushes for political, social, and communal

involvement is the heart of Kufundisha. The goal of applying this framework is for mentors to

encourage involvement and empower students to challenge and change that status quo. This is

essentially how mentor and mentorship survives, each generation sacrificing and mentoring as it

had been done for them.

What, then, is involved in mentoring? How does one enact a practice that is framed by

the three aforementioned frameworks? How does mentoring empower students, develop critical

awareness in them, and encourage them to become engaged in their communities? To answer

these, I will start with a short anecdote. On the day that my thesis advisor gave me the go-ahead

on this project, I made three calls, the second I got home. The first, of course, was my mother,

and the third was one of my undergraduate mentors. In both conversations, they were proud, had

questions, and wished me good look. The second call, however, to my other mentor, went a little

different. Upon learning my topic, he not only congratulated me and told me it was good work,

but began to vent his frustrations about teaching at Predominately White Institutions. He voiced

frustrations because of the limitations he hit, the barriers and walls that existed that were not as prevalent at HBCUs. He named the major difference in teaching styles by simply saying this, "At an HBCU you can care." This story answers the questions in that a mentor is different from an instructor, or a teacher, or an advisor, in that mentorship necessitates care. That is not to say that non-mentoring teachers do not care, but instead that they sometimes can't care, and often (at research tier one PWIs) are not given incentive, time, space, or support to care in the same ways that HBCU mentors can. Mentors at the HBCU "foster[] pride, inspiration, and encouragement…[they] expand hope and confidence by students' association with achievers" (Craig 103). That is to say, there is no directly identifiable difference in mentoring at HBCUs from any other location except that the institutional exigency creates a space in which mentoring is not an option for some teachers, but is the understood expectation for all members of the communal body.

Basing their practices off of the Igbo and Yoruba proverb "it takes a village to raise a child," mentors in the HBCU are not only instructors, but can be "administration, faculty, staff, alumni, and community people who take a personal interest in individual in individual students" as a means to form familial extensions (Davis Jr. 45). These mentors often meet with students one-on-one in unstructured, low risk, and familiar spaces in order to make their presence available and raise their chances of making a lasting impact; that is to motivate, encourage, challenge, or change a student by means of being present and available when needed (Davis Jr. 2006). This often requires that faculty members have office hours well beyond the norm and that advisors, administrators, staff, and the like are available at times that could be considered absurd by some (Ponder 121). It also often means that faculty members are available after class, after hours, and on weekends to be there for a student that is working towards growth and

development (Ponder 121). While research is important at HBCUs, mentoring often means putting teaching well before research obligations and seeing teaching, mentoring, and developing minds as the main priority (Ponder 121). According to the few quantitative studies done on HBCU mentorship, it is effective in making students feel cared for and is effective in aiding in graduation and retention rates of predominately African-American students . That being said, with the focus of these institutions on critical knowledge, empowerment, and community engagement, one must assume that these ideals are being transferred with all other knowledge at HBCUs. If HBCUs are sites in which critical and community engagement are frequent topics and practices, and mentorship is a common pedagogical practice at HBCUs, then mentorship must aid in the production of the critical, moral, ethical, and all other alternative knowledge that HBCUs teach.

Seeing that studies have identified and defined mentorship as an act of caring, availability, relatability, familiarity, and closeness; have argued that students perceive these as care, effort, and devotion; and have correlated this perception with a likelihood of graduation and retention, what must come next is a study that seeks to identify how the goals of critical pedagogy are being achieved (i.e. how students are being empowered, encouraged to engage communities, and how they are developing critical awareness and knowledge). The research shows that these ideals are not only important to critical pedagogues, but also are crucial to the HBCU. The research also shows that HBCUs are frequent sites of mentoring. This study will seek to synthesize these previous two ideas to identify the ways in which mentorship allows mentors to achieve the goals of critical pedagogy at HBCUs.

3. Testimonies
3.1 The Approach

In order to identify the ways in which an institutional focus on mentorship allows, and even encourages, instructors to mentor in order to achieve the goals of critical pedagogy at HBCUs, I chose to collect the stories of HBCU alumni. In asking them to share their experiences of their undergraduate institutions, my aim was to give these alumni the space and opportunity to testify[10]; to recollect whether or not and how their institution utilized the tool of mentorship similarly to the way I, using the secondary sources provided, have presented it. I wanted to get at the key questions: How do HBCU alumni remember their experience? Who/what do they remember as making the largest impact(s)? Within these impacts, the hypothesis is that the alumni would identify the ways in which their mentors helped them to feel empowered, critically aware, and an actively engaged member of their communities. Aside from the academic knowledge necessary to successfully matriculate, what did they gain from their experience at the institution? And how, if at all, has attending an HBCU affected their personal growth and/or development? In exploring these testimonies, I aim to highlight what the sharers perceive has been achieved at HBCUs (aside from, but in conjuncture with, an academic education) that is congruent with the mission of educating the "whole" person. I also aim to identify the ways in which this approach was or was not understood as central to, or ingrained within the HBCU experience at their particular universities. Understanding that empirically proving HBCU mentorship to be an effective tool that is utilized with success would take further research, I instead aim to investigate what has been achieved through the use of a particular approach to mentorship at HBCUs in the cases of these testifiers. Specifically, I am seeking to identify if

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[10] I use the term testify in the religious usage and not the legal. This distinction is important because it illuminates the core desire: to capture a remembrance of an experience that is spiritual. Not spiritual in the way of being metaphysical (although the secondary sources have already argued that HBCUs are rooted in religion and spirituality), but instead spiritual in that it is an experience that transcends the surface existence and exposes that which cannot be seen or explained, only felt.

alumni of HBCUs credit their institutions with affecting their perception of themselves as critically aware learners, their service to their communities academic or otherwise, and their empowerment as students, learners, and alumni. Through recording testimonies (asking alumni to identify how their individual institutions influenced, or attempted to influence, them, and to identify what, if anything, they embodied from those influences), we can develop an understanding of how this non-traditional approach to education has functioned (or failed to) in the cases of those who were potentially mentored at a Historically Black Colleges.

The group of potential mentees who contributed to this collection of experiences is comprised of five alumni who attended five different HBCUs located in various regions of the United States. They were selected based upon who responded to a call for interview participants that was disseminated through social media, email chain, and word-of-mouth. Although more than five people were interested in participating, only five were chosen because they were the first to sign and return their consent forms from any one university, as the aim was to avoid multiple representations of any single institution. Therefore, the only stipulations for selection were that they had graduated from a historically black institution different from the ones already represented. Each member of this group has attended, matriculated through, and graduated from an HBCU between the years 2000 and 2015. Because of the minor stipulations for participation, there is a great diversity in the collection including gender, nation of origin, field of study, previous knowledge and/or experience with HBCUs, etc. All participants were, however, people of color as are the vast majority[11] of HBCU students and alumni. Exposing the diversity of this group, however, only enhances the plausibility of the HBCU system and its tools and approaches

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[11] I say this while still acknowledging that some particular HBCUs (none of which are represented in my group of participants) are historically Black but are no longer predominately attended by Black students. This does not change the statistical fact, but, is necessary to introduce in that it highlights the diversity of these institutions.

as being the catalyzing variables in creating any consensus amongst participants. Below are

succinct bios of the five alumni[12]:

Tony	Attended Hampton University, located in Hampton, Virginia, from 2011-2015. He is originally from Trinidad but relocated to the United States in 2011 shortly before he began his studies at Hampton. Tony is currently a graduate student at the University of Kansas.
Diana	Attended Albany State University, located in Albany, Georgia, from 2000-2004. She grew up in Albany and is the daughter of two Albany State University Alumni. She describes herself as being a child of the University, having had close scholarly, familial, and community relationship with many members of the faculty and administration throughout her life. Diana has since attended and graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Law.
Kal	Attended Southern University A&M, located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, from 2000-2006. He has since received his Masters from Louisiana State University and is working on his Ph.D. from the same. Kal's graduate studies have been focused on the productive nature of Black leadership using the mentors of his alma mater as his study's participants.
Ororo	Attended Morgan State University, located in Baltimore, Maryland, from 2011-2015. She is currently seeking her Masters from Purdue University.
Kurt	Attended Dillard University, located in New Orleans, Louisiana, from 2006-2010. He has since received his masters from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is working on his Ph.D. from Cornell University.

As I myself am a HBCU alumni (having graduated from Dillard University in 2014), I will also

use my own experience within this approach. I will be introducing my voice as both interviewer

asking others to share their stories, and as one with a testimony to the successes and failures of

the HBCU system.

To evaluate the success or failure of mentorship in achieving what I have hypothesized, a

list of questions was drafted that would allow for the participants to comment on their

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[12] Pseudonyms used

experiences, judging these experiences and identifying their effect, or lack thereof, on their growth during their undergraduate experience. Also, the questions allow alumni to share the ways in which their experience with mentorship continued to affect them post-graduation. This list of questions was used to hold discussion-based interviews with the goal of collecting testimonies as evidence. These interview questions (see appendix 2) are separated into seven sections, each building on the last, designed to map out if, how, and by whom the alumni recollect receiving a critical education from at their alma mater. The recruitment and interviewing processes were designed in such a way that none of the interviewees were briefed on the specifics of my hypothesis (i.e. nowhere in any of the materials or scheduling discussions prior to, or during the interview, barring the final two questions, was the word mentorship even mentioned). This means that any explicit discussions of mentorship on behalf of the participants prior to the final two questions would be completely of their own volition. The questions were designed instead around the particular goals of critical pedagogy (empowerment, critical awareness, and community engagement) that I believe mentorship to help achieve, allowing the interviewees to share within their testimonies if their institution attempted to reach the goals, what/who they particularly credit with the push of achievement of the goals, and if this goal was achieved with them specifically. This allowed for discussions of pros/cons for the particular approach taken and would highlight consensus of a particular approach that has worked for HBCUs. Below are the questions followed by a brief discussion of the goals of the design of the questions:

Interview questions

Section 1
1. What HBCU did you attend and where is it located?
2. When did you attend?
3. Have you attended an institution that was not an HBCU?
    a. If so, what institution, where is it located, and when did you attend?

Section 2
4. In your opinion, how is the "HBCU experience" different for students than that of other types of institutions?
5. What are the benefits of matriculating through an HBCU?
6. What is the collective mission of "the HBCU?"

Section 3
7. Did you have a strong understanding of what HBCUs stood for and hoped to achieve before attending one?
8. Why did you choose to attend an HBCU?
9. What goals/expectations were presented to you on your HBCU campus by faculty/staff/admiration etc?
10. Was there a person who you felt explicitly and intentionally held you to those expectations?
    a. If so, who was it and how did they do that?
11. Do you feel as if attending an HBCU changed you as a person and/or the trajectory of your life?
    a. If so, can/will you identify an event that marks the beginning of that change?
12. What, other than academic knowledge, did you gain from attending an HBCU?

Section 4
13. Did you feel as if there were faculty, staff, and/or administration members who attempted to get to know you personally?
    a. If so, would you mind naming a few and describing your relationships?

14. Was there one faculty, staff, and/or administration member you could identify as taking a deeply involved, strong interest in you and your growth?
    a. If so, who was it, and how would you describe their role in your life at that time?
15. Did you ever have an encounter with a faculty, staff, and/or administration member that challenged your way of thinking or a belief that you held?
    a. If so, can you recall an example?
16. Were you ever encourage by faculty, staff, and/or administration to criticize and/or challenge a belief or way of thinking that you found fault with?
17. Did you feel as if you were in the position to make such a challenge?

18. Were you ever encouraged to get involved with community service outside of the university?
    a. If so, how?
19. Was your University as a whole involved with service to the community in which it was located?
    a. If so, how?

Section 5
20. Are you currently associated with (i.e. faculty, staff, or other hired or elected position) a HBCU?
21. Are you currently involved in any community service/volunteer work?
    a. If so, what are they, where are they located, and who do they service?
22. Are you currently in any leadership roles?
    a. If so, what are they?

Section 6
23. Do you credit the HBCU with impacting your life even after you left the institution?
    a. If so, how?
24. Do you maintain contact with any current and/or former faculty, staff, and/or administration member from your HBCU?
    a. If so, who are they?

Section 7
25. How would you define/describe "mentorship?"
26. Do you believe that mentorship is directly related to the HBCU experience?
    a. If so, how?

Section 1	This section is designed to identify and locate their HBCU. The last question of this section serves to weigh the validity of their response to the next question in which they will compare the HBCU experience with other institutions. It essentially situates their responses as either outsider or insider knowledge.
Section 2	The next section asks them to identify and define the HBCU experience, the benefits of attending an HBCU, as well as the collective HBCU mission in hopes that their answers will, as a global definition of HBCUs, will include one or more of the goals of critical pedagogy and/or a mention of mentors or mentorship. By giving the free range to do broad definitions, I created a space for them to do any sweeping generalizations of the HBCU approach prior to my leading the conversation in any one direction.
Section 3	Moving from the global to the more local, this section sought out to identify their prior experience with HBCUs as well as what goals their specific HBCU

	prioritized for them. For the goals identified, this section also sought to acknowledge any specific attachment of achievement with a particular person. This would be the moment where the testimony could attach a goal being reached by a student to the mentor working to move that student towards that goal.
Section 4	Building directly off of the last section, I identify the specific goals that I am after (critical education, empowerment, and community engagement) asking if they felt as if these were goals their institutions were pushing for and if the attached the achievement of the goals to a particular individual or moment specifically[13].
Section 5	This section briefly and generally asks if these goals are still being practiced by the alumni even after their HBCU experience. It is mostly to transition the thinking from their previous experiences to their current experiences.
Section 6	Building from that, this section asks alumni in a more explicit manner, how the HBCU experience continues to impact their lives, if/how they remained involved with their alma mater, and what they attribute their alma mater with giving them that remains useful.
Section 7	Ending with the first mention of mentorship on the interviewer's part, this section asks two very specific question. How they, having attended an HBCU (presumably an institution built around mentorship), would define/describe mentorship, and, if they see mentorship as a function within the HBCU system. The answer to the first gives them the chance to identify any of the goals of critical pedagogy as a function within their definition of mentorship at their HBCU. The second seeks to affirm the understanding of mentorship as a foundational structure within the HBCU system.

The next three sections will discuss the testimonies that were shared as evidence of, or against, the hypothesis that mentorship at HBCUs has been a tool for achieving the goals of critical pedagogy. The sections are organized by the goals of critical pedagogy previously discussed (empowerment, critical awareness, and community engagement) and will each seek to identify and understand what information was shared in the testimonies pertaining to the topic of that particular section, and how it furthers, or complicates, the argument that HBCUs' approach to mentorship has been a useful tool in helping students to internalize the goals.

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[13] For many of the interviews, we were able to skip or slightly amend one or more of these questions due to their individual acknowledgement and in-depth discussion of the goal themselves in the previous section.

3.2 Empowerment

As mentioned before, the influence of the HBCU is not found in any particular instructor's approach to educating (as any particular tool or practice can and, in some instances, should be implemented at non-historically Black institutions), but is instead found in the communal acceptance of, and dedication to the goal of implementing tools that work towards developing the whole person. As I have identified this HBCU community and the theoretical frameworks on which it functions (othermothering, village pedagogy, and kufundisha), what I will do now is argue that mentorship is a central tool used throughout these frameworks to create a critical environment that not only intentionally aims to, but also succeeds in empowering students who interact with these communities. Empowerment, within the confines of this text, focuses on two ideas: 1. that students come to value themselves, their ideas, and their identities as valid, effective, and of importance, 2. that students feel the authority to express their validated, effective, and important identities and ideas both within and outside of the context of the HBCU. This ideal is, of course, universal in that (I assume) every teacher, everywhere, wants their students to feel validated, important, and effective. However, while we (instructors) might idealize this, often our practice falls short of implementing it. In my experience,students often come to identify themselves by their performance within a class, seeing themselves as "bad students who can't write, read, take tests, etc." because of their performance on a particular assignment. While this is not the truth in all situations, my own experience with it has lead me to believe that this practice is a remnant of the arcane and archaic nature of the traditional grading system.Observing thetemptation for instructors to categorize students based on their perceived attention, effort, and ability alongside instructors'noticeably limited amount of energy, it seemed that instructors usuallymade incredibly difficult decisions as to how to divide their energy amongst their students based on the students' grades and perceive academic excellence. While I

am in no way arguing that this is wholly avoidable, or that this never happens at HBCUs, what I am arguing is that the framework of othermothering is a strong deterrent to such behavior, and is an even stronger motivator for empowering mentorship.

Paired with a village pedagogical approach in which mentors share educational responsibility of students with each other, other students, faculty and administration, othermothering at HBCUs create an environment that breeds empowerment. As mentioned by bell hook and my mentor alike, the difference here is caring. Not meaning that non-HBCU instructors do not care, but instead that the impetus for care is different, creating a difference in practice. What we as instructors come to accept, and what we ask students to accept, is largely based on what impetus we have for achieving any certain depth of caring. At HBCUs, the frequent practice of othermothering, of mentally and spiritually adopting students as family and creating familial bonds that mimic parenting, creates an impetus for care that does not accept mediocrity or failure, but instead pushes and encourages all to succeed. Just as (I believe) the majority of parents would do anything to help their child succeed, so do the "other mothers" push and encourage with the will of a mother, to empower students to believe in themselves.

One way othermothering expresses this care is through affirmation. When asked to identify the benefits of matriculating through an HBCU, Kal said

> You get the affirmation that you need. Certainly; definitely you get people who tell you 'you can do it,' they'll encourage you, they'll motivate you, they'll say 'hey, we're standing behind you,' they'll cheer you on, and they'll tell you what to do. They'll tell you how to do it. [They'll say] 'This is how I did it' [and] 'this is what you need to do.'

> They'll get you in programs. They'll get you scholarships and stuff like that. So you have
>
> that affirmation and that mentoring aspect.

The first thing he identifies is the mentorship present at his HBCU and the length to which

mentors will go to affirm and to ensure the achievement of their students: the encouragement and

the belief in their abilities regardless of circumstance. Tony called this "a presumption of

excellence." In identifying goals and expectations of his institution, he described his mentors as

"having little patience for mediocrity because they expect excellence; and [excellence] is

possible." Diana described the goals of Albany State as "limitless! Whatever you think is

possible, whatever you want to be possible is out there." She continued by focusing specifically

on excellence, naming the president of the University at that time as a person who continually

talked about and asked "how [they] were going to be greater; how [they] were going to be

excellent." Diana stated that although she was on a presidential scholarship and was thereby a

mentee of the university president, the president didn't only believe that those on the scholarship

should be excellent, but instead "she believed in all of the students on campus and wanted all of

[them] to do well." Kurt quoted a professor who he said always told them "no matter what you

think, you can do better, and you will do better."

The foundational idea in all of this is that HBCUs are spaces in which, no matter where

you are currently in your journey towards your goals, the belief of the mentoring body is that you

can and you will, with their help, achieve them. This communal belief in students' excellence

creates a space at HBCUs in which giving in to the temptation of accepting the stagnation of a

student is, at the very least, a highly unpopular and largely contested attitude. In fact, the familial

bonds of othermothering at HBCUs tend to cause mentors to reach out to the students far more

than required or expected at traditional institutions. Each interviewee made some mention of

their institution and the people in it being "family" or "like family." The overwhelming consensus was that although this was not home, and these people were not relatives, the encouragement, attention, and care that was given was similar to that of what students had experienced at home, and in their families. Every single testimony gave at least one name of an instructor who they considered pivotal to their matriculation, advancement, or continued achievement, all of which were still in contact with their previous mentees. Some even had fun nicknames for their mentors, others had intriguing stories, and some had since developed peer to peer friendships with their previous mentors. All, however, recalled the ways in which their mentor encouraged them, believed in them, and validated their ability to achieve. This affirmation is one of the many ways that students at HBCUs are empowered.

On top of affirming students via believing in them and encouraging them, another aspect of othermothering that helps to empower students is the familial dedication mentors have towards them. Mentors at HBCUs are often described as "going over and beyond" because of the immense dedication they often have to ensuring that their mentees succeed. The othermothering that creates this environment encourages that mentors go as far for their students as they would to ensure that their own children succeeded. As a student at Dillard, I was called to excel, being singled out and told that I could and would do better in times of mediocrity. One specific remembrance is of when my first mentor became my mentor. This particular professor had already taken under his wing the semester before the only other male English major in our graduating year, but had yet to meet me. Now that the other male student (hereby referred to as Sam) and I were in the professor's class together, I began to notice the specific things that were done by the professor towards him. The professor would hand Sam academic journals and articles to read completely aside from the class reading with no assignment attached to it. He

would also call on Sam just a little bit more than others and would challenge everything Sam said ensuring that Sam could never stagnate. I believed myself to be immune to this because I had already had a mentor in a different professor. Much to my surprise, the journal articles, books, and newspapers began to reach my desk as well. Sam's texts and mine were always different, always more tuned to our particular interests and strengths. What solidified us as his mentees however, was his approach to grading us. Understanding that we were both good writers but lazy students, he did the unthinkable; he gave us C's and D's on our papers. Over the course of two straight semesters, all of our papers were topped with a giant red C or D, rarely, but sometimes a B. And while this may seem to place the importance of this practice on the grades themselves, what was more important was that it was always done with a side eyed look and a snarky smile. We never dropped below an A in the course; however, we only once (on our final papers just before his retirement) had the satisfaction of an A on the paper. This was his way of seeing what we, as individuals, needed–to be challenged and called to do better–and taking action ensuring that we received it. I would have stayed in the realm of "good enough" as a writer had this mentor not directly challenged me to do better, targeting what he had come to know was a great pride and incredibly competitive spirit. My mentor personally empowered me to do better by not allowing me to stagnate in mediocrity, but demanding excellence from me in a way that felt loving and personal. He helped me to get better by knowing how to tell me that my "best" wasn't good enough and challenging me to go beyond my comfort zones. And he did all of this without my asking and largely without my realizing. He took the time to learn me, see something in me, and act on that something in a way that I was, and still am, only used to receiving from my immediate family members.

Similarly, Ororo recalls how she gained her first mentor at Morgan State. She had, by her own account, ignorantly filled out and submitted an application to a summer internship at Yale University. She had no knowledge of the prestige of Yale nor the process by which one fills out an application such as this. In fact, she had written only a paragraph in the application writing portion and had yet to obtain her letters of recommendation that were to accompany the application. While in the office waiting to meet with the department head to ask for a letter of recommendation, she was spotted by a professor passing by. This professor not only asked her what she was doing there and what she needed, but, upon realizing what had already been done, brought Ororo into her office, walked her through the proper process, helped her contact Yale and claim that the submission was a mistake, and worked with Ororo to properly submit to the best of her abilities. Ororo pointed out that "she didn't have to stop or ask me what I needed; in fact, a lot of professors wouldn't have. And even after she did, she could have just let me meet with the department head."

Ororo and I both realized that our shortcomings could have been allowed to continue. We could have been overlooked and we could have been left behind. Instead, we were intentionally sought out and worked with; moved by the dedication of an unsolicited faculty member choosing to dedicate their time and energy in us. The HBCU, in these cases, is functioning as a place in which there is an expectation and belief that students will do well paired with the support of mentors to ensure students live up to the expectation. This attitude alone shows how this Othermotheringhas bred expectations and dedications that have gone beyond what is usually understood as an instructor's role. Tony put it this way:

It has been my experience that professor at HBCUs are invested in their students in ways that extend beyond just their didactic, you know, classroom instruction. They are a lot

more concerned with mentorship within inside and outside the classroom, and they more

concerned about extending, using their positionality to extend access to their students that

don't have access to a community on their own. So, they're very much into mentorship,

they're very much into opening up experiences, they're very much into reaching out, and

they keep up with you.

Kal further illuminated this when he said that "the whole push [of Southern A&M] was success.

The whole push was do what you have to do, period. And it wasn't do what you have to do and

throw you to the wolves kind of thing…It was them constantly staying on me asking 'are you

considering your future?" He described a situation in which, even after he was involved in

leadership programs on his campus with his mentors, they were still bombarding him with

opportunities and asking him "what else are you doing?" Diana describes how being a "child of

Albany," that the expectations for her to succeed followed her home, and to church, and even to

the grocery store as she was always running into mentors who always had more opportunities

ready for her. Tony identified this call for excellence, and the dedication to ensure it was

achieved as one of the most appealing aspects of Hampton, while Kurt, considering himself a

generally lazy person, said that, he was "not looking to be challenged or changed, but [he] wasn't

allowed to hide in the shadows like [he] was able to in high school." This means that whether

you enjoy it or not, whether you seek it out or not, and whether you are achieving or not, the

continued dedication of mentors at the HBCU to improve and continue the journeys of their

mentees will exist.

This is empowering to students because regardless if they value themselves as A students

or F students or as good or bad writers, they will equally be expected to grow and continue to

excel. No matter their preconceived notions of their abilities or their available opportunities,

mentees are, through the dedication of the mentor, pushed further with a particular focus on individual growth. This dedication from a mentor who is heavily involved in your work, interested in your life, concerned with you wellbeing, and determined to create the pathway to you success often is the motivating factor for students to achieve scholarly goals they may have perceived as impossible, they may have had no knowledge of, or they may have failed to reach before. The mindset at HBCUs tends to be growth and success by any means necessary. This is often modeled in the mission statement of the institutions. In defining the overall mission and purpose of the institutions, all participants mentioned either achievement of excellence or success. These institutions empower by asking for no less than the students' best while simultaneously exposing them to how much better they can always be.

3.3 Critical Awareness

Although similar to empowerment in that both focus on perceived positionality, critical awareness is different in that its aim is for students come to understand their positionality and the causations, flexibilities, and implications of predetermined positions as well as possible ways to complicate, defy, or comply with them. That is, an empowered student feels themselves valuable, but a critically aware student is knowledgeable to the ways in which that empowerment may or may not be perceived by others; and has the knowhow to concede, challenge, and all together complicate their own understandings as well as challenge those of others. Where validity and affirmation were crucial to empowerment, critical awareness is found in the challenging and complicating of ideas, ideologies, and practices. Where I previously stated a belief that most, or all teachers have an intentional focus on the empowerment of their students to achieve and

succeed, I believe that creating the critical classroom as a pedagogical approach is less of an option and more of an expectation or necessity at alternative institutions in general, HBCUs specifically. That is, HBCUs exist to serve a function that is foundationally aware of a need for education beyond the academic. They historically have served to educate people who needed to not only conquer the newly accessible academic world, but then needed to also be aware of the perceptions, possibilities, and limitations surrounding their achievements. Students had to be aware that their attendance and matriculation of an institution of higher learning, as well as their skills and abilities attained may not be valued the same outside of the institution as they were in it. In fact, even if they were, that value would not outweigh the color of their skin. Although some argue that this historic need has been fulfilled (the most infamous being Jason Riley's *Wall Street Journal* article calling them anachronistic), I argue that HBCUs not only continue to serve their historic purpose, but they also, through application of kufundisha, create an educational web that connects all academic subjects to their historic, racial, cultural, and gendered realities. While many scholars search for ways to introduce race, gender, or class into the classroom at traditional institutions, the HBCU environment functions to, and has always functioned to, discuss these realities regardless of classroom topic, demographics, or other perceived complications. This is because kufundisha necessitates an understanding that all learning, no matter the place, space, or topic, cannot be separated from its reality and packaged in the microcosm that is academia. All knowledge is actionable both inside and outside of the campus environment, and must be treated as such. Kufundisha at HBCUs thus develops students' critical awareness by creating a space in which there is a non-negotiable responsibility of all member to always be aware of the implications of their actions. A space where mentoring moves beyond its academic role and becomes a device for personal growth and development.

This growth, however, is not often academic. In fact, mentoring relationships within Kufundisha are not always of the student-teacher variety. This type of personal learning, growth, and development occurs in peer to peer interactions as well as any other combination of two members of the learning environment. On top of that, this type of learning often goes beyond traditional learning environments. These learning moments often occur in dorm room settings, in cafeterias, and on the yard, just as they occur in the classroom. Just as Kunfundisha as an approach to the best practices of teaching Black Studies was more about the departmental constant focus on socioeconomic realities, so is Kufundisha as a practice of teaching at an HBCU more about creating a campus wide environment where personal, historical, and theoretical socioeconomic realities are forefront and always up for discussion. In identifying another goal of Hampton, Tony pointed out that HBCUs have a focus on "re-instilling and reemphasizing the rightness of [their students] being in an academic space." This validation of belonging often creates what is described as a family environment that feels like home and aids in the development of the whole person, not only the student. While the critical investigation of self-identity is a common occurrence in any higher education system, HBCUs have the added benefits of 1. Utilizing Kufundisha to necessitate person-to-person deep involvement that strongly encourages growth and development, and 2. Operating within a predominately African-American village pedagogy, thereby creating an investigation of Black as a majority and not a minority.

Dealing with the latter first, Tony, Ororo, and Kal, all made some mention of one of the added benefits of attending an HBCU being the ability to investigate the diversity within the African-American community. Tony stated that being at an institution in which the minority is the majority made it "easier to see how different African American themselves are. You get more

understanding of class differences. You get more understanding of regional differences. You really begin to see the diversity in a more nuanced than if you were just minority students in a predominately white institution." Ororo builds on this idea when in discussing her comfort in being involved with campus advocacy at the different institutions. She found that she had to stand up for her race in general more so at her traditional institution, but that

> "at the HBCU, since there are so many Black students, there are just as many students
> who are involved in advocacy and social justice work. So, if you're not passionate about
> that work, you don't have to feel like you need to be because there is always going to be
> someone else doing it. Whereas, whenever you go to an institution where you literally
> make up three percent of the population, it's kind of like you need the entire three
> percent."

Kal, seeing the familial benefit of this said that true diversity is what the HBCU community has been achieved in that "it didn't matter what color you were, when you got to the campus, you were Black then, you were part of the family and that is the very nature of the African Americans period, we are very accepting." Of course, he didn't literally mean that your race was then perceived to be Black, but through our conversation, he explained that although people say that they want diversity and people say that want inclusion and acceptance, the true existence of those desires can be seen, as his example, in the environment in which "when you stepped on Southern campus, you were home, you were family."

While this particular benefit of the HBCU does not necessarily use mentorship as the core tool to creating this growth and development, it is important to identify this as a product of the village pedagogical approach. One of the greatest affordances of having a predominately Black

population is the possibility of shifting racial identities from minority to majority within the microcosm of the HBCU. This is because along with this shift comes the opportunity to explore, learn, develop, and grow as an individual free of some of the socioeconomic burdens plaguing minorities outside of these spaces. This social phenomenon is something that is unique to race, gender, and religion based institutions. HBCUs, however, have the added benefit of a predominately black populations. As previously argued, village pedagogy at HBCUs creates a space in which mentorship can happen at any level and in any direction. What seemed to be important on this journey for self-identification at HBCUs was that there was an environment of encouragement in which members of the community were willing to enter deep enough involvements with fellow members to try and understand who they were, while simultaneously challenging that accepted ideal and pushing them to become a better them. It is a bilateral relationship that is the equivalent of a teeter-totter. As the community learns more about the individual, the individual has the encouragement and is empowered to find out more about themselves. But, as the individual finds out more about themselves and becomes comfortable with that identity, the community pushes back and challenges the individual to continue moving, changing for the better. This vulnerable and personal balancing act, is made possible because "the members of the community have mutual commitments, celebrations with one another, shared heritage, and relationships beyond the classroom" that allow for comfortability in having these types of relationships (Harris). In the case of HBCUs, the shared membership is often race, ethnicity, and culture. This shared membership allows for a village mentality, a feeling of all togetherness and belonging. It creates a space in which the assumption is to be at the center as opposed to in the margin. This village pedagogy is empowering in its own right and encourages exploration of self, but more importantly, it empowers members to push beyond, question, and

challenge other boundaries they perceive to be in their way. Ororo, I believe, highlights it best in admitting that, "prior to attending Morgan, [she] didn't even really like Black people. But [that] just goes to show how far [she's] come from then" to now being an active Black activist striving to do more for her people.

Village pedgogy, however, is not the only factor in providing these introspective experiences that sometimes lead to critical awareness. The critical awareness of self and others at HBCUs is heavily influenced by kufundisha's insistence that socioeconomic realities are always at the center of all practices within the village. Going back to the former benefit of HBCUs in aiding students in investigating their self-identities, it is important to understand how all of the previous qualities of othermothing within mentorship culminate in creating a space for students to find their importance. Ororo considers Morgan state's campus one of the few "places in this country where [she matters], where [she's] important." She said that her HBCU showed her that she can belong, where she is valued, where her identity is accepted. She even noticed that much of her "physical appearance" and her "sense of style" are remnants of the "space in which [she] was comfortable exploring [her] body, [her] identity;" her HBCU. She said that "[she] turned into this person…because of [her] experiences at [her] HBCU." Ororo said that she doesn't feel at home at her current institution, but stays hopeful that one day she will return to an HBCU, "to a place where [she] will be valued again." Kal, similarly, called Southern University home to the point that, although he calls New Orleans home and is not the biggest fan of Baton Rouge, is happy that he got a job in Baton Rouge and started a family there because his "second home," Southern University, is located there. He already has hopes that his "kids will one day have that experience" of attending Southern and falling in love with it like he did. Kurt, explained that the

friendships and mentorships he gained at Dillard completely changed "what [he] thought of [himself]." He went on to explain that

> "before Dillard, I was this, you know, lazy kid lounging around; smart with dreams but no drive. Then I met people at Dillard, and for the first time, had friends and professors pushing me to break out of my conventional ways. Not your typical college exploration, although some of that too, but, you know, sincere questioning and pushing that put me in committed positions and leadership roles. Like, roles that, I would have told you I would never be in. As a matter of fact, had you asked me in 2006 if I would ever be a teacher, I would have told you no, but here I am and it is definitely thanks to Dillard".

Diana felt like she "grew up at Albany State." Her parents went to Albany, the president of the university goes to her church, some professors are her neighbors (and she babysat their children), and the campus as a whole is central to her hometown. The campus and its members, not figuratively, but literally took up tangential familial roles in her life motivating and molding her into the eventual Albany graduate that she became.

While all of these experiences are vastly different, as self-identifying endeavors usually are, within each of them was a mention of the freedom to explore their identity, explore themselves, often, but not always, accompanied by a call to do so by some member of the HBCU community.The approach I will take to identifying the ways in which this particular theoretical framework functioning within the HBCU system has, or has not, affected the alumni is by using the testimonies to compare why students chose to attend HBCUs and what they understood about HBCUs prior to their attendance, to what students feel they received from their institutions, i.e. what did they retain from the experience that demonstrates critical awareness? The responses to

the questions posed aren't so much the target here as is the discussion of their own critical understanding at the time. Why they chose the school may or may not be relevant; however, it is a jumping off point that begins conversations aboutracial, social, and political, knowledge held and/or gained before and after the HBCU experience. The juxtaposition of these two snapshots of their knowledge base should be illuminating to the ways in which they perceive the HBCU system to have affected them. I propose this approach because, although the school system of choice is the controlled factor, the reasons for choosing the HBCU (as with any other institution) are widely varied, often more so for the HBCU. Some HBCU students enter their chosen institutions with perceptions of the benefits of HBCUs. Whether they gained these perceptions form family, friends, or the media, many students come to HBCUs believing that there is a specific benefit to this particular type of institution. Others enter completely unknowledgeable, not truly understanding the perceived benefits, seeing HBCUs as a variety of the traditional institution. Either way, understanding the knowledge base that the alumni entered the institution with concerning the critical aspect of the institution, versus the exiting knowledge base set up an interesting comparison of before and after, as well as began conversations about the skills and knowledge gained at the institutions. As this inquiry is more methodical, the rest of this section is organized by alumni, taking a close look at each of their experiences.

Tony

Tony, growing up in Trinidad and Tobago until the age of 19, "knew of HBCUs from afar," but did not necessarily have the understanding of the purpose, goals, or impacts they were having, or were intending to have on their students. Because he did not have the knowledge of American race relations, the "importance [of HBCUs] was lost on [him] until he got [to Hampton]." He said that he did not understand "How significant they were, or how important

what they represented was, until [he] got [there]." He didn't really choose to go to an HBCU, his family chose for him, thinking it was important that he didn't go "from Trinidad, where Afro-Caribbean people are the majority, to an institution in which he is a minority." His family found it problematic that he would be placed in a situation where he would be the minority without truly understanding what that means in America. In this case, his family valued the HBCU as "the first step," as the place for him to gain his academic footing along with a critical understanding of American race relations. Tony feels like the lasting impacts of his HBCU experience include his desire to ensure that minority students in general, but Black male undergraduates specifically "feel like there is someone actually listening to them" on his predominately white campus at the University of Kansas. He also has "for better or for worse, a hypersensitivity to the broader political issues that affect African Americans specifically, minorities as a group more broadly." And also, "as much as [he] can, with the positions that [he] holds, [he desires to] be an advocate in that regard and [to] pay attention to those conversations." Tony finished by saying this– "having attended an HBCU and having that experience and that education has tethered me to the real world, in a sense. So that, it would be impossible for me to connect, to wholly succumb to the ivory tower in its metaphorical sense because I am always tethered by my HBCU experience to, essentially, a reality." Tony then continued by introducing that his academic topic of study has evolved since his attendance of an HBCU, and he now seeks to specifically "expanding current psychological discourse to envelop people that inhabit minority spaces." His specific focuses are African Americans and the LGBT community.

Tony is the prime example of the critical awareness given to students at the HBCU. The fact that he came from a country with a completely different take on racial relations and was immediately immersed into the HBCU environment means that this space not only gave him the

psychological knowledge necessary to thrive at the graduate level, but that the ideas and passions he left the campus with must have also been bred there. In this case, Tony explicitly gives credit to his HBCU experience for creating his awareness and knowledge base on racial relations. He states explicitly within his testimony that he learned of the importance of and necessity to focus on such issues, not from a particular instructor, but from "coming to find out what the HBCU stands for." This type of learning (particularly dealing with race and race relations) that is not cemented in any specific mentoring practice, but is universally engrained in the institution or departments themselves is Kufundisha. This community wide focus on educating both the scholar and the person is such a staple of the HBCU that, to reiterate, Tony's family sent him to this particular type of institution for this exact reason. They understood that he would gain so much more than marketable academic skills from these institution; that he would have the awareness of issues, the knowledge to know how to find accessible solutions to those issues, and the conceptual understanding of when and how resistance may be futile. Tony's understanding of these topics is apparent in how he approaches the statement: "as much as I can, with the positions that I hold, [I want to] be an advocate in that regard and [to] pay attention to those conversations." Built within this statement is the understanding that his position is limited, his options are limited, and that he may not be able to advocate; but, should all that fail, he can still pay attention and observe. This ability to be aware of power structures, limitation, and options for social change, in the case of Tony, is a product of Hampton's university critical education. Also, his continued focus on sociopolitical issues within his studies further shows the level of critical knowledge attained from his institution.

Diana

As mentioned before, Diana is an Albany State legacy in that both of her parents were Albany State graduates. "Albany was the only four year institution in [her] home town and Albany State was all [she] knew." There was no competition or debate over what school she would attend. In her mind, "there was only one school for [her]." Diana stated that "Albany state has affected my mindset, my level of confidence, [and] how I interact with other people." She goes on to explain that both her parents are Albany State graduates and are (unspecified) professional workers, "but the things that they gave [her] that were foundational, Albany State helped to build on." She explains that it's not the "big stuff" that stands out, but the "little stuff" like "interacting with people and handling myself in certain situations" that allow her to think back to certain situations and conversations at Albany State to figure out how best to handle even her current day issues.

Although Diana was brief on these topics, what she did expose is that she understands that the lasting critical impacts of social education can help parents to make personal decisions such as how best to raise a child. She also makes us aware that she understands the importance of the particular approaches to "handling [one]self in particular situations" and "interacting with people." More specifically, she spoke about how to deal with the fact that she is "the only black woman at [her] workplace," and how she has to deal with situations in which her occupational ability is questioned based on her race. She highlights how HBCUs have particular productive approaches, some of which she looks back to her experience at her alma mater for, to help her in these scenarios. This is her exposing how this critical knowledge she has was attained, at least in part, at Albany State. Not only that, but because she accredited it to the university in general, and not to a specific mentor as she had done with empowerment, it leads me to believe that this was a university wide and omnipresent practice. The critical racial knowledge and awareness she now

has continues to help her as a family attorney specifically for a firm that services a predominately African American district.

Kal

Although Kal's mother graduated from Southern A&M University, he still had no understanding of what an HBCU was. He didn't even know that Southern was an HBCU prior to attending. He chose to attend because he got a few scholarships to the University, plus he visited and "got a sense of the community and the family on campus. It was very inviting; it was like home." In his words, "I just wound up going there and I fell in love with it." However, upon leaving Southern, Kal felt like his experience gave him "an edge to say 'there is nothing that can hold me back.'" While acknowledging that he is aware the he is not invincible, Kal still admits that he "sometimes feels invincible because of the encouragement given to [him] at Southern." He carries with his the words of his mentor: "You can do it; don't let anybody tell you [that] you can't." He acknowledges that through his empowerment he is equipped to feel invincible while having the knowledge that he is not. He exemplifies the overwhelming power of empowerment through mentorship at HBCUs, but by framing his invincibility as a feeling opposing his knowledge, he is showing a willingness to challenge the awareness he has come to have.

Kal is the only person who did not make any direct mention of anything retained from his alma mater that can be interpreted as an achievement/gain of critical awareness within these responses. However, I will argue that Kal clearly gained a critical awareness of the power dynamic of the African American in education. This is clear because of his discussion of his dissertation project. Kal went from not understanding the differences between traditional institutions and HBCUs, to writing a dissertation about the productive usage of black leadership

and the mentorship model at his alma mater. His critical knowledge of the positionality of HBCUs and the educational practices they use were both founded in and are focused on his alma mater Southern University. Because he did not go in depth, I have no way of locating how or where this knowledge was attained within the university.

Ororo

Ororo stated that she "had no idea what an HBCU was" and "was still calling it a Black school" until she attended. She didn't choose to go to a HBCU, but rather had her sights set on a (unidentified) traditional institution in Indiana. However, due to financial reasons, her father "told [her] where she was going, so [she] applied" and got accepted. Her preconceived notion was that this school was just "the place where all the black people decided 'hey, let's go here.'" She considers herself as coming into the HBCU experience blind, and she also believes that this was "different from most HBCU students." She, in high school, considered herself a very high achieving student, and believed that many students went to HBCU's because of the relatively low admissions bar, particularly with grade point averages and test scores, of which she did well in both. But she believes that "going into that experience with that mindset worked to [her] advantage because it woke [her] up to a lot of things." The lasting impact for her was that attending an HBCU, even while she was "very resistant" to attending, "turned [her] life around in that [she] is now in love with HBCUs." The HBCU helped her to "find her own identity," to "identify as Nigerian-American," and "to be proud of her pan-African heritage." She has a new desire to teach at an HBCU to both feel like she belongs but also to help validate and value other minority students. She also credits the HBCU with helping her to define "what she stands for, and what she doesn't stand for."

Ororo, unlike any one else listed, not only came into the HBCU system ignorant of its purpose, but she came into the experience resistant and aggressive. She had very negative thoughts of these schools and the people that populated them. She, therefore, is probably the one who was most blatantly affected by the critical education that can be attained at HBCUs. She went from having a strong distaste for this educational system, to glorifying the system for what it has achieved for her, and can achieve for others, with her on the professorial side of it. Her social perspective was so changed that the place that she dreaded going is now one of the few places "in the world where [she] feels at home." While this is empowering, what is truly telling is her discussion of why it feels at home. Ororo discussed not only the annoyance she feels from the assumptions placed on her at her PWI, but the shame she feels from her realization that the perspective that annoys her was previously her own. She mentioned a desire to "go back and slap myself for the way [she] thought about my own people, my own self." She reflected on how the diversity at the HBCU allowed her to see a clear path to accepting her race without accepting the "negativity [she] had attached to it." Again, this was not something she got from any single mentor, but from a university wide focus on acceptance and empowerment of racial identity. Now, Ororo not only understands the implications of her previous position, but is aware of her current position to be annoying and ashamed of it.

Kurt

Kurt knew of HBCUs because he lived so close to more than one. He talked about how growing up in New Orleans, his physical closeness to Dillard, Xavier, and Southern University in New Orleans (SUNO), all of which are HBCUs, "gave [him] a pretty vague understanding of what HBCUs were and what HBCUs did." He describes his knowledge as an "outsider's perspective," knowing no more than any other person who was aware of, but had no true

interaction with an HBCU. He believes that there's "no real way to understand what it is, [HBCUs] stands for, and what they do aside from attending one." He decided to go to Dillard because having gone to predominately black schools "all the way through high school," he knew that he wanted to "stay around black people." Kurt also wanted to stay in New Orleans. He chose Dillard because he "wanted to go to the [institution] that had a "reputation of prestige. [He] had heard it referred to as a 'Black Ivy League' school, and decided to go there." Upon leaving, Kurt felt like Dillard gave him "the mindset to achieve." He also believed that he "was made aware of "the need for Black male role models and teachers." Dillard gave him an outlook that was "always aware of the inequalities persistent in education, and in the world."

Kurt must have been at least marginally aware of racial relations and tensions previous to attending an HBCU seeing as he wanted to stay around a black populace. However, his personal desire to be involved with the outcomes of others was, by his own admission fostered at Dillard. He, in seeing a new need for black leader/teacher representation, must have learned, through experience or otherwise, the impactful nature of Black male leaders/teachers during his stay at Dillard University. Although he entered with some knowledge already, when compared to the amount and the approach to implementing the knowledge he had upon exiting, it becomes very likely that Dillard was a pillar in educating and inspiring Kurt to be critically aware.

Looking at each of these experiences, a pattern becomes apparent. Students come into the HBCU system with a certain level of awareness of its social purpose, its critical education, and its focus on social issues. However, after their tenure at a HBCU, they not only come to understand these purposes and approaches, but internalize them, and even repurpose them in their own lives. A student that would have never seen themselves as impactful is now teaching. A student that claimed to dislike black people now aches to be back on a HBCU campus, as an

instructor no less. A student that didn't understand the difference between a HBCU and a

traditional school now studies black leadership and mentorship at a HBCU. A student that was

new to the United States is now an advocate against racial inequalities in America. Using myself

as an example also, a student who wanted nothing more than to learn is now producing a thesis

focused on the unequal distribution of the focal point of pedagogical scholarship. At least for

these students, who have been successful and who think highly enough of HBCUs to volunteer

for this thesis, something about HBCUs and the sort of critical awareness they raise and the

critical education they spread both inside and outside of the classroom calls those that they

impress upon to act. Not only to act, but to be fully equipped to understand the consequences,

liabilities, and possibilities within those actions. We (the participants and I) were educated under

a framework (kufundisha) in which the entire university functions as a site of social, racial, and

political education in which all members are encouraged to explore, learn, and grow

simultaneously and constantly. Through experiencing a campus that practiced village pedagogy,

we were each allowed to find the sort of closeness and mentorship that encouraged, if not

insisted, that we each strive to learn more about ourselves, each other, and our places in society.

3.4 Community Engagement

The final goal that I aim to examine is that the community of HBCUs, which we have

already covered in detail, and how they create a space that not only encourages (at least, if not

necessitates) the participation of all of its members in community service, but also creates a

valuing of community involvement within and outside of the context of the university.

Expanding on the aforementioned function of village pedagogy, these institutions often use the

fact that many of their instructors, students, faculty, and staff are from predominately African

American communities as a means to build a relationship with surrounding African American

communities[14]. The shared experiences, understanding, joys, and pains, make it easier for HBCUs to themselves be productive memebers of their communities, as well as encourage their students to do the same. HBCUs' abilities to provide communities with otherwise unobtainable experiences (e.g. to meet historic figures, hear world renowned writers and poets speaks, etc.) mimics their ability, and long standing practice of providing the same for their students as well as a quality education.

Also, the HBCU mission, and the mission statements of most HBCUs have always had a focus on helping members of the surrounding community. This may be more of a quality of small schools (as most HBCUs are very small) or religion based schools (as many HBCUs were founded and remain connected to a religious institution), however, HBCUs are more than a space in which people are involved in community service. These universities themselves are often pillars within their communities, working to make positive change in the community that houses them, and possibly surrounding communities. Often being the meeting space for large events, involving the public to join in academic endeavors, or giving back time, energy, and/or money, HBCUs have historically served as, and arguably, continue to function as community engaged sites as well as a site that inspires community engagement.

The first hint to the fact that HBCUs foster an involvement with community service was that the participants reported that each of the 5 represented institutions had, at minimum, 200 hours of community service required in order for their students to graduate. While some had an obligation to do or voluntarily did more service because of their title, position, or Greek

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[14] It is important to point out that the vast majority of HBCUs are also located near or in a predominately African American community. Because of the center for Black arts and excellence that the schools became and remained, they were usually founded in a predominately African American community, or one was built around them.

organization, the consensus was that all had to get involved with community service during their time at a HBCU. However, the extent to which, and the ways in which this community engagement has continued after graduation varies widely. Amongst participants. Tony, for instance, had to fulfill volunteer requirements for both his university and his music fraternity, but has not continued the volunteer work after his graduation. Although he can and does affect his communities with his activism, particularly his campus activism, the approach of "helping the community…by cleaning up properties and houses that may be in disrepair" is no longer a practice. Similarly, Kurt explained the different volunteer work he participated in, particularly the effort to help repair the 9th ward around the one year anniversary of Katrina. He talked about enjoying making a positive impact on the surrounding communities. However, he no longer participates in activities such as that, and seemingly didn't even realize it until being asked that question. He replied by saying "that's a damn shame that I haven't reached out to the community in so long." While Kal and Diana did participate in community service at their HBCUs and continue to volunteer now, that work is specifically the volunteer work that they do in correspondence to their religious practices. Kal runs a Bible study on Sothern's campus and Diana has multiple volunteer roles at her church. Ororo was the only participant who both got involved in the community service at her HBCU, and has since continued to be involved with, and making the same sorts of impacts on the surrounding communities. Ororo is a mentor and tutor for at risk youths and an assistant dog trainer/walker. It seems that this goal of critical pedagogy and of HBCUs, although clearly implemented, was not necessarily taught and/or ingrained in the ways the other goals of critical pedagogy have been.

Another place of consensus was in all 5 testimonies' belief that their institutions were members of their communities. However, the ways in which they were involved varied greatly.

Tony pointed out that although Hampton University was historically a pillar of Hampton, the political and employment power the school has over the otherwise small town was, not surprisingly, problematic for many of the citizens. He also talked about how "Hampton was expanding, buying buildings in the downtown area;" a move that created "a rift between the university, particularly under this president's direction, and the city of Hampton." Similarly, Diana talked about the recent merger of Albany State University with a smaller predominately white two-year institution. She talked about how Darton college, the two year institution, was politically and socially preferred in her town "only because they are white" as she argues. She told the story of going into a store in Albany and seeing paraphernalia for the University of Georgia in Atlanta, Georgia Tech, and even Darton, but none for Albany State. This tension that already existed, she feels was the reason "the city is divided and doesn't know how to handle Albany State" now that it has enveloped Darton college. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Kal and Kurt both have memories of their institutions being largely impactful and involved in the surrounding community. Kal stated that there was "plenty of outreach while I was there and I believe that to be even more so now." He talked about how his school has opened up its doors to flood victims again and again, over the years. About how Southern hosted the Alton Sterling Funeral. He also mentioned the Southern University band, and how it often goes out and plays for the community for free. Similarly, Kurt talked about Dillard helping to repair the lower ninth ward in the years following Katrina. He talked about the hosting of the Louisiana Senate debate at Dillard, and the subsequent march on the debate because of the participation of David Duke. He mentioned that civil rights activists, writers, poets, and other potential role models "were always coming to Dillard, and Dillard was always opening the doors for the community to experience these people." What he did not mention that I will are the health care clinic on

campus that is open to the public and the Dillard choir which does plenty of charity performances in the city. Ororo, different from everyone else, felt as if she did not have the authority or knowledge to speak to her university's community relationship.

4. Conclusions and Implications

The initial goal of this project was to show that not only is the application of critical pedagogy in the higher education classroom theoretically achievable, but that there are other types of institutions (other than "the institution" which has been understood to be the research one predominately white institution) that have been, and continue to implement pedagogical approaches that focus on the achievement of the goals of critical pedagogy (empowerment, critical engagement, and community engagement). Through challenging the scholarly debate that calls into question the feasibility of implementing an approach based upon one type of institution's difficulties, this project aimed to identify the need of pedagogical scholarship (in any department, and in any field) to look both within and outside of its understood contemporaries for productive approaches to useful tools and skills. The hypothesis is that, by valuing the largely overlooked institutions and the marginalized approaches and scholarship within them, the instructors at all institutions can come to a broader and more complete understanding of what is, and is not possible, in applying any pedagogical approach.

In particular, this thesis has argued that HBCUs have been able to achieve those three critical pedagogy goals through mentoring—including othermothering, village pedagogy, and Kufundisha. Theoretically, these HBCU pedagogies coincide with empowerment, critical awareness, and community engagements. From the testimonies of these five graduates of different HBCUs—and my own story--this thesis has shown how these pedagogies work for

individuals. For these partiicpants, HBCUs seem most successful at empowering and encouraging students to continue to grow, even when the students believed they had reached their limit. It also seemed successful in exposing students to environments in which socioeconomic norms are destabilized allowing them to reevaluate preconceived notions of self and others.. .. For these participants, the goal of community engagement seems less successful since it seems not to have been continued once the students leave the institution. But HBCUs, in the end, have been, and continue to function as spaces in which education is personal, purposeful, and part of a socioeconomic reality. HBCUs are places where the people feel like family, the space feels like home, and closeness is an expectation. Lastly, HBCUs are a place where growth and excellence are demanded. [fill in with what you think your best conclusions are from the testimonies and your theoretical arguments—more sentences] [then maybe move your later paragraph on mentoring up here, since it's your results/conclusion]

I believe this project can be helpful to scholars, academic program creators, and teachers who are interested in created a more inclusive, open, and close classroom that focuses on students growth and development as students and people. As made evident by the scholarly push to bring socioeconomic, political, racial, and religious conversation and exploration into the classroom, there is a desire to use the higher education classroom as a space of perspective broadening and holistic learning. I want this project to function as a bridge, linking largely estranged education systems as a means of identifying the differences in their pedagogical approaches, analyzing how and why those approaches function in those places, and hypothesizing whether or not, and how the productive pedagogical qualities can be transferred. . The specific approach to building this bridge was to ask alumni of HBCUs to share their experiences and identify whether or not, and how their specific institutions helped them to be

more empowered, more critically aware and knowledgeable, and involved in their communities. In drawing the parallels of these experiences and the frameworks that governed them with the goals of critical pedagogy, this project aimed to identity mentorship as a tool that aided in the successful development of HBCU students. Hypothesizing that HBCU mentorship would be a tool that is adaptable and can be adopted by other institutions, this project exists to argue that the HBCU, and the tools it uses can be seen as an example of critical education Directly opposed to the traditional top down, hierarchical view of education systems in America. What I propose is a mutual scholarly conversation between different types of institutions that seeks to find similarities in goals with differences in approaches and achievement. Taking it a step further, in attempting to identify one tool used to teach and share these goals, I sought out the space to argue that there are tools that function to meet these goals which, theoretically, could be restructured, readjusted, and repurposed for usage at other types of institutions. These lateral mutual conversation could also lead to a conversation about tools and practices that are not (or do not necessarily need to be) dependent on the demographics, size, and mission of the institution. All told, the impetus for this project was a disbelief in the scholarship that aims to disregard attempts at progressing critical education; a personal frustration with the generalizing of the possibilities of "the university" as a singular form. Being an HBCU alumnus myself, my aim was to identify what mentorship at the HBCU system did for me and other alumni, and parallel it to the goals of critical pedagogy.

That being said, there were some elements of this project that fell short of meeting these goals. For instance, while dealing with the three goals of critical pedagogy, I found that community engagement was always encouraged on the HBCU campus; however, that engagement, in the ways that it was practiced on campus, were rarely continued after graduation.

My initial belief in this as a crucial element of the HBCU was due to my personal experience, of seeing a campus spirit and community service. However, I did not take into account that I, as well as my classmates, and all those who shared a testimony with me were required by their University to participate in these engagements during their tenure. One possibile explanation is that the HBCU enviornment, the village pedagogy created a space that encouraged engaging in community service. Most alumni identified their campus as an active participant in the community, meaning that there would be a general feeling of responsibility to the campus and the community (as exists in a village pedagogy campus). For whatever reason, my hypothesis that mentorship helped to ingrain an appreciation for and continued participation in community service fell short. Two alumni were still active community members, but it was instead tied to their religious affiliations or Greek organizations.[15] This, of course, means that their HBCU cannot be given the credit for their continued practice with their community service.

Also, the relationship of mentorship, as a tool, with the frameworks functioning within the HBCU created a complex web of practices in which sometimes it was more difficult than others to specifically see mentorship as a factor in creating the desired change. Although it was clearly important to the testifiers (i.e. prior to being prompted in the interviews, four of the five of them used the word mentor and all five described a mentor's impact on them), this impact was not always a explicit within the testimonies. There were times in which the impact of the framework and the HBCU experience were easily identifiable as making a large impact on the testimony. However, mentorship, in these same stories, was not explicitly present, only being

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[15] While there is some research into the ways in which the "divine nine" (the collective name for the nine Black Greek organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council) are core contributors to community service on HBCU campuses (as well as other campuses) and in the larger communities (particularly Black neighborhoods), this is not a focus of mine.

understood as a tool often used within the framework at this type of institution. That being said,

it bodes well that four of the five testimonies found the participant praising either their mentors

specifically, or the system of mentorship at HBCUs, by name without me having to mention it. It

seemed to be a word and a practice that was valued and remembered as crucial to any strategy

for victory. Although each person defined it slightly differently, i.e. each relished slightly

different aspects of it, each participant saw mentorships as a tool that encouraged and guided

their growth as a student and an individual. Each participant was able to identify a person (or

persons) that was able to directly impact them; the sharing of these experiences was usually

accompanied by a story of their mentor going "over and above" what the expectation of an

instructor. In fact, this phrase—over and above—was the most agreed upon and recited of any

other in the testimonies. This focus on the length that mentors will are willing to go and what

responsibilities they take upon themselves for their students exemplifies Mahwinney's five

expectations of the HBCU mentor. Stories of mentors spending their time and energy getting

close to students and relating to them on a familial level, even doing what they can to ease

financial barriers show the ways in which this community fosters and develops an intimacy

between mentor and mentees that goes "over and beyond" expectations. While this small group

agreeing does not constitute "proving" the effects of mentorship at HBCUs, it does however

strongly suggest that—much like I proposed—mentorship at HBCUs is a tool that is not only

enacted, but is valued greatly by those that it affects. More so, mentorship at HBCUs is

appreciated by students for both its academic, as well as its non-scholarly effects of their

experience. In fact, when asked whether or not mentorship was directly related to the HBCU

experience, the general consensus was that while it may or may not be central to the system

itself, mentorship is a powerful tool often offered and often received by HBCU students. As Kal

put it, "it's possible to go through the HBCU without that mentorship there; but if you do, it wasn't for a lack of trying…I wouldn't say it was a true direct link to the experience, but I will say that it is a tool that is the backbone of the work teachers, and other people on campus, do to help you to learn and thrive." At the heart of this is seeing mentorship as the "the backbone of the work" people do that can be avoided but not "for a lack of trying."

What this project has identified as a product of the application of this radical dedication and work at HBCUs is the empowerment of students. Behind every remembrance of a moment in which a student became more confident, more solidified in identity, more nuanced in thought, there was a framework, a pedagogical approach specifically employed to create that development, often due to the work of a mentor. . In each testimony where horizons were broadened, expectations were raised, and limits were pushed, there was a understanding of their school that this was the design, the intent, and the goal.. In every moment where a student saw their own potential, there was a system in place, a designed pedagogical approach, and a diasporic framework intended to achieve that moment. And while these experiences may or may not have been directly linked to a specific person,The overall remembrance of the moments and the experiences that put the impactful changes in motion were directly linked to a person (or persons), often identified by name, who personally shepherded the impact. These mentors often, through making familial bonds and taking on this relentless work, singled out what could/would help their mentee broaden their perspectives and achieve "excellence." They saw past the end goals that were being set by students and pushed them towards loftier goals. Whether it was pushing them past the goal of graduation and into seeing graduate school as the next viable option, or pushing them past participating in internship to becoming a scholarly fellow, or even pushing them past the comfortability of singing in a particular section of the choir into seeing

themselves as an adaptable singer, the testimonies were full of HBCU mentors taking the time to see the goals and the limitations of their students in order to challenge and push past them.

This is a crucially important impact of HBCU mentorshipbecause of its potential to create the type of change that many critical pedagogy instructors set out to make. The understanding that mentorship allows for the classroom to become a space in which students are active participants in both their academic and personal growth.[16] Their participation, however, is low risk and low activity relative to that of the mentor. Understanding this can lead to a shift in research, pedagogy, program design, and institution practice at the universities in which critical pedagogy has been, or is being, used. That is to say, often the conversation about critical pedagogy questions the ways in which we, as instructors, can get "them," our students to practice and share in the ways that are conducive to the critical pedagogical classroom. This, however, must be a conversation had with the thought in mind that pedagogies, frameworks, and tools are always situational and contextual and cannot be carbon copied to attain the same results. Often, the debate over critical pedagogy questions whether or not students came to college for this type of learning, whether they want to engage in it, or recollects times in which students didn't share, didn't want to share, or were resistant to this type of sharing and learning. However, if nothing else, this project has illuminated the flaws in this debate, in that, the HBCU approach to mentorship (having the practice always present and at the forefront of all practices with the responsibility intentionally primarily on the mentor) has created and continues to create a fluid space that is personalized time and again for the needs of the students and their growth. The

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16 As a caution, I was to reiterate that this type of mentorship does not always happen in the classroom and does not always follow the teacher student model of participants, however, as a shift to possible classroom implications, it is important to narrow the discussion to the classroom.

question isn't whether or not this student is actively and productively engaging in this pedagogy correctly at the HBCU; but is instead how can this pedagogy be remodeled and remolded to reach this student. This implication could have major impacts on the larger scale of University and departmental goals and expectations, but, keeping the horse before the cart, I will only focus on possible impacts on the classroom as that is where change is most plausible.

One such possible change is in grading policy. I chose the grading policy because "Many college students, understandably, see their coursework in the context of a 'successful' college education—getting good grades" (Thomson-Bunn). Because of this importance students have a tendency to place on grades, I think it is important to cater their education to what they think is important. Much like my own education, I also find it important to challenge them and push them beyond this understanding of higher education. Understanding the HBCU approach to demanding excellence, at the very least, highlights some alternative approaches to the traditional grading policy. HBCUs have, since their earliest days, not had the privilege of prestige. Being created to educate those that were considered unworthy of an education, they could never claim to have the filtering system that ensures that students who enter are of the upper echelon of academics. However, this has not stopped them from claiming that their students are top tier students or educating in a way that lives up to this claim. Therein lies the inherent pedagogical difference of the early American University System and the Early HBCU— one could judge students upon entry because only the most elite belonged in that space, and the other had to mold those who were not considered elite into a comparable scholars. While this historical existence is not enacted in exactness today, there is evidence that a mark has been left on these two systems. For teachers this means that, at prestigious tier one institutions, often there is a focus on sifting; on ensuring that students and student's grades are an accurate reflection of

the value of their effort, knowledge, and participation. One such example of this is the American

University's focus on "grade inflation." Lester Hunt, in writing about grade inflation notes that—

> Beyond the absence of good evidence, the debate over grade inflation brings up knotty
>
> epistemological problems. To say that grades are not merely rising but inflated— and that
>
> they are consequently 'less accurate' now, as the American Academy's report puts it —
>
> is to postulate the existence of an objectively correct evaluation of what a student (or an
>
> essay) deserves, the true grade that ought to be uncovered and honestly reported. It would
>
> be an understatement to say that this reflects a simplistic and an outdated view of
>
> knowledge and learning.

This idea of an outdated approach that still values the historic ideal of the elite is just one

example of the lasting impact of the historic purposes of the University system. In understanding

this, we as instructors can come to a better understanding of the history of our current approaches

and (if we find them problematic) look to places and spaces whose histories did not include this.

We can even come to create a grading system that empowers students to feel as if they belong

and are expected to be great regardless of their current grade, knowledge base, etc.

HBCUs, for example, have instead always had to focus on growth and development.

Their mentality is that students are not necessarily elite upon entry, but will be elite upon

graduation. Therefore, grading is often handled differently. Effort and growth are valued above

standardized achievement. Instead of living up to "the ideal student," students are often held to

"their perceived potential." This is a practice akin to what Samuel Dubois Cook was explaining

in describing mentorship at HBCUs as "seeds planted, cultivated, and harvested in the gardens

and fields of the continuum of human experience and adventure." The focus is not to value or

judge a student at any single moment (e.g. you do not write as well as another so you are not as good of a student/writer etc. and your grade shall reflect that), but instead is on how much you have grown, and whether or not you are better than how you started. The shared communal experience means that each mentor, each teacher is just one botanist planting, watering, cultivating growth towards excellence, and if you are on path towards that excellence, making progress and getting better, then that work deserves to be graded as such. This system, therefore, does not punish students for previous education in which quality is highly reliant upon area of living, encourages the freedom to push boundaries and be creative, and fosters a place in which the classroom is not a space of competition. Recreating this ideology then, could help to recreate the community that does foster a critical environment. As stated previously, there is no carbon copy approach that works in all scenarios. If anything, what the HBCU approach does that strongly resembles the Critical approach to education is personalize each experience. So, while the aforementioned approach is a common HBCU strategy, there are multiple occasions, much like the one where my professor intentionally lowered my grades, in which other influences and approaches are more appropriate in helping a student to achieve.

What this can do for grading is reposition the ways in which instructors think about grading. By using mentorship as an example of an approach that has functioned to encourage and empower students to continue to achieve, we can adapt and adopt this thinking while grading in critical classrooms anywhere. As critical pedagogy aims to create a classroom that is adaptive and reactive, use the classroom to not only encourage experimentation, but to practice experimentation. This, however, can and most likely will, be stifled by traditional grading ideology. This standardization goes against the HBCU's teacher effort approach in which it is the burden of the instructor/grader to use this, and every other moment and opportunity, to capitalize

on student growth. In my own teaching experience, I have found that grading, encouraging, and validating students based on growth and effort creates an environment of closeness and trustespecially in an environment where students have not been exposed to this approach and take a while to accept it. I have had classes where "the C student," earned a B or even an A based on their effort throughout the semester. One specific example of this was an English Composition student of mine who opened our conversation about his first paper (on which he earned a D) with "I know I'm a bad writer." We were able to sit down and talk about what he wanted to receive in my class. More so than this, I was able to talk to him about why he believed he was a bad writer, what he wanted to do in life, and even learned that he didn't even want to be in college but was forced to by his parents. By opening up and sharing my awkward and alternative road to and through college, I lifted his spirits and built trust. Not only did I let him re-do the first paper, but we made a plan for him to get the B he wanted. I baby-stepped him through every other assignment and he earned his B. Was his writing to the level that is slightly above the average student? No. But, seeing him as a process to excellence, as opposed to (what could have easily been deemed) a remedial student, I helped him to grow and develop as a writer and a student; a young man who is still a student, now voluntarily, 2 years later. I, in no way, believe I am singularly responsible for his growth, because as noted, it takes a village; however, I do feel this same responsibility to all my students to aid and foster growth. Comparing them to a preconceived normative or to each other is thereby counterproductive to my pedagogical philosophy; one I adopted from my own experiences at a HBCU. A pedagogical philosophy that aligns with the critical goal of empowerment—the encouragement and affirmation in the classroom, in grading practices, and generally HBCU mentorship as a tool.

Along with grading, this project illuminates the ways in which the classroom can be more so focused on self-actualization and identity in simultaneity with academic knowledge. Throughout the testimonies, there were memories of moments of realization. Moments when these former students came to understand some core element of who they were, what was possible for them, how they were currently, etc. Through the getting to know each other on such a close level, the participants shared stories of learning humility, confidence, racial diversity, national difference, and even the importance of correctness. While I'm sure that this level of conversation and closeness happens at all Universities, often, these conversations are saved for one-on-one conversations away from the classroom. In general, this makes sense, in that it is an American cultural practice to save these conversations for the privacy of a home, family, or friendship. However, this is again where the history of the research one university and HBCU differ. As Cook also points out, HBCUs were never devoid of their place in the academic sphere (Cook 2006). To simply go to a HBCU was to acknowledge that you were not welcome in other academic spaces purely based on your physical appearance. This, therefore, meant that these conversations about the differences were not only held, but were crucial to understanding the value differences. It was a place of privilege to not have to discuss these topics, but to choose whether or not (almost always not) even acknowledge their existence.

As before, this strong binary is largely dissolved; however, the history has again left its mark. HBCUs continue to teach not only academic topics, but to operate under the framework of kufundisha in which these topics are always situated into social constructs. This means that discussing Health at the HBCU must give students the basics of the topic, but also complicate the subject by pointing out the ways in which the field has negatively targeted African-Americans; that discussing philosophy cannot go without acknowledging that many touted western

philosophers traveled and studied in north-west Africa; and that learning the history of economics cannot go without acknowledging that the richest human ever was Mansa Musa of Mali. Although these points seem out of place for the topic at hand, it is necessary for HBCUs to maintain their largely excluded history, to intentionally focus on it when possible. Although a large part of what makes this possible is the village pedagogy that flousihes in the relatively low rate of racial diversity at HBCUs, there is another element that helps to foster these conversations in the classroom: mentorship. The closeness built between mentors and students helps to facilitate difficult topics, and even opens the classroom to conversations about self and identity. Although it is a cultural practice to keep these conversations out of social spaces, what HBCU mentorship does in the classroom is build strong bonds between the students and the teacher that allow for the students to feel comfortable and safe in sharing even the most intimae thoughts, ideas, perspectives, and experiences. . This closeness, if used in the classroom, could open up the classroom to the faith and trust that bell hooks discusses (hooks 2005).

The two ways I have used this faith and trust in my own classrooms have been to 1. Use myself as an example and to trust them with myself with hopes that they reciprocate; and 2. To use my closeness with my students individually, to share that same closeness with each other. As these two approaches build off of each other, I will use one classroom example that shows them functioning throughout a semester. While this was an ongoing process of me getting to know my students and breaking their comfortability (as I tell them a goal of mine is to make them uncomfortable), two large events happened this particular semester that shows the growth over time. First was the beginning of the semester in which I had them read an article about post-racial ideologies. The gist of the argument was the person could choose not to identify with any particular group, thereby making them non-racial or post-racial. As usual, I started class with a

general question: "What do you guys think of her argument?" My first class unanimously said that they agreed and that this is the way we should all think, some even going as far as to say this is how they think now. In order to complicate the conversation, I used myself as a tool. I asked one more simple question: "Then did none of you notice that I was Black on the first day of class?" This use of myself and making a point to identify myself in class started a whole class period discussion of the nuances of race. While I knowingly failed in my being a writing teacher that day, as we never got back to the text and analysis, this began the closeness I had with students who then wanted to discuss this, and other topics with me. The second event was on the last day of class. Students were only obligated to come and drop off papers but not stay in class. The same class as before not only showed up, but stayed and demanded that I teach them something because they showed up at 8am (this already shows our closeness). Not having anything planned I jumped to what was on my mind. The night before, then candidate Trump, had just announced a proposed ban on all Muslims entering the country. My question to them was this: "what is my problem with what he proposed?" In this, I am again using myself to facilitate discussion, but also, I created a conversation in the classroom that was reliant on their closeness with me being shared with one another. They had to validate who knew more about me and what I think with one another. Again, this snowballed and became a discussion of the importance in the binary between fear and freedom and is still one of my most memorable teaching days.

The point is, through being vulnerable and accessible, through using myself as an example and asking students to trust our closeness enough to share it with others, I created a classroom in which politics, race, and even personal fears and growths not only could be discussed, but were. HBCUs show us that this kind of normalizing acceptance of the otherwise

risqué is possible not only in one classroom, but in whole academic systems if, at the core of those systems, are people intentionally building bonds with one another.

All of the aforementioned plausible changes are theoretical; however, they are not baseless. Based on the research, the experience of others, and my own experiences, these things are not only possible but are being done. The concept of using yourself as a tool was not an invention of mine, but instead was a tool one of my mentors used; telling us on her first day her entire (very strange) backstory and making a norm to be vulnerable. Grading based on effort and growth was also not an invention of mine, but was the reason I received D's and C's from my mentor as mentioned earlier. My work (in comparison with the rest of the class) would have earned me A's and I would have had no incentive to work harder; but the grade on my papers was a reflection of my mentor's perception of my effort. And none of this is to say that these approaches and specific practices/tools are the only ones? that work. This project isn't even designed to say that HBCU mentorship is "the way." It instead has been done to say that there is at least "a" way to achieve the goals of Critical Pedagogy. Therefore, it is up to us scholars and teachers who praise the theoretical concept to not give up on the praxis, but to find the spaces and places where this can/does happen. Unfortunately, although this research is being done currently, the conversations between different institutions are not occurring that would allow diversification of thought and research. Therefore, more than anything, this is a push for major University's research to include studies of and about other types of institutions and the impacts that they can and do have on pedagogical approach and student development.

Appendix 1

Eight (sic) Components of the Kufundisha Model for Black Studies Pedagogy

Component	Description
Teaching philosophy	Explicate your basic assumptions about the teaching-learning process, including goals and objectives of the discipline and the course, beliefs about student learning styles, selection process of the texts and readings, method of classroom instruction, optimal learning environment, and method of student learning evaluation. Make explicit your ideological student learning evaluation. Make explicit your ideological perspective and methodological approaches to race, gender, perspective and methodological approaches to race, gender, class, and nationality.
Goals and objectives	Clearly outline the purposes, paradigms, and methods of the discipline and the goals and objectives of the course on the syllabus. Also, include a statement on the syllabus about the incorporation of race, gender, class, and nationality into the course. Discuss the origin and historical development of the discipline of Black studies and the goals and objectives of the specific course. Emphasize the dual origin and dual character of Black studies. Black studies originated in the community and on the campus, and it has intellectual and social missions.
Learning styles	Be attentive to individual learning styles and cultural tendencies that may affect student learning, including field sensitive/independent learning, holistic learning, and psychological and behavioral verve.
Texts and readings	Vary the type of required readings (e.g., textbooks, anthologies, autobiographies, literary work, journal articles, primary documents, and newspaper and magazine articles). Also, texts and readings should emphasize commonality and diversity among African-descended people, especially in terms of class, gender, ideology, and nationality.
Method of instruction	Vary teaching techniques to connect with different student learning styles, including using didactic lectures, interactive lectures, and discussions, guest lectures/panel discussions, simulation and small group exercises, and film/video/music. Demonstrate concern for students' affective as well as cognitive development. Emphasize that learning is a social process; use pedagogical methods that decenter the instructor(s) and actively engage students in the learning process. When lecturing, use an interactive style derived from Black cultural traditions and modeled after African (American) communication styles. Lectures and projects should facilitate student awareness of the class, gender, nationality, and ideological differentiation in the Black community. Use examples that reflect the experiences of both and men.

Method of evaluation	Use a variety of methods to evaluate student learning including time-objective tests, take-home essays, general writing assignments, group projects, and oral presentations. Require students to attend out-of-class, university-sponsored events, especially those sponsored by Black studies or the Black Culture Center. Schedule out-of-class conferences, each student to receive a self-evaluation of learning and of the course.
Learning environment	Establish ground rules for communication; encourage nonracist and nonsexist language. Work to develop a supporting environment that encourages constructive criticism and cooperation.

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