

The (In)Convenient Truth: Exploring Waidner-Spahr Library as a Repository for Books,
Scholars & whiteness

By
Sierra Climaco

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Professor J. Daniel Schubert, Advisor
Professor Amy Steinbugler, Reader
Jessica Howard, Reader

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries were full of ideas – perhaps the most dangerous and powerful of all weapons. –
Sarah J. Maa

Today, racial segregation and division often result from habits, policies, and institutions that are not explicitly designed to discriminate. Contrary to popular belief, discrimination or segregation do not require animus. They thrive even in the absence of prejudice or ill will. It's common to have racism without racists.

–Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

It is fair to assume that the average American knows how to use the library. They know how to maneuver inside, whether to borrow a book, access a desktop computer, sign up for a free group class, pay off a fine, or simply enjoy the air-conditioning. If they do not know, they can always ask members of the library. At first glance, the library is a self-explanatory, neutral space that is welcoming to all. Looking deeper, however, the library possesses a history, a set of expectations on how to act, and layers of meaning that are not as obvious. These meanings likely go unnoticed compared to, say, the classic American diner with its curlicue signage hanging above the storefront, the service bar running the length of the restaurant, spinning bar stools padded with bright red upholstery, Formica tabletops, and a jukebox playing classic rock. There is an obvious conveyance of the American diner experience: come in, eat a hefty American breakfast, socialize at the bar with the locals, gab with the waiter/waitress, and enjoy the American-ness of the space. Just like the diner, which conveys a particular meaning and sets expectations on how to act inside, other physical spaces and infrastructures, including libraries, possess their own intended and unintended meanings that guide behavior and belief. Although the meaning of the library space is not as obvious, it possesses meaning and a consensus as to how it should be used. In this thesis, I argue that what undercuts that consensus are notions of exclusion, race, and whiteness.

Syracuse University

November 19, 2019 at around 1 A.M.: students in the academic library at Syracuse University receive a white supremacist manifesto via Airdrop (Frias 2019). The manifesto was a copy of a different manifesto, one written by a man who killed fifty-one civilians at a mosque in New Zealand (Ortiz 2019). The Airdrop incident followed a series of incidents at Syracuse that included racist graffiti and Anti-Asian slurs and swastikas found on snowbanks (Madani 2019). While some attempts have been made to find the culprit(s), no one has been held accountable. The manifesto incident is unique and tragic, but the principle behind the act— to undermine the lives of non-white people— is not new. The act reflects a culture of whiteness and violence against People of Color¹ that has been at the foundation of the United States' systems and infrastructures.

The language of the manifesto has dismantled the idyllic image of the library, particularly the academic library. The intention of the academic library is to serve its patrons (students, faculty, and staff belonging to the respective higher education institution) and facilitate an environment where they can study, pursue academic research, or access information and other resources. However, the person responsible for the airdropped manifesto at Syracuse manipulated the space to spread rhetoric that targets Students of Color, threatening their safety within the library space and on the campus overall. The airdrop incident reveals how the library is a social site— a space where meaning and norms are created through interactions, practices,

¹ Throughout the paper, I actively capitalize terms like 'People of Color,' 'Person of Color,' and 'Student(s) of Color).' It is one small step and intentionality in wanting to humanize the lives and experiences of people who have historically, structurally, and interpersonally experienced incidents of dehumanization and marginalization.

and social relations. While it is easier to see spaces like the library as neutral and welcoming to all, it is important to recognize these spaces as social and therefore malleable to ideas that can influence and exclude others. I am interested in how forms of exclusion within physical structures can occur, particularly along lines of race. Specifically, how can the library space be discreetly unwelcoming and even threatening to some people? What allows for one to simply press a few buttons and disseminate a racist manifesto in the library space? What allows a nameless tagger to spray-paint anti-Semitic symbols or Anti-Asian slurs into the very landscape of academia, where all can see and feel targeted? What effects do these acts have on People of Color, the targets? Do these acts have residual effects on white people? Incidents such as Syracuse's reflect the larger phenomenon of People of Color made to feel that they do not belong in any space, including even those that are supposedly meant to be welcoming to all.

The unfound disseminator of the manifesto illustrates how space— any three-dimensional expanse where all species and material objects are situated— is meaningful (Dictionary.com, 2020).² The manifesto incident also points to who has the power to make the physical space meaningful, or decide what the meaning of said space will be. Henri Lefebvre is one of the recognized pioneers in seeing space as social. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre breaks down the illusion of space where people see any space they occupy as “innocent, as free of traps or secret places” (1991: 28). Instead, he contends that space is a product of social relations, thoughts, and actions. Space is social and created and maintained by people as social agents.

² In the literature review, I explain how there are contested definitions on what space is. For the purpose of this paper, I use the general dictionary definition of space as a three-dimensional expanse where all objects, people, and events occur at a specific time. I then contend that a) there is a social element ascribed to physical space by way of the actions and behaviors of people who occupy that space and b) the physicality of space and structures can also be meaningful in that they can also impact how people think and behave when in said space.

Lefebvre also warns that by its social nature, space can then be a social site of control and domination where people or entities will, by action and thought, master and dominate the space (1991: 33-34).

Space can be a place manipulated into a site of control by a variety of social factors including along racial lines. Space controlled by notions of race is not a new phenomenon. In 2019, four black students at Harvard Law School received anonymous comments— “we all hate u,” “you know you don’t belong here” and “youre just here because of affirmative action”— which undermined their presence on campus (Associated Press 2019). Their presence is temporary, unwanted and not based on merit. These recent incidents targeting Students of Color come from a long history of policies and practices in American society targeting the very grounds that People of Color are forced to tread lightly on.

We have always known this. We just never noticed.

In his memoir, *Black Boy*, Richard Wright, a Black man living during the Jim Crow era, borrowed a book from the library by using his white coworker’s wife’s library card.³ Card in tow, Wright felt compelled to forge a note to deter the librarian from believing he was borrowing the books for himself by way of denigrating himself: “Dear Madam-” he writes on the note for

³ I deliberately capitalize the ‘B’ in Black as I would with Asian, Chicano, or Brown. I intentionally keep white lowercase. Capitalization has been a longstanding issue within academia and the press. In the 1920s, W. E. B. Du Bois demanded that the press capitalize the ‘N’ in ‘Ne**o,’ a form that had previously been rejected by the press (Tharps 2014). Dictionaries and newspapers insist on lowercasing Black people all while upholding proper nouns for other nationalities, races, and tribes, thereby demeaning Black people as a race (Tharps 2014). As I argue later, People of Color, and Black people in particular, have dealt with the U.S. and the system of white supremacy experimenting on how to categorize People of Color among many other violent transgressions. Labels specific to Black people have always been lowercase. By capitalizing, I recognize the identities of People of Color, specifically Black people, who have faced the brunt of institutional and interpersonal erasure through dismissive, racial acts such as lowercasing Black people as a group.

the librarian as if he was said white coworker- “Would you please let this ni**er boy have some books by H. L. Mencken?” (2008: 207).^{4,5} The act of using a slur against himself to access books reflects the harsh reality of Jim Crow law and the larger societal imagining of a Black man in America as being of lesser value than a white person. Wright policing himself within the library space reveals the history of the library as a place meant to serve white people. Today, the principle behind Wright’s actions persist. With this understanding of space as social and a place where meaning is created, negotiated, and, at times, controlled and racialized, we return to the library, teeming with all kinds of life, objects, information, and social controls.

In this research, I examine the ways race and whiteness— the ideology that grants social and tangible privileges to those categorized as ‘white’— are signified, negotiated, and maintained within Dickinson College’s Waidner-Spahr Library. Through interviews with nine students and an ethnographic observation of Waidner-Spahr, I seek to answer a number of questions. First, how is the space of Waidner-Spahr racialized? Second, how does whiteness permeate the space and spatial practices within the academic library? Third, how do students behave accordingly or in opposition to this racial consensus? And finally, how do spatial practices in the library influence college campus experiences for undergraduate college students of different races? The interviews speak to the personal thoughts, perceptions, decisions, and behaviors that students engage when in the library while my ethnography examines the space as it is designed and what patrons do in the library in real time.⁶

⁴ Black people during Jim Crow Law were not allowed to borrow books from the library unless they were borrowing for their white coworkers or bosses (Wiegand 2015: 113).

⁵ As a non-Black person, I am more comfortable to censor out any derivative or use of the N-word.

⁶ An academic library differs from the public library, as I further explain in the literature review. While the public library is open to the general public, the academic library is semi-public. On the weekdays, Waidner-Spahr is open from 8:00 A.M. to 2:00 A.M. and general public hours are from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Only Dickinson College

Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens and the theoretical works of Henry Lefebvre, I argue that Dickinson College's Waidner-Spahr Library is an active and racialized social space maintaining inequitable notions of race and the domination of whiteness through its spatial design and the spatial behaviors of patrons.⁷ These notions of race and whiteness work inconspicuously and can be understood as the white elephant in the room: a looming presence that overpowers all else in the vicinity, but no one wants to address it because it would make some uncomfortable. Thus, we do not address the white elephant in the room, allowing for its presence to remain, allowing for race and whiteness to remain in the space and doing nothing about it. The white elephant in the room is not confined to the library space. Although the focus of my thesis is the academic library, notions of race and whiteness permeate the whole college campus in which the library is situated.

A personal endeavor towards theory, healing, and liberation

My exploration of the dynamic of race and whiteness is driven by my own experiences within the library space. Once when walking from the west wing of the library— students typically call it the 'Loud' or 'Talking Section'— to the east wing, or the 'Quiet Section, a white man, a college student, wearing a soccer jersey and casual shorts was walking in the opposite

faculty, students, and staff may enter past 6:00 P.M. with card access. On weekends, Waidner-Spahr opens later and closes earlier but the same policy of being open to the general public only at a certain times still applies (Dickinson College | Waidner-Spahr Library, n.d.)

⁷ CRT pushes back against the habit of keeping whiteness in the margins. Proponents of CRT denounce the idea that we live in a colorblind, post-racial society— that society has progressed since the slavery era and the struggle for civil rights, that one's racial identity is inessential to them accessing all the rights granted by society. We do not, as CR theorists claim, live in a society where racial inequality is over. CRT recognizes racism still embedded into the foundations and structures of everyday life, relations, and critical infrastructure. Using CRT, we see how Waidner-Spahr's foundation is embedded with elements of race and whiteness and it is a social repository of the larger racially exclusionary practices on Dickinson College's campus of which I, as a student, have experienced.

direction as me.⁸ He was walking towards me as if through me and, scanning the situation from the sure way he walked, I knew one of us needed to move, and that it was going to be me. When I did not move, we nearly collided, almost stepping on each other's toes until he maneuvered around me at the last second. I still wonder what it was that made him seem comfortable to stay on his route when I had been walking first. Another night in the library, I was sitting in the area where all the desktop computers are situated in a commons section— known as the Reference area. I was at one of the computers, packing up my things to leave, when a different college student— white male, brunette, wearing casual sweats— squeezed through the gap between my chair and the desk behind it. Rather than walking around the desktop computers where there was more space, he made a beeline through the tight, shoulder-length width of space that was my personal space by virtue of me being less than a foot away. Although I am extrapolating from these experiences, I continue to think about how the situations would have played out were I not a brown, Asian woman, or if I were perhaps white. Even if it was not their intention to invade my space and even if they were moving in haste, I am interested in whether other students, Students of Color, have similar experiences and whether they engage in the same thought processes.

My thesis is also spurred by my own complicity in upholding the culture of racism and whiteness. I find myself often hesitant to discuss race and whiteness because it does lend itself to tense, awkward, morose atmospheres. I've sat in uncomfortable silences after talking about white privilege in the presence of white people and People of Color. I've sat with my friends who are

⁸ In my general and ethnographic observations, I describe and identify people based on my own learning and conceptions of race and gender. Although the people I observe may identify differently from how I classify them from a first glance, I will identify them according to the gender, ethnic, or racial schemas I was taught and I recognize that it may be incorrect.

People of Color and we all acknowledge how our identity is always in conflict or at the forefront of conversations about rights and inequality. I've met white people who do not want to acknowledge their white privilege, white people who don't see how their whiteness grants them experiences and platforms that others are prevented from stepping into. I, too, am uncomfortable, confused, and tired, and I'd rather not have to deal with white people's discomfort upon acknowledging (or denying) that the system of whiteness grants a structural advantage to white people while keeping non-white people at a disadvantage. But, I have learned that there is never an easy, comfortable situation to discuss matters of race, whiteness, and inequality. If unpacking this discomfort is one way of wrenching whiteness from its position of domination— of addressing the white elephant in the room— then I will add to the conversation.

I write to join the conversation on how to unveil the invisible, violent acts of whiteness that persist in academic libraries, college campuses, and academia overall. I unravel an inner hesitancy that prevents me from freely talking about the systemic plight of Black, Brown, Indigenous— colonized— people.⁹ In “Theory as Liberatory Practice,” bell hooks writes on how the role of theory is a site of healing and liberation. Theory and practice are melded together for her as she, a self-identifying Black feminist, theorizes in order to dismantle the practice of white feminist writing overshadowing the works of Women of Color and Queer people (1991: 4). Like hooks, I write as a means to heal and combine theory and liberatory practices.

I believe that the library can be a welcoming, equitable, accessible space free from the grips of whiteness and racism. I raise this argument to emphasize the role members of the

⁹ As one will see later, I began this process tiptoeing around calling out whiteness. I slowly come to terms with the burdensome topic and eventually address whiteness as it should be addressed: plainly and upfront.

campus community, including students, and their agency play in this goal. The ordinary person is a social agent, complicit in maintaining whiteness in the space, but they can use that power and discretion to reverse these discriminatory practices. I make the final recommendation that each person belonging to the Dickinson College community are critical stakeholders whose narratives, experiences, and resistance can push back against the dominance of whiteness in academic spaces, and, eventually, all racialized spaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is not easy to name our pain, to theorize from that location. I am grateful to the many women and men who dare to create theory from the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give us their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys. Their work is liberatory. It not only enables us to remember and recover ourselves, it changes and challenges us to renew our commitment to an active, inclusive feminist struggle. -bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice"

Race & Racial Formation

In this paper, I conduct research on the correlation between race, whiteness, and space. Race, as it is most prominently understood, is a category that divides people along phenotypic attributes such as skin color or hair texture (Blakemore 2019). Race differs from ethnicity in that race is seemingly rooted more in biological terms, whereas ethnicity refers to the categorization of people along cultural lines such as religion, language, or tribe (Blakemore 2019). Both concepts are understood as social in that the categories of race shift and are socially determined depending on the respective society's existing structures. Michael Omi and Howard Winant's extension of the concept of race and their theory of racial formation informs my conception of race as social but with tangible effects. Omi and Winant define race a tool that we, as social beings, use to "navigate" the world and discern who people are in relation to ourselves (Omi & Winant 2015: 105). They coin the term racial formation to name this navigation of the world, or

“the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed” (2015:106). As we navigate our worlds, we create schemas, or mental structures, to guide our perceptions of people and the world. However, these structures and racial formations can be guided by concepts of hierarchy and the marginalization of others.

Omi and Winant define racialization as the imparting of social and symbolic meaning to phenotypical differences. Racialization is the extension of social, racial meaning to an unclassified “relationship, social practice, or group” (2015: 110). Racialization can occur at the macro scale– the development of African slavery or U.S. settlement in the Western hemisphere– or at the micro scale when phenomena like racial profiling occurs. Racialization is not based solely on the visual, and racialization is more contingent on social practices (Omi & Winant 2015: 111-112).¹⁰ Racialization is engaged through racial projects, the maneuvers which do the so called ‘work’ of organizing society’s social structures and resources along racial lines (Omi & Winant 2015: 125). They are not simply actions, but reflections of society’s current understanding of race. Racial Projects can also occur at the macro-level– “organizing work for immigrants’ [or] community health rights in the ghetto”– and at an individual’s practice– a police officer stopping and frisking a pedestrian or “even the decision to wear dreadlocks” (Omi & Winant 2015: 125). All engage in racial projects, starting at the very act of noticing race when we meet people. It is our way, as social beings, of navigating the world and organizing everyday life. In these processes of organization, race is a master category. Racial projects are also sites of marginalization and hierarchy.

¹⁰ Omi and Winant refer to one study where respondents, blind since birth, understand race through interpersonal and institutional socializations and practices (2015: 112). Thus, understanding and experiencing race does not necessarily have to do with visuals.

Omi and Winant argue that a racial project can become a racist project. A racist project “creates or reproduces structures of domination based on racial significations and identities” (Omi & Winant 2015: 128). Race can be used as a social control to manipulate and subjugate another racial group, and it has been used within lawmaking and policy to legitimize acts of racism and inequality. During the Reconstruction period following the emancipation of enslaved Africans, the U.S. enacted Jim Crow laws, a racial caste system of laws maintaining segregation between Black and white people. A mix of governmental influence and individual actions, Jim Crow laws enforced the inferiority of Black people. Black people were not allowed to work in the same room as white people, drink from the same water fountain as them, sit in the same parts of buses as them, or access the same institutions like hospitals or phone booths as them (Constitutional Rights Foundation, n.d.). Racialization creates perceptions and meanings of other racial and ethnic groups. These perceptions transform and work through racial projects that impact targeted groups, costing them materially as well as socially. Through Jim Crow Law as a racial project, Black people were denied the opportunity to engage in mundane activities—drinking water, working a job, take a bus ride home. What starts as an idea can produce tangible consequences, including other ideas about race. Another aspect of a racial project is that racialization’s social nature facilitates the ability for perceptions of racial and ethnic groups to change over time, as can be seen in the case of the internment of Japanese people in America.

The racialization and internment of Japanese people following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 exemplifies how race is a social construct, susceptible to time as well as being used for discriminatory means and ends. Following the attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, asserting that by the powers vested in him as President, he gave his

Secretary of War and military commanders heightened authority to exercise whatever means necessary to prevent the sabotage of America's defense system. This, in turn, led to the internment of hundreds of thousands of Japanese people for years. They were excluded from society by being placed in camps that left them susceptible to American government control and surveillance.¹¹ These epochs in American history, which occurred less than a century ago, demonstrate the social fluctuation of the meaning of race and how it is profound enough to produce tangible, inequitable effects against people. Coupled with race and racialization, the ideology of whiteness also is contingent on a perception of who is white and who, in contrast is 'nonwhite.' The culture of whiteness today produces effects that are more discrete in everyday life and structures compared to overt racist projects.

Breaking down Whiteness

Whiteness delineates the characteristics, practices, experiences, and benefits granted solely to white people (Cole 2019). The culture of whiteness grants power, privileges, and resources through conduits of "language, religion, class, race relations, sexual orientation, etc." (Carter, Honeyford, McKaskle, Guthrie, Mahoney & Carter 2007: 152.) Whiteness privileges people who are identified as white and it is contingent on two features: preventing nonwhite

¹¹ The anti-Japanese perceptions started with the rhetoric of the U.S. government before trickling down and becoming a general sentiment felt within the United States. Japanese people were seen as an "enemy race," as stated by Lieutenant General John DeWitt (Oi 2016). Two-thirds of those interned were born in America and despite having American citizenship, many Japanese people were turned away from enlisting by virtue of their ethnicity (Oi 2016). In 1943, the perception of Japanese-Americans shifted when the U.S. military needed more soldiers and opened up enlistment to Japanese-Americans (Oi 2016). Three years later after their internment, Japanese people were seen as loyal Americans upon proving their loyalty in their participation in the army among other U.S. institutions. The shift in how to perceive Japanese people demonstrates how fluctuating racialization and racist projects can be over time.

people from accessing said privileges and ensuring that all adhere to this culture despite its inequitable foundation.

The persistence of whiteness is an example of cultural hegemony, the organization of general society wherein the ideology of the ruling class is the dominant ideology that all adhere to (Cole 2020). The domination of any hegemony is maintained through means of culture: using “values, norms, perceptions, beliefs, sentiments, and prejudices” (Lears 1985: 569). Cultural institutions such as the family, church, education, and media can serve in disseminating elements of the dominant ideology. Cultural hegemony is discrete and succeeds when the general population sees such values and interests as natural and inevitable (Cole 2020). The general masses of people consent to the general direction, operation, values of their respective society. Domination becomes a latent force. Whiteness thus maneuvers like so in a discrete way. It is natural, as we will see, for all to adhere to how whiteness is a dominant but inconspicuous culture that pervades social relations, interactions, and perspectives.¹² Later, we will learn how whiteness manifests itself through the built environment as well.

Like race, whiteness itself is social and, therefore, an unfixed social construction dependent on action and thought. With the founding of the United States, for instance, colonizers brought over European culture rooted with the English language and related customs. Valorizing such customs involved people racializing themselves as white and, causally, racializing others as nonwhite—launching the creation of race as part of one’s identity (Gusa 2010: 468). The creation

¹² Of course, not all entirely adhere and submit to the Culture of Hegemony whether it be whiteness, capitalism, patriarchy, bipartisanism, or *machismo*. There are active pockets of resistance and social agents who protest cultural hegemony by way of civil disobedience, social movements, or simple existence. Cultural Hegemony generally renders a convinced and cohesive population.

of the white race solidified the practice of “racialization with an either/or framework that creates and measures racial differences and power” (Gusa 2010: 468).¹³ Being white becomes the reference for which people measure their own identity, whether it’s similar or apparently the opposite. To be white means accessing and benefiting from material benefits like property, partake in cultural customs deemed acceptable, and access rights that nonwhite people would not be granted by virtue of their existence. One’s race and the culture of whiteness is a social construct, contingent on practices and behavior for its maintenance. Whiteness is, thus, social in its perpetuation, social in the ability for white people to assert their superiority without question.

The social parameters of whiteness delineate who can take part in the privileges of whiteness, but also those who are excluded. Essig, in a group interview with other members of the Middlebury College community, speaks to that leeway in the definition particularly for her particular identity: “I am white. Whiteness is written onto my body, but it is an unstable whiteness as a Jew. Jews became white in the US after World War II, but that whiteness has always been a not fully completed project as we can see from the present rise in anti-Semitic groups and politics” (Spencer 2017).¹⁴ Whiteness has been utilized in various immigration acts

¹³ As stated previously, racialization is the imparting of social and symbolic meaning onto another group based on their phenotypic differences (Omi & Winant 2015: 110). Racialization is imbued with a power dynamic so it is not reciprocal. Those endowed with power (white people within the system of whiteness can generate a social and symbolic meaning that becomes a general sentiment while those less endowed with power (usually those who are racialized and discriminated against as a result of racialization) cannot do the same (Omi & Winant 128). The latter are more often the targets and recipients of racialization (Omi & Winant 2015: 128).

¹⁴ Jews in America were seen as being in the unique middle ground between racial categorizations. White Americans saw the Jewish people as distinct from themselves— as racial outsiders. Like other immigrant groups, the Jewish people took jobs that “white men’ would never take” (Slayton 2017). However, they weren’t in the same categorization as Black people or Irish people in the 19th century. Irish people at the time were referred to as “niggers turned inside out.” (Slayton 2017). Eventually, Jewish people ascended from the middle ground to be considered white. Jewish people enlisted and served in the U.S. army during World War II. The political climate shifted when Franklin Roosevelt recognized immigrants including Jews as “Fully American” affirming that they were seen as American and white. Following WWII, stereotypes perceived Jewish people as hard workers, representing the Horatio Algers myth that Americans aspired for (Slayton 2017). Jewish people also used their GI

and policies throughout American history: the Naturalization Act of 1790 decreed that only a ‘free white person’ could become a citizen; white indentured servants were exempt from laws that prohibited enslaved Black people from owning property, owning a gun, learning how to read or write; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred laborers from China from entering the country; the U.S. census lumps Latinx and Hispanic people under the racial category of white yet the category of ‘Non-Hispanic White’ is a category that white people specifically and fill out (Bazon 2018). Time and society influence who benefits from whiteness, who counts. To benefit from whiteness means to indulge in power and privilege, access social structures, accumulate assets with ease, create self-beneficial policies that debilitate others. And, as we will discover later, it allows for the construction and control of racialized spaces as we will later find. Amy Frazier, a librarian at Middlebury College who also partook in the group interview, defines whiteness as encompassing “whatever is easy, comfortable, accessible, and unchallenging for white people” (Spencer 2017). Understanding how whiteness makes white people the sole beneficiaries of the ideology, there is motivation to maintain such an ideology and racist project.

Why does whiteness persist despite its discriminatory and inequitable structure? Why do white people and institutions want to maintain the culture of whiteness? First, whiteness grants material benefits. In the 19th century, the cotton industry was at an all-time high, stimulating the American economy and making Southern white elites richer. This cotton boom was reliant upon the enslavement and “willingness to use violence on nonwhite people and to exert its will on seemingly endless supplies of land and labor” (Desmond 2019). Second, whiteness grants

Bill benefits (benefits that were denied to black veterans) and flocked to the new managerial and professional slots, living “‘white men’s lives,’” and the question of whether Jews were white ceased to exist (Slayton 2017).

normalcy and stability to those categorized as white. As demonstrated by the past policies enacted by the United States, non-white people have lived in a state of variability and their existence is determined by others and defined against the existence of white Americans. Beneficiaries of whiteness unconsciously maintain whiteness as a means to continue being “racial managers, clinging to the job of setting the culture’s terms and measuring everyone else’s otherness against those terms” (Bazelon 2018). Whereas non-white people are used to the act of assimilation or their history and culture being erased, the maintenance of whiteness ensures that the culture and history of white people remains the universal standard. To threaten the existence of whiteness is to threaten the normalcy and structural position that white people benefit from. Later, we will learn about different maneuvers ensuring that whiteness remains the standard in response to People of Color actively trying to make their identities legitimate in the built environment.

Whiteness manifests in different self-sustaining practices and norms. Gusa, an independent researcher who scrutinizes whiteness and its presence within higher education institutions to illustrate the salience of race, coins the term White Institutional Presence (WIP)—the norms, decisions and practices in institutions that denote whiteness (2010: 471-472). WIP consists of four elements that are consistent with the findings on Dickinson’s campus and in Waidner-Spahr library:

- White ascendancy: the sense of superiority, entitlement, domination over racial discourse, and victimization that white people engage in (Gusa 2010: 472). This enables the belief that white people’s values, actions, beliefs are universal (Gusa 2010: 472). This, in turn, ignores People of Color and their abilities and capacities, thus leading to a “hostile

environment” (Gusa 2010:474). I identify white ascendancy through the behaviors of white students throughout the library such as the volume at which they act or speak.

- Monoculturalism: The practice and policy of engaging in a white worldview, or white monoculture, which endorses “white structures of knowledge” (Gusa 2010: 475). At the same time, white monoculturalism disallows “different worldviews’ epistemologies, ideas, and practices” (Gusa 2010: 475). Monoculturalism pervades all kinds of institutions including higher education institutions. It is found in curricula and the built environment, privileging the voices and perspectives of Western thinkers while marginalizing the voices and perspectives of racialized “non-White thinkers.” In the findings, we see how monoculturalism exists within the interior design of the library and in Dickinson’s campus climate.
- White blindness: An ideology that protects white identity and white privilege (Gusa 2010: 477). The race of a person is immaterial and does not matter in any decision-making matter. Unlike Jim Crow racism, which relies on name-calling, the role of God, and biology in explaining minorities’ supposed inferiority, color blindness “otherizes softly” (Bonilla-Silva 2018: 10-11). Whites attributing Latinos’ high poverty rate to a “relaxed work ethic” is an example of othering softly without calling too much attention to itself as a racist statement (Bonilla- Silva 2018: 11). White blindness exists on college campuses, protecting white people’s identity and privileges. In being blind to race, white people, especially those who are able to make impactful decisions with a space, ignore their responsibility to nonwhite people (Gusa 2010: 478). In interviews with respondents who identify as white, I illustrate how they partake and benefit from white blindness in

that they do not see how their own race informs any of their decisions within and beyond the library space compared to their Students of Color counterparts.

- White estrangement: The act of white people physically and socially distancing themselves from People of Color (Gusa 2010: 478). On college campuses, lifelong segregated white students—those who “had little contact with individuals of other races in their home communities or on [college] campus”—lack the tools to navigate a multicultural environment (Gusa 2010:479). This leads to racial ignorance, reliance on stereotypes, avoidance, awkward interactions, or failure to instigate interactions at all (Gusa 2010:479). In my interviews, I ask respondents about the campus racial climate and their campus experiences. Certain spaces on campus and within the library are occupied by particular racial groups, making some feel unwelcome in those spaces. These spaces become target sites of tension and curiosity. Furthermore, respondents, regardless of race, discuss the disconnect between white students and Students of Color which illustrates white estrangement and the lack of integration on campus.

Additionally, the meaning of whiteness is relational. So long as whiteness holds meaning, so too does the meaning impute to People of Color. Frantz Fanon recognizes this binary in that with the “unconditional affirmation of European culture came the unconditional affirmation of African culture” (1963: 151). In order to affirm the superiority of European culture, it was necessary to also affirm the inferiority of African culture and African people as uncivilized. This relationship extends to all non-white people and, as a result, they remain demarcated as different and somehow inferior as long as whiteness remains the dominant culture.

We have broken down some of the elements essential to defining whiteness: it is a social construct that is maintained by behavior, a culture which shapes how white people perceive themselves (at an advantage over others) and others, an ideology that grants structural benefits, a relationship that is dependent on othering nonwhite people as inferior. It is easier to identify how whiteness is pervasive in all spaces including the college campus. It is imperative to focus on whiteness in higher education institutions as it impacts the experiences of Students of Color (Gusa 2010: 465). As we have broken down the culture of whiteness— what it can look like, what it mandates, how it underpins law and policy, how it guides personal interactions— we can see how it fits into the built environment, within the walls of the academic library, and throughout the college campus. We will further discuss what is at stake: What is the consequence of perpetuation of whiteness? How does the culture of whiteness cause an uneven distribution of resources and impact the experiences of people of different racial groups and racializations?

Space as Social

Space refers to the three-dimensional expanse or area in which all material objects are situated. Within space, all material objects have a position (the location of an object in relation to another object) and direction (the particular orientation of an object). Still, the definition of space is an interdisciplinary site of contention. It is usually understood as a concept to be approached with objective, geometrical, logical, and deterministic thinking. Isaac Newton, for one, understood space as absolute, as real in itself where the movement and existence of objects within space held definite positions (Madanipour 1996:332). Yet, proponents like Immanuel Kant and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz saw space respectively as that which is only seen from the human point of view or the order of objects coexisting with each other (Madanipour 1996: 333).

Ultimately, these different approaches illustrate the complexity of the concept itself and how it should not be taken for granted when considering the built environment.

Ways of seeing space are social. Lefebvre's social space is an optimal starting point to understanding how space is social as well as geometrical. Every society produces its own space according to their respective set of social relations: "For the ancient city had its own spatial practice: it forged its own— appropriated— space" (Lefebvre 1991: 31-32). Depending on the social relations of the society, they determine how a particular space is designed, enacted, and used. Lefebvre describes Social Space, as "the social relations of reproduction" and "the relations of production, i.e. the division of labour [or] social functions" imposed onto any space (1991: 32). Simply put, space is a product of social relations. Lefebvre's understanding of space also assumes that as space becomes more social, natural space— any terrain of the planet untouched by human activity— becomes more obsolete (1991: 30).¹⁵ Natural space is "becoming lost to thought" as societies transform thoughts into actions imparted onto that space (1991: 31).

Social Space possesses particular elements that Lefebvre calls the Spatial Triad. I apply this spatial triad to the academic library and how its intended purpose runs concurrent with the actions of patrons who either go along or against the dominant representation:

- Spatial practice: The ways of being in a space, or the cohesion of the location and its routines and activities, which are informed by the current society's existing social relations. This part of the triad requires performance and patterns of social activity.

Spatial practice "can be perceived in the everyday acts of buying, playing, traveling, and

¹⁵ Lefebvre was a Marxist and it is necessary to point out that Lefebvre was writing and critiquing society under the system of capitalism.

laboring, as much as in the everyday spaces of the home, office, school, and streets” (Giesecking, Mangold, Katz, Low & Saegert 2014). In the context of the library, the act of entering a public library, borrowing a book, using an available desktop computer is considered a spatial practice. I examine these practices in my ethnographic research.

- Representations of Space: the order of space as officially conceived for administrative and formal knowledge purposes. They are dominant representations, tied “to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre 1991: 33). Consider how governments or city planners want to market a major city to tourists. Specifically, Waidner-Spahr Library in its construction was conceptualized with representations of space by its designers, school officials, and architects.
- Representational spaces: the symbolisms and representations imposed on the space by clandestine or the “underground side of social life” (Lefebvre 1991: 33). They are spaces directly experienced and informed by cultural meaning. Such representations run counter to the intended dominant representations of space (Leary-Owhin 2015: 69). Reconsider how a city may be marketed to tourists versus how residents may occupy the city contrary to such marketing messages. A prominent theme in my findings is how certain spaces and resources in the library serve as representational spaces (havens, spaces conducive for studying) for students like the study rooms.

Social Space is defined by its social relations, representations, and the actions. Lefebvre remarks that Social Space is not a one-time creation. In fact, its creation is a process.¹⁶ While

¹⁶ Lefebvre’s social approach to space is consistent with Omi & Winant’s theory of racial formation. As notions of race are products of social thought and relations, the conception and consensus use of a physical space is a product of social thought and relations.

space and spatial practices are always conceptualized, the lived experiences and representational spaces are likely to occur first and establish a different meaning. Lefebvre informs my understanding of space as understood directly through the actions of inhabitants.

Even though representational spaces enacted by occupants is important, Lefebvre stresses that the dominant representation of spaces is impactful. Representation of spaces serves as a moderator for the meaning of the space in that “they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology” (Lefebvre 1991: 42). This intervention and ideology manifest through physical infrastructure, “by way of architecture, conceived of not as the building of a particular structure [...] but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture” (Lefebvre 1991: 42). So, as much as direct inhabitants make use of a space according to their own volition, entities endowed with power and knowledge can impose an ideology or idea onto a space through physical works and projects. Representations of space anchor themselves in physical foundations and work to remain at the forefront alongside representational spaces. Lefebvre furthers his point on ideology needing a physical reference for “What is an ideology without a space to which it refers.... What would remain of a religious ideology... if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle?” (1991: 44). As much as occupants within the academic library can alter the space to fit their representational space, the dominant idea of the academic library as established by planners and architects determines the consensus of the space.

Eric Klinenberg supplements Lefebvre’s theory of social space with the idea of social infrastructure. Social infrastructure includes the physical structures that shape interaction and social relationships between people (Klinenberg 2018: 15). A space possesses strong social

infrastructure if it “fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbors” (Klinenberg 2018: 15). If social infrastructure is degraded then social activity and connectivity is non-existent (Klinenberg 2018:15). Although social infrastructure alone is not sufficient in resolving urban planning issues, it is critical to understanding these issues with more depth. The library, in this view, best exemplifies ideal social infrastructure; it is a space that all can access, have significant control over what they want to do, and interact with others of different backgrounds, and it’s free of charge.¹⁷ If there was a stronger focus on social infrastructure and if powerful social agents with the means to shape space could mimic the principle behind the library, there would be a stronger social cohesion among communities. To understand social infrastructure as well as physical and economic infrastructure, one is more equipped to address particular social issues that require a multi-pronged approach. However, Klinenberg’s work fails to recognize critical ideologies, particularly racism and whiteness that pose as barriers to cohesive infrastructure. I argue that the academic library is a critical social infrastructure. For Waidner-Spahr to attain a strong social infrastructure that fosters an integrated community, there must be an examination of race and whiteness that impede that goal.

Whiteness in Space, Whiteness against the body in space

The culture of whiteness can be activated and perpetuated in space against the people and objects situated within. Beyond interactions, the culture of whiteness seeps into the space itself and becomes a racialized space. The elephant in the room that is whiteness impresses upon all inhabitants within the space, but especially nonwhite people; it can deter them, single them out,

¹⁷ Of course, the significant control over one’s actions cannot act against the established rules and policies of the library space.

make them feel self-conscious. As we see with Wright's memoir on how he denigrated himself to an anti-black slur to borrow books, we see it with other non-white people who, too, are self-conscious as a result of racialized spaces.

Craig L. Wilkins argues that whiteness encroaches on and polices the spaces where Black people are: "Black (access to) space is always temporary, exposed, and objectified. It is a space where everyone knows their place and that place is based on an absolute relation to *white*..." (2007: 22). Whiteness is embedded in the construction of space, and thus the everyday lives of Black people. In "Black Men and Public Space," Brent Staples shares an anecdote about how the culture of whiteness and his presence as a Black man interact within a space:

"At dark, shadowy intersections, I could cross in front of a car stopped at a traffic light and elicit the thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk of the driver- black, white, male, or female- hammering down the door locks. On less traveled streets after dark, I grew accustomed to but never comfortable with people crossing to the other side of the street rather than passing me... [B]lack men trade stories like this all the time" (1992: 1).

Whiteness in space impresses upon nonwhite people that produces a self-consciousness of their own selves, a self-consciousness of the fact their presence in a space draws attention, incites fear, and affects the environment around them. From that self-consciousness, they engage in precautionary measures so that their presence does not incite the fear of others around them.

Staples alters his behaviors to prevent disruption of the spaces around him:

"I move about with care, particularly late in the evening. I give a wide berth to nervous people on subway platforms during the wee hours, particularly when I have exchanged business clothes for jeans. If I happen to be entering a building behind some people who appear skittish, I may walk by, letting them clear the lobby before I return, so as not to seem to be following them..." (1992: 3).

Fanon is cognizant of how his body is shrouded in a space that is racially defined to depict him, a Black man, as hostile regardless of any movement he makes:

“Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a thirdperson consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world” (1967: 83).

Narrating her experience as an interned Japanese-Americans, Toyo Suyemoto describes going to the bathroom at night while staying in a relocation camp:

“One night about 2 a.m., I awakened to go to the latrine located around the corner of our stable.¹⁸ I put on a bathrobe and wooden clogs and stepped outside onto the porch-like walk, with several steps leading down to the ground, that had just recently been added to the front of the stable. I thought I heard a voice call ‘Halt,’ but did not realize the command was for me. I took a few steps forward, my clogs clattering on the porch. I heard a swift, whistling sound pass over my head. I stopped in fright. Then a searchlight was swung around, and I was caught in its glare. I stiffened, though I thought I could hear my own heartbeat. The sentry must have thought twice then because the searchlight moved away in an arc against the darkness. And I scurried off, my heart pounding, my legs shaky, on my necessary errand” (2007: 41).

In such a heavily policed and surveilled space, Suyemoto’s interned status as a Japanese-American heightens the perception of her presence as a threat, drawing a lot of attention and policing, causing her to modify her behavior out of fear.

¹⁸ Before moving into a permanent internment camp, Japanese-Americans were relocated to temporary camps. Suyemoto’s family among thousands moved into the Tanforan Racetrack, a horse facing facility in San Bruno, CA. As the facility was purely meant for animals, there was no furniture to properly accommodate for the thousands of people that were forced to relocate there temporarily. Thus, families including Suyemoto’s had to live in horse stables and make their own mattresses out of hay (2007: 38).

The culture of whiteness becomes the overarching determinant of the spatial layout and how people should act accordingly. The elephant in the room has settled into the foundation of the space for which we all, naturally, move around it, ignore it, and accommodate it. As we can see that whiteness impresses itself into a wide range of spaces, racializing and policing them, we can re-examine the library as a racialized space as well. I use this logic to inform my research and my findings as respondents, themselves, admit to augmenting their behavior along lines of race within Waidner-Spahr and the greater Dickinson College Campus. Before I examine the academic library specifically, I examine current literature on college campuses and their racial climate of which the academic library is found within.

Campus Racial Climate and Experiences of Students of Color on a (white) College Campus

The academic library is a repository for the larger social processes that occur on its parent institutions' campus. Inasmuch as I argue that the academic library houses racialization and whiteness, I examine how those processes derive from the overall college campus. The general campus climate describes how individuals and groups on a college campus experience belonging and membership in the campus community. To assess campus climate is to ask if and how do members of the college community feel included on campus. How is their cultural background respected and represented on campus? How are they, in turn, respecting other community members and their backgrounds? One way to measure the campus climate is through race and ethnicity, which ties to the focus of my thesis.¹⁹

¹⁹ It is typically up to the college's discretion how they will describe it. Colleges assessing the campus racial climate often use terms such as 'Inclusivity,' 'Inclusion,' or 'Diversity.'

A campus' racial climate refers to the overall racial environment, reflecting the experiences of faculty, students, and staff. The campus racial climate is important to examine as it impacts the college access, academic and graduation outcomes of college students, particularly of Students of Color (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano 2009: 664).²⁰ A strong, positive racial climate includes four components:

“... (a) the inclusion of students, faculty, and administrators of color; (b) a curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of People of Color; (c) programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of Students of Color; and (d) a college/university mission that reinforces the institution's commitment to pluralism” (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso 2000: 62).

A campus with a negative racial climate has fewer or none of these elements present, and that harshly impacts the sense of membership and academic outcomes for Students of Color. Ethelene Whitmire studies the relationship between a campus' racial climate and how white students and Students of Color perceived their academic libraries. Before diving into the perceptions of the academic library, Whitmire found that white undergraduates have greater positive perceptions of the overall campus environment, reporting “greater levels of fair treatment and overall satisfaction than any other racial group (2004: 364-366). Meanwhile, Students of Color reported different experiences where “African American students reported more negative experiences than any other racial group” (Whitmire 2004: 366). Negative perceptions of the racial climate had an impact on “all outcomes (academic and social

²⁰ Seeing that the campus racial climate plays a role in determining the outcomes of students, this logic aligns with the fact racialization and whiteness leads to uneven experiences and material outcomes depending on one's racial and ethnic identity. Here, one's education and degree is at stake depending on the campus climate, specifically the racial climate for Students of Color.

integration, personal emotional adjustment, and attachment to the institution)” (Whitmire 2004: 365).

Tara Yosso and Benavides Lopez examine how colleges contribute to creating a hostile campus racial climate. Colleges tend to endorse diversity policies “of convenience” where the policies are “reactionary and superficial” such as increasing the size of underrepresented groups on campus or portraying a racially diverse group of students in their brochures (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). Diversity of convenience policies fail to provide “equal access and opportunities for Students of Color, let alone promising an inviting, positive campus racial climate” (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). These policies backfire where increasing the size of minority populations on campus can “contribute to a hostile campus racial climate” (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). In order to achieve a positive racial campus climate, policies should endorse ‘genuine diversity’ where underrepresented racial and ethnic groups are “physically present *and* treated as equals on college campus” (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). All members of the college community affirm each other’s dignity and are willing “to acknowledge one another’s contributions to the common welfare of the college” (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). Yosso & Lopez argue that diversity of convenience policies serve white students, and Students of Color become a “source of educational enrichment for Whites” (2010: 89). Elements of WIP occur at the college campus where the concerns and needs of white people become central to the discourse.

If there is a generally negative perception of the college campus, it hampers the student experience, whether through academic outcomes to social integration. Dickinson College’s campus is not exempt from this conversation as its history was rooted in segregation and a hostile campus climate. In an interview with Judith Rogers, an alumna of Dickinson College

from the class of 1965 and one of the first two Women of Color (alongside Maureen Newton-Hayes) to be allowed to live on campus, she shares some of her experiences on campus:

“I heard later from a white girl [...] that I roomed with in my senior year who was telling me how there was one [student] who lived on the same floor [that Maureen and I] lived on in Metzger [...] and how she had for the whole year gone to the first floor or the third floor to go to the bathroom [...] because she was so afraid of using a bathroom that Maureen and I had used” (Otoo 2009: 9).

The hostile perceptions extended out beyond the campus to the city of Carlisle where Dickinson College is located:

“... walking to campus every day I would pass the fire house and they would call out ‘ni**er, look at that ni**er’ [...] And in town i got lots of people calling from trucks, ‘ko*n’ and other names [...] so you were always aware that you were a black student and this was not a community that was colorblind” (Otoo 2009: 8).

I point out in my analysis that the experiences and feelings of Rogers continue for some Students of Color at Dickinson’s campus over half a century later. What we see at stake extends beyond just the experiences of library patrons: we see people’s general welfare, academic and social opportunities, psyches impacted by the existence of innate racist institutions including those that fail to acknowledge the dangers of reactionary diversity and inclusion measures.

Because of hostile racial climates, Students of Color create their own communities and spaces, known as counterspaces. Counterspaces are for Students of Color to “process and respond to the rejection that they experience attending a historically [w]hite college” (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 94). Counterspaces fare better in promoting outreach, recruitment, and retention (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 96). However, counterspaces are met with accusations that they are forms of self-segregation, counterproductive to the goal of diversity on campus (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 96). Yet, they serve as “necessary acts of self-preservation” in response to a harsh racial climate. At her time at Dickinson, Rogers mentions the relief of having a Black roommate:

“... but it was wonderful having another [B]lack student so that at the end of the day when you had been in integrated atmosphere all day at the end of the day you could just close the door and be yourself[...] Grease your hair [...] and talk about and [...] really kind of debrief” (Otoo 2009: 4-5).

Current literature illustrates how racial formations, racialization, and elements of whiteness are on college campuses and its related infrastructure— spaces supposedly meant to foster membership and community across the entire campus population. However, hostile racial climates impact the experiences and outcomes of Students of Color, where we see the uneven outcomes in academic careers, retention and graduation rates, and social integration as a result of whiteness and racism. To respond, process, or push back against this uneven campus experience, Students of Color create counterspaces to cope, resist, and persist. Several of the elements of a hostile racial climate and spatial practices exist at Dickinson College, as we will see from current students’ responses. Before we examine the authorization of whiteness in the academic library, I provide a history of the general library and the academic library, in particular, to illustrate how libraries have historically been racialized social spaces.

A Genealogy of the Library

The majority of the American population value their public libraries for their own personal enjoyment as well as its role in the community. Among the Americans who have used the public library, 94% said that the public libraries are a ““welcoming, friendly space”” (Pew Research Center 2013). 90% of Americans contend that the closing of their local library would have an impact on their community as their local branches help promote literacy and provide general access to resources (Pew Research Center 2013). Here, libraries are perceived by the general American society as neutral and welcoming to all. However, the establishment of the library is based on an uneven history in terms of who the infrastructure welcomes and deters.

The American library started with the collection of books that came with European colonizers. These books were “expensive, rare, usually religious, and accessed almost exclusively by wealthy white men” (Aberg-Riger 2019). These men who supposedly founded America first formed social clubs, high societies, and local pub groups. The men in these congregations saw a need to share their books, “expand their discussions, and ‘mold the kind of ‘character’ they emulated”” (Aberg-Riger 2019). Thus, the social library was established.

Social libraries functioned more as a center for social networking and group activity. The earliest social library dates back to the 18th century. The first established social library was Benjamin Franklin’s debating society, the Junto, in 1760, which encouraged communities “to organize meetings and around predetermined questions [and] stimulate discussions” (Wiegand 2015:8). Social libraries were highly elite and only free white men could take. Neither white women nor Black people were invited (Aberg-Riger 2019). Poor and Working-class people did not have the funds, the time, or the education to access these books and participate in the clubs (Aberg-Riger 2019). Social libraries did not survive “but their existence helped communities mark themselves as friendly toward culture, and especially the culture of print that celebrated the moral values of dominant groups” (Wiegand 2015: 12).²¹ Circulating libraries emerged following the decline of social libraries. The first circulating library was established in 1765 in Boston (Wiegand 2015: 10). As a form of profit, they circulated novels which were the most popular category of reading.²² Although these establishments laid the foundation for the today’s public

²¹ In particular, wealthy, white men who could afford the money and time. Social libraries illustrate an example of cultural hegemony. Said wealthy, white men established the rules and roles of social libraries while deliberately preventing white women and black people from partaking. The social norms established within the Social Libraries were not isolated as this was reflective of Colonial America and the practice of chattel slavery.

²² Social and circulating libraries were established in Colonial America, primarily in the northern Colonies (Wiegand 2015: 11). With the establishment of the United States of America, more libraries were established in the

library, they only served particular pockets of the population while actively excluding women, the poor and working class, and Black people.

In response to their exclusion, Women's clubs and Black social clubs emerged to start institutions that would be welcoming to their respective groups. Women's clubs, "made up of wealthy, white, well-connected women," during the post-civil war era lobbied for "education reform, environmental protection, juvenile justice, suffrage, and libraries" because they believed it improved lives and "promoted desirable middle class values" (Aberg-Riger 2019). These women's clubs also barred Jewish, Black, and Working-Class Women (Aberg-Riger 2019). It took a century after the first appearance of social libraries for Black people to establish places whose meanings mirrored that of their white counterparts. Black clubs like the Phoenix Society, established in the 1830s, mirrored the goal of white social clubs "to build community and provide sociability" (Wiegand 2015: 22). The Society wanted "their library to be a combination of reading and place" (Wiegand 2015: 23). Even then, Women of Color were still excluded. In response, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) was formed years later in 1896 (Aberg-Riger 2019). The NACWC tackled social issues including but not limited to anti-lynching, literacy, and support for public libraries in the south (Aberg-Riger 2019).

In the midst of all these racial formations, the idea of the library was changing. Andrew Carnegie gave \$60 million (which is about \$1.8 billion today) towards the construction of libraries around the world between 1883 and 1929 (Aberg-Riger 2019). The establishment of Carnegie-funded libraries were highly segregated in their inception, and it was legal. The city of

New England region and followed those who traveled west of the Appalachians and some who went south to Virginia (Wiegand 2015: 12).

Richmond, Virginia rejected Carnegie's funding "for fear that Black citizens would be allowed access" (Aberg-Riger 2019). In the Atlanta Public Library, African-American novelist and Civil rights Activist W. E. B. DuBois asked the trustees of the library why "[B]lack folk' could not use a free public library serving a city of 90,000, 40 percent of whom were black" (Wiegand 2015: 84). The board chairman responded, questioning whether integrating white and Black people was potentially "fatal to its usefulness" (Wiegand 2015: 84). Black people used different entrances or could only use the library at specific and/or odd hours (Aberg-Riger 2019). In 1914, the Gainesville (Texas) Public Library allocated a reading room to Black people but "on the lower-level... with separate entrance" (Wiegand 2015: 84). Furthermore, hardly any non-black branch Public library subscribed to Black periodicals or newspapers (Wiegand 2015: 108-109). In response, Black community leaders pushed for Black public library branches of which were "governed by Black Boards, staffed by Black librarians, serving Black readers."

Twelve segregated Colored Carnegie Libraries were established between 1908 and 1924 (Aberg-Riger 2019). Black Branches had smaller buildings and less funding than the "white Carnegie Counterparts" (Aberg-Riger 2019).²³ Beyond the ability for Black people to borrow books, Black library branches served as a "neighborhood social center[s]" where meetings and gatherings took place such as "baby clinics, Sunday School training classes, story hours... classes to train black female (mostly southern) library workers" and even local NAACP group meetings (Wiegand 2015: 97 & Aberg-Riger 2019). Some Black people were hesitant and against the separate facilities. One testimony that Wayne Wiegand notes was by a Black assistant

²³ The unevenness in physicality of library structures along racial lines illustrates how physical structures can be exclusionary or emphasize the inferiority of people along racial lines.

librarian who found the colored branches “repulsive” (2015: 85). However, she recognized that “it would be impossible for [those of another race] to give us [Black people] the service that one of our race can give in an atmosphere where welcome and freedom are the predominant elements” (Wiegand 2015: 85).

Libraries became sites of civil rights protests. The desegregation of public institutions including libraries in America was met with contempt, violence, division, and some successes. When local courts ordered the public library in Montgomery, Alabama to desegregate, the trustees had all reading tables and chairs removed (Wiegand 2015: 175). In Albany, Georgia, city planners closed all libraries, parks, and public facilities in response to federal courts mandating integration (Wiegand 2015: 175). Black people and organizers did not entirely submit to this violent and contemptuous response. In 1960, Jesse Jackson— who was told by a librarian that it would take six days for him to get certain books and was forced to comply by policemen who were nearby— led the Greenville Eight into the library and staged a sit-in in the library (Wiegand 2015: 174).²⁴ All were arrested. In 1961, nine members of the NAACP Tougaloo College chapter were arrested ten minutes after entering the public library, charged for “disturbing the peace” (Wiegand 2015: 174). The genealogy of public libraries presents an uneven history where ‘public’ was a narrow term that almost always benefited white people. Nonwhite and specifically Black people were prevented— by law enforcement or by manipulating the physical space of the branch itself— from enjoying the library.

²⁴ Jesse Jackson is a Civil rights activist and politician who lived through Jim Crow Law. He eventually became politically active, unsuccessfully running as the Democratic candidate President of the United States of America.

The public library is thus not a neutral space where anyone who enters can simply enter and exist peacefully.²⁵ At points in history (and even now), a Woman of Color, a Black man, or a Student of Color, for instance, felt unwelcome in the library because of symbolic and physical measures. Still, Black activists and non-white individuals refuted the ways in which whiteness actively barred them by using the library as a site of protest.²⁶ This intersection between space and race furthers the notion of the library as a social space that can be augmented to serve different purposes. Furthermore, those endowed with the most power are not the sole meaning-makers in a space. Meanings are carved into the library depending on the social agents. Academic libraries, too, are susceptible to changing meanings depending on the social context.

Academic Libraries

An academic library is attached to its parent higher education institution serving the purposes of supporting teachers and professors as well as students in their research. Academic Libraries did not start this way. They underwent a historical transition from an unorganized, exclusive system to a robust, organized system, necessitating the creation of its own profession. Rather than being just a library as a repository of books, they became “centers supporting teaching and learning” (Ariew 2014: 210). At first, the establishment of the academic libraries was intertwined with that of higher education. The first few universities and colleges founded in the colonies were to teach the clergy. Most books and collections were theological and only a

²⁵ White men have never been barred from using their public library. Although white women experienced some pushback by virtue of their womanhood, they did not experience the same level of discrimination as People of Color to the point they had to establish their own library branches just to access the Public Library.

²⁶ Although Black people do fall within the category of People of Color, I will actively specify Black people among People of Color. In doing so, I am recognizing that they have a unique history and struggle that cannot always be conflated with all People of Color.

select group of people could access them (Budd 1998: 27 & 29). With time and developments in technology and academia, the role of academic libraries would change to serve a broader group of people and the provisions of libraries would expand as well, giving more agency to students.

The academic library underwent three paradigm changes. The first paradigm was user-centered with the advent of the early printing presses. During this period, the academic library was designed around patrons accessing small numbers of printed documents and collections (Khoo et al. 2016: 53). In the second book-centered paradigm, the U.S., as an industrial country, was able to print more material, thereby spurring the need for academic libraries to expand and house more book volumes (Khoo et al. 2016: 53). The third paradigm that we find ourselves in is the learning-centered paradigm. The academic library is now a teaching library where patrons and scholars engage in solo and group learning for academic pursuits (Khoo et al. 2016: 53). Now, scholars have digital resources which have transformed the physical layout of the library (Khoo et al. 2016: 53). Book stacks became less visible while new learning spaces with group tables, couches, and information commons with desktop computers emerged (Khoo et al. 2016: 53). Library classrooms for instruction, study rooms, and cafes among other student-centered spaces were constructed as well (Ariew 2014: 210). The current form of academic libraries aims at equipping students with the agency and skills to handle independent work, pursue their research, and think for themselves rather than having their professors solely guide them along. Here, colleges and universities expanded the role of academic libraries to also teach students how to be scholars.

The foundation of American institutions including the Academic library are reliant on notions of exclusion and race. Seeing how the academic library underwent transformations in its

spatial layout and mission, one sees its social nature which is susceptible to another transformation that is far more inclusive and welcoming depending on the social agents who instill change. John Budd reflects on the fluctuating, social skeleton of the academic library: “The library is not an autonomous entity (in fact it should not be; it is responsive to the environment of which it is part” (Budd 1998: xiii).

History of Waidner-Spahr Library

Dickinson College’s academic library was established in 1967, dedicated as the Boyd Lee Spahr Library, designed to connote meanings of dignity and class.²⁷ The library was designed by Howell Lewis Shay & Associates at a cost of \$2,250,000 (Dickinson College Archives 2005). Howell Lewis Shay’s architectural portfolio and partnerships were rooted in academic and institutional building design. Shay’s building design craft is influenced by the Beaux-Arts (Tatman n.d.). Beaux-Arts Architecture is an elaborate, ornate style that blends Ancient Greek and Roman architecture— emphasizing symmetry and size— with Renaissance ideas which emphasize ornamentation and grandiosity (Craven 2019).²⁸ The architectural form connotes luxury, attaching “a dignity or sometimes a frivolity to the ordinary”; its characteristics include interiors “polished and lavishly decorated” with balustrades, balconies, columns, cornices, pilasters, and triangular pediments (Craven 2019). The style is mostly applied to public buildings

²⁷ Spahr was the current president for Dickinson’s Board of Trustees and he had a vested interest in advancing the resources and services provided by Dickinson College’s library (Dickinson College Archives 2005). An avid reader, Spahr donated several books and manuscripts to Dickinson’s collection. He was first recognized by the College with a room named after him before the library bore his name. Dickinson College Archives described Spahr as a Board of Trustees President who “defly governed the College, variously choosing and controlling trustees and presidents “to make Dickinson the best small liberal arts college” (2005).

²⁸ This style of architecture originates from France, based on ideas taught at L’École des beaux Arts, “one of the oldest and most esteemed schools of architecture and design” (Craven 2019). A handful of American architects described as “fortunate enough” to attend the international school brought these ideas back to America which spurred its popularity as an architectural form (Craven 2019).

of grandiosity like train stations or government buildings one can see today. By hiring Shay and his team to spearhead its establishment, Dickinson College's Boyd Lee Spahr Library evoked—and still does—grandiosity, sophistication, and even prosperity as a liberal arts college.²⁹

The Spahr Library underwent renovation in 1997, requiring a new team of designers to augment what was meant to be evoked in the design. Rededicated as the Waidner-Spahr library, the new library was now able to house its whole collection under one roof and provide space for computer labs, classrooms, and individual study rooms (Dickinson College Archives 2005). Waidner-Spahr was designed by Perry Dean Rogers and Partners at a cost of \$14 million (Dickinson College Archives 2005). A key goal of this renovation was “respect the beloved pre-Civil War campus buildings while being of monumental scale in order to relate to the existing International-Style library” (“Library_06_Dickinson” n.d.). Antebellum architecture refers to the kind of architecture most prominent in the Deep South, best characterized by plantation homes and mansions. These structures had extravagant exteriors with large pillars, garbled roofs, and wrap-around porches. Its interiors were equally extravagant with expansive foyers and grand staircases. Contextually, only free white men could afford and legally have such homes. Furthermore, the U.S. was at an economic high with the cotton industry of which was reliant on the brutal enslavement of African people. It is important to consider what pre-Civil war architecture can symbolize for people beyond and who, historically, were living in such structures.

²⁹ At this time, Dickinson College's student demographic was predominantly comprised of white students. Black students were not allowed to live on campus and had to commute to and from school and it was not until just a few years prior to the completion of the Spahr library that Black students could live in the residence halls (Rogers 2009). Students of Color, and particularly Black students, could neither fully immerse nor associate with the meanings attached to the design of the library or the whole campus for that matter.

Moving from Beaux-Arts, International-Style as an architectural form emphasizes rectilinear forms and strips surfaces of any ornamentation with glass and steel replacing masonry as the primary material used (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). This “disciplined new structure” was a response by architects at the time that were dissatisfied with the eclectic nature of buildings from different architectural periods thereby producing a more “austere” design with a new focus on function (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). This renovation wanted to maintain the library as the heart of the campus wherein the building was visually and physically connected to the campus with visuals peering out and walkways connected to other campus sites (“Library_06_dickinson” n.d.).

Waidner-Spahr library adheres to the guidelines established by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) including the guidelines on spatial design, inclusivity, and diversity. Members of the association are thus committed to acknowledging and addressing historical racial inequities, challenging oppressive systems within academic libraries, valuing different ways of knowing, and working to eliminate barriers to equitable services, spaces, and scholarship (ACRL 2018). The purpose of setting these standards is to ensure and advocate for racially and ethnically diverse constituencies (ACRL 2018). Being a member of the ACRL, Waidner-Spahr as an institution and in its librarianship must work to convey cultural competence and pluralism (ACRL 2012). The ACRL also provides a toolkit, or a checklist, that guides higher education libraries in implementing these standards (ACRL 2012).³⁰

There are practices and guidelines that Waidner-Spahr follow in terms of diversity and spatial design. As these guidelines are recommendations rather than enforced criterion, this begs

³⁰ The diversity standards laid out by ACRL are recommendations and are not strictly enforced.

the question of whether Waidner-Spahr, indeed, adheres to these recommendations and if they make an effort to showcase that adherence. Furthermore, what are the guidelines that students are aware of and engage in when they use the library space. Are they made aware or cognizant of the diversity guidelines in place?

In the official Mission Statement of Waidner-Spahr Library, there is a commitment in providing equitable access to information and knowledge and preparing student patrons in leading engaged civic lives. The library commits to this mission by way of processes including: “providing relevant and representative information resources for inquiry and study;... maintaining a welcoming physical environment that inspires openness, creativity, diligence, and fellowship;... creating and fostering a supportive and safe learning and working environment for people of diverse backgrounds and abilities” (Dickinson.edu 2019). In their mission statement, Waidner-Spahr library lists their values that include but are not limited to “equitable, open, sustainable access to information;... continuous improvement;... relevance of the Library to the College, its community, and the world;... open dialogue on issues of intellectual, ethical, and social importance” (Dickinson.edu 2019). Dickinson College’s specific commitment to an equitable space, whether through information, spatial layout, or library practices, illustrates cultural competency and effort to try and achieve such. In my analysis, I find a disconnect between this commitment and the implementation of cultural competence within Waidner-Spahr. Knowing that one of the values Waidner-Spahr possesses is an inclination to improvement, we witness that a) space is malleable to ideas and b) more recommendations to better exude cultural competency and inclusivity are plausible.

In relaying the history of America's public and academic libraries and, specifically, Dickinson College's Waidner-Spahr Library, I demonstrate that these spaces are full of meaning that changes over time. Libraries are social spaces; their purposes and uses are socially determined depending on who is in authority. Often such determinations are informed by notions of race and power. White people have largely enjoyed the benefits of libraries while systematically preventing People of Color, primarily Black people, from accessing the spaces. Through my findings, I illustrate how students' and my own perceptions of Waidner-Spahr library either parallel or oppose the established literature on academic libraries.

Whiteness in the Library

The culture of whiteness within the academic library creates disproportionate experiences among patrons based on race. Freeda Brook, Dave Ellenwood, and Althea Eannace examine how academic libraries exhibit whiteness, debunking the idea of the library as a purely functional space that allows for certain activities to be enacted (2015: 247). Starting broadly with the American college campus, there is "very intentional architectural strategizing" that works to exude power or a particular message; often that message is racial and reflective of whiteness (2015: 255). Brook et al. identify three spatial mechanisms that reinforce whiteness: the physical and mostly permanent features, the semi permanent features such as decorations, and the spatial practices which are "governed by implicit and explicit rules" (2015: 258). My research shows that these spatial persist within Dickinson College's Waidner-Spahr Library. Common features include but are not limited to:

- Classic architecture whose design is specific to the "Western tradition of learning [...] valuing linear, logical, oppositional thinking done by men in hierarchical learning environments" (Brook et al. 2015: 258).

- Representations via statues, portraits, and plaques of wealthy, “usually White, often male, patrons or spaces that are named after those benefactors, suggesting the kind of wealth and status” (Brook et al. 2015: 258).
- Works of art donated by wealthy patrons that “originate from non-white Cultures and are not contextualized in terms of how they relate to the present population of the school” (Brook et al. 2015: 258)
- Expectations of quiet, individual study
- Reference spaces prioritizing height “or clear lines of sight that put the librarian or occupant of the desk in a disciplinary role of surveillance over a particular space when the bodies that occupy the supervisory position are consistently White, and the bodies under surveillance are expected to be docile” (Brook et al. 2015: 259).
- The use of size. The grandeur of the library were identified to be imposing, overwhelming, and scary to some, particularly high-achieving Latino/a college students who were part of a study (Brook et al. 2015: 259).

Sue et al. call these features environmental microaggressions or indignities— racial insults against a target group conveyed through the built environment (2007: 273). Consider the way semipermanent features like the decoration can serve as an environmental microaggression. One’s racial identity can be “minimized or made insignificant through the sheer exclusion of decorations or literature that represents various racial groups: (Sue et al. 2007: 274).

Brooks et al.’s identification of whiteness and push for social justice within the academic library is rooted primarily in critiquing librarianship hence they push for library workers to learn from their work and engage in creating a socially just and responsive library. I use the works of Brooks et al. to inform my research but rework the focus on the narratives of student patrons.

Perceptions of the academic library

The perceptions of the campus racial climate carry into the academic library, affecting patron experiences and use of the space. In Dallas Long’s study of Latino college students’ perceptions of the academic library, the sample of students who self-identify as Latino or

Hispanic at a Midwestern University expressed their sentiments towards and against the academic library. All of the students discovered the library late into their undergraduate career despite having the same library orientation as the other first-years (Long 2011: 17). In tandem with the late usage of the library, “Latino students use the library less frequently, seek assistance from librarians less often, and demonstrate lower levels of information than students of other racial and ethnic groups” (Long 2011: 24). Intimidated by the size and complexity of the library, some felt a lack of familiarity with the resources like the collections of books made available to students. Despite this aversion to the academic library and their lack of patronage, some participants saw the library as a shelter or as a “haven” (Long 2011: 21).³¹ All juxtaposed their views of the academic library with their hometown public and school libraries; participants viewed their home libraries as “mechanisms for cultural support and expression” while academic libraries exhibited a “‘chilling factor’ or environment that deters Latino students” (Long 2011: 23-24). Long suggests that academic libraries can engage in better marketing practices, development of multicultural competencies, and “articulation of their purpose in student success” (Long 2011: 29). These recommendations enable better retention among Latinx college students. Here, the academic library is a social space that holds meaning: either the space can deter people from entering and feeling welcome or the space can be perceived as a haven.

Whitmire examines the differences in academic library use along racial lines and how campus experiences influenced their use. Students of Color used the academic library more,

³¹ Seeing the library as a haven connects to Lefebvre’s idea of the representational space. Though their spatial practices within the academic library may fit within the intended use of the space (the representation of space), the way students perceive the library as more, as a haven, shows the hidden meanings that occur within.

specifically to read or study, ask the librarian for help, and read references and documents more frequently than white students (Whitmire 2003: 253). Despite high academic library use rates among Students of Color, “retention and persistence rates for this group is often lower than for [w]hite undergraduates” (Whitmire 2003: 161). There is a significant relationship between faculty interaction and increased academic library use for Asian-Americans, African-Americans, and white students yet “Students of Color as a group reported less faculty interaction when compared to [w]hite undergraduates” (2003: 160). White college students had higher grade point averages (GPA) (3.26 vs. 2.91), spent more time studying (3.00 vs. 2.89), and interacted with faculty more often all while Students of Color engaged in more academic library use (Whitmire 2003: 153). GPAs were generally not associated with academic library use yet Whitmire finds a negative relationship between white students’ GPAs and academic use: a higher GPA resulted in less academic use (2003: 160). Although Whitmire’s study is over a decade old and statistics have changed with the increasing number of People of Color enrolling into college, she establishes the significance of the academic library and how its use and perception is divided along racial lines, impacting campus integration and retention rates. Within Waidner-Spahr, I reveal how there are uses of the library that differ by race, influencing how patrons behave within the library as well as how they act on the larger college campus.

In Whitmire’s other study that investigated undergraduates’ perceptions of the academic library, she discovers that although there were differences in campus perceptions, that did not extend to the academic library. White students rated the academic library higher (4.01) than Students of Color (3.97) but the difference was determined not statistically significant (2004: 372). Whitmire suggests that “Students of Color do not view the academic library as a race-

related space” (2004: 374). Where there were “white spaces” on campus where Students of Color do not feel welcome, “the academic library was not among these ‘[w]hite spaces’ on college campuses” (Whitmire 2004: 374). Instead, the library is a “third place” or a neutral ground “where people can come and go as they please and where everyone is made to feel comfortable” (Whitmire 2004: 375). However, Whitmire expresses the limitations of this secondary analysis. Whitmire examined the perceptions of the general academic library but was unable to determine the specific spaces and services in the library elicited a variety of assessments (Whitmire 2004: 376). Furthermore, as this was a secondary analysis of data collected from a survey, Whitmire suggests that future studies use CRT as the framework, using storytelling and the narratives of patrons “so researchers could really ‘hear’ the voices of the Students of Color describing their academic library experiences” (2004: 377). This is the approach I have taken in my work.

The academic library is perceived and used by its patrons, differentiating along racial lines. Some college students see the library as an environmental microaggression, deterring them from feeling welcome and thereby entering or using the space. Some uses of the library are heavily influenced by their campus experiences and if said campus has a hostile racial campus climate, it hinders their use of the library. The literature informs my study of the academic library as I gauge student patrons’ use and thoughts on Waidner-Spahr and how their Dickinson experience is a critical influence in that use.

Methods

“O my body, make of me always a man who questions!”
-Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

The primary methods I use are ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews. Ethnography is a hands-on, on-the-scene method accounting for the behaviors, mannerisms, and

culture in a social setting. Most observations are recorded in the form of field notes. The ethnographer– the researcher conducting the observations– immerses themselves “in the respondent's world” (Walters 1980: 32). Ethnography goes beyond the surface of the action to interpret the social context which informs said behavior (Walters 1980: 33). The ethnography organizes observations and data into a cohesive pattern which can apply to the social discourse and population of interest. Ethnography affords the researcher an understanding of the universe “unique to the respondents [and] the social structure and values that organize their lives” (Walter 1980: 34). Clifford Geertz’s ‘Thick Description’ extends ethnography and how the practice is precarious with several barriers that can obscure its reliability.

Essential to observing culture is thick description, where the researcher describes not only the actions of a subject but the context and social code which informs said actions (Geertz 1973: 312). When examining an action, one has to know the background information, or the social context, before observing and drawing any analysis (Geertz 1973: 314). The researcher has to sort out all their observations as they were directly enacted and determining all their social contexts beyond that which the researcher knows (Geertz 1973: 314). Geertz posits that thick description *is* ethnography and doing ethnography is akin to “trying to read [...] a manuscript– foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior” (1973: 314). Ultimately, ethnography is a researcher’s means of obtaining information and delivering it in a way that they as well as others can understand a different social setting and be equipped to converse with said social setting’s subjects (Geertz 1973: 320).

Ethnography also allows for the researcher to capture unexpected moments, events, and behaviors by people in their natural habitat which a structured, prepared methodology would not have accounted for. Thick description provides a richer detailed description of an event and an explanation of its cultural significance. To analyze these moments, Geertz argues that ethnographers “rescue” these occasions and rework them into “perusable terms” (1973: 318). Researchers prevent these events from going unnoticed; they capture the faintest to the most altering of details which potentially possess information that can add to the current social setting, if not, larger respective societal norms. However, ethnography is just as susceptible with its detriments which must be acknowledged and prevented with each practice.

If ethnography is not handled with care, the researcher is led astray, portraying inaccurate notions of reality, rendering their work invalid. Because ethnography is a deep dive into cultural settings that requires the researcher to handle different cultural significances at once, ethnography is difficult to replicate with each new setting (Walters 1980: 35). While certain socio-cultural patterns persist, moments and events do not happen exactly as they had occurred the first time it was observed and recorded. Thus, replicability poses a problem for ethnographers. The ethnographer is also always susceptible to disregarding the culture specific to the setting they are observing, thus creating fiction from the data they obtain (Geertz 1973: 317). Ethnographer’s descriptions are powerful and convincing. If they are inaccurate, they are rendered vacant and “something else than what the task at hand [...] calls for” (Geertz 1973: 317). Geertz stresses anchoring one’s self to reality as one relays their observations.

Ethnographic observation is the best fit for my examinations at the Academic library. As a setting that welcomes the whole Dickinson College community, a population of people from

different sociocultural backgrounds, I can observe behaviors and the space itself as they naturally occur. There are multiple opportunities for different events to be chronicled, events teeming with significance. Ethnographic observation is one of the tools that ethnography is equipped with. I will also complement my observations with interviews about the social setting.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-Structured interviews occur when the researcher as interviewer and their respondent engage in a dialogue with predetermined questions prepared by the former. Unlike a structured interview with more formatted questions that does not allow the interviewee to digress, semi-structured interviews have more open-ended questions that give the interviewee a more direct role in the framing of the interview. A semi-structured interview consists of the researcher having more of an interview guide, or a list of questions and topics that they want to cover and explore (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). The researcher asks questions in a particular order but allows the respondent to answer and carry the conversation in different directions. Thus, each interview varies with each answer. The usefulness and results of semi-structured interviews depends largely on the kinds of questions asked, the purposes of the research, and how structured the researcher wants to be.

One will want to use semi-structured interviews if they want to know the *Why's* as opposed to the *How many's* or *How much's* which can be answered through quantitative methods or a structured interview (Fylan 2005: 66). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to prepare questions beforehand, so they know what they want to discuss even if the conversation goes somewhere else. In asking more open-ended questions, the respondent has more freedom to express their views on their own terms (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). Some questions may not apply

to the participant so the interviewer can talk around the topic and gauge what is more important to them instead (Fylan 2005: 66). The variability allows for deeper and further exploration of the particular topics which can reshape the research question itself, providing new ideas unseen beforehand (Fylan 2005: 67). Semi-structured interviews provide a more appropriate format where the researcher can ask (non-confrontational) questions that can be complicated or sensitive. Respondents are made aware that they do not have to answer every question as well as that they can answer however they see fit, which reduces the likelihood of emotional discomfort while doing the interview (Fylan 2005: 67). The benefits of a semi-structured interview reflect the necessity of intentional preparation; if not done correctly, such interviews can raise some ethical and moral issues. The researcher has to ensure protection of the identity of respondents while asking probing questions that are neither leading nor unexpectedly discomforting. Beyond the technicalities, there are certain disadvantages of interviewing.

Conducting an interview and developing a conversation with descriptive answers is time-consuming. The researcher, often with time constraints, is limited to smaller samples (Nardi 2018: 16) Because of the variability of the semi-structured interview responses, it is more difficult to code and create cohesive patterns among each response depending on how varying the responses are. Semi-structured interviews are more difficult to replicate in its process and variability should one want to repeat the same interview (Nardi 2018: 16).

The interviewer has an effect on the interview. The interview must reflect on their own everyday thinking. That implicit bias can lead to selective perception and questioning which can be prevented if the interviewer is aware of their position. Furthermore, depending on how the interviewer gains rapport, or trust with the interviewee, the interview can yield different

responses if participants do not feel at ease based on how the interviewer opens the interview and welcomes the participant (Fylan 2005: 75-76).

With this in mind, semi-structured interviews fit the aim of my research study, complementing my use of participant observation. The variability enables me to see the different responses and usages of the academic library which I am unaware of.

Methods in Practice

I intended to conduct my research using three methods, including the use of surveys. I thought surveys would be helpful so as to have a large sample to draw analyses from. After meeting with Professor Steinbugler, a methods specialist in the Sociology Department at Dickinson College, she contacted Lester Ko, the director of Institutional Effectiveness at Dickinson College. He provided a list of steps on creating a survey disseminating it to Dickinson College's student population. Due to time constraints, I decided against doing surveys. Instead, in-depth interviews best complement my use of ethnography.

Prior to conducting my interviews, I followed the process of applying to Dickinson College's Institutional Review Board as I would be working with human subjects. I submitted my research question, consent forms, and survey which determined the kind of IRB approval required on February 9, 2020. I revised my application, adding the recruitment form I would disseminate via email. On February 21, 2020, my research project was approved.

Through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Dickinson College, I requested a list of students' names and emails. I aimed to have a random sample of interviewees to create a more representative perception of students' perceptions of their academic library. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided me with a list of 400 randomly selected students' names and

email addresses. I assigned a number to each student in no chronological order. I used a random number generator from online to select the ten students I would request to interview. I emailed the ten randomly selected students, requesting for their participation to be interviewed. Only five responded and agreed to participate, I resorted to snowball sampling as I still aimed to interview ten students. I reached out the Heather Champion, the liaison for Posse Foundation scholars, and she disseminated my recruitment letter. Several reached out and offered to participate. I assigned each of them a random number and used a random number generator again to pick which student would be part of my sample. In assigning those who volunteered to participate, I wanted to ensure that this would be as randomly selected and as representative as possible.

On March 16, 2020, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Dickinson College along with at least 200 other colleges in the United States decided to go online. Students had to either move out of their residences by April 5th or they could petition to stay on campus (Dickinson.edu 2020). Most campus facilities including Waidner-Spahr closed for the remainder of the semester. This posed a challenge to my research, for my ethnography as well as my semi-structured interviews. I was able to conduct one in-person interview but the rest were held remotely. All respondents who agreed to participate were reached electronically.

One interview took place in one of the study rooms offered by the library, particularly the study rooms on the main floor in the west wing of the library. The remainder of the interviews were conducted via telephone and the Facetime app. For the lone in-person interview with Nicola, I oriented the chairs so that we were facing each other. I ensured that the interviewee was also not looking directly out the door as the doors to the study room have window panes looking out. Before conducting the interview, I gained rapport with the interviewee, asking them

questions about their day. After thanking her for her participation, I provided a written version of my research proposal and my procedures while also reading it aloud. For all respondents, I asked them for their consent while explaining their rights, including the right to ask any questions, stop the interview, or withdraw altogether. I assured full confidentiality and tell each the steps to which I will protect their identity. Because of the semi-structured nature of the interview, I reminded them that this is not a structured, formal interview. I aimed to provide a comfortable space where the interviewee can respond freely. I asked for permission to record the interview with an audio recording device and also if I can take notes throughout the session. Following the interviews, I thanked them for the participation, relayed what I intend to do with the audio recording and how I will keep the information safe (on a password-protected laptop that will be on my person or in my locked dorm room), and asked them if they have any questions or concerns from me.

For my ethnography, I sat in different parts of the library with optimal vantage points to see as much as possible. I observe details including but not limited to where people sat or the volume at which they moved or talked. I also sat in the library at different times of the day as I believe that the library has rush hours of foot traffic and pockets of group study sessions, especially beginning in the evening time once classes were over. I also noted the kinds of architecture and interior design offered by the library. Although most of these are stationery items, they teem with cultural significance. Furthermore, there is potential for students and staff to alter furniture and design whether intentionally or not. I recorded my observations via fieldnotes; I wrote down such details as the time of day, the weather outside, the orientation of the furniture as I hypothesize that they contribute to the experience of being in the library.

Since the campus closed down due to the spread and threat of COVID-19, the amount of time I planned to conduct ethnography was cut short. I observed most parts of the library more than once. I was unable to conduct proper observations in the designated quiet section on the second floor of the library, the east wing of the library. I was also unable to conduct research on the basement level of the library in the west wing section. Regardless, I made enough observations to generate prominent themes for my findings.

The topic of identity and, specifically, racial identity is quite broad, leading to difficulty in centralizing the supposedly universal and correct way of identifying oneself and others. In my thesis, I argue that there is no sole correct way to racially identify. I apply Wendy Roth's concept of racial schemas, or mental structures that use knowledge and process information to guide perceptions and racially categorize oneself and others (2012: 12-13). These schemas are not individual pursuits as they are shared, public schemas that are institutionalized through family, school, and workplaces (Roth 2012: 13). I apply my own racial scheme of which I learned through schooling and social relations. Thus, when I racially categorize patrons in my ethnography, I use categories that are the most inclusive of all identities while being cognizant of historical processes that have made exclusionary racial practices.³²

It is imperative for the researcher to engage in reflexivity. Reflexivity asks the researchers to place themselves in their research, to understand their role in meaning-making and

³² For instance, I use terms like 'Latino,' 'Latina,' and 'Latinx' instead of 'Hispanic' except when one of my respondents self-identifies as Hispanic. The term 'Hispanic' refers to anyone from Spain or anyone from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. However, the term also promotes Spanish heritage and is opposed to the term due to Spain's violent history of colonization in Latin America and erasure of Afro-Latinx or Indigenous people. Thus, I use the term Latinx to identify those whose heritage derives from Latin America, a term which is more gender neutral compared to Latino or Latina unless respondents specify.

theorizing. Reflexivity is putting up a mirror to the researcher as they delve deeper into their work, spurring action in terms of figuring how to pursue their research with this reflection and position in mind. I recognize how my positionality as an Asian, Woman of Color with a socio-cultural background contributes to this research rooted in understanding racial and ethnic social relations in Academia. There may be some students whose racial campus experiences are more hostile or specific of which I cannot fully resonate with and there may be some students who feel uncomfortable talking about race.³³ With that in mind, I provide a space for all respondents during interviews to feel as comfortable as possible in sharing their experiences. I ensure that no biases or personal experiences infiltrate or tip over the trajectory of this research. Rather than seeing my positionality, my identity, as a setback, it is more of a motivation as I pursue and understand how to create future spaces in academia that have historically prevented access to all.

Findings

“All we need do is simply to open our eyes, to leave the dark world of metaphysics and the false depths of the 'inner life' behind, and we will discover the immense human wealth that the humblest facts of everyday life contain.”

-Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*

Each day in Waidner-Spahr library is a scene rich with different personalities, moments, interactions, and experiences. At first glance, they are seemingly meaningless actions. Taking a deeper look, they commingle and reveal profound realities and truths about the human condition. Some of these truths are tough to face but necessary in unearthing as a means to overcome inequality and alienation. From my observations and interviews, several themes emerge. First,

³³ I compare the culture of whiteness to the elephant in the room. The culture of whiteness is present but there is a failure to address it due to discomfort. I expected that students regardless of race would feel awkward, unsure, or uncomfortable discussing race and whiteness.

Waidner-Spahr is perceived as socially split into different sections that are informed by race, whiteness, and campus clubs and organizations. Second, there is an overwhelming presence of whiteness persistent in the physical space and students' spatial behaviors but it indeed remains as the elephant in the room. Patrons know that whiteness exists in the space but fail to address it. Third, the floors in Waidner-Spahr provide different access to materials and resources, which generates social transformations and legitimizes the library as a social space. Fourth, architecturally and socially, whiteness has a seemingly permanent placement within the space while any aspect that falls out of whiteness is temporary and precarious. Finally, the spatial behaviors in the library reflect the larger racial campus climate. Through these themes, I argue that space is social and racial, which generates uneven experiences. Racial formations and whiteness are authorized in Waidner-Spahr to either welcome, intimidate, or deter patrons.

Before I delve into these themes, I return to Gusa's description of WIP and Brook et al.'s list of spatial mechanisms which reinforce whiteness on college campuses and in the academic library respectively. WIP identifies how whiteness privileges white people while marginalizing People of Color in hostile environments. In the context of higher education, WIP marginalizes Students of Color on hostile college campuses, impacting their academic and social integration or attrition. The elements of WIP consist of white ascendancy (the thinking and behavior of white people guided by a sense of superiority, entitlement, and authority), monoculturalism (the organized institutional practices that endorse white, western thinking while devaluing other structures of thought), white blindness (color blindness where one's race is immaterial to their life outcomes, thereby, making whiteness invisible while racially biased discrimination is ignored), and white estrangement (white people physically and socially distancing from People

of Color, leading to awkward interactions based on stereotypes and ignorance). With each finding, I relay how they exemplify WIP. Brook et al. argue that whiteness is reinforced specifically within the academic library through spatial mechanisms such as architecture, interior design, the use of size and height, designated purposes for library spaces, and decoration (2015: 258-259). These mechanisms enforce the domination of white decorum where the supposed appropriate behavior of conduct and context conforms to the needs and taste of whiteness. Within Waidner-Spahr, several spatial elements adhere to the criterion of white decorum. These elements are environmental microaggressions against Students of Color at Dickinson College, creating uneven academic and social campus experiences.

Socially & Racially Determined Sections of the Library

Respondents perceived the library as governed by race and exclusivity. Specifically, two sections in the library are racialized. The upper level of the library, particularly in the designated talking section, is perceived as a space primarily used by white students, specifically white student athletes. Explicitly, the upper level of the library is seen as a “white space,” or environments where Students of Color do not feel welcome (Whitmire 2004: 374). Attached is a map of Waidner-Spahr Library with an additional legend to demarcate particular services and facilities within the space (Figure 1). The area of focus is the untitled space found in the section of the map labeled ‘Upper Level.’ In this blank space, there are several group tables placed at intervals and respondents perceived this space to be predominantly occupied by white students.

Some respondents feel deterred from sitting there. Ketari, a junior who self-identifies as a Black male, prefers a study room. He scans for any available study room on all floors before

finding his space. What he notices in his perusal of the rooms, is that predominantly white students sit on the upper level talking section, which discourages him from sitting there:

“... yeah, it was always at the tables outside [on the second floor]? White people. White folk. Always. That’s something else that made me even not want to sit out there. And they were always- they weren’t loud but they weren’t library-kind of quiet. Because this wasn’t the quiet space so you know you had to- you could talk and do all of that giggling and stuff so- I didn’t want to be there at all. But those were the kind of people-”

During his first semester at Dickinson, Ketari tried using the library space but did not feel like he fit in: “I don’t find it, especially my first semester, I didn’t find it as a fitting space for me, a Person of Color, to be in there or at least that’s what I thought.” Since then, he has not used the library unless completing a group project. Instead, he does his work in one of the academic buildings on campus or in his single dorm room.

Of the respondents who self-identify as white, some recognize the upper level talking section as a racialized space and also felt a level of intimidation. At first, Nicola, a senior, did not think race played a role in the upper level of Waidner-Spahr. Later, she clarifies that it was a specific sector of white people that occupied that space and she, who identifies as coming from a lower socioeconomic background, felt uncomfortable sitting there:

N: Um, I generally feel uncomfortable in the upstairs social section.

S: Mhm.

N: Because, I feel like everyone there has at least ten friends and is connected with several other tables, people. And I feel like if I’m working alone, that’s like, like a personal callout to myself. Like as in a high school cafeteria at the one table unoccupied.

S: Yeah.

N: But I don’t think that’s so much about race 'cause it seems like that area is usually dominated by white people but, like, I think it’s more, like, rich white people and that’s not really my background.

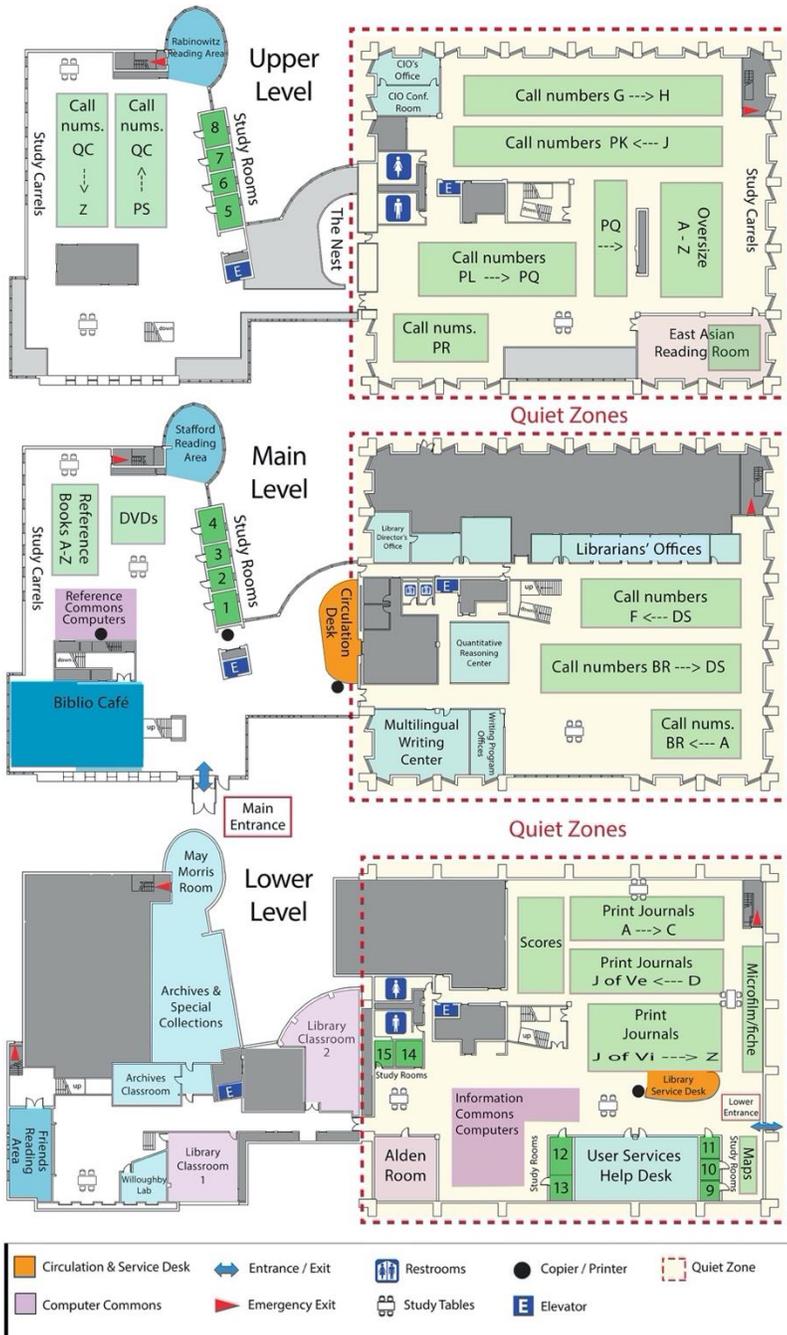


Figure 1: Map of Waidner-Spahr Library. Retrieved from "Library Map" by Dickinson College, n.d., Carlisle, PA. Retrieved from https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20391/library/2467/library_map

Davis, a white sophomore, also shares how the upper level talking section is racialized as a space for white students, primarily athletes, and he, too, shares how he used to sit there: "... so when

you walk into the second floor of the library[,] like the open section, it's very... it's a lot of like the white athletes is what I have noticed because I spend a lot of time there. So, like, that's what I've seen mainly." Davis eventually moved to the basement level of the library due to the upper level talking section being too loud. Lorrie, a sophomore who identifies as white, sees the upper level section as organized by campus organizations, specifically athletic programs. "I feel like there's a lot of sports people right as you get up to the top of the stairs and that area." She explains that "there's always a bunch of people working and I always feel like they're coming from sports 'cause they have all the backpacks and stuff. [...] So I'm always just like, 'It's so full.' [...] I feel like that's the only thing that I really notice." Although she does not notice these spaces as racialized, she shares how she benefits from certain privileges by virtue of her white identity. "... I think in terms of race, I feel fine sitting everywhere," she says. The only discomfort she feels relates to her volume: "... in terms of my loudness habits, I like, obviously, I don't wanna go where I'm gonna be looked at for being too loud" (Later, I will return to the role of volume in the library). Lorrie and Davis share the same of feeling of comfort to be in any space as white individuals. When I ask Davis about his general campus experience at Dickinson, he responds, "I mean it's been pretty good. Like, yeah. I'm a white male and I'm gay but like I don't really feel unsafe most of the time." White respondents' answers surrounding the racialization of library spaces exhibit elements of WIP.

The way Nicola, Lorrie, and Davis disconnect themselves from the upper level talking section— saying respectively that only wealthy white students or athletes access that space— illustrates white blindness. White blindness delegitimizes the role of race in deciding the trajectory of people's lives. Nicola, Lorrie, and Davis say that their white identity grants them

privileges in terms of accessing the full range of Dickinson College's spaces, academic, and social resources without any obstacles. However, they all essentially contend that because they do not sit in the upper level talking section, they do not align with the white students who do sit in that area. It is paradoxical that respondents admit their general comfort on campus by virtue of their white identity while simultaneously denying that they share in the same benefits of whiteness as those who sit in the white spaces of the library. The rhetoric is the same sentiment as white people saying "I'm not racist" or "I'm not like other white people." The defensive act of individualizing one's self overlooks the broader context in which all white people systematically benefit from whiteness and white privilege. Such defense is counterintuitive in that saying "I'm not like other white people" does not eliminate the racial biases and systems that discriminate against People of Color. Their reasons for not sitting in the upper level talking section (volume or lack of familiarity with the students in the space) are valid, but they pale in comparison to Students of Color who do not sit in the upper level talking section because they feel isolated, profiled, or uncomfortable sitting in perceived white spaces. This paradox becomes a failure to recognize whiteness in all its forms and speaks to how deeply entrenched whiteness is in each perception, interaction, and behavior.

While the upper level talking section is a racialized space, the other space frequently spoken of by respondents is the Reference Commons Computer area on the main level of the library. Simplified as the 'reference area,' that space is perceived as mainly occupied by Students of Color. Fidel, a self-identifying mixed white-Hispanic junior, noticed how the library is sectioned off depending on who is situated within them. To Fidel, the reference area is where he

and a lot of Posse students happen to be.³⁴ Contrasting the perception of white people sitting in the upper level talking section, more Students of Color are in the reference area at one of the available desktop computers. “I just know,” Fidel says, “that I hang out and a lot of people from Posse hang out at the computer area, you know? I don’t know if it’s just because of the classes we’re taking that require the computers or just for some reason the spaces we hold... um but it’s definitely, like, almost clearly sectioned off.” Fidel shares how the imaginary borders guided by race are obvious in Waidner-Spah, sectioning off where people are: “There’s the computer area, there’s the quiet section, there’s the upstairs. There’s just clear sections of... you’re entering another space, you know? It’s not like it fades or blends into each other... almost.”

The observation of where students specifically sat influenced where respondents chose to sit. Nick, a senior member of the Latinx student population, sits in the reference area with his friends who are also Students of Color. When I ask if he felt comfortable sitting anywhere in the library, he says, yes, that he does not care despite feeling like his presence has an effect when he sits, say, in the upper level:

“Yeah. I was saying that, like, I would sit [upstairs] just cause I don’t really care what the other students, like, think. But I’m aware of that positionality and so, um, if I do sit there, I feel like it throws people off. Just cause I’m not like part of the friend group or part of the teams or anything like that.”

I proceed to ask him, “So because of that you don’t- you’re aware that you feel like you’re not supposed to sit there?” He affirms with a “Yeah.” Paige, a first-year Latina, studies with her friends on the upper level but in the available study rooms on that floor. En route to her study

³⁴ Students with a Posse Foundation scholarship are granted a full-tuition leadership-based scholarship, chosen as young leaders coming from diverse backgrounds. Although the Posse Foundation scholarship is not a diversity scholarship, majority of Posse scholars at Dickinson College are Students of Color from diverse backgrounds.

room, she mentions having to ignore the way she feels watched by the white students who tend to sit in the upper level talking section:

“So, I go through the side door where you have to kind of scan in if you’re [unintelligible] at night, walk through the metal detectors, and then I have to stand there a little bit waiting for my group of friends to text me where they’re at. They’re usually up top. So, I just usually walk up the stairs, try to ignore every single eye turned that way[...] Well, the stairs are like literally right smack in the middle so there’s no way you can get up to the second floor— even the elevator makes a big fuss about it— so there’s no way for you to get up to the second floor without everyone turning to look at you. And then, um, white people usually tend to congregate in those areas or right around the little tables that are all lined up. So, and then it’s natural for everyone’s eyes to turn and look at you especially if you make a lot of noise walking upstairs.”

When I conducted my ethnography of the upper level, I sat at one of the group tables. I had a clear view of anyone who clambered up the staircase and reached the second floor. I could see the other group tables surrounding the stairwell, set at intervals along the walls. Some of the spatial practices I observed coupled with my own interactions in the space mirrored some of the experiences of respondents. On my first day of observations in the space, I sat with my friend, a Chinese-Vietnamese senior at about 12:00 P.M. Five hours later, I note that we have been the only People of Color who sit in this open space. “Any Students of Color who climb the stairs,” I write in my fieldnotes, “go to the quiet section or further back into the upper level away from the open area by the staircase.” Throughout the day, two Asian students were the only nonwhite students sitting in an area. At one point that afternoon, a friend of mine ascends up the stairs to greet me. She jokes, “Wow, you guys blend in so well,” while motioning to my friend and me. Though it was a joke, we stuck out when we arrived but eventually blended into the space, quiet as the upper level unfolded before us with white students filtering in and out.

There were a couple instances where as I walked up the stairwells and scanned around the room for an available table, I made eye contact with some tables full of students (white-passing at first glance) who would look up from their work to see who entered the space. The same day that I sat with my friend at the upper level, I returned in the evening time, climbing up the stairs and I made eye contact with this one student, a white male, sitting at a group table. I note that I was the first to break eye contact.

Lorrie's observation that the upper level talking section was mainly used by student athletes was one I noted myself. Observing the upper level in the evening, one student with a clean-shaven head arrived, heading for a group table directly in front of mine, used by a group of white women students. The women have a jumbled conversation with their assumed friend, making a spectacle out of his shaven head. A half hour passes after that interaction when more students, white men, also with shaved heads come up the stairs and interact with the table of women in front of me. I note how students at other group tables turn their heads to look at the white students with shaven heads. I would later learn that Dickinson College's Men's lacrosse team had shaved their head for charity. There was a jumbled conversation that occurred across the different tables. It seemed that the other students in the area knew some if not all the white student athletes who had arrived. I could make out greetings made and conversations starting over their haircuts. From afar, even though all the tables were disjointed from each other and there was distance between each table, the students across the room seemed to be familiar with each other.

Sitting at the reference area where some respondents identified that Students of Color primarily sit, there was an observable difference in racial and ethnic composition at first glance.

There was a visible sense of comfort that Students of Color exhibited in the space. One night, a woman, Brown, was walking around the space, to and from her spot at one of the desktop computers without shoes against the carpet floors. One student, a Black woman, was scanning each study room to see if they were available when she made eye contact with another student. They wave at each other through the door before said woman saunters off. At that time, I sat at one of the desktop computers with my friend, a Brown Latina, who is studying math with our mutual Chinese friend. From these observations, just as it was with the upper level talking section, there was also a level of rapport and friendliness found within the space. The only difference was that predominantly white students (save for the occasional individual Student of Color) made up the upper level and Students of Color used the reference area in the main level.

The perception of racialized library spaces in Waidner-Spahr provides insight on notions of race and space in broader social contexts, as well as in Dickinson College's campus climate in particular. Structural diversity at a higher education institution does not automatically render inclusive spaces. The visible presence of diversity (or more nonwhite students or students whose socioeconomic backgrounds differ from wealthy white people) on college campuses does not address the existence of racialized spaces nor sentiments of discomfort based on racial composition of patrons. Racialized spaces act as environmental microaggressions, impacting the behaviors of students. Students of Color end up relegated to particular spaces and any space beyond those boundaries is white space. Nonwhite patrons in white spaces are susceptible to feelings of profiling or discomfort. Meanwhile, white students can be anywhere without any sort of discomfort as spatial expanses have conformed to the comfort and criterion of white decorum.

Beyond Waidner-Spahr being perceived as racially sectioned off, each floor, I learn, provides a different set of materials and resources which, in turn, generates a social environment that makes for no intermingling or cohesion between groups. The relationship between total racialized spaces and each floor providing different materials and resources reinforces the atmosphere where students cannot feel comfortable or obliged to engage with each other unless it's for conveniences such as printing documents, accessing academic resources, or studying in groups. It is a fragile ecosystem dependent on a lack of intermingling and a next to non-existent heterogenous mix of Dickinson patrons present in the different sections of the library.

Uneven Material and Resource Distribution

If one were to take a tour of the library, one would quickly realize that each floor and each section provides a different set of resources— information resources and/or materials and equipment. The official website of Waidner-Spahr provides a virtual tour of the library where one can see specifically the kind of resources and options made available in the library.³⁵ What strikes me about this kind of heterogenous mix of resources is how it contrasts with the fact that the social ecosystem of the library is racialized and less intermingled and heterogenous.

During one night of my observations, I had a conversation with two students and we shared the gist of our respective thesis projects. Without delving into my own observations, they pointed out how they think the space is racialized between floors. One of them notices that students (particularly white) from a specific business class study together at the desktop

³⁵ https://www.dickinson.edu/info/20391/library/2539/virtual_tour_of_the_library

computers by the reference area for a class. Her observation suggests a perception that this group's presence usually takes over the reference area space, but upon finishing their study sessions, they retreat back to their study spaces of which she points out is probably the upper level of the library. So, this group would normally never be found in the main level of the library where Students of Color are. However, when it is for a particular purpose such as studying for a particular class, they take over the space. The other student I spoke with echoed her friend's sentiment but she felt that there were always white students who only entered the reference area or the general main level for simple conveniences such as printing before retreating back to wherever they usually are in the library. In my own observations, I also noticed the practice of students who usually sit in the upper level section only descending to the main floor to print items or order a coffee at the library café before returning to their respective spots upstairs (Waidner-Spahr offers printing services and two printers are located on the main floor while one is on the lower level). On days of my observations, while sitting at the upper level, I've watched students sitting at a neighboring group table head downstairs and come back shortly thereafter with newly printed papers. While sitting in the reference area computers, I've noted how students enter the library, sit at one of the desktop computers nearby, print a document without ever taking off their backpack. Although this spatial practice is the norm that you would find in any library where patrons come and go and only access certain resources at their own convenience, I raise this point to discuss some implications.

Two students, unprompted, note their discomfort at watching students enter the space only for printing or only to socialize amongst themselves in that space, seemingly without any regard for the other students who have already been there. It speaks to a lack of integration and

social. I do not mean to push for segregated floors of students and resources. But for the most part, the interaction between people using different floors is sparse. The less-quiet sections of each floor have their own blocks of students. This lack of interaction among patrons of each floor begs the question as to whether this is reflective of the larger campus climate and interactions between people of different races on campus.

In conclusion, Waidner-Spahr consists of three floors separated into a quiet section and a talking section. Beyond the realization that certain sections in Waidner-Spahr are racialized, these sections are uneven in the kinds of materials and resources they offer. The uneven distribution of materials and resources coupled with the perception of racialized library space gives way to a whole social ecosystem where there is no true cohesion and little heterogenous interaction. Coupling this kind of social ecosystem with the perceived racialized library spaces, the meaning of Waidner-Spahr reads as a place where students in the upper level, for instance, are only sociable and interacting with students in the upper level. Students on the main level only interact with those on the main level. Waidner-Spahr is not just an academic space; it is a social space where communities and interactions occur but these communities are separate, disjointed, and exist away from each other. Essentially, they operate as segregated communities that do not feel comfortable intermingling. When intermingling does occur, it is for convenience's sake.

I find that socially (along racial lines) and materially, Waidner-Spahr is segregated where white students tend to their own sort of spaces and wanting to be among each other just as much as Students of Color do. The difference, I find, is that the latter's tendency to be in spaces with other Students of Color speaks to a narrow sense of comfort they feel; hence they gravitate to those few spaces of comfort. Those spaces are mainly on the main level or the lower level where

most resources are available such as desktop computers, a library café, the ability to borrow laptops. The upper level, where the available resources consist of book shelves and one large study room [the East Asian Studies room], is where predominantly white students tend to congregate. And as it is materially scarce compared to the lower levels, they only descend to said levels for conveniences and accessing these resources. They do not ever descend downstairs, I as well as other students find, to interact and engage with other students who are already in those spaces. This spatial maneuver— the accessing of spaces for their resources but never to interact — maintains a segregated space with physically and socially separate floors in the library. The maintenance of segregated spaces does comfort to elements of whiteness. White students' sense of comfort and freedom to roam the library and use the resources is total and expansive, all while Students of Color are in relegated spaces where their comfort is reduced and even threatened.

I have spent some time focusing on how the built environment, objects, and resources have shaped or informed the interactions in Waidner-Spahr. On one hand, the lack of interaction speaks to the fact it is an academic library where individual study is normal. However, the library is separated by a quiet and talking section. Since the latter is a social space, the lack of interaction between already racialized floors is a conundrum, demonstrating how the material elements of Waidner-Spahr and its interior social norms interact and create a racialized, segregated space. In the following section, I continue in my analysis of material objects in the library but I focus more on the social behaviors and interactions occurring within the space than the material elements in the space. Specifically, I illustrate how the social behaviors engaged by white student patrons uphold the culture of whiteness.

Presence of [whiteness]: The Elephant in the Room

Observing the behavior of patrons, decorations and displays on the walls, and interview responses, the culture of whiteness is discrete in its operations. Whiteness is the Elephant in the Room that everyone is aware of but refuses to acknowledge. Sometimes, whiteness operates in a manner that patrons are not aware of, thus subconsciously maintaining the culture of whiteness in the space. These aforementioned acts and visuals fit Gusa's criterion for WIP as well as Brook et al.'s list of white spatial mechanisms. In the designated talking sections, white patrons speak and behave loudly compared to non-white patrons. Even in quiet areas, I noted how mainly white patrons spoke or acted loudly but were never seen as disrupting the space. In the Reference area, I witnessed study groups where white students made loud or lewd jokes or would speak about private matters at a volume that I could hear from afar amidst everyone working at their respective spaces and minding their own business. Their behaviors best fit Gusa's white ascendancy. Artwork and spaces whose design derives from non-white origins are displayed in spaces perceived to be only occupied by white patrons or hung next to portraits of white men of the college. Despite the overwhelming presence of these practices, they go unnoticed and fail to be called out in its maintenance of whiteness and privileging of white people.

The volume at which people act or speak is a salient theme in my findings. Specifically, white patrons have the privilege to speak or interact at loud volumes and never be conceived as disrupting the space. Meanwhile, either spaces where Students of Color tend to be or Students of Color themselves were seen as gate-crashers, "too loud" according to some students I talked to in my observations. Students of Color with whom I spoke with during observations noted how sections where white people tended to be (white spaces) were loud yet those sections went unchallenged or were never asked to be quiet. The contrast in perception of volume illustrates the

privilege granted to white people by whiteness where their presence goes unchallenged no matter how much of the scene it takes up. Students of Color and the volume at which they behave, however, are perceived as a nuisance and their behavior has altered because of the instances where they have been asked to lower their voices.

I return to one of statements a student shared about the upper level talking section of that is a racialized white space: “I used to think the upstairs was the quiet section,” she tells me.³⁶ She, as well as I, would realize that the upper level talking section is social and loud, similar to how loud the talking section on the main floor can get.³⁷ The upper level talking section’s general volume competes with the main talking section. I noted instances where tables of different, predominantly white, groups seemed integrated and neighborly. Students from one table would cross and chat with other tables. Athletes would arrive and dab up (a friendly greeting in the form of handshakes, high-fives, quick hugs) fellow athletes sitting at different tables but in close proximity. On the day I sat upstairs and observed the talking area, a table of white male students, behind me spoke, laughed and joked around at a high volume even though I was sitting not far off. They would break into song and parody voices while they studied, and no one other than me turned their heads to look at them. There were other relatively social tables and I was the only one sitting alone, and none of them batted an eyelash at this table of men behind me. An hour later, as they were leaving together, they joked loudly and one of them

³⁶ I surmise that the assumption stems from the fact that students have shared with me how other students, particularly white students, avoid sitting in the main level talking section because it’s ‘so loud’ and then retreat upstairs or downstairs. However, with the acknowledgment of how racialized the library is, one can wonder whether they use volume as a means to rationalize sitting away from spaces where People of Color tend to be.

³⁷ One of the structural differences is that on the main floor is the Biblio, the library café surrounded by cushioned seating, round tables, couches, and high tables. The Biblio area is where students are arguably the loudest due to study groups meeting there or the general conversation occurring over purchasing from the Biblio.

touched the display case in the middle of the space while parodying the voice of what sounded like a museum security guard telling their friends to not touch the glass. From my seat upstairs, I could hear them continue their voice imitations as they exited through the library doors. These behaviors suggests feelings of superiority, nonchalance, and security in spaces, and they were not limited to the upper level.

I noted earlier that white students or groups of mixed racial compositions in the reference area would behave and speak loudly even if they were discussing personal. During one of my observations in the reference area by the computer desks, it was a little past dinner time. It was the week before midterm exams and spring break so typically more students come to the library to study and work than usual. I was studying with my friends at a study table to the side of the computer desks so I had a view of the computer area, the entrance of the library, and the study rooms. At the computer area, there was a trio of students— a Black man, a white man, a white woman— studying together. I only heard the voice of the white man though his words are still incoherent from where I am sitting. An hour later, another student, a white man, approached them and there was immediate recognition where the white man in the study group lifts his friend and spins him in a circle. They were catching up, joking around while the other two continued studying after greeting the white student who arrived. When I looked up from my notes to observe the group, they were joking but the one new visual was the sight of the white man who had just arrived, snickering with his friend while he pretends to hump one of the computer desks. The moment he notices me looking, he stops what he was doing but he laughs as he sits at a different desktop computer table. In the next hour, he speaks to the trio of students, loudly from where he sits. By the end of the hour, their conversation is loud and coherent for me to hear

almost everything they say. They discuss an upcoming party and exchange numbers with one of them saying the numbers loudly.

While there were other scenes happening around this hour of loud, intelligible conversations— this was at the same time as when a Brown Asian woman walked around without shoes, a Black woman spoke on the phone by her computer desk, and other students at their desks talking to their peers— I raise this particular observation between these white students to show how WIP privileges them. Meaning, they can speak about private business loudly, behave in a lewd manner for comedic effect, and behave against the designated purpose of the library spaces. WIP essentially gives white students a pass in how they behave because how they behave is normalized and accepted while non-white students' behaviors are measured by comparison. Non-white students are corrected, watched, or silenced. The failure to challenge these behaviors of WIP in conjunction with depicting the library spaces where Students of Color are as too loud or deviant demonstrates whiteness in its elusive form. This is powerful enough to marginalize Students of Color and the spaces in which they are found.

The relationship between race, whiteness, and volume in the library stems from a larger phenomenon where the volume at which People of Color is stigmatized and policed. In “The Politics Of Being Black And Loud,” Eternity Martis chronicles the ways in which Black people have been “profiled, policed, and even killed for the noise they make” (2016). Black noise is perceived as threatening, antagonistic, and abrasive. These perceptions are accepted in the public narrative, authorizing the shutdown of events that celebrate Black people, the policing of protests, the loss of jobs, and its existence in white spaces “that reflect white, middle-class

identity and values” (2016).³⁸ In “The Problematic Politics of Being a Loud Latina,” a contributor discusses the politics of noise at the intersection of race and gender. Latinas are stereotyped as “loud, overbearing, controlling, mothers or girlfriends” and are hypersexualized to be seen as sexually available (HipLatina 2018). The contributor, a Dominican woman, shares her experiences of muting herself in a room of white people lest she’s perceived as a loud Latina or an improper, unruly woman (2018). In a report on noise pollution, high levels of urban noise pollution are found in predominantly Black, Brown, and Asian neighborhoods, but the authors of the report admit to underestimating differences “given that many wealthy homeowners invest in soundproofing” (Bosker 2019). The overarching stereotyping of Black and Brown noise while overlooking white noise is prevalent in Waidner-Spahr library.

The volume of Students of Color is stigmatized. This stigma, in turn, rationalizes white students’ general avoidance of spaces where Students of Color tend to be even though white spaces are just as loud. Although I witness loud and social behavior among all students regardless of their racial background, only nonwhite students are profiled and stigmatized. I return to Lorrie, whose choice of where to sit in the library is guided by not wanting to be seen as too loud. Still, she recognizes to some extent that her identity as a white woman gives her a sort of pass to be in any space: “But in terms of my loudness habits, I like, obviously, I don’t wanna go where I’m gonna be looked at for being too loud,” she says, “so... then I’m not too

³⁸ The contradiction in policing Black and Brown noise while overlooking white noise is exemplified in Martis’ example of concerts. In Brooklyn, the Barclays Center, an indoor arena, received multiple noise complaints specifically surrounding hip-hop concerts (Martis 2016). An audiologist contributed by saying that hip-hop uses heavy bass but it is not a consistent bass so whether it is agitating is based on the person (2016). Furthermore, in terms of decibels, hip-hop is not louder than rock music but noise complaints hardly surface for the latter. Martis shares how one AC/DC concert was so loud, its vibrations were picked up by seismographs but it did not cause any agitation or incite as many complaints as the hip-hop concerts (or any kind of concert) by Black artists.

comfortable. But in terms of being a white female, I think anywhere in the library is fine for me to just... sit. I don't know." The stigmatization of her loudness habits, arguably, is the only discomfort Lorrie feels. Her concession to feeling generally comfortable in any space as a white woman shows how Students of Color deal with stigmatization along multiple fronts, including, but not limited to, their racial identity and noise levels.

Alongside volume and unchallenged deviant behavior, another element engaged in Waidner-Spaher is white estrangement. White estrangement is the act of white people physically and socially distancing from People of Color. When they do engage in cross-racial interaction, "they lack the understandings and tools to navigate," leading to rude, awkward, ignorant interactions (Gusa 2010: 479).

During one of my nights observing the main and lower levels of the library, I was waiting for a friend so we would head downstairs to study in the computer section of the circulation area, located in the quiet wing of the library. I was waiting to the side of the circulation desk, by the threshold of the entrance into the quiet section and one of the available school printers. There was a student, a white woman, printing in front of me. When she finished printing, she turned around but when she saw me standing there, she jumped, visibly surprised. I did not know her but I gave a small smile, silently apologizing for startling her. She froze when she saw me before she laughed and sauntered off with her eyes on the floor. A brief interaction between two strangers and, nevertheless, it was one of those instances where I cannot help but consider how race could be involved. I think of how she reacted to the sight of me, a visibly Brown woman who was standing by a wall and not invading anyone's personal space; it was awkward especially as she avoided my eyes even after I smiled. I surmise that this silent interaction

represents white estrangement: an awkward interaction between a white and nonwhite person. Perhaps she does have a network of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds or perhaps she was more so startled, but it is fair to extrapolate and consider how a probable lack of exposure to racial and ethnic diversity creates atmospheres such as this.

White estrangement occurs in different spaces on campus, of which I discuss further into my findings. The moment I shared with the white woman by the circulation desk is the only visible representation of white estrangement in Waidner-Spahr. However, white estrangement is perceptible when thinking about where students tend to sit in the library. White students physically distance themselves by sitting on a different floor from rest of the library which is far more racially mixed. There are visible white individuals and pockets of study groups throughout the main and lower levels of the library yet the upper level talking section serves as a pseudo base where white students can congregate as a means to physically and socially disconnect from the pluralities in the other parts of the library.

One of the final profound elements of whiteness that emerged in my work is the artwork hanging on the walls alongside the portraits of white men. One of the common features that Brook et al. identify as a reinforcement of whiteness in the academic library is works of art donated by wealthy white patrons that originate from non-white cultures and “and are not contextualized in terms of how they relate to the present population of the school” (2015: 258). On one hand, there are several art pieces that demonstrate the wealth of opportunities offered by Dickinson College (photos from study abroad experiences) or pieces that celebrate plurality (on the lower level of the library by the computer area, there is a rainbow flag signed by students in support of the LGBTQ+ community). On the other hand, I identified art pieces and a library

space of non-white origin that did not correspond to the racial makeup of the current patron population. These tokenized nonwhite cultures were displayed in white spaces as proof of diversity on campus.

On my last day of observations, I observed the Rabinowitz Reading Room (See Figure 1)— a space in the back of the upper level talking section behind the book shelves.³⁹ Along the back wall, there were a handful of art pieces hung at intervals. One of the pieces is a collage created by a French-American artist, Max Papart, donated by a couple. I did not note their names but I wrote their respective titles— “Dr. & Mrs.”⁴⁰ Next to the Papart piece is a large panoramic art piece titled “Untitled,” created by someone whose name sounds Japanese and who was a Prize Recipient. The donated collage pieces in Waidner-Spahr stand out in that they reinforce notions of whiteness and taste. I assume they contribute to the purpose of Waidner Spahr’s academic library space which is supposed to foster an intelligent, scholarly atmosphere. However, it is not explained why these pieces are important enough to be hung on the walls. Hence, one simply assumes that these pieces are important even though they most likely cater to a select few who have the capacity to understand the craft of the piece. By catering to a select few, it excludes the rest who may not understand the point of these pieces and inadvertently feel excluded or unrepresented in what they see on the walls. This reflects Brooks et al.’s argument that artwork either donated by wealthy individuals or of nonwhite origins in the academic library upholds whiteness as well as Sue et al.’s definition of environmental microaggressions where the

³⁹ This was during spring break and there was no one in the library except for the student workers and a friend who accompanied me during some of my observations. Hence, I only examine the space and interior layout for my last day of observations.

⁴⁰ The same Dr. and Mrs. Couple donated other pieces including another collage done by Papart that hangs on a wall on the main level by the Biblio Café.

built environment targets racial groups (2015: 258 & 2007: 273). Without contextualization, these art pieces near the Rabinowitz Reading Room do more to erase plurality and, instead, maintain the culture of whiteness. They forgo the use of the walls as a way to properly celebrate or showcase other cultural pieces that better reflect the student population.

I came across artwork that tokenizes diversity, inclusion, and plurality. Tokenism is the practice of institutions selecting a few individuals from a socially underrepresented group in order to appear to the larger world as diverse and inclusive (Wilks-Harper 2016). Although there is a multitude of consequences, I focus on how tokenism does the bare minimum and as a consequence ignores the complexities of diversity.

On the upper level in the talking section, as one walks to the back, there is a wall on which hangs two canvas frames part of the same art piece. The words ‘Share’ and ‘Reflect’ are written across the canvas and surrounded by colorful handprints. Its information plaque reads that the piece was created during a past event in support of campus inclusivity. On the surface, the inclusivity piece reflects the college’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Looking deeper, the piece serves as a veil that overshadows the reality of an aversion to plurality and a protection of whiteness in the racialized spaces. When I ask respondents about their campus experiences and its racial climate, Students of Color, in particular, mention prolonged moments of not belonging and isolation. Some describe college life as among the worst times of their lives verbatim, due to their racial identity or lack of exposure to the kind of academic and social environment Dickinson College provides.⁴¹ These narratives contrast what the library space and

⁴¹ All respondents mention that their high school campus facilities do not match what Dickinson College provides. Ketari shares how the only way to access his high school library was with the accompaniment of a library chaperone, but his high school did not have a chaperone. Nick did not have a school library. Fidel’s old high school

the specific inclusivity art piece attempts to convey about the heterogeneity of the campus— that it's cohesive. In my final theme, I share some of the thoughts respondents have about Dickinson College and while they say that the institution tried, there is a disconnect in that students are still impacted by the hostile racial campus. Thus, this inclusivity piece comes off as tacked on, a meager attempt that touts about diversity even though it is an empty piece, eliding the experiences of students who do not resonate with the intention of the piece. Furthermore, the art hangs on a wall in the upper level talking section— a white space— that Students of Color do not feel comfortable visiting. It is ironic that a piece showcasing diversity and inclusion is in a space where only a select few— white students— feel the most comfortable being. Here, we see how the space and its physical interior can be weaponized not only against Students of Color but white students who end up without exposure or immersion in genuine plurality and multiculturalism. Instead, they are surrounded by an interior design with haphazard art pieces that are out of touch with the exclusion and whiteness that permeates the campus.

I have provided a few pieces of evidence of how the physical, spatial layout of Waidner-Spahr protects the culture of whiteness and, therefore, authorizes the various behaviors of students in the library. Whiteness operates discretely, hanging on the walls of the library, echoing in the volume of students' voices, or reverberating in the distance created between white and nonwhite students. The noise level is similar in all talking sections of the library, regardless of which floor. However, the noise level of Students of Color is stigmatized and used as an excuse for others to physically distance and retreat to parts of the library. Additionally, the

is a rented out abandoned church. However, Lorrie, Nicola, and Davis mention that the racial composition of their hometowns and high schools parallel Dickinson's— predominantly white.

culture of whiteness normalizes the noise level of white patrons. I witnessed loud camaraderie, the exchange of personal information and private business, and lewd behavior by white students. They were all ignored and thereby accepted as normal, part of the library's social landscape. I personally experienced and observed white estrangement, the physical and social distance placed between white and nonwhite students, and when any hint of cross-racial interactions occurred, it was stilted, demonstrating the need for more work in fostering true inclusivity on campus. Finally, artwork throughout the library reifies whiteness and they are mindless props meant to yield a multicultural atmosphere. Yet, these pieces are out of touch, unaligned with the current campus context that is perceived by People of Color to be hostile.

Ultimately, these elements of the library's physical and social landscape reveal the multiple fronts whiteness takes in order to shape the experiences and presence of patrons, especially Students of Color. No matter how loud, visible, or obvious spatial elements of behaviors are, whiteness is never called out and is accepted into the normal operations of Waidner-Spahr Library. In the weaponization of space against the behavior of Students of Color while protecting whiteness, the spaces fostered by Students of Color are additionally undermined to seem temporary and unwanted while whiteness is deemed the permanent, universal standard.

Whiteness as Permanent vs. People of Color as Temporary

Descending the staircase located in the quiet section from the main level to the lower level, there is a large painted portrait of Robert A. Waidner that hangs on the wall above the stair landing. In the colored portrait, Waidner is dressed in academic regalia- a red robe with red lining. Spahr's portrait is not the only portrait of a white man from Dickinson in Waidner-Spahr.

There are more decorations in the library, including portraits, art pieces, and photographs that exudes whiteness. Their presence in the space confirms Brook et al.'s findings that reinforcements of whiteness in the academic library include representations, statues, portraits of men, which signals wealth and status (2015: 258). Furthermore, from my observations of Waidner-Spahr, there's a suggested notion that anything non-white is temporary. I extend Wilkins' argument that Black spaces are temporary by including the general population of People of Color (2007: 22).

There are representations of white men and whiteness found in nearly every area observed in Waidner-Spahr. In the lower level, walking from the computer area in the quiet section into the west wing of the library,

a photograph of Bill Durden, former President of the College, stands next to the statue of Benjamin Rush, founder of the college. The photo hangs on the wall as one crosses the threshold into the other section of the library. In the reference area by the computers, there is a large-scale photograph of Neil Weissman, Provost and Dean of the



College, reading a book with his grandchildren. On the upper level, a wall divides the open area and the bookstacks at the back of the floor. Several portraits and paintings hang on the wall including one of an alum from the class of 1924, a former Dickinson Trustee and a President of

the Board [of Trustees]. The portrait is roughly three feet in length. Further along that same wall, there is a larger portrait of another white man in academic robes. There is no associated plaque which indicates his title. Regardless, the portrait is positioned on the wall to face the walkway between bookshelves. As indicated in the photograph included, if one walks through the space, they cannot avoid the portrait.

There are reasons behind why these men are part of Waidner-Spahr; they have contributed to the college in one way or another. Their faces are seemingly permanent and as they are all white men, the culture of whiteness permeates the space. As some of them are without informational plaques, there is a general assumption that they are important and deserve to be on the walls. Brook et al. argue that these representations signal wealth, status, and whiteness. All the men observed are either wearing academic robes or well-kept suits; their status and image is what all should apparently aspire to—the status quo. However, as they exude whiteness, the portraits and photographs can have the opposite effect, intimidating or making no sense to patrons in the space.

Fidel mentions the paintings in the library, regarding them with confusion, nonchalance, and mild contempt. “I know there’s a lot of paintings of a bunch of old white dudes,” he says. “I have no idea, anything about them. I know that I guess they have something to do with Dickinson. There’s just a bunch of them all over. I know that.” When I ask him about his perceptions of the library and share that I personally tend to ignore them, he says, “I ignore them too. But I don’t understand why they’re there. They don’t interest me at all.” He then comments on the size of the paintings: “They’re just so big! That’s probably why they put them up because

Dickinson doesn't know what else to do with them." Still, Fidel shares how he uses the paintings to consider his own position being at Dickinson:

"Every time I look at them, I tell myself, I tell myself this. I'm like, 'That guy probably used to go to brothels.' And then I'm just like, 'Fuck that guy.' I don't know. I just tell myself- that's how I make- that's how I am content with the things that I do, you know[...]. Cause I'm like 'These guys did something crazy and they're being presented at Dickinson College.' And they probably were slave owners or went to brothels or something. I don't know. I don't know anything about them."

Fidel mentioning how he imagines these men deviating from how they have been portrayed— as frequenting brothels or owning enslaved people— raises some points. Some of the portraits and photos do serve as a reminder of the events swirling around the time some men were at the college. Some of the men in the portraits were part of the Dickinson community in the 19th and early 20th century. By comparison, Esther Popel was the first Black woman to graduate from the college, in 1919, over a century after the founding of the college. Neither Popel nor her daughter were allowed to live on campus and it was not until 2012 when former President Bill Durden made a formal apology for the treatment of Esther Popel's family (Bitts-Jackson 2013). Although Durden is generally revered for his impact on the community, the portrait of him standing next to Benjamin Rush does suggest the history of Dickinson founded by Rush, a slaveholder living in times where slavery was legal (Goldberg et al., n.d.). The several portraits of white men is an overwhelming presentation of whiteness and a silent reminder of Dickinson's history where non-white people were not welcome to live on campus let alone feel unsettled by the portraits of white men they do not share a racial affinity with. They continue to leave Students of Color feeling unsettled.

Unlike the fixtures of whiteness found in the representations of white people throughout Waidner-Spahr, any symbols, decorations, and spaces that are either made by non-white people or celebrating plurality are temporary, seemingly tacked on. By the reference area next to the two aisles of desktop computers, a space was cleared for a Black Comic-Con display, an exhibition of Black and/or LGBTQ+ superheroes and collectible items. I started my observation in February, during Black History Month. Specific organizations and academic departments curated events to celebrate and honor the impact Black people have made in history. I finished my observations about a month later when the display was moved and cleared, replaced by a display of students' photos. Accompanying the Comic-Con display was an opening reception where the student curators, students, faculty, and staff could look at the display and then have a Skype conference with an alum, a Black woman, who works on a television show with Black superheroes. It was a curious site because the Skype conference took place behind the DVD stacks where few could see. Although there are several sponsored school events that celebrate the history and impact of People of Color in more visible spaces in the library, this Comic-con event is the first of its kind at Dickinson and it was relegated to the back of the room. Its lack of visibility prevented a greater attendance and even though several college community members showed their support, one cannot help but wonder how much bigger this event could have been had it been much more visible to the ordinary Waidner-Spahr patron. These events, celebrating Blackness and plurality, finished almost as quickly as they came, replaced by the library's original furniture. It is almost as if they never happened.

Also honoring Black History Month, on the main level on the walkway between the talking and quiet section, display boards sharing the history of the Apollo Theater were set at

intervals.⁴² Patrons could pause and learn more about that piece of Black History. By the end of Black History month, the displays were taken down, making room for students of Dickinson's Sculpture class to display life-sized cardboard sculptures. Events and displays such as Black Comic-Con and the history of the Apollo are temporary fixtures. Meanwhile, the presence of whiteness has settled on the walls, remaining while any displays of plurality come and go when it is permissible, temporary, or convenient. White decorum cements into the foundation of the library, becoming the norm to which all practices and interior designs of the space adhere to white taste. White decorum is normalized. One does not need the identifier of 'white' because whiteness defines the space.

On the lower level, the Archives & Special Collections department frequently displays exhibits about a theme or a person. Early in the semester, before I conducted official observations, Archives displayed the portrait and history of Esther Popel. By the time I conducted observations, the Esther Popel display was replaced by a display on the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program at Dickinson. The photos were black and white and most of the people photographed were white Dickinson community members.

The culture of whiteness found in Waidner-Spahr uses decor and temporality to exist freely without calling too much attention to itself. The portrait and other memorabilia of white people are permanently embedded in the space, reminding patrons that part of Dickinson's legacy was the exclusion of and discrimination against People of Color, particularly Black people. Furthermore, where these portraits and memorabilia are permanent fixtures, any displays

⁴² The Apollo Theater was found in 1910 in Harlem, NYC. It was a showplace that welcomed Black people unlike other clubs in the city that were designated for whites only. It is a staple in Black History Month as it is a center which launched the careers of artists, comedians, performers, singers, and such.

that celebrates non-whiteness and plurality are temporary and seemingly replaceable. This confirms one part of Wilkins' argument that Black spaces are perceived as temporary and susceptible to being encroached upon. The implications of these practices beg the question of how this perception of temporariness extends to the Students of Color themselves. Does the fleeting celebration of plurality that comes once a year extend to students themselves feeling temporary? The culture of whiteness maintained discreetly through portraits and displays legitimizes the idea of whiteness as the Elephant in the Room. It is there, we see it, we do nothing about it. To do so would make us uncomfortable.

Waidner-Spahr as Repository for the Values of the larger Campus Climate

The racialization of Waidner-Spahr and its associated spatial practices— racialized spaces, environmental microaggressions against Students of Color, white comfort and estrangement, and empty representations of diversity— are not confined to the library space. I learn that perceptions of Waidner-Spahr Library extend to Dickinson College's campus, which is also seen as hostile and impactful against all students, but especially Students of Color. Although some respondents are fond of Dickinson College and most respondents find that the college does try to foster a diverse and inclusive space, there is a general sentiment that genuine diversity is still far from present on campus and that more work needs to be done.

Racialized Spaces on Campus:

Just as respondents saw certain spaces in the library as favorable or racialized, there are spots on campus seen and felt as sites of social and racial tension. Although students identify

several spaces on campus, I focus on one particular space that all respondents mention: the cushies. The cushies— the area with cushioned chairs on the main floor of the Holland Union Building (HUB) in front of the windows peering into the dining hall— is perceived as a racialized space. Respondents perceive the space as primarily used by People of Color or predominantly Black students. Some saw the cushies with curiosity and others with a sense of racial tension. For Gabriel, a first-year Latino-American student, the cushies are welcoming, particularly to Students of Color. Architecturally, he felt the cushies were a site of spectacle and conflict:

G: Yeah, so when I'm in the HUB, I see a space where it's welcoming for People of Color. I see People of Color feel comfortable to sit on the cushies and actively have a conversation with other People of Color. And I see a lot of conversations being held, and once I leave the HUB and enter the cafeteria, I see the [divide] between that space not being there no more.

S: And then do you notice anything architecturally about the space? Is there anything that stands out to you or not really?

G: Probably the windows that come from the cushies [into] the cafeteria. Because they're glass so it allows the people inside the caf to see the atmosphere that we take, that we obtain the space.

Gabriel does not elaborate on whether he finds the glass window as detrimental to his experience when sitting at the cushies. He only mentions that this architectural element can be utilized to raise awareness of the presence of People of Color in that space⁴³.

When I asked Fidel if he considers notions of race in the HUB, he was quick to mention the cushies:

Well, I think this one's pretty obvious. We all know, I feel like, the People of Color hang out at the cushies more than a bunch of. I mean I don't know. I wouldn't even say the People of Color. I would say, like, there's, like, a similar group of people and they happen to be primarily People of Color, I guess. And I

⁴³ As in the presence of People of Color who have historically and structurally been prevented from accessing spaces like Dickinson College.

hate using that term, but, like, I don't know. Um, people with darker pigmentation, I guess.

Although he tells me that he avoids thinking about race in his everyday life, Fidel perceives racialized spaces on campus is apparent to him. Later, Fidel tells me how prior to attending Dickinson, he never really thought about race, finding that this hometown in Southern California exposed him to diversity: "So I've always [...] never really paid attention to it [race]," he says, "But then when I got to Dickinson, there was like... [people] were like so primarily white that I felt like an outsider or something. It was weird. And it was like a different kind of, different kind of feeling, I guess." Feeling like a minority in a predominantly white campus, Fidel was thrust into perceiving and experiencing notions of race and he felt somewhat unprepared to adjust to this new environment. As he mentioned earlier how Waidner-Spahr is sectioned off by social parameters, he also notes this same separation in the HUB: "But then I do notice things from time to time," he says. "[In] the underground [the floor below the main level of the HUB], it just seems separated like the cushies seems like [where] people of darker pigmentation [sit] than downstairs [which] seems more like of [people with] lighter, fair-skin." So, Fidel notices how the cushies is just one spot of the total racialized structure that is the HUB. Again, as he compares how Waidner-Spahr is separated by sections and floors, there are other buildings on campus, in his opinion, that similar in being racially sectioned off by floor.

Racialized Spaces and white estrangement:

Among the white respondents, some look with curiosity, others look at the space as a site of empowerment, and some are pensive as a white person in a perceived space for Students of Color. Lorrie prefaces her statement by not wanting to assume one's race or ethnicity, "but at the

cushies,” she says, “they are like more Black and Hispanic people, like, chilling usually.” She does not expand more on that visual. Keep in mind, Lorrie does not think about race often in her daily life and even she notices how the space is social and racial. Nicola discusses the cushies in relation to the fact she would feel like an intruder in that space as a white person:

“I think [about race] both around the cushies and in the cafeteria. I think there are spaces that tend to be dominated by People of Color and I want to respect that because there are a lot of spaces especially on this campus that’s really white-dominant... um... where there are spaces like that[,] I want to be mindful of that so that I’m not kind of intruding. Um, but otherwise, I generally feel comfortable in just about any space.”

There are no explicit rules that designate that the cushies are only for Black and Brown people. Still, white students like Nicola or other members of the college community physically and socially remove themselves from the areas where Students of Color are. Despite Nicola’s mindful intentions, her actions speak to larger practices of estrangement that make for a less integrated setting. This, in turn, isolates and makes a spectacle out of the spaces where Students of Color are. Meanwhile, any space outside of where Students of Color are situated are guided by whiteness and white decorum, but it tends to go unchallenged or hardly mentioned as I illustrated through respondents’ perceptions white spaces in Waidner-Spahr.

Karen, a first-year who self-identifies as “African-American or Black,” is the only respondent to mention a ‘white cushies’ area. “I remember someone said, ‘You don’t sit at the cushies, you sit at the white cushies,’” she recalls, “So the table that’s next to the bathroom? They’re just like, ‘Oh, that’s not really where People of Color sit’ or whatever. Like I never really thought of it as that. It’s just some place that I sit.” Karen does not elaborate on how the

existence of the apparent white cushies makes her feel beyond simple nonchalance. However, it's important to consider what the perception of a white cushies area suggests.

Whether the idea of the white cushies is real or not, white students are seen as likely to sit away from the cushies where Students of Color tend to congregate. On one hand, this spatial maneuvering suggests that white students may not want to encroach on a space where Students of Color are if they share the same sentiment as Nicola. However, on the other hand, it could also be seen as white students avoiding Students of Color to avoid feelings of discomfort. This speaks to notions of white estrangement yet again where white students do not know how to genuinely engage in cross-racial interactions and, therefore, they socially and physically distance themselves from Students of Color. I raise Frazier's definition of whiteness—"whatever is easy, comfortable, accessible, and unchallenging for white people"—which informs the rationale behind the self-relegation of white students on college campuses (Spencer 2017). Rather than challenging themselves to be in unfamiliar atmospheres, white students end up relegating themselves, retreating to spaces that preserve white decorum and whiteness. The culture of whiteness permeates through the whole Dickinson College, maintaining racialized spaces as seen through the separation of students along racial lines in open, public social spaces. Protecting white students' comfort is rooted in not recognizing the racial inequalities integral to maintaining the culture of whiteness and this failure of recognition can render avoiding Students of Color and multiculturalism altogether.

Although Waidner-Spahr and other Dickinson College campus spaces share in the fact that they are racialized, I raise the two to illustrate their stark differences and what is at stake. The cushies are couched in a designated social setting where students go to take a break from

being students. It is a space meant for socializing and interaction. For Waidner-Spahr, the academic library's primary role is to be an academic space where patrons pursue learning and knowledge-building. What's at stake rests more in Waidner-Spahr as a critical institution that plays a role in the academic outcomes of patrons. If the comfort of Students of Color is reduced to minimums, then that lack of comfort translates into an inability to fully access all the resources and provisions of knowledge that Waidner-Spahr provides. Meanwhile, the comfort of white patrons faces no obstacles in accessing all which Waidner-Spahr or Dickinson College as a whole gives. Other parts of the campus are important to examine as well for the social consequences. However, more is at stake at Waidner-Spahr as we unlearn the idea of the library being a meaningless space. The consequences are multi-pronged— impacting some people's attitude towards themselves, their social interactions, and their academic pursuits. Students of color either leave their college careers without learning the full range of Waidner-Spahr or they realize it late into their time at Dickinson College. They experience the library within constraints, feeling they cannot maneuver everywhere in the library and access the distribution of people, resources, and information on each floor and section of Waidner-Spahr. This heavily impacts research and knowledge pursuits, opportunities to learn about a breadth of literature that is non-white and intersectional, and general comfort in simply existing in the space.

Campus-Wide white ascendancy

The activation of white ascendancy instills the belief that white people's ideas, thoughts, presence is universal and dominant. White ascendancy exists in the behaviors engaged in Waidner-Spahr library such as the noise levels of Students of Color being stigmatized even

though the noise levels of white students is just as loud but it is accepted into the social landscape of the space. This relationship— one that protects white students and stigmatizes Students of Color— persists in the larger campus, making for a hostile campus climate that means to undermine the voices of Students of Color and, in a way, silence them.

Gabriel shares his experience of going to a basketball game with his friends. Typical of any sporting event, there is loud cheering, excited fans, and the suspense of a competition. Gabriel and his friends went to support a friend who was on Dickinson’s basketball team and as his whole group, a group of Students of Color, cheered, they were met with pushback:

I went to a basketball game this fall and I was with three of my friends and they identify as Black men. They had other friends with them so we were kind of a group of POC [People of Color]. And we were clapping for a freshman cause he— we know him and he’s a Person of Color, he’s on the basketball team— and we were going to cheer him on and we had some white lady tell us that we needed to shut up cause we’re being quote unquote “too loud” for acting happy for Dickinson’s basketball team.

He does not specify whether the woman was a parent, faculty, or staff member of the college. All he recognizes, even into his first year at the college, is how his identity as a Latino in tandem with his friend group of Black people is challenged and seen as out of the ordinary. The ordinary in this case, it seems, is that white people can cheer and engage in high noise levels but when non-white individuals do the same, it is abnormal, unwanted, and “too loud.”

“So, I notice the sports event is a little bit occupied with white spaces and white alums and white parents, you know, who don’t know how to comply or don’t— like they automatically assume that we’re aggressive, violent, loud because of us cheering for the team.”

Gabriel’s experience is the only one specifically about noise levels and he was the only respondent to explicitly call out the double standard of noise levels between white and non-white

people. Although he is one individual among thousands at Dickinson College, he is not alone in this experience. I described earlier about how the noise levels of white students, however loud and disruptive it may be, will never be seen as loud and disruptive. Thus, it is fair to assume that the belief in the universality and dominance of white people's ideas and behaviors does not reside solely in the academic library. Rather, this element of white ascendancy transcends the walls of physical structures, shifting and relocating with the goal of undermining and silencing the ideas and behaviors of non-white students on Dickinson College's campus.

These accounts contradict the image that Dickinson College tries to portray to the public that it is a diverse and inclusive institution. While the college actively markets itself as progressive, diverse, and heterogenous, respondents feel that the college is passive in the actual follow-through and implementation of said progressive ideas. Consequently, this lack of follow-up upholds the culture of whiteness and emphasizes how white the campus seems.

“What does diversity mean anyway?” or Dickinson tries but...

In earlier findings, I note the use of artwork on the walls of Waidner-Spahr. These are meant to convey Dickinson's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. However, these pieces are not contextualized as to how they connect with the current population, and they are out of touch with the campus racial climate. These pieces of artwork become mindless props used as proof of diversity in the library in place of actual artwork, portraits, or displays of plurality. This spatial mechanism of advertising but not really practicing the tenets of diversity is pervasive on the larger campus as well. Yosso & Lopez identify how colleges tend to endorse diversity policies of convenience wherein policies do the bare minimum to appear diverse and inclusive to the public

(2010: 89). For instance, colleges will increase the size of racially underrepresented group on campus or portray diversity in their marketing and advertising campaigns. However, they are counterproductive in failing to provide equal access and opportunities to students of color and, therefore, foster a hostile racial campus climate (Yosso & Lopez 2010: 89). A few respondents recognize how Dickinson College engages in these diversity policies of convenience. The general sentiment is expressed as Dickinson College does try to endorse diversity and inclusivity but the effort essentially ends up overlooking critical elements that contribute to a hostile racial campus such as the lack of inclusive spaces or the failure to accommodate and provide opportunities for already underrepresented groups on campus.

When I ask Ketari his perspective on Dickinson's diversity and inclusion efforts, he says that Students of Color are taken for granted by the institution: "..._Students of Color are just seen as tokens in my opinion. Like, you know, if you ever look on a poster or some ad Dickinson is running, they always make sure they put Students of Color in there which is okay, right?" He ends his thought with a hint of sarcasm before he refers to an experience he had in his first year on campus:

"I remember we had this meeting at ATS [Anita Tuvin Schlecter Auditorium]. She [current President of the College] just... she would always use the word 'diversity,' and I just- I would always wonder what she meant by the word 'diversity.' Is it just how we look or our ideas and the backgrounds we come from? And I feel like they try very hard to diversify a space, but not inclusive at all."

Ketari notices the disconnect between Dickinson advertising itself as diverse and inclusive and the failure to accommodate Students of Color and their sense of belonging on campus. This failure of accommodation has impacted his own campus experience:

“Okay... so my first year was my worst year- the worst year of my life actually. (Laughs) Yeah, I hated Dickinson’s campus. Didn’t wanna be there. Felt like [an] outcast. Didn’t fit in in *any* space, all right? Because, you know, being Black, it kind of was difficult trying to navigate. And then when I would try to put myself out there as people suggested, it just really didn’t work for me. And I felt that I was putting on a show because this wasn’t really me. I thought I had to act different in certain spaces so that people would like me.”

As a way to try and reconcile with some of his poor experiences on campus, Ketari engages in what he calls his coping mechanisms to better his time on campus. His coping mechanisms include no longer going to the library or any social functions on campus; he no longer lives with roommates who were distractions for him and he now lives in a single dorm room. He is likely to be either in his dorm room or in an academic building, only “[s]tudying and... yeah, just studying.” So, Ketari’s coping mechanisms has largely reduced his Dickinson College experience solely to this academic work and biding his time before he graduates. His campus experience is conflated with his racial identity as a Black man, and it is largely defined by feelings of not belonging, of awkward interactions, of feeling isolated and uncomfortable in spaces. Here, we see how Dickinson College has failed a member of its community. As a result, a student’s integration into the campus has been impacted and reduced to nonexistent as he engages in coping mechanisms to simply get him through his career at Dickinson. In lieu of Dickinson College designing its campus and policies to better accommodate Students of Color, the college relies on bare minimum tokenism practices which ultimately neglects parts of its student population and leads to experiences such as Ketari’s.

Nick also criticizes Dickinson College’s lack of commitment to diversity and inclusion: “I always question the fact that I know Dickinson says we’re diverse and inclusive but they don’t create more inclusive spaces.” He mentions that there are few spaces and centers where Students

of Color are actually be invited, and of those spaces, they are not always welcoming hence there is little to no spaces for Students of Color to flock: “I feel like at Dickinson, there should be - how do I say this- but there’s a Latinx house, the X house also but aside from those, there’s not, like, open spaces for Students of Color to go to.” The Latinx and X house are on-campus residents on Dickinson College’s campus whose function is to celebrate multiculturalism and specifically be as safe of a space for Latinx and Black students respectively. These houses and the cushies are the only recognized spaces where Students of Color can go to without feeling sentiments of discomfort, a lack of belonging, and isolation. These narratives illustrate that a) the feeling of not being welcome in certain spaces is not exclusive to Waidner-Spahr and b) there are not many spaces on campus where Students of Color can freely exist without their existence and racial identity being questioned or stigmatized. I argue that a lack of inclusive spaces is a form of weaponizing space to exclude or stigmatize groups of people along racial lines. As Nick and Ketari mention, the lack of inclusive spaces has affected their college experiences. Nick struggles to even into his final years on campus, and Ketari decides not to socially integrate onto campus as a means to cope and survive.

Paige is more explicit in her perspective on Dickinson College’s diversity and inclusion efforts. Her first year at Dickinson, she describes, has not been overly negative. Instead, her campus experience insofar has been neutral. However, she hesitates to call Dickinson College her second home. When thinking about Dickinson College in general, she says that the institution has tried, “but the vibe that they give off is very white-dominated.” Like Nick and Ketari, Paige’s critique commends Dickinson College for trying at the least but further reinforces how the institution fails to follow through in accommodating Students of Color who are still

underrepresented at a predominantly white institution. These trials and efforts, inadvertently, maintains the omnipresent culture of whiteness persistent on campus.

The narratives of Dickinson College students as well as my own observations illustrate how Waidner-Spahr is an active social space, rich in norms and values that inform patrons' experiences. Of these norms and values, some are racial and hostile against groups of people, specifically patrons of color who are predominantly students. It does not matter whether they are intentional or not. These students carry their experiences beyond the threshold of the library and into other spaces on campus. It is time to consider deeply what is at stake for these individuals and how it affects multiple spheres of their lives.

IMPLICATIONS

When someone lives as a minority, they experience the world differently than those of us who live in the majority. We may occupy the same physical space, but we don't occupy the same psychic space.

-Jennifer Granholm

The reality we live in is selected by our conceptual definitions. You and I may be in the same physical space, but each of us will see it as entirely different.

-Ram Dass

The library cannot be perceived the same way anymore. Academic libraries, in particular, house a wealth of meaning beyond their available resources. Beyond the ordinary patron knowing how to borrow a book, access an online web article, or even find an ideal study spot, they should know the social parameters which inform the consensus of the space. Of these social parameters, race is the most profound and dominant force. Dickinson College's Waidner-Spahr Library, in its foundation, history, and current state, is overrun by notions of race and the culture of whiteness. These mere notions take form in the built environment and the behaviors that student patrons engage which may be disruptive, racial, comfortable, or self-preserving.

The relationship between the built environment, the physical space, and the behaviors couched in that space reflect Lefebvre's spatial triad. The triad consists of the way space is intentionally designed by administrative stakeholders, the practices that conform to that space, and the clandestine acts that individuals engage in they attach their own meanings to that space (Lefebvre 1991: 33). Waidner-Spahr is a curious site since not only did the official plans of the college (and, therefore, the library as a related institution) designate access only for white people for over a century, but the spatial practices in the library suggest an atmosphere that is welcoming to white students and conditional to Students of Color. As I elaborate, Students of Color can access Waidner-Spahr comfortably on the condition that they are a) relegated to certain spaces in the library, and any sort of transgression beyond the made-up boundaries is susceptible to stigmatization and discomfort b) isolated from interacting with other white students unless it is for practical, convenient purposes c) silent or not making any noise that causes disruption and d) condoning whatever acts white students engage in and normalizing their behaviors and e) normalizing the culture of whiteness.

Waidner-Spahr is divided into floors and sections architecturally and racially. From my respondents' perceptions and my own observations, the upper level talking section is a predominantly white space, and the reference commons computer area is where mostly Students of Color are situated. On the days when I sat upstairs, I was the only Student of Color in the open area for a whole day. White students felt comfortable upstairs and in the reference area, too, but used the latter only for convenience. If white students did socialize, it was only among each other and/or in a different space, away from other Students of Color, making for an environment of segregated pockets of communities. Some respondents said that white student athletes make up

the majority upstairs, but that wanes in significance when one understands that the culture of whiteness— an ideology that protects white people’s comfort en masse— grants white students regardless of their student affiliation the comfort of being upstairs in a white space. On the other side of the coin, Students of Color are in spaces perhaps because there are few areas where they can feel comfortable and unchallenged because of their racial identity. In a way, white students sit where they want and congregate among each other because they want to, and Students of Color sit where they are and congregate among each other because they *have* to. Respondents who identify as Students of Color have admitted that they sit in certain spaces or avoid upstairs because they feel uncomfortable with the overwhelming white library spaces. At stake in the maintenance of whiteness and the presence of socially racialized spaces is the uneven difference in experiences of college students. This spatial practice and perception actively deters students from sitting in particular library spaces, or in even entering the library.⁴⁴ Within these whole and separate environments, there are specific material elements and miscellaneous items that aid in the maintenance of whiteness and hostility against Students of Color.

Elements of Waidner-Spahr’s environment, specifically its artwork, displays, and portraits, uphold whiteness while burdening the presence and spaces of People of Color. Throughout the library, there are portraits of white people, mainly white men, in formal regalia and associated plaques that indicate some level of contribution to the college. Not only do they exude status and significance, but they also signal whiteness and their permanence in the space. Beyond their informational plaques that show their titles and relationship to Dickinson, they

⁴⁴ Paige and Fidel say they do not go into the library anymore unless they have to, or if they are with friends. Ketari admits that he no longer goes to the library at all, determining that the space is not right for him, that he does not fit.

serve no real purpose for the student patrons and even one respondent, Fidel, criticizes their lack of value. Furthermore, some of these portraits of men are silent reminders of the history of Dickinson. The founder, who has a statue on campus, was a slaveholder. The College only admitted nonwhite individuals a century after its founding. These material objects convey a double meaning of significance and exclusion, better described as environmental microaggressions that target nonwhite people. Though I am unsure as to how long these portraits have remained on the walls, they appear as permanent fixtures that patrons should be used to observing. Meanwhile, any material displays that celebrate plurality, including portraits of People of Color, are temporary—easily moved and replaced, suggesting that their existence is temporary and patrons need not get used to their presence. Portraits are more explicit as representations of whiteness but even artwork itself can serve as reinforcements of racialized spaces and whiteness. Pieces of artwork in the library that were either of nonwhite origins or donated by wealthy members of the Dickinson community suggest that these pieces were merely chosen as proof that the institution is diverse and inclusive. Without contextualization as to how they contribute to the space or the current patron population, they are placeholders for artwork and displays that could better celebrate or encourage plurality. Thus, seemingly haphazard pieces of artwork are, in the culture of whiteness, complicit in making a space hostile and exclusionary.

In these revelations, we, as critical stakeholders in the institution, should reexamine Waidner-Spahr Library as an active physical space. In doing so, the reversal of the marginalizing and hostile environment is far more plausible. Waidner-Spahr, however, is just one piece of critical infrastructure that makes up a college campus.

The practices and visuals described in this thesis conform to a culture of whiteness. There are racialized spaces on campus where white people tend to flock to and where People of Color go, but the latter spaces are stigmatized and even avoided by white people. There are experiences where students do not feel comfortable in a space due to their race (their non-whiteness) to the point they silence themselves, reduce the spaces they enter, and avoid incidents that make them feel they are undeserving of the (few) spaces they do occupy on the college campus. The built environment and the material world create uneven college campus experiences that make some feel superior and normal while others feel unwanted and undeserving. I believe that this does not need to remain the norm. Looking ahead, I make some recommendations that can go a long way in combating hostile environmental microaggressions, the culture of whiteness, and the idea that People of Color are inferior.

I end with the key takeaways of my research pursuit: First, space is indeed social wherein all sorts of ideologies and meaning can be imposed. Second, though ostensibly an academic space, the academic library is a prime social space that houses many meanings. The one that dominates is race and the culture of whiteness. As a result, behaviors and aesthetics in the space conform to whiteness— white students' comfort, taste, authority, and ideology. Third, in this upholding of whiteness as a dominant system, notions and seemingly miscellaneous objects can have lasting impacts on people's lives and perceptions of themselves. Finally, whiteness operates discretely as it takes root and shape in the built social landscape. Though it is plausible to recognize and even address it, there is a failure to call out whiteness. Thus, whiteness is the elephant in the room, looming large and boisterous but never called out due to fears of discomfort and relinquishing the powers and benefits systematically granted to white people.

I argue that in order to reverse some of the materializations deriving from my takeaways, changes need to occur in the physical and social microcosm that is Waidner-Spahr Library and Dickinson College at large. Concerning the interior design of Waidner-Spahr, more steps can be made to truly celebrate diversity in all its facets. The library can immortalize the faces, lives, works of People of Color who have contributed to the college just as much as the array of white men in the portraits. People like Esther Popel-Shaw, the first Black woman to graduate from Dickinson College and who became a prominent writer and Civil Rights activist, or Maureen Newton-Hayes and Judith Rogers, the first Black women permitted to live on campus. Rather than giving the achievements of People of Color temporary spotlights that only come during certain months out of the year, there are several opportunities to highlight their lives and livelihoods that would better achieve the goals of diversity and equity. This is but one step toward genuine inclusivity in college spaces, which historically have barred the entrance and presence of nonwhite people. As I have established that the built environment can affect the behaviors and perceptions of patrons, these changes can generate new social environments and behaviors, behaviors of which would not be segregated and marginalizing. As opposed to environmental aggressions that target racial groups, there is power in representations and acknowledging the existence of underrepresented people. They are sources of empowerment and symbols that signal their inclusion into a previously exclusionary space.

Changes to the built environment are not specific to Waidner-Spahr. Dickinson College as an institution holds a responsibility in practicing genuine plurality. I extend my recommendations to the campus as a whole. It is an arguably easy feat to provide more inclusive spaces by displaying the faces, works, and lives of People of Color from diverse backgrounds as

permanent fixtures. To have these visuals is to show how Dickinson College, indeed, values the existence of those who are not white. Still, the built environment is not solely responsible in reversing the culture of Waidner-Spahr. Inner acknowledgment and an addressing of the elephant in the room that is whiteness is crucial.

CONCLUSION

“The struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian--our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.”

–Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

It is imperative that we reveal whiteness in whatever way it materializes. By acknowledging the presence of whiteness and its antagonistic, hostile, exclusionary nature, we can reexamine our imaginings of people, the human condition, and the spaces we occupy. As I have shown, people end up valuing whiteness for a variety of reasons, many of which are unrecognized. All, including myself, are complicit in maintaining whiteness. Yet, there is a human agency found in each of us that can address and combat whiteness. In my introduction, I write that speaking on whiteness is a difficult feat, but it is not impossible. Calling out, speaking on whiteness, means dismantling that which we've been used to believing and valuing. It means acknowledging and eventually relinquishing the privileges we may benefit from that harm others- specifically Black, Brown and Indigenous people who have never benefitted from the system of whiteness. By reexamining our values and complacency in whiteness as a system, we see that its breakdown requires a mental, inner pursuit too. Again, we have seen how mere notions and ideas can render environments and strong social norms. Changing the built environment and spatial layout is part of the potential solution, but it follows that before those

changes can come into fruition, it is imperative to revisit what we know or are used to knowing, and that requires constant revisiting. For self-awareness does not occur in just one instance. It is a lifelong pursuit if we desire to live in spaces where diversity and multiculturalism exist.

Although I was limited in my research due to time constraints, a global pandemic, and gaps in methodology, I offer some recommendations for future research. I was able to interview nine students and while they provided a wealth of unique experiences, I implore future researchers to continue listening to narratives and hearing the voices of those most immersed in and impacted by the phenomena of weaponized space. In my findings, I focused on how the spaces and presence of Students of Color is encroached upon. Looking ahead, there should be an investigation of the ways Students of Color push back against this said encroachment. Another critical aspect is librarianship and the range of people who work and maintain the library as an institution. Future research can look towards the role librarians, library staff, and archivists play in the academic library and Waidner-Spahr specifically. The library and librarianship are responsible in speaking on whiteness and providing a more equitable space. Such practices can manifest through a more racially diverse range of hired professionals, for instance, or a better advertising of the fact that Waidner-Spahr's staff possess the knowledge to provide relevant resources and literature that are from non-western and non-white origins. Finally, as much as the focus on race has provided revelations about the built environment, I implore more intersectional approaches that explore the built environment at the crux of race, gender, sexuality, class, culture, language, and more. Again, I write to raise the platform of colonized, Black, Brown, Indigenous people, whether that is inside or outside of academia. Through these recommendations, I hope to facilitate a wider space of opportunity for unheard voices to speak.

I named this research as a personal endeavor towards theory, healing, and liberation. I have learned that this endeavor is far from over, and that it is not an individual pursuit either. The solution and work towards theory, healing, and liberation needs to be peopled, rooted in the work of many rather than just one. A problem affecting a community requires a community response. I lay out this synthesis of my work with the understanding that there is much still to be done.

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Appendix A – Original set of interview questions and final set interview questions⁴⁵

Original set of interview questions:

INTRODUCTION

1. Where is home for you? Could you define the kind of setting/culture of your neighborhood?
2. What is your gender orientation?
3. How do you racially and/or ethnically identify?
4. What year are you? What is your major/minor or intended major/minor?

5. CAMPUS QUESTIONS

6. There are times and instances where the average person considers their racial identity. Do you consider your own racial identity throughout your day? If so, how often?
7. I'm going to give some examples of space on campus. Could you tell me if you ever feel that you must consider your racial identity in those spaces? If so what do you consider or why?
 - a. The HUB
 - b. The classroom
 - c. The academic quad
 - d. Morgan Field
 - e. The gym
 - f. The Kline Sports learning center
 - g. The dining hall + other eating spaces
 - h. The library

8. LIBRARY

9. Are you familiar with most of the library's available resources?
 - a. What do you use the library for?

⁴⁵ As the interviews were semi-structured, answers varied as well as questions. By the end of my ninth interview, I included more questions.

- b. How often do you use and visit the library?
 - c. What times do you normally visit the library?
10. Please walk me through your usual route when you enter the library.
- a. What do you look for when you enter?
 - b. Do you notice anything when you walk through?
11. Do you feel comfortable sitting anywhere in the library?
- a. Do you sit by yourself in the library?

12. CAMPUS QUESTIONS + CLOSING

13. [Introduce Dickinson's Diversity Initiatives] What are your thoughts on Dickinson College's Diversity and Inclusion efforts?
14. How would you describe your campus experience insofar?
15. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns for me that I didn't address?

Final set of interview questions:

INTRODUCTION

1. Where is home for you? Could you define the kind of setting/culture of your neighborhood?
2. What is your gender orientation?
3. How do you racially and/or ethnically identify?
4. What year are you? What is your major/minor or intended major/minor?

5. CAMPUS QUESTIONS

6. Did you visit/get a tour of Dickinson before you enrolled? If so, what did you notice about the space? If not, what drew you to choosing Dickinson?
 - a. How similar was Dickinson to your high school campus or facilities?
7. There are times and instances where the average person considers their racial identity. Do you consider your own racial identity throughout your day? If so, how often?
8. I'm going to give some examples of space on campus. Could you tell me if you ever feel that you must consider your racial identity in those spaces? If so what do you consider or why? What stands out or comes to mind whether in terms of race or architecture?
 - a. The HUB
 - b. The classroom
 - c. The academic quad
 - d. Morgan Field
 - e. Residence halls/Housing
 - f. The gym/Kline Sports learning center
 - g. The Wellness center
 - h. Sporting events
 - i. Campus events
 - j. The dining hall + other eating spaces
 - k. The library

9. LIBRARY

10. Are you familiar with most of the library's available resources?
 - a. What do you use the library for?
 - b. Do you sit by yourself in the library?
 - c. How often do you use and visit the library?
 - d. What times do you normally visit the library?
11. Please walk me through your usual route when you enter the library.
 - a. What do you look for when you enter?
 - b. Do you notice anything when you walk through?
12. Do you feel comfortable sitting anywhere in the library?

13. CAMPUS QUESTIONS + CLOSING

14. [Introduce Dickinson's Diversity Initiatives] What are your thoughts on Dickinson College's Diversity and Inclusion efforts?
15. How would you describe your campus experience insofar?
16. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns for me that I didn't address?

Appendix B – Consent form

Dickinson

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space

provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sierra Climaco, a student in the Department of Sociology at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. The faculty supervisor for this study is Professor Dan Schubert, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Dickinson College.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is examining if and how race and whiteness- the ideology which grants tangible privileges to those categorized as ‘white’ - manifests within Dickinson College’s Waidner-Spahr Library. The purpose of this study will seek out answers to such questions: What are the racial formations that occur within the academic library? How does whiteness permeate the space and spatial practices within the academic library? What keeps whiteness as invisible, authoritative, and normal in the academic library? How do spatial practices in the Academic library contribute to or influence college campus experiences of undergraduate college students of different races?

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, the following will happen

1. Primary investigator will send a recruitment email to respondent if they have been randomly selected for interview. (Respondents will be randomly picked through a Listserv or list of student’s email addresses provided by the college)
2. Upon agreement to participate, primary investigator and respondent will agree to meet at agreed location, primarily the study rooms in the academic library or any location preferred by respondent.
3. Primary investigator will share the aim of the research as well as the procedures and rights granted to the respondent including the right to ask questions, stop the interview, or withdraw at any moment.
4. Primary investigator will audio record the interview for transcription purposes and make respondent aware of what they will do with the audio recordings and transcriptions in terms of ensuring of protecting respondent’s identity and location of securing data and other research materials.
5. Interview will take between thirty minutes to an hour. Primary investigator will ask respondent about their usage of the library among other facilities and amenities provided by the college.
6. Following the interview, Primary investigator will thank respondent and remind them again of their rights, assuring that their identity will be protected. Primary investigator will also provide their contact information should respondent have any questions.

7. Upon completion of the research, all raw research materials and data collection will be destroyed except for consent forms.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve one interview session that will take roughly forty-five minutes to an hour. The study will take place in the study rooms made available and reserved by the student investigator within the College's Academic library

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

We do not anticipate any risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible benefits to others include understanding and acknowledging acts of racial bias, discrimination, and microaggressions that may exist not only in higher education spaces but within types of infrastructure including the public library and the college campus.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report we publish, we will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, we will provide you an alias as chosen by yourself or through an automated random name generator from the Internet. All audio recordings, transcriptions, and data collection will be stored on a password-protected laptop owned by the student investigator. Should the laptop not be on their person, the laptop will be stored in the dorm room of the student investigator. Transcriptions will be sure to conceal and bracket any specific information that may only be applicable to minority populations on campus such as associated clubs or specific classes that you are a part of among other kinds of information. All identifiable data including transcriptions and data collection will be destroyed following the completion of the research investigation. Consent forms will be kept for three years following the completion of the research as required by IRB.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty in addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Sierra Climaco at 3106346769 or climacom@dickinson.edu . If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Dickinson College Institutional Review Board at (717) 245-1902. Additional contact information is available at: http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/78/institutional_review_board

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

[IRB Rev. 02/12/18; modified from forms provided by Fairfield University]

Appendix C: Template of recruitment email sent to randomly selected participants

Dear [NAME],

My name is Sierra Climaco. I am a Sociology Major in my fourth year pursuing a Senior Thesis. In my research, I am to gauge the experiences of students' within Waidner-Spahr Library. The name of my research thesis is: "Spatial Profiling: Exploring Racial Formations and the Domination of Whiteness within the Academic library."

I am emailing because you have been randomly chosen to participate in an interview session with me as a student investigator. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Inclusivity provided me with a partial list of students' names and email addresses and your name was randomly picked in the sampling process. All participants are Dickinson College Students between the ages of 18 and 22. I will be asking you a series of questions at a location of your choosing regarding your use or lack of use of the library. Beyond your use of the library, I would also be asking you questions about your use of the college campus' available spaces. I will provide full confidentiality in the interview and data collection process as well as a consent form listing the procedures of my research and your rights as an interviewee including the right to withdraw.

If you agree to be interviewed, please respond back to this email at climacom@dickinson.edu or reach me via phone at (310) 634 6769. Upon confirmation, we can figure out a time and space that works for you.

Thank you for your consideration!

Best,

Appendix D: Template of recruitment email sent out to all Posse scholars

Dear [Name],

My name is Sierra Climaco. I am a Sociology Major in my fourth year pursuing a Senior Thesis. In my research, I am to gauge the experiences of students' experiences within Waidner-Spahr Library. The name of my research thesis is: "Spatial Profiling: Exploring Racial Formations and the Domination of whiteness within the Academic library." I am emailing because you have been randomly chosen to participate in an interview session with me as a student investigator. All participants are Dickinson College Students between the ages of 18 and 22.

I will be asking you a series of questions at a location of your choosing regarding your use or lack of use of the library. Beyond your use of the library, I would also be asking you questions about your use of the college campus' available spaces.

I will provide full confidentiality in the interview and data collection process as well as a consent form listing the procedures of my research and your rights as an interviewee including the right to withdraw.

If you agree to be interviewed, please respond back to this email at climacom@dickinson.edu or reach me via phone at (310)*****

Sincerely,
Sierra Climaco