



“It’s not a Productive and Constructive Space for us as Black Students”: Reimagining Campus-wide Support for Black Students at West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs

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ABSTRACT

Black students at four-year universities on the West Coast are often overlooked based on misconceptions that their experiences are inconsequential due to the region’s progressive nature. This study illustrates that Black students at West Coast Non-Black minority-serving institutions (MSIs) encounter barriers to getting an education: in class, on campus, and in student housing. This study examines 21 Black students’ perceptions of their dual-serving MSI (AANAPISI/HSI) on the West Coast to answer the research question: What stories do Black students attending AANAPISI/HSIs tell as their educational experiences? This sample produced three overarching ideas: (1) Black students encounter anti-Black language in their courses, (2) perceive their campus to provide little support outside of Black Campus Centers, and (3) feel their “Blackness” is targeted in various student housing interactions. Evidence-based recommendations provide MSI educators with ways to improve campus-wide support for Black-identifying students attending non-Black-centered MSIs and PWIs.

Keywords: Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Black College Student Belonging, Counter-narratives, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Student Affairs Student Support.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and educators have made considerable strides to understand how to best support Black college students (defined in this study as Black US-born, self-identified African-American or Black descendants of enslaved ancestry) to promote feelings of inclusiveness, campus belonging, and excellence at predominantly white institutions¹ (PWIs) (Brunson et al., 2024; Tichavakunda, 2022, 2024; Volpe & Jones, 2021). Though interdisciplinary research has begun to illuminate the importance of understanding Black college students' sensibilities at Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) (Choi et al., 2021; Comeaux et al., 2021; Pirtle et al., 2021), Black women's silence, othering, and lack of social and academic support at HSIs (Willis et al., 2019), Black men's feelings of segregation and an uninviting HSI campus climate (Brooms, 2023, 2024), less is known regarding how to support Black students' *campus-wide* at dual-serving non-Black-centered minority serving institutions (MSIs). In contrast, a Black-centered MSI would be a predominantly Black institution (PBI) like Faulkner University in Alabama, or Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C. (*Predominantly Black Institutions*, 2022). Relatedly, historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs) are mission-based institutions that were born out of affirmative discrimination by the federal government, which often gets mistakenly lumped under the MSI term and umbrella (Pierre & Baskerville, 2022). MSIs, on the other hand, are enrollment-based institutions that seek to aid specific underrepresented student populations that seek higher education attainment and socio-political mobility (*Minority serving institutions*, n.d.).

Accordingly, this study examines Black students' in-class, on-campus, and student housing experiences at a non-Black dual-serving MSI on the West Coast (i.e., not an HBCU or PBI given the absence of such institutions in the region) to provide scholars with a deeper understanding of how educators at said institutions might further reimagine support for their Black students. In recent years, California has implemented substantial programming for Black students, like the statewide Black-serving institution (BSI) launch for all colleges and universities (*California Black-Serving Institution application*, n.d.), and the statewide Umoja program for all community colleges (*Umoja Community*, 2025). The present study furthers

¹ In de-colonial and anti-racist engagement this study uses a lowercase "w" when referring to white individuals and capitalizes Black when referring to Black individuals to combat historical writing conventions that perpetuate white supremacy (Bauder, 2020; Lanham & Liu, 2019).

these efforts by acknowledging the above initiatives and progress in the region while simultaneously focusing on what work needs to be done within four-year MSI structures. The tripartite approach to investigating Black students' experiences (e.g., in-class, on campus, and student housing experiences) expands what researchers (a) know about Black students at four-year MSIs on the West Coast, and (b) provides administrators and instructors at single and dual-serving MSIs a glimpse into Black students' perceptions of MSI campuses on the West Coast, and arguably PWIs across the nation. This study is important for interdisciplinary research due to scarce scholarship existing on Black students' experiences at dual-serving, non-Black-centered MSIs in higher education. Moreover, higher education literature examining West Coast institutions, MSIs in particular, is fundamentally underdeveloped, given a common misconception that Black collegiate students on the West Coast are "okay" due to the region's progressive nature. The present study is needed for at least four reasons: (1) limited research existing on racial, cultural, and ethnic college student enrollment at MSIs that said MSI is not federally designated to serve (e.g., Black students attending Hispanic serving institutions), (2) scarce research existing on Black students' experiences in higher education on the West Coast, (3) scant research existing on Black students' experiences at dual-serving MSIs, and (4) no study has provided an all-encompassing investigation of Black students' total campus experience across in-class, on campus, and student housing at West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs.

In what remains of this study, extant literature is reviewed, methods are detailed, findings are presented, followed by a discussion, implications, suggestions, future directions, and a conclusion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Survey of Black Student Challenges in US (Higher) Education

Negative Experiences

Scholars consistently find that Black college students across the US can face logics of racism that includes, but is not limited to: (1) anti-Black racism, the intolerance to Blackness and positive advancement for Black ideals (Dumas & ross, 2016), (2) racial microaggressions: a) microinvalidations (e.g., devaluing SOC's feelings), b) microassaults (e.g., name-calling), c) microinsults (e.g., demeaning a person's heritage), d) environmental microaggressions (i.e., the manifestation of microaggressions in a centralized, specific location like college classrooms) (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2019), (3) anti-Black linguistic racism, various linguistic inequities in education spaces, defined loosely as linguistic critiques educators hold

toward Black student use of “non-academic language,” or Western mainstream English (WME) (Baker-Bell, 2020a, 2020b; McMurty, 2024), and (4) Black students experience hyper-surveillance on university campuses and are the most “carded” for their campus ID’s (Jenkins et al., 2021).

Positive Experiences

Research has provided evidence that Black students can benefit from: (1) Counter spaces, defined as positively-based fixed entities (e.g., forums, classroom discussions), academic programs (e.g., mentorship, study groups), and social programs (e.g., sororities, fraternities, and student unions) where a supportive collegial environment can be achieved (Solórzano et al., 2000), (2) Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) & Black Resource Centers (BRCs), which are institutionally established spaces that support Black students’ intersectional identities (i.e., racial, cultural, gender affirms, and socioeconomic, etc.) by providing academic and social resources in order to address their socio-emotional learning needs (Harris & Patton, 2017; Patton et al., 2022), (3) Black Excellence Zones, pedagogical spaces/places wherein Black student identities are valued, and students are encouraged in ways that allow them to see, feel, and experience academic success (Lacy, Chen, Smith et al., 2024), and (4) Affinity housing, defined as a “college residential program that houses students based on a shared interest, goal, or purpose” (Volpe & Jones, 2021, p. 2), is imperative to fostering campus belonging for Black students given racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. This study draws on these concepts to better understand how higher education can begin to foster supportive environments for Black students.

Black Student Marginalization at Dual-Serving West Coast MSIs: AANAPISI/HSIs

Burgeoning research on Black student sensibilities at dual-serving MSIs on the West Coast, particularly at AANAPISI/HSIs, shows Black students experience feelings of frustration, marginalization, and isolation on said campuses. Lacy (2025) explains how he, a Black man attending an AANAPISI/HSI on the West Coast, became frustrated when he encountered a white male student verbalising two n-words in an intercultural communication course, to which the white professor, who was a white woman, ignored. Similar studies investigate Black student experiences in STEM at an AANAPISI/HSI on the West Coast and found students disclosed feeling uninvited and excluded by instructors (Flores et al., 2023). Lu and Newton (2019) found Black students at an AANAPISI/HSI on the West Coast experienced a cultural mismatch with their Latinx and Asian peers at the

university due to feeling like the odd group left out of campus support through events and social and academic initiatives. Other studies illustrate Black students at AANAPISI/HSIs on the West Coast can feel isolated in classes and, as a result, communicate silence due to feeling underrepresented, fearing peer/social backlash, and fearing instructor retaliation like public ridicule or poor grades (Lacy, 2024a). Another study found Black students at AANAPISI/HSIs on the West Coast desired in-class counter spaces that mitigated Eurocentric pedagogy, promoted Black scholarship, and fostered Black excellence zones, places/spaces where Black student learning was encouraged (Lacy, 2022).

The present study builds on these studies by interrogating Black students' total campus experience across in-class, on-campus, and student housing at West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs to close gaps in the literature.

Critical Race Methodology: Counter narratives

To understand Black students' experiences at an AANAPISI/HSI, this study centres on critical race methodology. Critical race methodology: counter storytelling (CRM; Delgado, 1989), is a methodological framework that focuses on systemic racial inequalities of individuals through counter narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As a method, CRM leverages racial counter narratives or counter stories of marginalized groups to better understand racial oppression. Racial counter narratives can be: (1) first-hand personal accounts, (2) second-hand narratives, or (3) composite stories that expose narratives not often told by people of color, which challenge dominant narratives of those with racial privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). One of the earliest college studies to use CRM investigated Black college men's mathematical and holistic scholastic success, which challenged notions of Black men's failures in math and scholarship (Stinson, 2008). CRM was leveraged to reveal Black students' first-hand narratives (e.g., counter narratives) while attending non-Black MSI campuses on the West Coast as a means to address "where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 70). Thus, this study uses CRM's first-hand counter narratives as even at AANAPISI/HSIs, "academia expects underrepresented [Black] students to 'prove' themselves worthy while framing their differences as individual deficits" (Lacy, 2024a). This project builds on existing studies using CRM by examining Black students' experiences at a dual-serving AANAPISI/HSI on the West Coast as a means to highlight how they can better support Black students. This study addresses gaps in CRM as it underscores the method by examining Black/race ideals

amidst minority-serving environments (i.e., analyzing Black students at an MSI that is not funded/recognized to support Black students). Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research question:

RQ: What stories do Black students attending AANAPISI/HSIs tell about their educational experiences?

METHODS

This research study used semi-structured one-on-one interviews of Black under/graduate students as data. After 21 interviews were completed, interview transcripts were analyzed to interpret data and construct thematic implications across participants' experiences. The following sections outline my positionality as the author of this study, participant demographics, and data analysis.

Researcher Positionality

As a Black, cisgender, able-bodied male in my late-thirties, I am interested in bettering racial experiences for Black college students. A researcher of critical race theories, systematic inequalities, and restorative justice for underrepresented Black communities, I am an agitator for both white decoloniality ideals and anti-Black sentiments while striving to provide justice, equity, diversity, and inclusive (JEDI)-initiated future directions for systemic level change. Once a Black student who attended an HBCU in Louisiana as an undergraduate, a graduate from two different AANAPISI/HSIs in California (e.g., bachelor's at one school and master's from another), and a graduate from a PWI in the Midwest with a PhD, I have held higher education positions of full-time and adjunct social science faculty, Director of Diversity, Equity, & Belonging at a Midwest community college, and presently serve as a Director of Black Student Success Initiatives at a California community college. My positionality as a Black researcher allows me to co-construct meaning and framing (Milner, 2007) of Black student experiences. As a Black man, my embodiment (Fanon, 2016; Wilderson, 2020) allowed me insight to connect with Black college students' ontologies, which is a manifestation of embodied racial apparatuses in social systems (Sekimoto, 2018) like higher education.

Participant Demographics

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, 21 Black-identifying college students at a large AANAPISI/HSI on the U.S. West Coast were recruited. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 45 years. Participants included thirteen Black women and eight Black men. Undergraduate participants included three first years, one second year, four

third years, two fourth years, and one fifth year. Eleven graduate students were enrolled in MA programs: six were first-year students, and five were second-year master's students. Both undergraduates and graduates were sampled to glean a comprehensive understanding of Black experiences on both graduate and undergraduate levels at the AANAPISI/HSI campus/research site.

Participants' areas of study were communication studies, mass media/journalism, education, engineering, political science, pre-law, and psychology. Snowball sampling was used, given the marginalization of Black students at AANAPISI/HSIs (Flores et al., 2023; Lu & Newton, 2019). Although all participants identified as Black at the AANAPISI/HSI, it is important to state that Blackness is not a monolith, and all Black students' experiences should not be lumped together based solely on having the same racial identifier. However, social scientific analyses can reveal some commonalities amongst racial, cultural, and socio-economic experiences (Faulk, 2024).

Procedures

Students were recruited through a university-wide research pool that required students to be enrolled at the university. After students signed up on the university portal, they received a short 5-minute preliminary survey that culled demographic data to determine eligibility. In cases where interviews were confirmed, a password-protected Zoom link was provided through the university email listed on the portal. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in their Zoom interview, which replaced their name on the transcripts, to maintain anonymity.

Interviews ranged from thirty-five minutes to two and a half hours, with an average time of 50 minutes. Interviews took place between February 2021 and April 2021 and transcripts produced 981 double-spaced pages of data. In addition to earning extra credit via the student research pool, all participants received a digital \$25 Amazon gift card upon interview completion, personally financed by the author to mitigate Black student labor without compensation.

Interviews were semi-structured² which were informed by an interview guide that allowed for consistency throughout each interview, but

² Some questions included: What is the Black experience like for you on your campus, and how can your school's administration better support Black students on your campus.

also provided flexibility to probe and follow up on each participant's experiences. Informed by Dumas and Ross (2016), I asked open-ended questions, which occasionally evolved, wherein participants were asked probing questions like, "Can you expand?" to add clarity (Tracy, 2020).

Data Analysis

Data were collected via Zoom transcription and augmented with shorthand field notes in real-time (Tracy, 2020) to provide rich context to each participant's responses. After data was transcribed through Zoom transcription, the data was also transcribed with a paid transcription service. In addition to a notebook with field notes, the NVivo platform was used to sift through and code interview transcripts, a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet to manage and keep track of the code names, and Microsoft Word to keep track of participants' narratives related to code clusters.

Interview transcripts were reviewed several times, and coding underwent multiple rounds for an enhanced level of sense making (Lawless & Chen, 2019). Open coding was employed (Tracy, 2020) to identify patterns and draw meaning across this study's data set, particularly the different ways Black students experienced in-class phenomena juxtaposed to out-of-class phenomena. Level one of open coding and analysis involved a thematic gathering of overarching groups and clusters of information that revealed themes on a discursive level (Tracy, 2020). For example, I grouped data into themes that concentrated on the nuanced recommendations participants provided (e.g., teacher-student interactions, campus-wide feelings of isolation, etc.).

The second level of coding and analysis required a deeper examination (Tracy, 2020) of what participants' initial responses meant. Here, closed coding was used (Lawless & Chen, 2019) to interpret, understand, and more closely group phenomena that emerged into thematic categories. For example, some students explained they experienced anti-Black language in class, while others described a desire for belonging initiatives outside of their Black resource center. Data were synthesized into thematic categories for a better understanding of Black students' needs.

FINDINGS

Responding to the research question, what stories do Black students attending AANAPISI/HSIs tell as their experiences, three overarching themes were developed: (1) anti-Black language in college classrooms, (2) unbelonging outside Black centers, and (3) targeting in student housing.

Anti-Black Language in College Classrooms

Black students' perceptions of anti-Black language in AANAPISI/HSI classrooms begin with Jayda, a fourth-year political science major who shares:

I just left my class that focuses on race and politics in America, and I was really uncomfortable because my professor kept saying 'Blacks' [when referring to Black people]. You know, I'm not a 'Blacks' and you know, like it's funny because he's a [white] professor teaching racism in there, but you're addressing Black people as just 'Blacks,' but *okay* [sarcastically]. So, recently, someone went to him and spoke up about it, but he still uses the language you know, it makes me uncomfortable because we are more than that.

Jayda is uncomfortable being called "Blacks". Although Jayda identifies as a Black person, she takes offence to "Blacks" being used alone, lacking personification. Like Jayda, Karissa, a fourth-year communication studies major, explains what she perceives as offensive anti-Black language:

It's the small things that pop up in class, and I won't say anything, but I'll see it. I remember a professor who refers to Black people as 'Blacks' - I'm not a 'Black', I'm a Black person. It's the small things like that that [white] professors aren't held accountable for. I mean they're not being as aware and conscious of. Granted, a lot of these older tenured professors did research back in the day when there was a step up from Negroes to Blacks, but like there's been a step up since then too. You have to change with the times. It's just a little dehumanising when they're like, 'oh Asian people,' and then Blacks [...] It's tiring for me because it's like you either don't address Black people at all, or when you do, it's only about Black violence.

Karissa's response to a professor calling Black individuals "Blacks" and nothing more continues the importance of personifying Black individuals. Karissa, like Jayda, did not approach her professor in this instance to correct them.

Black students offer insights into other forms of anti-Black language in AANAPISI/HSI courses. Kimmy, a third-year communication studies major, vividly remembers encountering anti-Black language in her first year:

My freshman year at [University], in my history class, it was that period where we were going over slavery in class. I

remember the [white] professor was reading a passage from a slave, and you know slaves weren't taught how to read and write, so there were misspellings and stuff. Still, the way she was reading it [the passage], she was laughing because she thought the grammatical errors and stuff were funny. Being a Black person, I was like what's funny about this? The whole situation rubbed me the wrong way.

Kimmy's experience illustrates how instructors literally laugh in Black students' faces. Laughing at someone who was lawfully and systematically illiterate is first inappropriate, second unprofessional, and third, sends the wrong message to white students. This finding is critical to understand as it can help elucidate how some white students in higher education might perceive these reactions from faculty/staff as license to mock Black history and struggles.

Angie, a third-year communication major provides insight on how Black students can perceive instructors' comments regarding language use in Black communities as anti-Black:

My [white] professor, you know, I really thought he was a really cool person, but he said something one day and, and my [Black] friend who's also in that class also caught it. So, we were talking about language and the way people speak, and he was explaining slang and how he doesn't like it or see it as being proper because it doesn't sound intellectual. But we [Black people] speak in a certain way when we are comfortable [around people]. The cultural significance of slang and not always speaking eloquently makes me feel seen. Now, I'm not seen as other students in the class who potentially, you know, speak with a 'more appropriate way' of speaking in his presence. It's a really weird thing to think about. I can't roll back those layers you know. As a professor, you're supposed to create that environment for your students, just to be themselves. Be approachable if I want to come and talk to you. I don't need to speak to your standards, and language.

Angie's narrative illustrates anti-Black linguistic racism as the professor's outward opinions create an environment where WME is upheld as the only legitimate speech pattern, where any other dialect renders the speaker incompetent, ineffectual, or not worth listening to. Educative

environments like this example could reduce the likelihood of Black students' participation in class discussions.

Un-Belonging Outside Black Centers

The second theme outlines the importance of implementing Black-centered student success and belonging initiatives that exist beyond traditional Black spaces. When asked how his campus values Black students, Vince, a fifth-year communication major stated:

They really don't, aside from maybe the BRC [...] *it's not a productive and constructive space for us as Black students*, and it is like we were maybe one class away from falling through the cracks. There is not a lot of reinforcement for us, but when we turn around, our Hispanic and Latino counterparts have so much support. There are support groups galore, there are events, and so many things.

Vince acknowledges the Black resource center (BRC), though outside of the BRC some Black students like him might feel left out of supportive campus communities at his AANAPISI/HSI.

Similarly, when asked where her campus can better stand in solidarity with Black students, Aaliyah, a first-year master's student who attended the research site as an undergraduate, shared:

There's nothing being done to help me, or those who look like me. We have our Black resource center but that's it. That's the only people that are genuinely trying to help the Black community [the people in the Black Resource Center]. I know we have different committees they're trying to start, but are the heads of these committees Black people? You're putting white people at the head of diversity committees. That doesn't make any sense. They're not offering enough support for Black students and Black staff. I mean, really? You're not really doing anything for us because there are no Black people there to represent us.

Aaliyah explains how Black students at her AANAPISI/HSI do have a BRC, however, the BRC alone does little to elicit feelings of support, belonging, and excellence campus-wide.

Blue, a first-year pre-med student, illustrates the importance of campuses demonstrating solidarity with Black students campus-wide:

Have you heard about the Black Resource Center being vandalized? I saw this girl on Instagram who was sitting in her car parked outside of the BRC, and some white guys were

screaming at her. She was literally just sitting in her car, which I guess made her start recording the video. I mean it could've easily been me sitting in my car in front of the BRC, then they would've been screaming all crazy at me. Then, I think, I could have been at the BRC in those moments when it had been vandalized. Who would want their child to go through this type of stuff? Then people swear we are lying when it happens, it's never any winning.

Blue articulates feeling racially fatigued, dealing with anti-Black phenomena in perceived Black-affirming spaces. Blue empathises with the unfortunate circumstances and imagines herself in the unsafe crosshairs of Black hate incidents.

Nia, a second-year Communication Studies major illustrates how some Black students do not participate in fear of their safety and social backlash in the wake of Black hate:

I was in a mentorship program through Women and gender equity for commuter students at the BRC. The program is a commuter pathway thing. And at first, they were offering resources with my mentor, [mentor's name] and because of all the issues with the BRC, I just did not trust that at all. I mean, I've heard the little [university] stories, I knew that the Black resource center had just gotten vandalised prior to me coming there, and the school didn't do anything to make Black students feel safe. So, like that right there, I was like, I like the idea of the mentorship for Black women, but nope - shut down.

Nia explains how the anti-Black campus climate for social activities creates a sense of untrustworthiness for Black students, even in the process of positive Black student success initiatives. While Nia appreciates the notion of initiatives for Black women, she does not participate due to fearing for her psychological and physical campus safety.

Targeting Student Housing

The final theme explores Black students' experiences in student residence halls. For example, Kiara, now a second-year master's student who attended the same institution for her undergraduate years shares:

I remember back when I was living on campus, I was just hanging out in like the lounge area with some people on my floor, like my roommate at the time, and there were other

people who were just like hanging out listening to music. So, this one white boy looks at me. You know, he looks at me, and he randomly says to me, ‘You kind of look like J Cole.’ And I’m all like what? So, it gets very quiet, and we were all just looking at him like what does that mean? Do all Black people look alike? Even though I am clearly a woman, *I look like a famous Black guy*. I bet you, he wouldn’t dare go up to white girls and tell them they look like Jim Carey.

Kiara was offended when she received an unsolicited comment that suggested she resembled a prominent Black male rapper, even though she is a cisgender, heterosexual woman.

Sierra, now a master’s student, recalls her undergraduate experience at a different AANAPISI/HSI institution:

So, freshman year this white girl, my roommate, was just saying ‘I don’t think it’s bad or it’s offensive when a non-Black person has like braids or [natural] locks. She was saying that if I can get this done [e.g., have locs as a Black woman], why can’t she? So, I was like, these hairstyles don’t hold any cultural significance for you, dear, like it’s not specific, it’s not like indigenous to your culture. It was just a weird conversation that made me think about the importance of having Black roommates. Even though she was my roommate for a whole year, I didn’t talk to her anymore.

Sierra highlights how cultural perceptions of hair (e.g., the different viewpoints Black and white individuals may hold) can create additional barriers for Black students in cross-racial interactions.

Black men also face issues in on-campus housing. Tyree, a first-year master’s student, who attended the same institution as an undergraduate recall an incident:

There was this big thing that happened my sophomore year here in the dorms. So, basically, I had been out at parties all night with my friends. I get back to my room, you know, it’s like super late and basically, some RA [resident attendant] tried to accuse me of breaking in. I was like, girl, I live here. Basically, someone from my floor went to get some McDonald’s or something and was coming back in. Thank god you know, because they vouched for me before it got crazy. I mean, as a Black guy, I already know how that could’ve ended. But there

it is, you know, she [the RA] believed him [the white neighbouring student] and not me because he was white.

Tyree explains having to prove his existence in his place of residence at the university while simultaneously understanding the gravity of the situation if the police were called.

KeeKee, a third-year undergraduate transfer, talked through experiencing rude service:

After things officially shut down in March [COVID-19] I moved in with my boyfriend at his family's house until November. So, I was on my own in a city I'd never been to with people I had barely met. That's when I asked [the university] for help. I talked to someone over the phone, like maybe an RA, and I told them I was struggling to make rent. I was struggling to buy food and furniture; I literally had nothing. As I was telling them this on the phone, they were so rude. So, I sent an email saying how I didn't appreciate how they were talking to me. And this whole email chain happened. It was so bad that someone reviewed the call, maybe a manager or something - I don't know the hierarchy. But someone reviewed the conversation and reached out to me personally, like called me about the situation. They [the university residence hall] reached out to me, saying, 'Oh, I apologise for the way they were speaking.' I was like I don't think this is how you should treat students who are trying to provide for themselves in the middle of a pandemic. I had so much going on that I was like, " This is the least of my worries right now. Honestly, I don't even know where I will be in the next two months, and now, I don't even live in [the city] anymore, because I moved again.

KeeKee's experience shows that Black students could experience poor customer service in student encounters, which holds the potential to add to overall feelings of unbelonging at AANAPISI/HSIs. Here, students' voices, matched with student photos and names (i.e., once a student IDs are given at the onset of student affairs interactions) can be perceived as anti-Blackness, which might prompt Black students to leave the institution/city entirely.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated Black under/graduate students' experiences at a dual-serving, non-HBCU, MSI on the West Coast to better

understand how college campuses can better support Black college student experiences.

Anti-Black Language in Class

Black students perceive some instructors' language as anti-Black. For example, Jayda and Karissa, both fourth-year students, perceive being called "Blacks" by itself with no personification as offensive. The lack of instructors personifying terms attributed to Black people can be perceived as micro aggressive, as such terms are dehumanizing and thereby insulting (Sue et al., 2019). Karissa indicated that various ethnic and cultural groups are attributed human labels (e.g., Asian people), whereas language surrounding Black populations does not receive the same human acknowledgement. Jayda also highlights the bigotry of some professors who continue to use offensive language even after students speak up. This finding of remaining silent in their respective courses supports Lacy (2024a), who found Black college students suffer in silence due to: (1) feeling marginalized in number within classes, (2) apprehension of being mocked and harassed by peers if they (Black students) speak up and out against anti-Black phenomena, and (3) fear possible instructor retaliation by way of public ridicule or biased grading.

Students like Kimmy and Angie illustrate anti-Black language slightly differently. Kimmy's narrative shows instructor behaviour surrounding enslavement wherein Kimmy became disengaged from her course when her instructor openly laughed at the illiterate passage assembled by an enslaved Black person who would have been whipped, fined, and likely to be dismembered for becoming literate and/or fighting for their freedom/humanity (Givens & Isson, 2023). The insensitive nature of the instructor, along with Kimmy's disengagement, supports Garibay and Mathis's (2021) study, which found Black students experience deleterious interactions with white faculty regarding the period of enslavement due to: a) the institution's history with enslavement, and b) Black students being microaggressed by white faculty at the institution. Garibay and Mathis (2021) recommend PWIs develop initiatives to foster supportive relationships with Black students (i.e., institutions should recognize and address their histories with slavery, and engage in reparative efforts, such as scholarships for descendants of enslaved people). Second, Angie's experience showcases how Black students can feel targeted which can subsequently alter student-instructor relationships. As Angie stated, she initially enjoyed her (white) professor until the professor openly stated that slang, a form of speech many Black individuals use, was not only inappropriate language, but is not "intellectual" speech. Here, Angie could interpret her instructor's comment

as an insult, calling Black students, and any students who use slang non-intelligent. Angie experienced a microinsult to her culture (Sue et al., 2019), which is also characterized as anti-Black linguistic racism due to slang being synonymous with Black Language (Baker-Bell, 2020a, 2020b). When (white) professors laugh at passages written by the enslaved, or openly articulate gatekeeping WME standards surrounding language, due to the seriousness of the racial and cultural “roots” tied to present-day phenomena, Black students contend with additional barriers when compared to their peers, which can result in added emotional labour. By understanding Black language, instructors can begin to support Black students by mitigating instances like linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020a, 2020b), and create environments where students can heal from linguistical harm (McMurty, 2024).

Un-Belonging Outside Black Centers.

These findings illuminate both the importance of campus-wide support outside of BRCs at MSIs, and the significance of BCCs/BRCs at PWI and MSI campuses that do not yet have them (Patton et al., 2022). Still, Black students at the MSI feel disproportionately underserved on their campus outside of their BRC. For example, Vince, a fifth-year senior, articulates that he perceives his campus to provide clear and abundant campus-wide support (e.g., academic and social initiatives) for his Latine/x peers while Black students do not have such events and support outside of their Black campus center. Vince’s insights help showcase how Black students feel unsupported on AANAPISI/HSI campuses on the West Coast and are maybe one class from exiting the university indefinitely. This finding of lacking academic and social support substantiates Lu and Newton (2019) who found Black students perceived their West Coast AANAPISI/HSI university to be exclusionary which created feelings of marginalization given their Latinx and Asian counterparts receiving overwhelming social and academic support initiatives. Second, Aaliyah perceived the campus to have little to no Black representation in administration and decision making, particularly on diversity committees in particular. As a result, she explains she does not identify with or trust the effectiveness of such committees’ support for Black students. This finding builds on Alicea and Johnson’s (2021) recommendation that affinity programs designed for SOC in higher education are most effective when led by faculty and staff of colour, with white allies serving in supportive roles to enable the goals of the racial community for the underrepresented students to be achieved. Here, the nuanced investigation of Black students at AANAPISI/HSIs is critical as white allyship might be pertinent for PWIs, but this sample illustrates a more nuanced look at the

importance of specific faculty and staff of colour being represented across campus-wide initiatives to better support particular SOC populations at MSIs.

Both Blue and Nia's narratives deliver deeper context surrounding safety and Black campus centers. Blue explained her feelings of exhaustion and her perceptions of campus safety in the wake of anti-Black vandalism that occurred at her campus's BRC. After viewing a video of a Black student being accosted outside her university's BRC, Blue imagines how easily it may have been for her to be in harm's way had she been at the BRC during the moments it was vandalized. The importance of campus safety is evident here as Blue feared for her safety which corroborates Maffini and Dillard (2022) who draw attention to both the physical and psychological dimensions of safety for Black college students, given that significantly more Black students report being stalked, verbally threatened, and experiencing feelings of safety and psychological distress. Likewise, Nia's experience shows some Black students might experience apprehension of using the BRC in the wake of vandalism, even if they are invited to participate in a Black student success initiative (e.g., Black campus commuter program). Nia reveals that her campus should have done more to aid in the feelings of her perceptions of safety and thus, participated in the women's gender and equity mentorship program at her Black center. Nia and Blue's insights highlight how MSI campuses' over-reliance on BRCs as the only form of support for Black students can marginalize their experiences (Harris & Patton, 2017), especially in times of vandalism and hate crimes. This finding emphasizes Carpenter et al. (2024), who found that, aside from the idea of "campus belonging," Black college students typically desire physical, mental, and emotional protection from their campuses.

Targeted in Student Housing

The final theme draws attention to the microaggressive living quarters of Black students that instructors and staff might not otherwise consider when interacting with Black students at PWIs (Volpe & Jones, 2021), or in this sample, dual-serving MSIs. This study's participants described interactions in student housing as either a form of social (e.g., peer interactions), or formal (e.g., staff interactions) targeting due to their racial identity. For example, both Kiara and Sierra recalled memorable, negative social interactions with non-Black peers during their undergraduate years. Kiara found it offensive when a white male offered an unsolicited suggestion that she looked like a famous Black male rapper in front of other peers. Kiara implied her embarrassment, but explicitly stated she believed the individual

would not act the same way with white women colleagues which highlights Willis et al. (2019) findings of Black women's mistreatment at HSIs.

Relatedly, Sierra perceived her roommate to exploit Black culture as her roommate desired to wear Black hair styles like locs. And while legislation like the crown act seeks to protect Black cultural hairstyles, Sierra's excerpt illustrates how some Black students encounter emotional labors of preserving cultural ideals like hair styles. Although hair styling is not exclusive to any one culture (e.g., white individuals have been seen with box braids or locs), the critical insight here is that Black students can encounter various perceived forms of hair discrimination in school settings with (white) instructors and/or peers (Mbilishaka et al., 2020). Specifically, Mbilishaka et al. (2020) connect present-day discrimination toward locs, and other natural hairstyles of African and Caribbean Black peoples, to that of chattel slavery and the societal acceptance of a Eurocentric aesthetic value system. Even though the two roommates decided to no longer speak to one another, the insight here is the idea that Black culture, Black bodies, Black hair is up for debate and can be understood by Black students as cultural appropriation. Some questions housing administrators at AANAPISI/HSIs might want to ask themselves are: How many instances of anti-Blackness like this occurs daily? How might we support our Black students if they choose to respond differently to perceived racially subjugation? How might we mitigate such treatment for our Black students?

To that end, based on both Tyree and Keekee's vignettes, AANAPISI/HSI student life administrators might also look to professionally develop staff members to better support Black students in the area of customer service (e.g., formal staff-student interactions). Tyree recalled an incident in his second year that could have turned fatal based on an overnight RA's immediate assessment that suggested Tyree did not live at the hall which corroborates Jenkins et al. (2021) who found Black men are extremely likely to be surveilled and required to furnish proof of their student ID's on higher education campuses. This narrative highlight provides a much-needed look into Black men's perceptions of AANAPISI/HSIs but also, the importance of bystander intervention. As Tyree explains his experience of having to prove his existence as a student not only at the university, but as a resident of the hall, he understood that as a Black man, the likelihood of getting into the building would've decreased dramatically if police were called (Lacy, 2023, 2024b). Secondly, KeeKee, a third-year undergraduate transfer student explains the importance of customer service in the campus's residence life office and how it could directly affect Black student attendance at the university. KeeKee's excerpt provides evidence that she encountered poor

service when she reached out to the university for help, and the residence life office served at the point of contact, wherein, KeeKee perceived the interaction to be rude, and unwelcoming which supports Willis et al. (2019) findings that show Black women are often mistreated at HSIs. This finding also emphasizes the severe impacts Black women experienced during the height of COVID-19, namely housing insecurities (Versey & Russell, 2023).

IMPLICATIONS

Higher education leadership at single-serving, dual-serving, non-HBCU MSIs, and PWIs across the U.S. can glean at least two overarching takeaways from the present study, (1) Professionally develop faculty and staff to support Black/African American Students, and (2) Commit to campus-wide Black student success initiatives for place making and belonging.

Professionally Develop Faculty & Staff to Support Black/African American Students

First, West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs (and all non-Black MSIs and PWIs) can strategically hire more Black, African American, and Pan African faculty to not only represent Black students at said MSIs, but also assist Black students in various social-emotional ways. One of the longest standing challenges to Black student retention in all higher education is the presence and availability of Black faculty (and staff). Strategic faculty hires can include adding one Black faculty position per year for five years across all departments/schools. Institutions can also engage in targeted campus-wide cohort structured cluster hires of HBCU graduates from various graduate research and teaching programs. In this way, non-Black MSIs hire and retain Black faculty, staff, and administrators. Second, non-Black MSIs can continue to professionally develop faculty and staff by covering a range of topics diving deep into Black culture. Based on this study's data, it should be self-evident that standard diversity, equity, and inclusion professional developments that are all encompassing will not work for Black students attending a dual-serving, non-Black centered MSI. Instead, Black students at West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs require innovative, Black-centered pedagogical techniques in classrooms thus, professional developments need to be designed accordingly. And while more than half African Studies faculty are white (Lawrance, 2020), West Coast AANAPISI/HSI administrators can begin to collaborate with their own Black identifying African/Africana/Black Studies departments for in-house facilitations of Black-laden resolutions for Black students. However, African/Africana/Black Studies faculty should be offered such opportunities (not mandated) and should receive bonus compensation in

the form of an honorarium, or institutional credit toward service for such efforts. Also, West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs can begin to collaborate with HBCU administrators to share/allocate resources in exchange for faculty and staff professional developments into Black culture (e.g., coordinate student exchange summer programs in return for HBCU professional developments). Some West Coast based institutions can also develop a loan program to loan out artifacts from HBCUs for their BRCs, BCCs, Black Studies/Africana Studies departments, and beyond, to better show support to their Black students by leaning on libraries and museum sectors of the university.

Additionally, the content of AANAPISI/HSI Black-student-centered faculty and staff professional developments that are aimed at supporting Black students' (in-class) campus experiences should focus on three primary areas: (1) anti-Black (micro aggressive) language, (2) institutional connections to enslavement, and (3) critically-reflexive anti-Black pedagogy.

Anti-Black (micro aggressive) language. Black college students experience the highest amount of microaggressions out of any racial, ethnic, and cultural group (Lewis et al., 2021). Thus, it is critical to provide continual anti-Black professional development to faculty and staff to mitigate such encounters. For example, based on this sample, professional developments aimed at mitigating anti-Black linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020a, 2020b) in education spaces could serve as an excellent professional development for MSI faculty and staff. This type of professional development can attune non-Black faculty (and staff) to the nuances of "Black language" as a form of resistance toward, and mitigation of, anti-Black micro aggressions. Specifically, a series of professional developments in this area can provide educators at MSIs with insights into the deep cultural and historical roots of Black language and its conventions in addition to understanding the importance of storytelling, a key convention of Black language, as a means to communicate ideas, empower Black student agency to overcome internalized anti-Blackness, provide linguistical justice, and better engage Black students (McMurty, 2024).

Institutional connections to enslavement. Second, faculty and staff professional developments can include frameworks for institutional reconciliation and reparations on the topic of enslavement. Mathis's (2021) study for example, shows us that Black college students tend to have negative interactions with white faculty at campuses that profited from enslaved labor. The present study's findings expand on this concept by providing evidence that even the topic of enslavement in class can be triggering and traumatizing for Black students enrolled at MSIs on the West Coast, where historical ties to enslavement might go unnoticed. Accordingly, West Coast MSIs should

provide faculty and staff with professional developments that: a) provide ways in which (non-Black) instructors can honor the period of enslavement in an ethical way, b) help (non-Black) faculty and staff improve on interpersonal communication with Black students, and c) develop campus-wide initiatives for Black students on the topic of enslavement (i.e., institutions should recognize and address their histories with slavery, and engage in reparative efforts, such as scholarships for descendants of enslaved people) as (Mathis, 2021) indicates.

Critically-reflexive anti-Black pedagogy. Finally, West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs can develop faculty to engage in innovative, Black-centered pedagogy. Professional developments that focus on this concept should provide faculty with teaching, mentoring, and interpersonal techniques to engage with Black students. For example, Lacy and Chen (2022) proposes faculty members employ strategic, systemic, and sustainable critically reflexive co-mentoring, where non-Black faculty learn from Black students in an inviting, supportive, and collaborative way. By valuing Black students' experiences as humans, faculty can begin to make connections with Black students and even learn from Black students. Critically-reflexive Anti-Black pedagogy is illustrated in (Lacy, Chen, & Smith et al., 2024) where Black students desired Black-centered creative spaces that the authors coined "Black excellence Zones," wherein Black students experience readings from Black scholars in their respective disciplines and are positively represented in class discussions. At the end of their study, the authors posed a provocative inquiry for (non-Black) faculty at AANAPISI/HSIs, and PWIs to consider, "In what ways am I communicating anti-Blackness through my selected readings for this course?" (Lacy, Chen, & Smith et al., 2024). More literature like (Lacy, Canary, & Martinez et al., 2024) case study offers administrators a framework of how to overhaul a department's curriculum for anti-racist and social justice concepts, in addition to providing specific ways to work with faculty (Lacy, Canary, & Martinez et al., 2024).

Commit to Campus-wide Black Student Success Initiatives for Placemaking & Belonging

Second, West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs can address Black student experiences through various campus-wide social activities. To this end, administrators can augment BRC/BCC's efforts (Harris & Patton, 2017), by establishing campus-wide Black-affirming programming for Black students and Black faculty at MSIs (Flores et al., 2023; Lu & Newton, 2019; Thompson et al., 2019). This study's findings suggest that single and dual-serving, non-HBCU MSIs, and PWIs can increase their strategic planning for

Black student initiatives such as the Divine Nine or “D9” (Brown et al., 2021). For instance, West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs can lobby to host national D9 events for Black fraternities and sororities to demonstrate fervent commitments to Black students’ social life. Campus-wide endeavours that involve hosting Black organisations can create a celebratory campus climate of Black-centered programming for Black students, which can be used to: (1) recruit, (2) mentor, (3) retain, and (4) graduate Black students.

Other possibilities include West Coast AANAPISI/HSIs establishing and maintaining close partnerships with the California State University (CSU) system’s Central Office for the Advancement of Black Excellence to improve the enrollment numbers of Black students as well as foster Black student academic and social success (Beall, 2023). Here, campuses that may be looking for Black-student opportunities can partner with campuses that have established Black-centered initiatives like CSU Los Angeles (an AANAPISI/HSI) which created their Halisi Scholars Black Living-Learning Community, which is designed to enhance the residential experience for Black students by offering the opportunity to connect with Black faculty and peers in/with cultural awareness and civic engagement (Lloyd & Guinyard, 2016). Another example is CSU Sacramento (an AANAPISI/HSI), who is launching the nation’s first-ever Black Honors College, which is designed as a living-learning community for students interested in Black history, life, and culture, and as such, the college will have its own housing, dean of students, director, counselors, academic advisors, student support staff, as well as professors who have a successful record of teaching and mentoring Black students (Watson, 2024).

Still, working toward Black student support on MSI campuses will require administrators to allot budgetary funds for positions and programming that is geared particularly for Black students. For example, AANAPISI/HSIs can begin to increase roles for Black support staff (i.e., Black student success coordinators, Black career coaches, Black academic advisors, Black mentoring programs etc.) to aid in placemaking processes (Thompson et al., 2019). Hence, AANAPISI/HSIs can increase such roles as Black staff members are also critical to serve on DEI committees as further evidence of representation for Black students, given students’ awareness of, and dissatisfaction with, Black representation in the current sample. This nuances Alicea and Johnson’s (2021) suggestion that programs designed for Black students are most effective when led by Black faculty and staff, as such identity alignment fosters increased rapport. Furthermore, such programs can create and foster collaboration with Black student unions, Black faculty, and BCCs/BRCs for increased exposure, awareness, and community with Black

campus stakeholders. This study also provides evidence for the administration's need to respond to anti-Black campus vandalism, as mental health professionals can also be increased if/when BCCs/BRCs are vandalized as more can be done by the administration, given that anti-Black acts often get disregarded and left unpunished. In other words, Black students' mental health efforts can be improved by campus-wide leadership to show tangible signs of fervent institutional commitments to Black-student solidarity, advancement, and excellence.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study examines Black students' in-class, on-campus, and student housing experiences as perhaps the first study to provide an all-encompassing investigation of Black students' total" campus experience at AANAPISI/HSIs, the current study presents some limitations. First, in terms of Black students' experiences across in-class, on campus, and student housing, this study only sampled Black students at one AANAPSISI/HSI on the West Coast, which does not fully or accurately represent all Black students' experiences at every single, or dual-serving MSI e.g., AANAPSISI/HSIs. Hence, it is imprudent to treat Black students' experiences as monolithic; thus, the Black students in the present study (e.g., U.S. born and descendants of U.S.-enslaved ancestry) represent a fraction of the Black diaspora. Future studies can investigate the "Black" experiences of students who may be international, mixed race (e.g., Afro-Latino/a, Afro-Caribbean) across PWI, and single serving MSI contexts. Future studies can examine Black students' experiences across multiple dual-serving MSIs for an enhanced understanding of how Black students feel at various AANAPISI/HSIs. While this sample included graduate students who attended different AANAPISI/HSIs for their undergraduate matriculation, in addition to students who transferred from community colleges, this was a missed opportunity to juxtapose the AANAPISI/HSIs' campus differences and similarities to other MSI campuses.

CONCLUSION

The present study analysed one-on-one interviews of 21 Black students at a West Coast dual-serving, non-HBCU and non PBI MSI (e.g., AANAPISI/HSI) to understand better their "total campus" experience. Drawing from the counternarrative method, this study exemplifies Black students at West Coast non-Black serving MSIs encounter educative barriers in class, campus-wide, and in student housing. Specifically, students interviewed in this sample disclosed that they: (1) encounter anti-Black

language in their courses, (2) perceive their campus to provide little support outside of Black Campus Centers, and (3) feel their “Blackness” is targeted in various student housing interactions. This study highlights a key area of research for Black students as West Coast students are under researched and thus, underserved. While MSIs are enrollment-based institutions that seek to aid specific underrepresented student populations’ higher education attainment and socio-political mobility, not much effort has been placed on understanding Black students’ overall perceptions at dual-serving non-Black MSIs. This study’s findings provide key insights to Black students’ scholarly vein given that no PBIs or HBCUs were founded on the West Coast. Findings in this study provide evidence that the Black student population within the MSI discussion deserves more acute attention. Key takeaways presented here draw attention to MSI leadership and call on instructors to begin design and implementation of campus-wide Black student support initiatives like Black affinity communities. Black affinity initiatives are essential for overall mental health and well-being (Volpe & Jones, 2021). Recalling California’s programming for Black students like Black-serving institutions (BSIs), and the statewide Umoja program for colleges and universities (*Umoja Community*, 2025), findings in this study advance those efforts by honing in on total campus approach. The present study provides evidence for MSIs/PWIs to provide Black students with affinity housing to reduce Black students feeling targeted in student housing. This study also provides evidence that MSIs/PWIs can bolster Black campus activities beyond Black cultural centers to increase Black students' feelings of belonging. Finally, this sample illustrates MSIs/PWIs can and should empower faculty with Black and Pan-African-centered curriculum to improve in-class experiences of Black students. These efforts can provide Black students with physical and psychological affirming spaces where Black students can thrive both academically and socially.

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Manuscript submitted: January 26, 2025
Manuscript revised: August 1, 2025
Accepted for publication: October 4, 2025