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**A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE REPUBLICAN MISCONDUCT
AT ONE HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTION**

By

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BA, Saint Anselm College, 2010

MAT, University of Maine, 2014

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(in Interdisciplinary Studies)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

December 2023

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE GRADUATE SCHOOL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The University of Maine recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of Penobscot people, where issues of water and territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations— the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac—through kinship, alliances, and diplomacy. The University also recognizes that the Penobscot Nation and the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.

**A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE
REPUBLICAN MISCONDUCT AT
ONE HISTORICALLY WHITE
INSTITUTION**

By Sarah J.V. Dyer

Dissertation Advisors:

Dr. Julie DellaMattera

Dr. Justine Andreu-Darling

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(in Interdisciplinary Studies)
December 2023

This study examined one instance of College Republicans sharing harmful rhetoric that aligns with the white power movement (WPM). Through a restorative justice (RJ) framework, the College Republican's rhetoric was found to be harmful to the University of Maine community. In this study, the University of Maine relied exclusively on legal approaches that disenfranchised those involved in the harm as well as the larger community.

Ultimately, reliance on a legal approach ignored the needs of those harmed. The legal approach to harm often fixates on policies and laws that wait for harm to happen rather than the restorative justice approach, which aims to prevent harm in the first place.

In this study, I found that the College Republicans' rhetoric aligns with the white power movement (WPM), and it harmed the campus community. Additionally, I found that the University of Maine was limited by the legal approach, which left them disempowered to stop the harm or meet the needs of those affected.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, especially in the United States, tensions between race and politics have intersected on college campuses, where passionate young people have pushed for social change (Alford, 2020; Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Johnson, 2019; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). In recent times, however, these tensions have increased (Bauman, 2018; Gantt Shafer, 2017) and become more volatile (Johnson, 2019). The tension on campus may spread to broader contexts when an impassioned debate is shared to mass media and social media (Belew, 2018; Kidder, 2017). The tension surrounding free speech in a politically and racially polarized society sometimes results in broad conflict online, in the media, and even violence on some campuses and beyond (Bauman, 2018; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Gantt Shafer, 2017; Johnson, 2019). Scholars have found U.S. society and higher education campuses influence each other (Cabrera et al., 2016; Kidder, 2017; Patton et al., 2016; Squire, 2017; Squire et al., 2019).

One nexus of racial and political tension between higher education and U.S. society has been found in some College Republican groups (Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2015, 2017; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Additionally, scholars have documented that white power movement (WPM) rhetoric has been normalized by some College Republican groups on higher education campuses (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020), yet the WPM is not being identified by higher education researchers or administrators as a problem in some College Republican organizations (Johnson, 2019).

The Southern Poverty Law Center has released numerous warnings about extremism taking root on college campuses (Center, 2017; Corke, 2022; Gais & Hayden, 2022). The sharing of WPM propaganda by College Republicans on campus and in social media has been found to

normalize WPM propaganda in U.S. society (Belew, 2018). Scholars have also found that calling the behavior of the College Republicans racist or bigoted has, in some instances, garnered more support for the white power movement (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

The Southern Poverty Law Center has found that what I refer to in this study as the white power movement is growing (Center, 2017; Corke, 2022; Gais & Hayden, 2022). The adoption of the WPM poses threats to fundamental rights in the United States but also poses the threat of increased terrorism (Belew, 2018, 2021; Center, 2017; Corke, 2022; Gais & Hayden, 2022). To be clear, this is not a concern over political correctness but threats of the reinstitutionalization of hate and violent extremism.

One of the only studies to examine a College Republicans' event found that the legal system and institutional policies enabled, and protected events perceived as harmful by many community members (Johnson, 2019). In Johnson's study, the College Republican-hosted event turned violent, and campus members belonging to the LGBTQ+ community were attacked. In a separate instance at the same event, a man protesting the College Republicans' event was shot. When he asked for a restorative process, his request was denied because the defense attorney felt it would compromise his client in the legal system. Johnson (2019) alluded to the way our institutional policies and legal systems may facilitate rather than prevent harm.

Furthermore, these same laws and policies may pose obstacles when seeking healing. This study will contribute to Johnson's assertion by analyzing communication regarding College Republican misconduct and the administrative approach to the misconduct that was widely viewed as harmful by the campus community and justified by others.

During the introduction and literature review, I will refer to the white power movement (WPM) to conceptualize the research that increasingly shows a connection between the WPM

and some College Republicans. However, the research on the WPM demonstrates that the more we try to label the rhetoric as racist, white supremacist, or bigoted, the more the WPM grows due to backlash (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Therefore, I will review the literature on the WPM and analyze the rhetoric of the College Republicans in relation to the WPM, but I will refer to the behavior of the College Republicans as misconduct.

Significance of the Study

When College Republicans engage in misconduct (i.e., racist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-immigrant, and antisemitic speech and activities), it has the potential to cause harm to people on campus and the broader community. This type of rhetoric can be disruptive to a college campus, often acting against the purported diversity, equity, and inclusion mission or goals of an institution (Johnson, 2019). Sometimes, students, faculty, and staff react to the misconduct with counter activities such as discussions, counter-protests, marches, or calls to action from the administration (Johnson, 2019).

These potentially controversial tides on campus create a tumultuous environment (Belew, 2018). The controversy gains more momentum as social media and mass media pick up stories of conflict on campus (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Administrators then try to respond to the College Republican behavior, calm concerns of safety and inclusion on campus, and respond to societal inquiries with limited options for each (Johnson, 2019).

Finally, once the campus controversy is propelled into U.S. society, the college campus is often disrupted further, and more controversy may be inserted into U.S. society (Belew, 2018). Even calls for disciplining College Republicans have been shown to cause more controversy (Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019). Therefore, there are significant reports and some scholarship to

highlight that traditional approaches are not working, but there is little clarity about why it is not working. Part of the reason clarity is lacking is because decision-making and conduct issues are traditionally confidential. Therefore, there is sparse scholarship to examine higher education administrators' decision-making processes. Rather, scholars are usually left to analyze only the limited statement(s) sent to the campus community (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). In this study, many senior administrators' emails were made public. The publishing of these emails under the Freedom of Access Act is an ideal opportunity to understand and illuminate the decision-making process of the University of Maine administration in relation to College Republican misconduct.

The rhetoric of the College Republicans is significant because it potentially results in controversy and disruption on a college campus, U.S. society, and ultimately, the normalization of bigoted propaganda in both places (Miller-Idriss, 2020). In sum, the misconduct of College Republicans is viewed and experienced as harmful by many (Johnson, 2019; Tanner, 2020). Although there has been much discussion of how individuals view the behavior as harmful, there is little research examining the impact of the misconduct.

Likewise, the way that College Republican misconduct has been handled institutionally is largely from a stance of what is permissible under the law and institutional policies. The seemingly secondary concerns of morality appear to be overshadowed by legality (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Institutions are bound to comply with the law even if it appears to be causing harm (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Furthermore, the exclusive reliance on law and policy employs a certain ontology and epistemology that may limit responses to harm and wholly overlook opportunities to prevent harm and build a peaceful community (Johnstone, 2014).

Purpose of Study

This study is meant to examine how we can bring peace to interrupt the harm cycle on our campuses and in society through the theoretical framework of restorative justice (RJ) practices (Davis, 2019; Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019). However, to begin the work of restoring a community we must start with truth and the research shows that some College Republican groups are taking up WPM propaganda and normalizing it within mainstream society. To avoid further inflammation of the harm and to separate the behavior from the person according to RJ, I will refer to the actions of the College Republicans as misconduct or sharing WPM propaganda –

I do not aim to label the individuals within this study but only name the behavior. College Republican misconduct is not meant to be a euphemism but instead, it is used for the sole purpose of not causing more harm. This decision aligns with restorative justice practices that separate bad behavior from labeling the person themselves as good or bad (Sered, 2019).

To further clarify my use of the term misconduct, it's pertinent to note that free speech allows anyone to share any viewpoint as long as it does not incite violence (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Therefore, labeling the WPM propaganda as misconduct does not refer to a violation of free speech but a violation of the institution's purported diversity, equity, and inclusion goals for the community.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how institutions may privilege Western systems of law and policy that may engender harm (Johnson, 2019). In this study, RJ will offer a framework to understand the impact of the College Republicans' misconduct that shifts away from the question of; what is legal? to what is harmful or healing?

Research Goals

The research goals of this study are to: 1) identify how one community was affected by College Republican misconduct at one historically white institution, and 2) analyze the University of Maine's institutional responses according to the restorative continuum.

This study may offer more insights into the impact of College Republican misconduct by analyzing it through a restorative justice lens rather than a legal lens. This study will also offer an opportunity to analyze the University of Maine's institutional responses according to the restorative continuum (see Appendix A). This will yield an understanding of how the institution is approaching the community in general and addressing situations of misconduct.

Question one is a novel inquiry as there is a paucity of research on College Republicans or their misconduct, therefore an inductive approach will be used. Additionally, the sharing of 15th century Spanish War propaganda was identified as the starting point of campus controversy, and thus, this question offers an opportunity to achieve the following research goals: (a) to understand how this event drew upon community relations, and (b) impacted community relations after this time.

For question two, the restorative continuum (see Appendix A) will provide a framework to understand administrative responses on the continuum of punitive and restorative approaches. In this study, individuals' behaviors were made public through publications, social media, and the Freedom of Access Act. My goal is not to shame anyone in this study but (a) to reveal the community's actions that this data offers and a framework to humanize all who were caught up in systems and (b) expose the cycles of harm that have been passed down through generations. However, this study will focus on the potential harm and the impact on one higher education community.

Dissertation Outline

In the introduction, is an overview of the restorative justice framework, the College Republicans, and the case selection and institutional context. Next, the literature review will provide an overview of the extant research pertaining to this study, specifically focusing on the College Republicans and administrative responses within higher education. Through the review of the literature, I will also identify gaps in the literature. Chapter three will include a discussion of the methodology, the theoretical framework of restorative justice, a discussion of the case, and content analysis. These areas are reviewed to explain the research design. Chapter four outlines the findings from this study. Chapter five offers a discussion of the findings in relation to other scholarship in the areas of higher education and restorative justice practices.

Restorative Justice: An Overview

RJ has four components; history, concepts, context, and tools (Andreu-Darling, 2019). Historically, restorative justice (RJ) practices are based on indigenous ways of being (Davis, 2019; Sered, 2019; Zehr, 1991). Some of these indigenous communities included Native American tribes, Māori people, indigenous communities in Europe before colonization, and tribes in Africa (Consedine, 1999; Davis, 2019; Gavrielides, 2011; Zehr, 1991). However, not all indigenous communities' practices are restorative, nor were all of their approaches always restorative (Andreu-Darling, 2019).

Conceptually, RJ is a communitarian, relational, humanistic perspective of the world with an ontological view that all humans and the environment are interconnected (Davis, 2019; Zehr, 1991). Through interconnectedness, harmony is our natural state of being. RJ practices seek to both prevent and heal harm.

Conceptually, restorative justice practices are used to maintain and restore the community from a humanistic, relational perspective. Contextually, when examining harm, RJ shifts the focus from policy and law violation to recognizing human harm both for individuals and the community (Johnstone, 2014).

Traditional legalistic and administrative approaches to harm often conceptualize harm through the lens of violations of laws and policies and position the state or institution as the victim with frequent outcomes of punishment. There are also various perspectives on RJ; some see RJ as a social movement for societal change, while others see it as a way to manage behavior in education and criminal justice fields (Andreu-Darling, 2019; Gavrielides, 2014; Schiff, 2013). Both perspectives are relevant in this study. RJ practices are separated into a three-tiered system which includes: 1) building and maintaining good relationships (i.e., community building), 2) harm-repair, and 3) reintegration.

The first tier of RJ focuses on building and maintaining good relationships through sitting in a circle. Sitting in a circle involves a group physically sitting in a circle and using a talking piece so everyone has an opportunity to speak. When using the talking piece, only the person holding the talking piece speaks, and everyone is invited to listen (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015). The circle is facilitated by the group as each person who picks up a talking piece becomes a co-keeper. Therefore, time on a topic, or choosing what topics to discuss, is egalitarian rather than prescribed through institutional hierarchies. In this way, the circle serves to equalize the group and potentially suspend power dynamics. To implement RJ practices with fidelity, tier one practices are necessary to prevent harm, not simply create a policy to respond to harm once it occurs (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Karp, 2019b).

Tier two focuses on harm repair. In RJ, harm is examined not through the lens of victim or offender but through the lens of human harm, who was harmed, and who harmed. Therefore, RJ practices first focus on the needs of the person harmed and then examine how the person who harmed can take accountability. Accountability is considered to be achieved if the person responsible for the harm: 1) acknowledges responsibility for their actions, 2) acknowledges the impact of one's actions on others, 3) expresses genuine remorse, and 4) takes actions to repair the harm to the degree possible and no longer commit similar harm (Sered, 2019).

Tier two practices do not guarantee any outcome, but a common outcome is a harm repair agreement in which the person who committed the harm and the community outline action steps for reparations and prevention of harm in the future (Karp, 2019). RJ is always voluntary for anyone involved. RJ's harm repair also expands the focus from the individuals involved in the harm to interrogate how the community was implicated or impacted by harm.

Tier three is a practice to reintegrate someone who has been away from the community. Tier three is used to ensure that the community is ready to welcome back and support the person who has been away. Likewise, tier three ensures that the individual is ready to rejoin the community and maintain right relation. Some situations that may precipitate the need for tier three are instances in which someone was incarcerated, suspended, or put on administrative leave. These instances may have stemmed from harm or could be due to non-harmful circumstances such as illness. RJ, as a preventative model ensures that the community is actively engaging to prevent harm and cultivate a community in right relation.

Restorative Justice Philosophy in Practice

The context of restorative practices is determined by the space in which the circles (i.e., the tier one practice of sitting in circle with one's community, talking and listening using a talking piece) are held (Gavrielides, 2014) and the people who compose the circle (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Davis, 2019). These contextual factors constitute the community and contribute to making the space shared (Gavrielides, 2014).

For instance, to support trust and egalitarianism, ensuring that the community is invited, not just individuals with positional power, is important to cultivating trust and ensuring that the space is representative and inclusive of the community. Secondly, the space may create feelings of comfort for some but discomfort for others, such as people who have been historically marginalized. Therefore, sharing in the decision-making about space can also support the implementation of RJ practices that are egalitarian.

Scholars have noted that the systemization of RJ is necessary to implement the practices with fidelity at institutions and organizations (Andreu-Darling, 2019; Braithwaite, 2002; Schiff, 2013). Braithwaite highlighted the conceptual co-optation that can happen if Western practices of accreditation or legal systems take precedence over RJ practices. "... Accreditation for mediators that raises the spectre of a Western accreditation agency telling an aboriginal elder that a centuries-old restorative practice does not comply with the accreditation standards is a profound worry. We must avert accreditation that crushes indigenous empowerment..." (Braithwaite, 2002, P. 565).

Karp (2019) offers an overview of the dimensions of harm that may illuminate how harm impacts an individual and community. Karp's conceptualization of the types of harm are useful to tier two practices to understand how harm may impact individuals differently based on their

identities, experiences, and relationships. Karp's dimensions of harm are: 1) emotional/ spiritual, 2) material/ physical, 3) communal/ relational, and 4) inflamed structural/ historical. Karp's conception of harm offers a framework to understand how harm may impact individuals and a community differently. Karp (2019) also offers guidance for what types of harm repair would be fitting according to the various dimensions. However, harm repair agreements are individually formulated based on the needs of the person harmed and the community. In the next section, I will define some key terms.

Key Terms

For this study, I offer these definitions to clarify my use of the terminology and offer a theoretical understanding of how I define and use these words.

Campus Controversy

Campus controversy is the disagreement surrounding the College Republican misconduct resulting in tumultuous and sometimes confrontational experiences for campus community members. The campus controversy happened between campus community members (e.g., students, staff, faculty, administrators) and individuals outside of the campus community (e.g., communication or interactions in person or online).

Society

U.S. society encapsulates all ideological viewpoints regarding politics and race (Belew, 2018; Gantt Shafer, 2017; Lagos et al., 2014; Mouffe, 1999, 2000). U.S. society is defined in this study as the ideas and activities that are prevalent and considered normal. Therefore, mainstream

society holds the bounds of what dominant ideas, attitudes, and activities are normal or conventional, thus, marginalizing ideas, attitudes, and activities outside these bounds as abnormal and unconventional.

Indigenous

Indigenous people and traditions as an umbrella term (Kimmerer, 2013). In this study, the term indigenous refers to communities that hold the ontological view that we are all interconnected with each other and the environment (Zehr, 1991). This view was common in many parts of the world before colonization (Gavrielides, 2011; Smith, 2012). Although the term indigenous does apply to Native American, African, and Māori people, I will refer to these cultural and ethnic groups by name to offer clarity.

Race

Leonardo's (2009) definition of race; specifically, I understand *race*¹ to be a social construct, not biologically real, but one that produces real effects in the world. Defining race and

¹ The concept of race was created in 1453 and publicized by Gomes Enanes de Zurara of Portugal to procure the slave trade (Kendi, 2019). The United States used the idea of race to create systems of oppression Takaki, R. (1993). Throughout history, limiting access to education for people of color was a key way to maintain economic and political power Roebuck, J. B., & Murty, K. S. (1993). *Historically Black colleges and universities: Their place in American higher education*. Praeger. Thus, race has been a problem in U.S. higher education since its founding Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. Penguin Random House LLC. , Roebuck,

centering the connection between race and politics is critical to the conceptualization of this study. However, white supremacy can only exist in the confines and agreed upon social construction of race.

White Supremacy

In this study, white supremacy is defined as:

A political, economic and cultural system in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and nonwhite subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017, p. 167)

Whiteness

Building on the work of other scholars, I draw a distinction between the socially constructed demographic group of white people and whiteness as an ideology and system (Foste & Irwin, 2020; Leonardo, 2009). Whiteness as a system and ideology shifts from viewing

J. B., & Murty, K. S. (1993). *Historically Black colleges and universities: Their place in American higher education*. Praeger. , Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Back Bay Books. , Wright, B. (2007). For the children of the infidels. In H. S. Wechsler, L. F. Goodchild, & L. Eisenmann (Eds.), *The history of higher education* (pp. 1). Pearson. (Reprinted from *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 1988, 12(3)).

whiteness psychologically to examining whiteness socially (Foste & Irwin, 2020). Foste and Irwin (2020) noted, “Central to positioning whiteness as a system and an ideology are the ways whiteness upholds white supremacy through patterns of racial domination and exploitation that bear down on how individuals’ structure, process, and organize the social world” (p. 442). Scholars have contended identifying whiteness as an ideology grounds whiteness in power structures (Foste & Irwin, 2020; Gusa, 2010).

Racism

For this investigation, I define *racism* as a group’s collective bias backed by legal authority and institutional control (DiAngelo, 2018). Leonardo (2009) contended that white people own the apparatuses of power and, subsequently, can be the only racists. Thus, reverse racism is impossible because marginalized groups are not the majority in apparatuses of power. However, Kendi (2019) offers two nuanced perspectives in which he highlights that people of color have had significant influence, even if limited. Kendi shared that people of color can also embody racism based on white supremacy. However, it is not what the white supremacist ideology would deem reverse racism (i.e., racially marginalized people exercising prejudice against white people). Through Kendi’s conception of racism, the identity of the person or institutional leader does not exonerate the entity (e.g., person, institution, or nation) from the implications of their deeds. Thus, Kendi, claims it is false that someone cannot be racist because they are a person of color. According to Kendi (2019), identity does not determine whether one is acting in a racist or antiracist way. Therefore, the focus shifts from one’s identity to one’s actions.

Legal Approach

In this study, I define the legal approach as the rationalization of what is wrong or right according to the law. In the legal approach one questions what harm is allowed under the law, not necessarily how to interrogate, understand, and stop harm. The legal approach was used to reframe inquiries about harm to discussions of law, policy, and procedure that erased the human experiences of harm.

Utility of Definitions

Kendi's (2019) conception of race is helpful in environments where tokenistic representations of diversity can be commodified to promote a falsified image of equity (Squire et al., 2018). Sometimes, people of color have been used as spokespersons to promote racist ideas (Kelderman, 2021). Following this conception of racism, the question of racism does not rest solely on one's identity but rather on investigating whether actions, policies, or words are racist or antiracist (Kendi, 2019). Likewise, one cannot claim to "not be racist" as racism is determined by action, not identity. This assertion is essential to this study, as some College Republican leaders and speakers invited by them (i.e., Kimo Gandall and Michelle Malkin) identify as people of color who also perpetuate white supremacist ideas (Anderson, 2020; Kelderman, 2021) and what Belew (2018) would identify as white power movement (WPM) propaganda.

College Republicans

The College Republicans hold charters from the College Republican National Committee (College Republican National Committee [CRNC], 2020) and are recognized by higher education institutions. The CRNC was established in 1892. CRNC identify themselves as one of

the longest running youth political organizations. The CRNC have 52 federations: one in each U.S. state, the District of Colombia and Puerto Rico. Within these federations the College Republicans have 2,000 chapters, and over 250,000 members. In the CRNC's webpage they shared information on Republican agendas and recruit student volunteers to get voters out to support Republican candidates. In 2020, they even offered funds to fly students to Georgia to help turn-out the Republican vote. The College Republicans stated that activism is often their gateway into the College Republicans.

On campus, the CRNC recruits, trains, mobilizes, and engages college-aged students in all 50 states and Washington D.C. to win elections and advocate for conservative ideals. Every year, College Republicans from all across America join together to help elect Republican candidates, support the Republican agenda, and become the future leaders of the conservative movement (College Republican National Committee, 2020). (CRNC, 2020).

Since 2015, there has been a distinct shift in discussions of race in some College Republican organizations (Kidder, 2017).

College Republicans Misconduct

Reporters have shared stories of misconduct of some College Republican groups with various names, often conceptualizing the phenomenon as degenerate, racist, or xenophobic (Kelderman, 2021; Quintana, 2018). However, sparse scholarship examines this phenomenon of College Republican misconduct, which has been shown to negatively impact the campuses that institutionally support them (Johnson, 2019).

Johnson (2019) studied an event hosted by the College Republicans at the University of Washington in which Milo Yiannopoulos spoke against equity and inclusion efforts.

Yiannopoulos is famous for his inciteful and bigoted rhetoric (Johnson, 2019) and is connected to WPM groups (Belew, 2018). Yiannopoulos also engaged in doxing, an act of sharing an individual's personal information such as name and contact information. Doxing often results in harassment or violent threats. At this event, in addition to publicly doxing a transgender student, a campus space designated as safe for marginalized groups was bombarded by a mob, and one man was shot in a separate confrontation. Many people on campus reported feeling unsafe before, during, and after the event.

News reports corroborate scholarly findings that some College Republican organizations have helped facilitate the revitalization of racist ideas in the mainstream media (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Simultaneously, higher education institutions have struggled to respond to often nebulous but insidious communication from some College Republican groups, which have not been examined by scholars but widely discussed in the media (Anderson, 2020; Kelderman, 2021; Vasquez, 2021).

Although some College Republicans have been identified as organizations that infuse racist rhetoric into higher education campuses (Kidder, 2017), this rhetoric has not been frequently connected to the WPM, whose anonymous leaders have systematically targeted college campuses (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Some college campuses have become recruitment sites for WPM organizations (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

The WPM aims to inflict harm on communities that are not white, heterosexual, Christian, or citizens of the United States (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). However, identifying the WPM propaganda as bigoted often incites more conflict. Many people see the rhetoric of the WPM as justified and not bigoted. Therefore, as in the case of Johnson's study, some see the events or rhetoric as justified and good, while others see it as hateful. In the next

section, I will offer an overview of the University of Maine College Republicans and the difficulty campus administrators had in responding to their communication during the 2019 – 2020 academic year.

College Republicans at UMaine: Case Selection

In the Fall of 2019, Dr. Amy Fried was asked to be the University of Maine's (UMaine) College Republicans advisor (Anderson, 2020). Dr. Fried had previously advised other student groups along the political spectrum despite her own liberal politics. Dr. Fried engaged in such advisory roles as she valued the rights of free speech and free expression. Within a month, Dr. Fried resigned as the advisor because of the College Republicans' instigative social media use and derogatory, anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The social media posts of the College Republicans were referred to as racist and xenophobic in the media (Anderson, 2020). UMaine College Republicans' posts on social media took on new meaning when they invited Michelle Malkins, a famous conservative speaker who has praised holocaust deniers and white supremacists, to speak in Maine.

The UMaine College Republican's Vice President, Jeremiah Childs, gave an interview with *Inside Higher Education*. Childs stated it was a fallacy to link the UMaine College Republicans to holocaust denial but then stated the group embraces the "America First" politics of Trump, who has also been connected to holocaust deniers (Feinberg et al., 2022; Gantt Shafer, 2017). According to Gantt Shafer (2017), America First was a slogan that originated with the Ku Klux Klan and was used by Trump along with other racist language to polarize the country politically.

Holocaust denial and America First politics both fall under the umbrella of the white power movement (WPM) (Belew, 2018). However, in this study, there are more examples of alignment between the UMaine College Republicans and the WPM. Anderson (2020) noted, “UMaine College Republicans take conservative stances on immigration, homosexuality, and gender relations, and climate change” (para. 2).

Controversy on campus continued to swell in the Fall of 2019 when the UMaine College Republicans released a “Facebook post [that used] 15th-century Spanish war propaganda to dehumanize indigenous peoples, implying all indigenous peoples of the Americas are brutal savages” (Dana, 2019, para 4). UMaine College Republican members posted the colonial propaganda in opposition to the state of Maine’s change from celebrating Columbus Day to celebrating Indigenous Peoples’ Day. The post, which has since been removed, stated Native Americans were “brutal societies . . . corrupted by rampant ritual sacrifice and cannibalism” (as cited in Anderson, 2020, para. 8).

These assertions against Native Americans are particularly problematic for the University of Maine as a public, land-grant institution built through the stealing and selling of Native American lands in the Western United States (Heller, 2011; Takaki, 1993). Following the sale of Native American lands in the west in 1865, the University of Maine was built on Wabanaki, Penobscot land and was structured to educate white men. The lands, resources, traditions, and families of the Penobscot people, like many Native American communities, were systematically dismantled through governmental and institutional organizations federally and in Maine (Kloehn, 1990; Reach, 2018; Smith, 2012; Takaki, 1993). Therefore, the sharing of racist, dehumanizing colonial propaganda is reminiscent of Maine’s history of Native American persecution.

John Bear Mitchell, the Native American waiver Coordinator & Wabanaki Center Outreach and Student Development Coordinator, questioned the University of Maine's decision to support the free speech of the College Republicans; however, he stated many people felt seen in their racial struggle now that racism and racial awareness saturated society (Anderson, 2020). Indigenous students organized a campus protest to end racism, and some College Republican members attended as counter-protesters. Mitchell recounted College Republican members harassed and physically threatened the protest organizer, prompting the student to not attend classes for the following week (Anderson, 2020).

Although the University of Maine was not able to comment on student conduct cases, Childs asserted, "This is not true at all, we've never harassed anybody. . . . Nobody in our group has ever been found guilty of anything. . . . My members always treat everyone with dignity and respect" (as cited in Anderson, 2020, p. 4). However, this feeling was not shared by Childs' peers. Liam Kent, then President of the University of Maine College Democrats, stated they no longer engaged with the College Republicans in spaces other than formal debates, which have security present, as they did not feel safe. Mitchell summarized the free speech versus hate speech dispute with the following statement:

Any group that partakes in any racism or hate or direct threats to any students should be easily removed. But they're not—they're protected. . . . I wouldn't say that we should eliminate any Republican club. But anybody who engages in hate and racism should be removed, without question. (as cited in Anderson, 2020, p. 6)

The UMaine College Republicans were not able to continue as a recognized student organization, not because the university intervened to stop their harmful speech but because they did not have an advisor following the resignation of Dr. Fried. However, the former College

Republicans rebranded the same group as the UMaine Constitutional Republicans and regained recognition from the University of Maine Student Government in the Spring of 2020. When members of the UMaine College Republicans invited Malkins to Maine, not only did the university disavow the event, but numerous venues also declined to host the Groyper pundit with white supremacist ties (Tanner, 2020).

Waterville's Mayor Isgro and former congressional candidate Adrienne Bennet helped the UMaine College Republicans find their venue to host Malkin. Malkin's speech touted anti-immigrant rhetoric, a simultaneous and contradictory embrace of Republicans, and a rejection of established government (Tanner, 2020). The College Republican rhetoric aligns with descriptions of WPM propaganda (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020a). UMaine College Republican leaders, including Childs, were photographed with Malkin, flashing the "okay" sign, which has been classified as a hate symbol (Allyn, 2019; Neiwert, 2018). The group more explicitly showed its connections to white supremacists such as Nick Fuentes, Milo Yiannopoulos, and Alex Jones, an antisemitic conspiracy theorist (Tanner, 2020). Members of the group also shared images of themselves with founders of white supremacist groups such as the Groypers, the Proud Boys, and Infowars at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC; UMaine College Republicans, 2020, March 2; Tanner, 2020). Malkin portrayed the UMaine College Republicans as a group of kids being punished by liberal censorship at the University of Maine (Tanner, 2020). Fuentes would later retweet Malkin's post with the UMaine College Republicans, stating, "we will keep multiplying. #Americafirst" (Tanner, 2020).

The phenomenon of College Republicans engaging in WPM propaganda has not been frequently identified (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). There is limited scholarly research on

College Republican groups (Kidder, 2015, 2017) and less on their misconduct (Johnson, 2019). However, from the existing scholarship, the UMaine College Republican's case aligns with the tactics used in similar cases. Frequently, controversy is enacted by posting thinly veiled racist posts that incite the community. Likewise, inviting a famous extremist speaker creates more controversy. From this point, racism is protected under the guise of free speech. Through free speech, the WPM ideals are normalized in society under the rejection of liberalism and protecting *our* country (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

In Spring 2020, UMaine College Republicans posted about the utility of militias, ending with "A militia is a group of regular citizens that take up arms against a tyrannical gov't. Sorry they didn't teach you that in gender studies" (as cited in Tanner, 2020, p. 14). WPM propaganda often engages in violent talk, but determining the level of threat is difficult (Simi & Windisch, 2020a). In this case, the College Republicans were engaging with WPM ideology whether they were aware of it or not (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Context of the University of Maine

Maine offers a unique context to examine College Republican misconduct. Maine was the whitest state in the U.S at the time of this study in 2019., and the University of Maine is a historically white institution (HWI). In this study, UMaine College Republicans exist in the overlapping contexts of a racially divisive and turbulent U.S. society and an environment of whiteness in one HWI (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010; Kelderman, 2021).

Kidder (2017) found College Republican groups reshaped and reproduced societal ideologies of who had a right to participate in U.S. society through their conceptualization of moral geography. Kidder showed that ideologies within society can be filtered through the

College Republican groups to reinform society. Whiteness is dominant in U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Mills, 1997) and at HWIs (Foste & Irwin, 2020; Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009). Recognizing the context of these events may contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the College Republicans' misconduct.

There is extant research connecting some College Republican groups with the WPM and the event under question shows strong similarities to the events, tactics, and rhetoric used to promote the WPM. Scholars have also shown that by continuing to label the rhetoric and, consequently, the people as bad, more conflict is likely to be created (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). The institutional tactics of publicly labeling rhetoric as hateful, bigoted, racist, xenophobic, or antisemitic have often resulted in more conflict, both verbal and physical (Belew, 2018, 2021; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020). However, an investigation of College Republican connections to the WPM may be useful in other situations such as law enforcement initiatives focused on preventing terrorism (Fahey & Simi, 2019; Simi & Windisch, 2020a, 2020b; Simi et al., 2015).

Reports from the media, scholars, and the findings in this study show that traditional legal approaches have not interrupted College Republican misconduct. This suggests a new lens to examine this topic of College Republican misconduct and new practices might offer different insights and outcomes. Often, higher education administrators oscillate between protecting free speech, even free speech that is viewed as harmful, and denying that the speech represents their institution. This seeming contradiction and the lack of assessment of human harm are two of the reasons that I have designed this study.

Context of Maine

The context of this selected study site is the University of Maine as an HWI in a turbulent U.S. society. The turbulence between the University of Maine College Republicans and administrators made national news. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Maine is the whitest state in the United States with a population of 94.4% white. Maine also has a strong connection to racism. In 1925, Maine had the largest number of Ku Klux Klan members outside of the Southern United States (Bench, 2019). The Maine Ku Klux Klan reached its peak in 1925 when 23% of Mainers belonged to the Klan.

During this time, the Klan espoused hatred for Black and Jewish people, but there were limited Black or Jewish populations in Maine. Some of the populations of Black Mainers that did exist were forcefully removed by the state (McMahon, 2019). With a primarily white population, the Ku Klux Klan in Maine focused on religious and ethnic identity construction and targeted French-Canadian Catholics. Native Americans were also persecuted, but this had already been done so effectively by the state of Maine that there likely was not a significant competition for economic and political power with Native Americans compared with French Canadians (Bench, 2019).

Therefore, Maine offers an intriguing context for this study due to its history of racism and its racial homogeneity (i.e., identifying now as primarily white). Likewise, Mainers (i.e., usually individuals born and raised in Maine, although Native Americans are often not referred to as Mainers) often see the whiteness of Maine as natural, which completely ignores the history of colonization, segregation, and violence (McMahon, 2019, 2020). Therefore, McMahon asserted that many Mainers see race as a non-issue in the state.

However, the designation of Maine as the whitest state, and the rural nature of the state, has attracted one neo-Nazi to begin establishing a commune and training camp (Tischauer, 2023). Christopher Pohlhaus is an ex-marine and neo-Nazi who wants to keep Maine white. He is an open neo-Nazi and has a significant online following. “Pohlhaus, who also goes by the online moniker “The Hammer,” reportedly moved to Maine in 2022 to build a white supremacist community that would provide a place for the Blood Tribe to network, strategize and train. In a video Pohlhaus posted on Telegram on Jan. 20, 2023, he updated his followers on his plans to build a headquarters for his group. Pohlhaus claims in the video that the Blood Tribe has more than “120 acres already,” including a 10-acre spot he describes as “the main camp.” (Tischauer, 2023, para. 9). Additionally, in 2017, U.S. News and World Report found that Maine is one of 22 states that have an active Ku Klux Klan organization in the state (Trimble, 2017). Thus, with the historic and contemporary legacy of organized hate, the state offers an ideal location to interrogate the impact of College Republican misconduct in a unique environment dominated by whiteness.

The University of Maine is a public land-grant and sea-grant institution founded in 1865, under the first Morrill Act (Thelin, 2011). The institution is an HWI built for the education of white men through the oppression of Native American people (Thelin, 2011). The University of Maine resides on Marsh Island in the middle of the Penobscot River. The Penobscot Tribe is part of the Wabanaki Nation, which is indigenous to the Dawnland, the place now called Maine. The University of Maine meets many of the criteria found to engender combative and instigative behavior among conservative student groups (Binder & Wood, 2012). College Republicans at 4-year, public institutions, like the University of Maine, have been found to use more inciteful, and

aggressive forms of activism (Binder & Wood, 2012). Therefore, this study will add another layer of understanding to existing literature through the lens of restorative justice.

Methodology

The following questions will guide this qualitative research:

1. How was the community affected at one historically white institution following one institutionally recognized College Republican group sharing 15th-Century Spanish War Propaganda about Native Americans?
2. How restorative were the institutions' responses?

Content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal, and visual communication (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Using content analysis, I analyzed analytic data and placed the data into categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Weber, 1990). This inductive analysis for question one allowed me to analyze the data through the lens of restorative justice and generate categories from the data.

Conversely, a deductive approach for question two, allowed me to analyze the data through the restorative continuum, for which I organized the data into pre-existing categories.

Weber (1990) explained content analysis can be used to:

compare media or “levels” of communication; audit communication content against objectives; code open-ended questions in surveys; identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicator; determine the psychological state of persons or groups; detect the existence of propaganda; describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications; reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions, or societies; reveal the

focus of individual, group, institutional, or societal attention; and describe trends in communication content. (Weber, 1990, p. 9)

Content analysis is particularly useful to this study as it lends itself to identifying the impact of the College Republicans' misconduct on the community. Content analysis aligned with the epistemology of my research questions to achieve many of the research uses listed above.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I examine three distinct areas of research: College Republican organizations, historically white institutions (HWIs), and administrative responses to issues of misconduct. This inquiry focuses on College Republicans, an organization that lacks empirical research. Therefore, I will offer a review of the two studies that do exist focusing on College Republicans (Kidder, 2015;2017). I will supplement this with research that examines the College Republicans incidentally (Belew, 2018; Binder & Wood, 2013; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Lastly, I will substantiate the need for more empirical research by reviewing news reports of College Republican misconduct often discussing their relationship with their campuses, which are, often, historically white institutions. News reports also focus on the actions taken by higher education administrators. Although there is often condemnation and celebration of the College Republicans and higher education administrators, via news reports, or social media, there is a lack of research examining the College Republican groups and their misconduct. However, there is a plethora of research examining the context of historically white institutions (Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010; Irwin & Foste, 2021; Iverson, 2012; Squire et al., 2018). Related to the topic of this study, scholars have expanded the analysis of historically white institutions to also interrogate how administrators respond to misconduct often related to race (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). College Republicans have been the focus of two inquiries (Kidder, 2015; 2017), but are central to this study. The examination of literature regarding College Republicans will explore communication and evidence of increased race-related misconduct through a restorative justice framework. I will then review the literature examining whiteness at HWI's and a review of scholarship examining

administrative responses to issues of race. Lastly, I will explore how restorative justice shifts away from legalistic and punitive approaches to harm that continue the harm cycle.

Rise of WPM on College Campuses

The College Republicans are a long-standing organization on many college campuses. The College Republicans often reflect the politics of the U.S. Republican party (Kidder, 2015). However, with the presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump, some College Republican groups also embraced a shift to bigotry (Kidder, 2017). Nationally, reports of hate crimes in the United States spiked following Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and presidency (Warren-Gordon & Rhineberger, 2021). Reports of hate crimes on campus increased by 40% from 2011 to 2016. However, many acts of hate do not rise to the level of criminal activity and thus are not reported (Nelson, 2019).

Although there is a correlation between rhetoric and an increase in racist violence, it has been difficult to hold individuals accountable or prove causation through the legal system (Belew, 2018, 2021; Simi & Windisch, 2020a). Some scholars have called this the "Trump effect"; however, they note that it is not going away as his rhetoric and the ideas he mainstreamed continue to seemingly influence and inspire hate even after leaving the presidential office (Feinberg et al., 2022; Warren-Gordon & Rhineberger, 2021). News reports of College Republican misconduct soared following the 2016 Presidential campaign, and election (Mangan, 2018, 2019; Quintana, 2018; Tanner, 2020).

However, much of what was publicly deemed misconduct according to diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of an institution is free speech and protected under the First Amendment (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Therefore, higher education administrators have been stuck in a quandary between

their purported diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, and the free speech rights of their students. Yet, other scholars note that the College Republicans have served as another avenue for the mainstreaming of white power movement propaganda (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Since 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center has found college campuses are key locations to insert WPM rhetoric and mainstream messages and recruit new members (Center, 2017). Republican student organizations have been one of the key sites for legitimizing the WPM (Center, 2017; Gais & Hayden, 2022). In some cases, WPM politicians have connected with College Republican groups to legitimize themselves and gain from the credibility afforded by the College Republican National Committee, social networks, and the University or College. The politician then moves the group from a republican group that is moderately conservative to a group that is aligning with extreme, WPM ideals (Miller-Idriss, 2020). With the legitimacy of the republican party behind them, these individuals run for office and then propose bills that are more moderate than their WPM beliefs. This tactic is called entryism, which is a tactic through which a person who strives to impose WPM ideals into law, hides their extreme views until they are entrenched in the system and can convert others to WPM ideals. These tactics appear to be working as, a 2023 report from the Southern Poverty Law Center found that what Belew (2018) and Miller-Idriss (2020) would call the WPM rhetoric which dehumanizes many groups and calls for violence, has become mainstreamed (Miller & Kieffer, 2023). The issue of the College Republican radicalization to the WPM is not just a concern for college campuses but for U. S. society. Therefore, with limited research into College Republican misconduct, and limited options for administrative legal action, this study aims to interrogate this phenomenon through a restorative justice lens. A restorative justice lens shifts the paradigm from a legal framework in

which misconduct is protected by free speech to a framework that interrogates harm and human impact.

College Republicans

The College Republicans are sub-organizations of the College Republican National Committee (College Republican National Committee [CRNC], 2020). CRNC is one of the longest-running youth political organizations, with 52 federations. These federations are in the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In these federations, the College Republicans have 2,000 chapters and over 250,000 members. On CRNC's webpage they share information on Republican agendas and recruit student volunteers to get voters to support Republican candidates. They even offered funding to fly students to Georgia to help turn out the Republican vote in 2020:

On campus, the CRNC recruits, trains, mobilizes, and engages college-aged students in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., to win elections and advocate for conservative ideals. Every year, College Republicans from all across America join together to help elect Republican candidates, support the Republican agenda, and become the future leaders of the conservative movement. (College Republican National Committee, 2020)

There is a significant body of research examining student activism (Alford, 2020; Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Coomes, 2016; Dominguez, 2009; Douglas et al., 2020; Jones & Reddick, 2017; Logan et al., 2017; Weinberg, 1990; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019) and scholarship discussing the relationship between higher education and U.S. society (Coomes, 2016; Keels, 2019; Squire et al., 2019) but research about political student organizations is

sparse. There are only two studies since 2013 focusing on College Republican organizations (Kidder, 2015, 2017).

College Republican Misconduct

There is also a lack of research investigating the reports of College Republican misconduct. Johnson's (2019) study focused on a College Republican-hosted event that turned violent but did not interrogate the College Republican organization. Other scholars circle around the topic of College Republican misconduct through the lens of influence, association, and ideology without a focus on the potential harm to the community and individuals (Miller-Idriss, 2020, Belew, 2018; Binder & Wood, 2012). Of all the research about College Republicans, Kidder (2015; 2017) is the most widely cited scholar. From his study conducted during the Obama presidency, Kidder found that College Republicans served more as a form of collective identity affirmation rather than holding actual policy points. In Kidder's (2015) study the College Republicans shared rhetoric that focused on free-market capitalism. Although Kidder (2015) found that the College Republicans lacked clear policy objectives, these groups were engaged in activism, according to their statements (CRNC, 2020).

Between 2015 when Kidder's ethnography was published and 2016, when Trump was elected, Kidder identified a distinct change in the College Republicans from a group that identified with free-market capitalism to a group that widely embraced the bigotry of Trumpism (Kidder, 2017). Reporters have called upon Kidder to offer expertise on several cases in which the College Republicans have been criticized for bigotry.

Bigotry and the College Republicans

Racist views have flourished in some College Republican groups who see it as an escape from the liberal college campus (Kidder, 2017). College Republicans' misconduct has been reported through many news outlets (Mangan, 2018, 2019; Quintana, 2017, 2018; Tanner, 2020; Tucker, 2019; Turner, 2019; Vasquez, 2021); however, scholars, higher education institutions' leaders, and the public disagree on how to describe or categorize what I refer to as misconduct (Belew, 2018; Gantt Shafer, 2017; Johnson, 2019; Simi & Windisch, 2020a; Simi et al., 2015).

There is a paucity of scholarship examining College Republican misconduct (Johnson, 2019) or College Republican organizations (Kidder, 2015, 2017). Kidder (2015, 2017) is one of the few researchers investigating College Republican organizations, but he has not studied their misconduct. Most discussions of College Republican misconduct are found in higher education articles from reporters like Kelderman (2021). Reporters frequently consult with Kidder as the foremost expert on College Republican organizations, to offer insights into College Republican misconduct.

Although College Republican misconduct has not been studied enough (Johnson, 2019), some scholars would identify the increase in hate among College Republicans as radicalization by the white power movement (WPM; Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). The Southern Poverty Law Center has also warned that College Republican groups are being infiltrated and influenced by white supremacists (Center, 2017; Corke, 2022; Gais & Hayden, 2022). Although the link between the two has not been fully explored in extant, scholarly literature (Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2015, 2017). Johnson's (2019) study of an event hosted by the College Republicans at the University of Washington that turned violent, was termed hate coming to campus. Johnson

called this event hateful but did not connect it to Belew and Miller-Idriss' assertions that some College Republicans are being influenced by the WPM.

Furthermore, her study focused not on the College Republican organization but on the event they hosted. Johnson found that the person who was shot at the College Republican event requested restorative justice practices, but he was denied RJ because of barriers in the legal system. Essentially, the person harmed was seeking healing for himself and the person who harmed him, but this healing was denied, because the legal system could take the communication from the restorative justice practices and repurpose it for harm toward the person who did the shooting. Therefore, Johnson's study highlights that the legal system can inflict harm and prevent healing.

WPM: Communication and Extremism

The white power movement (WPM) rhetoric has been entering mainstream communications, and the College Republicans have been one avenue for legitimizing the WPM rhetoric. The WPM ideology values white identity, as demonstrated by the ever-changing rationale for rejecting equity. The white power movement (WPM) ideology is not just racist, as many believe. It is also sexist, homophobic, transphobic, antisemitic, and Islamophobic; almost any call for equity in U.S. society is likely to provoke the WPM (Belew, 2018, 2021; Miller-Idriss, 2020). The rationalization of the white power movement rests on dehumanization.

Dehumanization refers to language and beliefs that position entire groups of people as subhuman or less than human. It rests on the unconscious belief that while some groups of beings appear fully human, "beneath the surface, where it really counts, they aren't human at all." Such beliefs are what allow individuals to imagine other people as subhuman animals who

“have the essence of creatures that elicit negative responses, such as disgust, fear, hatred, and contempt, and are usually thought of as predators, unclean animals, or prey”.

Sometimes this belief is expressed explicitly, such as the Nazi labeling of Jews as *Untermenschen* (subhumans), but often it is evoked through the use of metaphors like rats, wolves, cockroaches, vermin, and snakes, or with language that evokes those animals such as references to immigrant infestations, invasions, swarms, “shithole” countries, or being overrun. It also comes across in language that equates immigrants from particular regions or countries as rapists or criminals, or positions Muslims or Islam as an existential threat to European or Western civilizations. (Miller-Idriss, 2020, p. 6).

Scholars have argued that the candidacy and presidency of Trump moved white supremacist slogans and ideas into mainstream society (Gantt Shafer, 2017; Matias & Newlove, 2017; Sánchez, 2018). Belew and Miller-Idriss position the white power movement as the umbrella term that encompasses the extremism of white supremacy, antisemitism, neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, the order, and other extremist groups with their nuanced focuses on whiteness.

WPM views are effectively communicated in mainstream society, especially social media, by not citing sources such as the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, or other white supremacist organizations. By making a conscious decision to leave out these known hate groups these communications can be, and are, framed as not racist (Belew, 2018). The WPM also employs plausibly deniable communications, such as the okay sign (Allyn, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Neiwert, 2018). The okay sign was designated as a hate symbol following the adoption of the sign to represent white power instead of okay. The sign can, therefore, be shown as a white power symbol and then denied by drawing on its historical meaning of okay, thus offering plausible deniability to anyone using the symbol as white power. WPM messages can be

obscure, decontextualized, and engage ever-changing rationales depending on the utility of furthering their goal of widespread violence and establishing a white world order (Belew, 2018, 2021; Miller-Idriss, 2020). For instance, those in the WPM may draw upon patriotism in one instance and then draw upon a rejection of U.S. politics and call to overthrow the government (Miller-Idriss, 2020; White, 2001). White racial superiority and violence are the consistent messages in these groups (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020a).

Many scholars have examined aspects of the WPM (Fahey & Simi, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2019, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020a, 2020b; Simi et al., 2015). Belew (2018) and Miller-Idriss (2020) are two scholars who have examined the coordinated but diffuse way the WPM has inspired terrorism in the United States since the 1970s with mass shootings, bombings, and insurrections. These scholars have clearly stated that the WPM is spreading and building stronger roots in national and international political systems. To achieve their goals of race war and a new world order the WPM has targeted higher education campuses (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Spreading the WPM Message

Some scholars have examined the WPM through the lens of understanding the individual psychology that leads to the adoption of extremist views (Blazak, 2001; Simi & Windisch, 2020a; Simi et al., 2015; White, 2001). One scholar found that adolescents who experience anomie, a lack of social connection with their community, belonging, or adherence to social norms, are more likely to be radicalized (Blazak, 2001). Lacking social and ethical standards is a common characteristic among those in the WPM (Blazak, 2001; Simi & Windisch, 2020a; Simi et al., 2015). Simi and Windisch found that aligning one's personal identity with the collective

WPM identity was possible because of separation from mainstream society. This need for isolation and anomie is so essential to the WPM radicalization that Simi and Windisch (2020a) stated that without this separation from mainstream social norms, the WPM would atrophy.

The WPM is most commonly associated with terrorism, but since the 2016 Presidential election, WPM propaganda has become more mainstream (Belew, 2018; Miller - Idriss, 2020). Simi and Windisch (2020a) found that the normalization and prevalence of violent talk among the WPM make it challenging to determine who is or is not going to act out the violence. Violent talk is a way to signal group membership and a belief in the WPM ideology, but some people also act upon violent talk (Simi & Windisch, 2020).

Through studying online spaces Wojcieszak (2009) also found it difficult to ascertain how communication in online spaces would lead to offline actions. Threat assessment is challenging because of the diffuse, leaderless nature of the WPM (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001); the sharing of violent talk can inspire violent acts without concrete or traceable connections (Simi & Windisch, 2020a). For instance, the *Turner Diaries* has served as a playbook for coordinated terrorist efforts without the risk of exposing the terrorist network (Belew, 2018, 2021; Blazak, 2001a; Simi & Windisch, 2020b).

Sociology and history scholars agree that online sharing of WPM propaganda allows the movement to reach people who would otherwise never have come to a Klan meeting (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001a; Miller-Idriss, 2020). WPM messages are normalized by omitting sources or presenting ideas as just conservative (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001a; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Radicalization of the Individual on College Campuses

Blazak (2001) found that radicalization can happen when one experiences a lack of belonging. Blazak's finding connects to Kidder's (2015) finding that College Republicans served more as a form of collective identity affirmation for conservative men resisting a liberal college campus. Thus, the College Republicans' organization can be seen as a place to belong and escape the liberal college campus. Belew (2018) posited that traditional-age college students might be ideal targets for radicalization as they find their identities as young adults.

Scholars in other fields support this idea as they noted college students are developing their racial (Cabrera et al., 2016) and political-social identity (Habermas, 2000). Blazak (2001) exemplified this sentiment by highlighting that an adolescent who is just coming to understand their racial identity may ask why there is no white club at school and be met with contempt or called a racist. In these ways it is not just a matter of personal psychology but interaction with the environment (Blazak, 2001). These scholars highlighted the need to interrogate how the space's (e.g., campus, organization) ethos (Cabrera et al., 2016) may contribute to this phenomenon of WPM radicalization (Blazak, 2001). From a communications standpoint, there will be a level of interaction with those who think differently than others, especially online or on a college campus, but there are also increasing opportunities to silo into communities of like-minded individuals (Cabrera et al., 2016; Dreher, 2009; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Mouffe, 1999, 2000; Rosenbaum, 2018).

Kidder's (2017) study found that College Republicans, through their everyday interactions, reproduced dominant ideologies of racism drawn from the United States society. Kidder (2017) and Cabrera et al. (2016) used a campus ecology framework to analyze student development through students' relationships with individuals and organizations, institutional

policies, and U.S. society. Kidder (2017) found that College Republicans reproduced and reshaped dominant ideologies from U.S. society, such as racism. The construction of racist ideas was intertwined with moral beliefs about who were true, hard-working, moral Americans (white, rural, Christians) and who were not (people of color, urban, non-Christians; Kidder, 2017).

The College Republicans reproduced what Kidder termed moral geography, which engaged race, space, and politics to assert who were real Americans and who had the right to participate in U.S. society (Kidder, 2017). Through this moral geography, images of people in urban, racially diverse communities were deemed not true Americans and morally wrong, while people in white rural and suburban areas were considered real Americans and morally right. It's important to note that these racial sentiments of inferiority and superiority were not explicitly stated but were implicitly communicated through imagery and describing spaces. Connected to Kidder's finding that College Republicans reproduce dominant ideologies such as racism from U.S. society, Belew (2018) and Miller-Idriss (2020) have also found that College Republicans are a conduit for WPM propaganda that subsequently normalizes racist WPM views in the United States.

Specifically, the College Republicans consume WPM propaganda and then reshare it. When they reshare the WPM propaganda, it legitimizes it through a republican framework and distances the ideas, words, and images from their actual origin in the WPM. Drawing from these scholars' work, the next section will offer an overview of how these messages of the WPM travel through various contexts. White power movement rhetoric is introduced into higher education, often through digital spaces (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020), which allows the WPM to (a) disrupt progressive and inclusive education, (b) cause controversy that propels the idea of liberal indoctrination into the mainstream U.S. society via mass media and social media, and (c) insert

discredited academics into higher education who explicitly argue for WPM through eugenics, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). The culmination of these actions on college campuses depicts a portrait of higher education as a place of indoctrination to a liberal ideology that is intolerant and vengeful toward conservative students and faculty (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

National and international organizations (e.g., conservative political action coalition, intercollegiate studies institute, Young Americans' Foundation) that support college clubs and organizations, such as the College Republicans, offer guides on how to be disruptive and create controversy on campus (Binder & Wood, 2012) Kirk (2018) even wrote a book titled *Campus Battlefield: How Conservatives can WIN the Battle on Campus and why it matters*. Kirk featured a forward by Donald Trump Jr. and outlined how to bring the fight to college campuses.

These right-wing political student organizations see the college campus as the citadel of leftist ideology and thus, a center to disrupt indoctrination into leftist views (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Through this image of a leftist college campus that persecutes conservative students, those in the WPM can pose their worldviews as legitimate and rational (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Numerous publications and organizations in the U.S. intend to disrupt the higher education campus (Binder & Wood, 2012). Thus, within digital spaces in the everyday interactions of College Republicans (2017), some College Republican groups are digitally connecting with WPM propaganda or organizational members (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001).

Connection Through Digital Space

Digital spaces such as social media have been shown to impact campuses of higher education (Keels, 2019; Shonekan, 2020; Squire et al., 2019). Social media has allowed for the

broad sharing of racist views (Belew, 2018; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Gantt Shafer, 2017; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Likewise, social media has enabled the sharing of information between ordinary people and a waning of a central and forceful agreement of what is true or factual (Bouvier, 2019).

Part of the waning of a central and forceful agreement of truth has occurred as information from marginalized groups is shared more widely, particularly on social media platforms (Bouvier, 2015, 2019; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015; Rosenbaum, 2018). As ideas contrary to mainstream views are shared on social media and sometimes picked up by mass media, alternative views are shared and more widely accepted in mainstream U.S. society (Bouvier, 2015, 2019; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015). Individuals can also silo themselves into echo chambers on social media platforms—to only engage with like-minded people and content (Dahlberg, 2001; Dreher, 2009).

Jackson and Foucault Welles (2015) highlighted that social media offered room for counter spaces, that is, spaces to challenge the dominant narrative traditionally proposed by mass media and the government. The marker of efficacy among counter spaces is their ability to disrupt mainstream society's normative conceptualization of a topic (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015). In their study, Twitter users were able to disrupt the normative idea that police serve and protect the community by sharing alternative perspectives via stories, images, and videos documenting police brutality (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015). Another aspect of counter space is rejecting comportment standards accepted by society as appropriate (Davis, 2018). An individual can exercise autonomy through counter spaces and create a personal, cultural understanding (Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Rosenbaum, 2018).

Counter space's determination as morally good or bad would largely depend upon the individual asked (Mouffe, 1999, 2000). Mouffe (1999; 2000) foretold of the moral dilemma. Mouffe contended that relying on individualistic, rationalistic, and universalistic frameworks would create issues sustaining democracy based on moralism. Mouffe critiqued prior scholars, such as Habermas, who asserted that people must agree on rational ideas to reach a consensus and achieve agreement among all.

Social Media and College Republicans

Mouffe's (1999; 2000) work connects to several themes in this literature review. First, some College Republicans asserted that only certain people (e.g., white, documented Republicans) have a right to participate in U.S. society (Kidder, 2017). Mouffe found that excluding groups from democracy based on identity, or even questioning their legitimacy to participate threatens democracy.

Second, according to Mouffe, free speech (e.g., on campus) is essential for democracy. However, once free speech is protected it is allowed legally, but morally, some groups will see free speech as protecting racist speech while others see it as neutral. A reliance on rational arguments, according to older models of democracy (Habermas, 2000), does not offer room to understand that human beings do not have universal experiences but individual experiences in the same place, under the same laws, with unequal and unfair outcomes (Alexander, 2010; Arendt et al., 2018; Potts, 2022).

Third, the spread of information through various contexts in relation to identity (Cabrera et al., 2016; Kidder, 2017) without a consensus on what is true (Bouvier, 2015) often erases the possibility of basing a discussion on a shared truth. Mouffe (1999, 2000) stated that democratic

societies are ill-prepared to contend with the extreme right, which had gained some traction in the early 2000s. Particularly, Mouffe (1999, 2000) took issue with the idea that individuals could agree upon rational arguments and come to a consensus. By examining the formation of previous models of communication and democracy, Mouffe contended that ideological opponents will not always agree upon what is a rational argument. Without agreeing on a rational argument there is no possibility of consensus (Habermas, 2000; Mouffe, 1999; 2000). Even if a rational argument is accepted by opposing parties, Mouffe deemed the idea that individuals can always find a consensus idealistic.

Historically, many people have been legally excluded from participating in democracy based on their identities. Thus, previous theoretical models of democracy were controlled and, therefore, limited the perspectives that were shared. Instead, Mouffe (1999, 2000) contended a model of moving from antagonism to agonistic pluralism. Mouffe described a person engaging in antagonistic communication as oppositional, and hostile toward their opponent. Antagonistic communication silences, excludes, or diminishes an opponent's view.

Conversely, through agonistic pluralism, adversaries are meant to understand their opponent, not question their opponent's legitimacy to participate in democracy, nor should they try to subjugate them. Mouffe's work lends a layer of understanding as to why there may be so much conflict between free speech and the College Republicans.

From the limited scholarship on College Republicans, Kidder's (2017) study found that College Republicans questioned who has a right to participate in U.S. society or higher education. Johnson (2019) found this same idea of true Americans was perpetuated by the College Republicans in her study. Therefore, some College Republicans have proposed racist

views as rational arguments with which many would disagree (Johnson, 2019; Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Kidder, 2017).

The problem of truth and rational arguments exists on both sides of the ideological aisle. Therefore, Mouffe in alignment with many scholars such as Arendt (2018), Derrida (2010), Sered (2019), and Davis (2018) proposed a relational framework in which the experiences and perspectives of ideological opponents are understood and discussed. Restorative Justice practices align with this framework in which individual truths and experiences are listened to in a community.

The Historically White Institution

Much research has examined whiteness at historically white institutions (HWI) (Cabrera et al., 2016; Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009). Hegemonic whiteness has been found to permeate many HWIs and U.S. society (Applebaum, 2010; Cabrera et al., 2016; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Mills, 1997). Therefore, I draw from extant literature to offer an overview of how whiteness can constitute the place of the HWI campus. An HWI is not just a numerical composition of racial demographics within an institution (Bourke, 2016) but is also indicative of campus culture (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010). Gusa (2010) called the embedding of whiteness white institutional presence.

In U.S. higher education institutions, pervasive privileging of white norms, students, faculty, and curriculum may create a context of hegemonic whiteness (Bourke, 2016; Gusa, 2010). Hegemonic whiteness privileges white individuals (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010). People of color are disadvantaged as they are expected to assimilate into white cultural norms

(Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010). Policies and practices of the institution can institutionalize whiteness and present it as race-neutral (Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009). In the following sections I review extant literature demonstrating the purposeful creation and maintenance of HWIs through interest convergence.

Illusions of Equity

Bell (1980, 2004) contended that the illusion of racial equity had been perpetuated through interest convergence. Interest convergence is the temporary alignment of interests between the white elite (i.e., individuals with institutional and systemic power to affect change) and communities of color (Bell, 2004; Bell, 1980). The piecemeal adjustment of race policy allowed the white elite to demonstrate humanitarianism to the world, disrupt the Communist movement building in the Black community, and encourage industrialization of the South (Bell, 1980; 2004). However, Bell (2004) held that there is more segregation now than before *Brown v. Board of Education*. Thus, policies that appear race-neutral can still effectively discriminate against people and communities of color (Bell, 2004; Guinier, 2015).

Even decades after the end of legal racial segregation Guinier (2015) found great value placed on racial diversity because integration does not often naturally occur. In this way racial diversity in education is discussed as a way to appropriate goods from people of color (Squire et al., 2018; Warikoo, 2016). In one study many white individuals believed people of color should be admitted to higher education if it benefits white students and does not take any opportunities from them (Warikoo, 2016). Of course, the mere presence of racially diverse students does not translate into an integrated and equitable campus (Bourke, 2016). The aforementioned findings in this paragraph support scholarship, suggesting that despite the presence of students of color, HWI campuses often still embody hegemonic whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa,

2010). These findings highlight that even when strides toward racial inclusion and diversification have been pursued and achieved to some degree, it is often within systems and institutions that prioritize whiteness and benefits to white people.

Furthermore, many scholars point to the persistence of racial inequity and tensions as the white elite and the rest of the white population continue to have unique experiences of whiteness with varying levels of privilege (DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019; Leonardo, 2009; Mills, 1997; Takaki, 1993). Specifically, the perceptions of disenfranchisement among nonelite white people have historically and contemporarily resulted in racial animosity toward people of color (DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019; Takaki, 1993). The white elite and working-class white people have had very different economic and political experiences from each other in the United States (Takaki, 1993). When white people blame people of color for the circumstances of working-class white people rather than the white elite it has historically been effective in maintaining the status quo. Similarly, it has effectively normalized WPM propaganda which continues to propose the idea that people of color are the real economic threat to middle-class and working-class white people, not the white elite who disenfranchise both groups (Blazak, 2001; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020b; Simi et al., 2015). In the next section I will provide an overview of literature discussing how hegemonic whiteness can perpetuate racial inequity.

Hegemonic Whiteness

Although campuses generally abide by laws against discrimination, allegedly race-neutral campus policies can effectively discriminate (Guinier, 2015) and the campus can be unwelcoming to people of color (Cabrera et al., 2016; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Gusa, 2010; Mills, 1997). The privileges afforded to white people (e.g., trust, benefit of the doubt, sympathy,

protection) are often invisible to them and obvious to people of color on campus (Bourke, 2016; Irwin & Foste, 2021).

Furthermore, white students often experience HWIs more positively than their peers of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Some of the differential experiences according to race, have been attributed to the way white students are centered in the culture, space, and curriculum of the HWI (Cabrera et al., 2016). Racial centering of white students can lead to a lack of racial identity development or understanding of race relations for white students (Cabrera et al., 2016).

DiAngelo (2018) defined white fragility as an inability to recognize their contributions to or benefits from racism. DiAngelo contended that white fragility could be a common reaction among white individuals when their racial identities or racist contributions are discussed (DiAngelo, 2018). Other scholars recommend that new research regarding racism should examine structural forms of racism because research on individual, psychological attributes leading to racism is plentiful (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Choudhury, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Swim et al., 1995).

Other scholars concur that further research is needed to understand how the ethos of an environment affects race relations (Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020b). To further contextualize the place of the HWI I will now review extant literature regarding administrative responses as these relate to whiteness.

The Practice of Whiteness: Administrative Responses

Through hegemonic whiteness policies, institutional agents often privilege white students, faculty, and staff, deeming their needs appropriate and construing requests or complaints from racially marginalized groups as unjustified or demanding special treatment

(Warikoo, 2016). Scholars have argued that institutional responses to racism or hate speech may also prioritize white comfort, safety, and approval at the expense of people of color (Cole & Harper, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Johnson, 2019). When responding to student misconduct, the dominant ideology of colorblindness is often privileged (Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Colorblindness is the view that race no longer matters and we are in a post-racial society in which everyone is treated equally through the law (Haney-Lopez, 2006). This view persists despite empirical data showing disproportionate outcomes according to race in criminal justice education, healthcare, and financial systems.

Cole and Harper (2017) analyzed college presidents' responses to racial incidents and found some gave specific details, directly naming groups or individual perpetrators. Other presidents limited details about the misconduct of the group responsible for the misconduct or individuals involved by simply communicating a commitment to diversity (Cole & Harper, 2017). Administrators may acknowledge small groups or specific individuals as exercising racism but the conceptualization of racism on campus is usually limited to a small part of the campus community (Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper, 2012).

Publications and social media are among the few places where racial incidents are discussed, as many institutional administrators try to bury the issue and move past these events expeditiously (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015). This decision is often due to the threat of brand damage, such as Mizzou, which resulted in the loss of faculty, staff, and students (Shonekan, 2020).

Senior administrators are often blamed for inaction when racist misconduct occurs (Cole & Harper, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Shonekan, 2020; Squire et al., 2019). Some scholars criticized the actions of senior administrators but offered no framework for emancipation from

higher education as a system of oppression (Squire et al., 2019). For instance, Squire et al. wrote: “We argue that by engaging affective shifts in language, the administrators who authored these statements used emotional pleas as a way of not having to do anything further.” (2019, p. 122). Squire et al. (2019) also argued drawing on a legal framework offered senior administrators an “easy out” as a way not to take action. There is a wealth of information within Squire’s study to describe how practices of oppression have become entrenched in higher education systems.

Additionally, this scholarship highlights that there is often no action. However, this study does not fully recognize that the law binds senior administrators, and it is not just an individual choice to do what one thinks is moral. Therefore, the assertion that administrators are looking for an easy out or using emotion to do nothing, dehumanizes the administrators and suggests they lack moral courage rather than recognizing them as also subject to higher education systems of oppression.

Furthermore, Squire et al. (2019) offered no framework to humanize all in the community and overlooked opportunities to make non-performative statements about the community actionable. I argue Squire et al. (2019) findings are unactionable without proposing a new framework outside of the system of oppression that the authors describe. The assertion that administrators use emotion to do nothing lacks supporting empirical data and is oversimplified.

The previous assertion, in addition to a lack of recognition of the legal requirement placed on institutions and administrators, also vilifies the people who serve as administrators. Yet much literature alludes to the feeling that administrators lack the moral character to address racism (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Squire et al., 2019). The assertion that administrators simply lack moral character or courage decontextualizes the laws, fiduciary responsibilities, and systemic problems of racism in higher education and U.S. society.

From a fiduciary standpoint, public higher education institutions must uphold free speech to receive federal and state funding (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Public institutions such as the University of Maine receive the majority of their funding from state and federal governmental funding (Heller, 2011).

States spend as much or more than the federal government in support of higher education, including student financial aid and spending, university-based research, and other categorical aid. State funds are the most critical at public institutions in this country where they continue to represent well more than half of educationally related revenues despite some decline in their share of funding over the past several decades (Heller, 2011, p. 63).

What this means is that if universities violate free speech, they could stop receiving funding from federal and state governments, which would financially devastate the university and stop their ability to provide education to the community. Even interrupting the most egregious forms of speech will not necessarily protect the institution from a lawsuit and the potential loss of governmental funding.

For example, the Supreme Court has explained that “the Court in *Virginia v. Black* reaffirmed that “the First Amendment ... permits a state to ban a ‘true threat’” and defined a true threat as a statement “where the speaker means to communicate a serious expression of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular individual or group of individuals” (538 U.S. at 359). The Court then determined that intimidation may be included within the category of true threats, so long as the intimidation is limited to statements in which “a speaker directs a threat to a person or a group of persons with the intent of placing the victim in fear of bodily harm or death” (538 U.S. at 360.” (Kaplin & Lee, 2013, p. 1226).

Even in instances of physical violence against another individual, the Court found that it is not enough to prove someone is racist, but one must prove that an individual's racism motivated a crime. These laws and the cases associated with them signal to higher education institutions that they may face a lawsuit if they intervene in a case of hate speech. Furthermore, if they are found to have interfered with an individual's free speech, they could lose their federal and state funding. States also have a history of scrutinizing public higher education institutions and make funding a "political decision" (Heller, 2011, p. 63). Therefore, there is enormous financial risk in addressing hate speech on U.S. public higher education campuses. In the next section, I will discuss factors that further complicate the resolution and abolishment of hate on campus.

In controversial instances that have been deemed hateful, it's often difficult to ascertain what is a matter of personal psychology or a product of the environment. To draw on Blazak's (2001) work, assuming racism is a purely psychological problem ignores the environment of the institution. However, scholars also critique administrators' conceptualization of the environment as not racist (Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Scholars have highlighted administrators' claim racist rhetoric does not represent the campus (Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). These claims ignore that student misconduct comes from the members of the campus and, thus, reflects the institution itself (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007) even though their actions may be against the institution's purported ideals (Iverson, 2007; Iverson, 2012; Squire, 2017; Squire et al., 2019; Squire et al., 2018). The way administrators conceptualize misconduct guides the institutional response, particularly through the limited lens of policy (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Contextualizing Administrative Responses and Impact

Colleges are stuck in a quandary between upholding free speech and handling misconduct, often from students who promote views presumably antithetical to institutional goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Drawing from the literature, discussions of diversity and disciplinary action toward right-wing political groups aid in the recruitment and mainstreaming of the WPM propaganda (Belew, 2018). Those orchestrating the WPM may be capitalizing on the discomfort DiAngelo (2018) found many white people experience when hearing claims the United States is not equitable.

Efforts for inclusion, equity, and diversification continue at HWIs with backlash from white people in U.S. society (Bourke, 2016; Yancy, 2018) and the WPM (Belew, 2018). Disciplinary action for College Republicans' misconduct can serve as a WPM recruitment tool as they accuse higher education institutions of indoctrination, censorship, and denial of their right to free speech (Miller-Idriss, 2020). The WPM's views are propagated through some political student organizations such as the College Republicans (Kidder, 2017). Belew (2018) and Miller-Idriss (2020) underscored the danger of viewing misconduct (i.e., bigoted rhetoric and incidents) as anomalies and not recognizing it as part of the broader network of WPM. In sum, administrators' actions in any direction can incite conflict or campus unrest (Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Shonekan, 2020)

Limiting Factors: A Double Bind

Before discussing the limitations of higher education systems, I must first acknowledge that individual psychology has been identified as a factor influencing racial inequity through implicit bias (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Data from Harvard's Implicit Association Test found that 70% - 80% of individuals, regardless of race, hold a racial bias (Morin, 2015). Therefore, it is

likely many institutional leaders are operating from implicit racial biases that perpetuate white privilege and the oppression of people of color while touting egalitarian beliefs (Choudhury, 2015). However, systemic racism does not require a racist at the helm of the ship; the system just must operate uninterrupted (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin & Elias, 2013).

Some institutional policies, such as free speech at public universities, and narrowly defined student conduct policies, may contribute to the normalization of WPM views of the College Republican organizations (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Kaplin and Lee (2013) stated, “Issues regarding student protests and demonstrations remain among the most difficult for administrators and counsel, both legally and strategically” (p. 602).

Public institutions, such as the University of Maine, are required to uphold First Amendment rights, which allow free speech (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Although there are limitations depending on the context, an institution cannot limit speech because of disapproval of a perspective, even if it is a racist perspective; therefore, anyone can share their view if it does not incite violence. The term *hate speech* is used to label derogatory remarks such as epithets, slurs, insults, taunts, and threats; additionally, hate crimes have specific criteria under the *Clery Act* for which not all forms of hate speech apply (Center, 2018). WPM views can be communicated without uttering any of the hate speech listed above (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). For this reason, Kaplin and Lee (2013) explained the viewpoints undergirding hate speech have been “intertwined with the political correctness phenomenon on U.S. campuses” (p. 1224).

The idea of political correctness holds the connotation of being overly sensitive or unjustified in one’s feelings (Harper, 2012; Warikoo, 2016). That is to say, being able to determine what is hateful or not is complex for many of the reasons outlined in the previous literature on whiteness, racism, and communication (Belew, 2018; Goldstein Hode &

Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Kendi, 2019; Leonardo, 2009; Miller-Idriss, 2020 Mouffe, 2000; Bouvier, 2016)

In the midst of trying to determine how to classify speech and misconduct from a legal perspective, institutions are bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Even if a student is found guilty of misconduct, FERPA states students have the right to an education, and certain information within their academic and disciplinary records is confidential (Education, 2021). In these ways, although institutions may identify student behavior that goes against the purported institutional beliefs, campus leaders may not be able to respond by simply doing what they think is morally right. Institutional leaders must examine what is allowed under the law or risk litigation.

However, institutions tend to support free speech in public, high-stakes situations such as campus protests, or the invitation of a white supremacist to campus but tend to fire or dismiss faculty, staff, and students who post problematic statements—situations with lower threats of costly litigation (Johnson, 2019). Johnson (2019) contended free speech on college campuses should be situated in a context of political and racial strife to understand that free speech often protects those in the majority (i.e., white, cisgender, heterosexual, men) at the expense of marginalized populations. Potts (2022) concurred that laws are often structured to allow harm to occur and inflict harm as punishment.

Lastly, when responding to hate on campus, after the consideration of student privacy and legal obligations are ascertained, the question of unwanted press coverage is likely to emerge as a concern since recognizing racism on campus may put the institution in jeopardy (Shonekan, 2020). Scholars have critiqued higher education for not naming racism in their institutions (Harper, 2012) and higher education professionals for not naming racism in themselves (Bonilla-

Silva, 2014). However, in a time when admitting fault results in costly litigation (Kaplin & Lee, 2013), publicity that lowers donations, recruitment, and potentially federal funding (Shonekan, 2020, Kaplin & Lee, 2013), and the risk of more harm (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Johnson, 2019), are these requests from researchers realistic within our current systems of oppression? Likewise, these calls for reckoning (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 2015; Cole & Harper, 2017; Dancy et al., 2018; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper, 2012; Harper & Hurtado, 2007) do not offer a mechanism through which institutional leaders can admit to racism and not put the institution in jeopardy (Johnson, 2019; Shonekan, 2020). These limitations make it nearly impossible to implement inclusion-focused practices (Garces et al., 2021). Additionally, higher education scholarship does not identify this phenomenon of some College Republican misconduct as part of the broader problem of WPM (Belew, 2021; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Relying on legal approaches to addressing harm does nothing to prevent harm and has protected, justified, and legalized certain harm (Davis, 2018; Potts, 2022; Sered, 2019). The legal approach in which laws dictate what punishment should occur when harm happens (Kaplin & Lee, 2013) is a reactive approach to harm (Davis, 2018; Karp, 2018; Sered, 2019). Within higher education, in addressing instances of free speech and racism, the legal approach may perpetuate more harm (Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020). RJ offers a framework that aligns with the communication and understanding that some argue is needed to support democracy (Derrida, 2001; Mouffe, 1999, 2000), combat extremism (Blazak, 2001; Fahey & Simi, 2019; Simi & Windisch, 2020a, 2020b; Simi et al., 2015), and potentially, heal and prevent harm (Davis, 2018; Karp, 2018; Sered, 2019).

Summary

Due to those in the WPM targeting higher education campuses, WPM propaganda has been normalized through some College Republican organizations (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). As a complicating factor, efforts to combat College Republican misconduct may instigate reactionary WPM activity (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). College Republican misconduct has been reported to harm the campus but lacks empirical research. Higher education institutions have had difficulty in effectively responding to and squelching incidents of College Republican misconduct (Anderson, 2020; Kelderman, 2021). With the obliged legal responsibilities and pressures to present an inclusive campus, administrators have approached misconduct from a legalistic approach, with little success (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Johnson, 2019).

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the study that will address these gaps in the literature as conceptualized in the research questions that shift from a legalistic framework to a restorative justice framework.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The previous chapter reviewed scholarly research related to the following topics: hegemonic whiteness at historically white institutions (HWIs; Brunnsma et al., 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009), the white power movement (WPM) targeting higher education campuses (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020), the misconduct of College Republican groups, which is often protected by institutional policy (Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2017), and HWIs' administrators' difficulties in responding to College Republican misconduct (Johnson, 2019; Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Through this qualitative study, I utilized content analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. How was the community affected at one historically white institution in Maine following one institutionally recognized College Republican group sharing 15th-century Spanish war propaganda about Native Americans?
2. How restorative were the institution's responses?

Since traditional legalistic ways of handling College Republican misconduct have, by many accounts, not worked (Anderson, 2020; Kelderman, 2021), this study explored this assertion through scholarship. I employed a restorative justice (RJ) theoretical framework in this study to analyze how restorative the university administrators were in their response to the College Republicans. RJ offers a different paradigm from which to examine College Republican misconduct by centering on those who were harmed and looking for solutions.

Guiding Theoretical Framework

Restorative Justice (RJ) practices are based on practices from cultures around the world that hold a distinct worldview that we are connected to each other and are empowered to build and maintain our own communities. These worldviews predated colonization and have survived despite attempts to stomp it out. In this section, I will discuss the history of RJ, the ontological and epistemological views that underpin RJ, and how RJ practices operate differently than modern legalistic systems.

History

Restorative justice comes from indigenous ways of knowing (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). Restorative justice was introduced to mainstream Western culture in the 1970s in Canada (Schweigert, 1999). The term indigenous is sometimes used interchangeably with first people, Aboriginal, Native American, or people of the land (Smith, 2012, p. 7). In these ways indigenous has often been used to describe people in ethnic terms, referring to the heritage of people who lived on the continents of America, Africa, and Australia before colonization. However, indigenous has also been defined as a knowledge of one's environment and one's connection to the environment: land, plants, organisms, and people (Kimmerer, 2013). In this study, I refer to Indigenous people or traditions as those people from any part of the world, including the continents of America, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe, who understand the principle that we are connected to our environment and all the people of the world. Although restorative justice practices came from indigenous people, not all indigenous cultures had practices that aligned with RJ (Andreu-Darling, 2019).

RJ, as an indigenous practice, survived the brutality of colonization, which many innocent Indigenous peoples did not. Therefore, in using the practices of RJ that are meant to acknowledge and heal harm, it's necessary to acknowledge the harm that Indigenous people have endured for centuries (Smith, 2012). Additionally, acknowledging the indigenous roots of RJ may avoid culturally appropriating RJ practices (Davis, 2019; Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019; Ziff & Rao, 1997). Cultural appropriation was defined by The Writer's Union of Canada as "the taking— from a culture that is not one's own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge," which was in response to controversies over the use of elements of First Nations cultures by non-Natives (Ziff & Rao, 1997, p. 1). However, RJ practices existed in many parts of the world and are not exclusive to one community or culture.

RJ practices are not new but ancient and sacred (Davis, 2019; Gavrielides, 2011; Sered, 2019). These practices were common in many places such as Africa, America, Australia, and Europe (Consedine, 1999). RJ practices were common in many indigenous cultures, but not all. RJ practices pervaded spiritual, governmental, and human relations (Davis, 2019; Smith, 2012). For instance, in some indigenous African tribes, ubuntu encapsulates their ontological view of the world. *Ubuntu* means I am because we are, and we are because I am (Davis, 2019). The Lakota Sioux have a similar belief: *Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ*, which translates to we are all relatives (Davis, 2019).

In Ireland, the Brehon laws also aligned with restorative justice until English colonizers replaced the practice with colonial, biblical laws (Consedine, 1999). For instance, "The same practice of seeking reparation instead of the death penalty was also in use among the ancient Greeks, the Gauls, the Franks, the Swedes, the Danes, the Germans, and the Saxons" (Consedine,

1999, p. 134). These societies offer examples in which communities created support for the resolution of individual harms, not state and institutionally-sanctioned punishment for punishment's sake. Thus, with the spread of Christianity in Europe and the colonization of subsequent territories in the continents of Asia, Africa, America, and Australia, many of these practices have been lost and replaced with the modern criminal justice system. RJ practices were replaced with Christian Western laws in Europe during medieval times (i.e., approximately 500 AD – 1,500 AD) and expanded to other continents during colonization.

Foucault (1995) offered an etymology of the current criminal justice system in Western society. Foucault found that discipline and punishment were the goals of medieval governmental and judicial systems when handling crime. Foucault traced the development of public torture, executions, and imprisonment to modern-day practices of separation and surveillance.

Essentially, the idea was that if harm occurs then it is right and just to harm the person who committed the crime and this punitive brutality will prevent crime. Foucault identified that the goal of disciplining and punishing bodies was to make the person docile and compliant with their position within a system to benefit those governing the system (Foucault, 1980, 1995, 2010). Foucault found that Christian, Western criminal justice systems and educational systems aimed to subjugate the individual to be compliant within the dominant system.

Similarly, Jacques Derrida asserted the idea of sovereignty should not be given to the state in cases of harm since the state, in many cases, is not the one who is harmed (Derrida, 2001). Derrida concluded that sovereignty should remain with the person harmed to examine the harm and potentially explore forgiveness.

However, Foucault found the idea that harm requires punishment and suffering came from Christian views of repentance, for which punishment and harm were the only resolutions.

Gavrielides (2011) also found that during the medieval period the newly emerging Christian church in Europe was financially invested in moving societies to punitive systems of discipline that empowered Christianity and disempowered people. Therefore, these findings are meant to highlight that 1) RJ is an ancient and traditional practice for many around the world, 2) the institutionalization of punishment was achieved through political and religious organizations, and 3) ultimately, the widespread adoption of punitive systems that disempower people likely impacted individuals' ontological and epistemological conceptions of the world.

Ontology and Epistemology

Restorative justice is based on the mutual empowerment of individuals to share power and decision-making (Johnstone, 2014; Sered, 2019). If restorative justice practices focus on the well-being of the individual(s) for the good of the whole (Johnstone, 2014), colonial systems focus on disciplining the individual for the benefit of the few (Sered, 2019; Takaki, 1993). Many scholars analyze the origin of our society in the ways that some were privileged while others were made subservient due to gender, class, race, or religion (Foucault, 1980, 1995, 2010; Kendi, 2019; Sered, 2019; Smith, 2012). The colonial and modern systems in the U.S. have largely exacted power over, while the indigenous ways of being have established power with the community. Scholars have also noted that the systems, such as the criminal justice system or education, that are based on colonial world views legislate and justify their harm (Potts, 2022). Since the systems employ a worldview that harm requires more harm via punishment, harm is legalized, justified, and protected (Potts, 2022).

Restorative justice (RJ) is a practice based on the knowledge that we are all interconnected (Johnstone, 2014; Sered, 2019). Potts (2022) found that many philosophers

asserted that we need others to help us understand ourselves, especially in relation to harm. Specifically, viewing ourselves within a web with others gives one perspective that they would not have in solitude (Arendt, 2018). For instance, when one experiences guilt, this guides the person to understand themselves in relation to others. Separation of the individual from the community would push the individual to believe their limited view, perspective, thoughts, or experience is always correct. Arendt's description of people in a web of interconnected relationships, who need each other to understand themselves in relation to others, aligns with RJ. Arendt's description of conflict and community relations is similar to RJ's worldview based on harmony within community relations.

RJ's way of being and worldview is based on the idea of interconnectedness. RJ holds that our natural state of being is in harmony with all our relations. The goal of harmony is often referred to in RJ as being in right relation with the environment, and people (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). The teachings and practices of RJ focus on both preventing and healing harm to be in right relation (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). Johnstone expanded on this point to assert: "restorative justice is essentially a way of life we should lead; for instance, restorative justice is achieved when power-based relations are replaced with relationships structured in such a way that the needs of all are met" (Johnstone, 2014, p. 49).

The teachings of restorative justice are a form of precepts that offer guidance on how to live a restorative life (Johnstone, 2014). Johnstone underscored that how we consider and define crime or policy violation will impact the epistemology of the questions we ask. For instance, in many systems in the United States (i.e., criminal justice and education) we ask what law or policy has been broken (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). In restorative justice practices the question is: What harm has occurred (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019; Sered,

2019)? The human focus of the latter question shifts our responses toward healing and accountability rather than punishment. Therefore, teachings of restorative justice, which focus on healing harm and seeking justice, 1) examine first the harmed party's needs and potential healing, 2) seek accountability from the person who committed the harm and potential healing, 3) allow and encourage room for emotions from all involved to contribute to the process, and outcomes (Johnstone, 2014). In allowing room for emotions and human connections, the outcomes are focused on healing and accountability, not mandated, dispassionate punishments handed down without substantial community input, which is indicative of current legal approaches in the United States (Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Potts, 2022).

For instance, in cases that are adjudicated within higher education, the proceedings and decision-making are confidential with few stakeholders' input (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). In cases adjudicated in courts of law there are substantial limitations on what can be said and who is allowed to participate (Sered, 2019). Oftentimes, only those with institutionally appointed positions, such as attorneys, judges, or juries, are allowed to participate in prescribed and limited ways. Even the person harmed is extremely limited in their participation in the adjudication process (Potts, 2022; Sered, 2019). Nor is there a significant opportunity to pursue outcomes that might support the healing of the person who was harmed, or the person who committed the harm (Sered, 2019).

Restorative approaches offer a framework for the person who was harmed to determine what resolutions are needed in conjunction with the community. RJ also holds that the community is harmed when one of the members is harmed or harms another. Finally, RJ also allows an opportunity for the person who harmed to restore themselves within the community.

The comparison of RJ to dominant practices of U.S. legal and education systems may offer insights into the differential outcomes according to the respective practices.

Restorative Justice Practices

The paradigm that I describe as restorative justice was kept alive by Native American tribes and Māori people who were able to protect these practices in the face of colonization (Sered, 2019). Restorative justice focuses on being in right relation with our environment and community. Restorative justice is sometimes reduced to restorative conferencing by organizations and publications that focus on harm repair but not harm prevention (Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019). This myopic focus ignores that RJ is a way of living. Howard Zehr, a foundational restorative justice practitioner and scholar, conceptualized how individuals can live restoratively on a daily basis (Johnstone, 2014).

Zehr stated the following list of ways to live restoratively:

1. Take relationships seriously, envisioning yourself in an interconnected web of people, institutions, and the environment.
2. Try to be aware of the impact – potential as well as actual – of your actions on others and the environment.
3. When your actions negatively impact others, take responsibility by acknowledging and seeking to repair the harm – even when you could probably get away with avoiding or denying it.
4. Treat everyone respectfully, even those you don't expect to encounter again. Even those you feel don't deserve it, even those who have harmed or offended you or others.

5. Involve those affected by a decision, as much as possible in the decision-making process.
6. View the conflicts and harms in your life as opportunities.
7. Listen deeply and compassionately, to others, seeking to understand even if you don't agree with them.
8. Engage in dialogue with others, even when what is being said is difficult, remaining open to learning from them and the encounter
9. Be cautious about imposing your "truths" and views on other people and situations.
10. Sensitively confront everyday injustices, including sexism, racism, and classism. (as cited in Johnstone, 2014)

The recommendations for living restoratively underscore that RJ is first based on building and strengthening relationships. Restorative Justice Practices are organized in a three-tiered approach (Karp, 2019). The first tier focuses on building and strengthening relationships, the second tier focuses on harm repair and conflict resolution, and the third tier focuses on reentry for someone who is rejoining the community.

Tier one practices create a community in right relation that seeks to prevent harm. To create a community in right relation, everyone in the community should be engaged in tier one practices as a cultural foundation. The teachings set forth by Zehr are guidance to anyone interested in living a restorative life and potentially bringing more healing and connection to their experiences and community through tier one practices. Tier one practices can often be overlooked, as communities seek out RJ once harm has happened and community relationships have been neglected (Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019).

Within the second tier, the first teachings set forth by Johnstone (2014) highlight how systemic and institutional leaders can adjust their approaches through policy to consider harm to humans. This communitarian, humanistic view of RJ provides the opportunity for healing rather than reconceptualizing human harm as violations of laws or policies with required punishments. RJ holds the tension between recognizing harm, accountability, and offering an opportunity for healing to everyone involved. The humanity of the harmed party and the person who harmed them are central to the process.

RJ is, first and foremost, a worldview and way of being in right relation with others. When harm occurs, rather than punishment for punishment's sake, RJ seeks accountability from the person who committed harm. However, RJ foregrounds the needs of the harmed party first. Through the lens of RJ, it is acknowledged that harm can never be undone. Rather, through RJ, those who harm try to make things as right as possible for the person(s) they harmed. For instance, through individualized harm repair agreements, a person who harmed someone can offer reparations and commit to never committing this harm again (Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). After the needs of the harmed party are met, the healing of the person who did the harm is also addressed.

The current practices in the U.S. are based on a legal system that dictates what harm is allowed and what harm is not allowed or what harm is needed to punish harm that has occurred (Derrida, 2001; Potts, 2022; Sered, 2019). Legislation that rationalizes forms of harm, such as slavery and discrimination, is not legal in most places. Many countries have used the legal system to remedy injustice through legal protections offered by law and the criminal justice system (Bell, 2004; Bell, 1980; Kaplin & Lee, 2013). However, harm still happens.

Part of the reason that harms, such as violence, hate speech, or inequity, still occur is due to laws that reify an imperfect system (Bell, 2004; Bell, 1980; Delgado et al., 2017; Foucault, 1980, 1995, 2010) and subsequently justify harm (Potts, 2022; Sered, 2019). A legal approach is defined by rationalizations of what is wrong or right according to the law. In the legal approach, one questions what harm is allowed under the law, not how to interrogate, understand, and stop harm. A goal of this research is to explore alternative approaches to harm that do not rely on structures of colonization that legislate, inflict, and justify harm (Potts, 2022; Sered, 2019).

In the United States, this legal system engenders and protects the cycle of harm. People who deviate from the identities of white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, documented, able, and Christian are disproportionately impacted by the legal systems' harm cycle (Alexander, 2010; Bell, 2004; Bell, 1980; Guinier, 2015; hooks, 1994; Sered, 2019). Conversely, RJ is a paradigm that interrupts the harm cycle and offers an opportunity for healing; restorative justice gives sovereignty back to the individual harmed and the community (Davis, 2019; Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019). Therefore, in this study when harm from the white power movement (WPM) is protected by free speech, restorative justice may be a means to offer a paradigm shift to interrupt the harm cycle.

In the next section, I will outline the research design and methodology of this study.

Research Design and Method

I chose content analysis because it meets the epistemological needs of my study by allowing for the examination of language through written, verbal, and visual representations. The data in this study are social media posts, articles, letters, and emails from the University of Maine College Republicans and the administration. Content analysis is considered a flexible

analysis for analyzing communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) indicated, “Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Kassirjian (1977) noted the following premise: content analysis allows the researcher to analyze the message, not the individuals who constructed the message. However, content analysis allows the researcher to analyze the formation and transmission of societal standards. Likewise, content analysis allows the researcher to:

... identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicator; determine the psychological state of persons or groups; detect the existence of propaganda; describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications; reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions, or societies; reveal the focus of individual, group, institutional, or societal attention; and describe trends in communication content. (Weber, 1990, p. 9).

Content analysis allows the researcher to discover themes to understand the data. Within this study, content analysis allowed for the analysis of the reported community impact of the College Republican misconduct and an analysis of how restorative or punitive the University of Maine’s response was.

There are two types of content analysis: deductive and inductive. Deductive is appropriate when there is existing research and theory on a phenomenon. Inductive content analysis is appropriate when there is limited research on a phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I used inductive content analysis to answer question one, as there is limited research examining College Republicans in general (Kidder, 2015, 2017), particularly related to their

misconduct (Johnson, 2019); I used inductive content analysis to analyze how their misconduct may have impacted the community.

I used deductive content analysis because there is plentiful research within the field of restorative justice in relation to punitive and restorative approaches. I employed the University of San Diego's Restorative Justice continuum to analyze how restorative or punitive the University of Maine's response was. Olson and Sarver (2022) contended restorative practices must be analyzed qualitatively as there is an ontology and epistemology that influence how authentically restorative practices are implemented. These researchers used their restorative index to assess whether programs titled restorative justice are practicing RJ authentically or co-opting RJ to relabel a punitive system (Olson & Sarver, 2022). The restorative index does not allow for the analysis of restorative versus punitive systems within a continuum. Therefore, many institutions have created restorative continuums to analyze how punitive or restorative institutional approaches are to cases of harm. The University of San Diego is, arguably, the leader of restorative justice practices within the United States. Therefore, I selected the University of San Diego's restorative continuum for this study. I used the restorative justice continuum from the University of San Diego in this study, which was developed under the guidance of Dr. David Karp. Dr. David Karp is one of the foremost experts in restorative justice in the world.

The Problem

Since 2016, there have been increasing media reports of misconduct from College Republicans, which have been deemed harmful (Mangan, 2018, 2019; Quintana, 2017, 2018; Tanner, 2020). What the media has deemed harm, hate, or misconduct, scholars have documented as WPM propaganda that has been normalized by some College Republican groups

(Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Although this is recognized by scholars within sociology, there is very little research on College Republicans within higher education (Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2015, 2017).

Since higher education professionals are largely drawing from the field of higher education scholarship, it is an area that needs research. This research could offer insights as to why some College Republicans see their organizations as an escape from the broader campus (Kidder, 2015; 2017). However, since the 2016 presidential election, the College Republicans have been making headlines for their misconduct (Kelderman, 2021; Mangan, 2019; Quintana, 2017). Scholars have also found that outside political organizations have targeted higher education and written playbooks for College Republican organizations to disrupt the campus (Binder & Wood, 2012; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Additionally, scholars have documented that hegemonic whiteness permeates many HWIs (Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009). Whiteness is ubiquitous with historically white institutions and thus privileges white people while disenfranchising people of color. Higher education institutions have been created through colonial systems that inscribed a white, male, Christian worldview (Smith, 2012; Takaki, 1993; Thelin, 2011; Wright, 2007). Higher education discipline is modeled after colonial systems of punishment (Burton, 2005). These white worldviews (Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009) and punishment-based systems of discipline persist in many higher education institutions in the United States in 2023 (Kaplin & Lee, 2013; Karp, 2019)

Scholars note that administrators often struggle to respond to misconduct (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Discipline is viewed through the lens of law and policy violations (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). Free speech is protected at public higher

education institutions. Therefore, any speech that does not invoke violence is permissible. Free speech protects what is commonly referred to as hate speech, rhetoric that places certain populations as superior to others. However, many institutions also have diversity, equity, and inclusion goals aimed at supporting the community and marginalized groups on campus (Iverson, 2012). In these situations, administrators are stuck in a double bind - they must allow free speech regardless of the viewpoint, but by doing this, they are violating their own diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. Thus, their options to respond are very limited.

The University of Maine is an ideal site to understand the impact of College Republican misconduct. In most cases institutional emails regarding misconduct are confidential. However, in this case we can see behind the proverbial curtain to understand part of the process the University followed. The emails from University of Maine administrators regarding the College Republicans were made public through the Freedom of Access Act, offering unique insights into administrative decision-making and protocols. Access to administrative processes and correspondence is almost always confidential and not available for research. Thus, this case is ideal for this inquiry because of the public sharing of administrative emails. I employed the University of San Diego's Restorative Justice continuum to analyze how restorative or punitive the University of Maine's response was.

I analyzed several data sets, including articles from the local news and national higher education periodicals, social media posts, and emails from the University of Maine College Republicans and University of Maine administrators. Tweets, Facebook posts, and articles are analytical data because the data already exists and are public. In total, I analyzed 2,074 units of data. Emails between administrators regarding the College Republicans were released under the Maine Freedom of Access Act and are public data.

In the next section, I offered an overview of the data that made the University of Maine an ideal site selection for the study.

Site Selection

This study is centered on the events that engaged the entities of the University of Maine College Republicans and the University of Maine administration during the 2019–2020 academic year through the campus controversy from the University of Maine College Republicans. This case was selected for several reasons. This case, drawing on Belew (2018), Miller-Idriss (2020), and Binder and Wood (2012), exemplified how College Republican misconduct can cause disruptions to the campus and normalize bigoted views under the guise of just being conservative.

Cases similar to this have occurred when College Republicans or other right-wing political organizations share various forms of propaganda, inviting confrontational extremists to campus, and the perception of condemnation from the campus stokes the public debate via media (Belew, 2018; Binder & Wood, 2012; Miller-Idriss, 2020). However, scholarship has detailed the reasons why institutions of higher education must support free speech and maintain the confidential nature of handling misconduct (Johnson, 2019; Kaplan & Lee, 2013). In this case, some of the information that is usually kept private when addressing misconduct was made public. Therefore, this case offers similar events to those identified as highly problematic in higher education literature with a unique opportunity to understand some of the administrations' communications and potential processes.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study included archival data from the public domain. I collected four categories of data: 1,650 social media posts, 408 emails, 13 publications, and three letters to the community. These data pertain to social media posts from the University of Maine College Republicans, emails concerning the College Republican misconduct that were released under the Freedom of Access Act, publications, and letters to the campus from students and administrators.

Social Media Posts

For social media, I collected 59 tweets from the University of Maine College Republicans from August 2019 to May 2020 because this time encapsulates a tumultuous period between College Republicans and the University of Maine administration (Anderson, 2020). To collect the tweets and Facebook posts, I logged out of my personal Twitter and Facebook accounts to ensure I only collected public data. The University of Maine College Republicans' Facebook and Twitter pages from Fall 2019–Spring 2020 were set as public accounts; therefore, anyone can see the tweets or Facebook posts. I used the software Octoparse to collect tweets from the College Republicans' Twitter handle. I selected the author page template that meets the needs of my data collection and entered the Twitter handle into the appropriate textbox. The author page template collects tweets. To limit the time frame, I manually edited the data after collection. Facebook changed its permissions for web scraping between the time of the design of this study and the data collection of Facebook posts in May of 2023. I did not collect the Facebook posts but analyzed the posts on the Facebook platform. I was able to access the Facebook posts without logging in by pressing the escape button once on the UMaine College Republicans Facebook Page. Facebook posts were also marked public by the globe symbol on each post.

Emails

Through the Maine Freedom of Access Act, emails pertaining to College Republican misconduct are already available. Michelle Malkins requested these emails through the Freedom of Access Act and previously shared these emails on social media. The University of Maine general counsel has confirmed these emails are public data and lawful to analyze in this study (Personal communication Amon Purinton, April 1, 2022). Emails retrieved under the Maine Freedom of Access Act are considered public data so there was not any recruitment of participants for these data.

Publications

Articles regarding the University of Maine College Republicans during this time period were published in *Inside Higher Education*, *The Bangor Daily News*, *The Portland Press Herald*, *News Center Maine*, *Maine Public*, *The College Fix*, *The Sun Journal*, and *The Maine Campus*. Another article was later published by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, but it was after the time-period of this study. Students and staff gave interviews to these news outlets and these data sets are publicly available. I downloaded these articles from the respective publications to my laptop.

Letters to the Community

I also analyzed any communication released by the University of Maine administration during this time, including letters to the community. Some students also shared opinion pieces in campus newsletters with the community. These messages are available through the Fogler Library. I downloaded copies of these messages to my laptop.

In research examining public data, some researchers choose to include identifying information such as Twitter handles or Facebook page titles, although others choose to omit the Twitter handle for the anonymity of the Twitter user (Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Rosenbaum, 2018).

Although public Twitter accounts and public Facebook accounts are public data and do not require the researcher to protect the anonymity of the social media user (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), I have previously chosen to “paraphrase some of the more egregious tweets to protect the humans behind the tweets” (Dyer & Hakkola, 2020, p. 130). The events and people involved with this case are already public knowledge; therefore, I will not be able to provide anonymity to individuals involved with this study, and confidentiality will not be possible. Even if I withheld their names, they would likely be identifiable in the study as all the emails are public.

Data Analysis Strategy

I chose content analysis because it meets the epistemological needs of my study by allowing for the examination of language through written, verbal, and visual representations. Content analysis allows for the examination of manifest and latent communication (e.g., word choice, signaling importance, propaganda, and communication of societal norms (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Weber, 1990). Content analysis is considered a flexible analytical tool for analyzing communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon indicated, “Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Content analysis can be both inductive and deductive (Elo &

Kyngäs, 2008). Both inductive and deductive content analysis follow the same phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this study, I used inductive content analysis to answer question one and deductive content analysis to answer question two.

Elo and Kyngäs (2008) noted, “Inductive content analysis is used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when it is fragmented” (p. 107). Because I am foregrounding the novelty of the College Republicans’ misconduct (Belew, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2015, 2017; Miller-Idriss, 2020) in question one I engaged in inductive content analysis. Deductive content analysis is appropriate when there is substantial research on a topic with developed theories or frameworks. Restorative Justice is a well-developed field of study and practice (Davis, 2019; Karp, 2019; Sered, 2019). Therefore, deductive content analysis is appropriate to answer question two. In this study, I analyzed 59 tweets, 1,576 Facebook posts, eight articles, and three letters to the campus. In the next sections, I will further detail my data analysis process.

Preparation

The preparation involves the researcher deciding 1) what the unit of analysis is for the study and 2) what types of content were analyzed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The first step in preparation is to determine the unit of analysis. In this study, the unit of analysis is the individual communications. The types of content are social media posts, emails, publications, and letters to the community. The unit of analysis should be “... large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to be kept in mind as a context for meaning unit during the analysis process” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). Content analysis scholars recommend texts such as letters are appropriate to meet the standards listed above (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In this study, I also analyzed the manifest and latent content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis allows the researcher to analyze what is said, but also what is not said, how it is said, what language or propaganda may be used, or, in this study, what images may be used to communicate meaning. Analysis of the latent communication is important to this study because communication regarding College Republican misconduct and administrative responses often communicate ideologies, in part, through latent communication (Belew, 2018; Kidder, 2015, 2017; Johnson, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

The second part of the preparation phase is making sense of the data as a whole. After collecting data, I then analyzed the data as a whole to familiarize myself with the content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Before analyzing the data, the researcher must immerse themselves in the data to understand the whole. This is done by reading through the data several times before beginning to analyze it. Who, what, when, where, and why questions help the researcher make sense of the phenomenon before analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Organizing

To answer the first question of this study, I used conventional content analysis which is inductive (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Inductive approaches to content analysis are appropriate when there is little or fragmented knowledge known about the phenomenon. Because there is limited and fragmented literature regarding how the community is affected by College Republican misconduct, inductive content analysis is appropriate to answer question one. In this study, inductive content analysis progressed from the preparation phase to selecting the unit of analysis, making sense of the data (familiarizing oneself), followed by the organizational phase. The organizational phase of inductive content analysis in this study

included the following progression: open coding, creating coding sheets, grouping, categorization, abstraction, and reporting.

To answer question two of this study, I used deductive content analysis. Deductive content analysis is appropriate to answer question two because there is established research within the field of restorative justice analyzing restorative approaches to misconduct. Similarly, to the inductive approach, to answer question two I began with the preparation phase by selecting the unit of analysis, making sense of the data (familiarizing oneself), followed by the organizational phase. In the organizational phase of deductive content analysis, I used the University of San Diego's restorative continuum as a structured matrix. The data were analyzed and coded for correspondence within the categories. The categories were then reported in the findings.

Inductive approach

In this qualitative inquiry, I engaged in a process of inductive content analysis to categorize the data into themes of potential preliminary categories and identify how the themes may be interconnected (Creswell, 2007; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I started to answer question one by open coding the data into preliminary categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). "Open coding means that notes and headings are written in the text while reading it" (p. 109). I used NVivo to code the data. I then reviewed the preliminary categories to clarify, consolidate, and organize them (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

During data analysis, I engaged in the hermeneutic circle of inquiry (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I continuously analyze the pieces and whole themes of the texts

until no new themes are found (Creswell, 2007; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). By moving from the specifics of the phenomenon to the broad concepts of restorative justice, I created what Elo and Kyngäs call an abstraction, a conceptual map of categories that was established in the reporting phase.

Deductive Approach

When using deductive content analysis, a categorization matrix must be selected or created to code the data according to the categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). There are options for structured or unconstrained matrices to analyze the data. “When using an unconstrained matrix, different categories are created within its bounds, following the principles of inductive content analysis” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 110). I used a structured matrix because my question aligns with an existing model of restorative justice practices called the restorative continuum (see Appendix A). To answer the second question, I used the categories of the restorative continuum to code the data. This allowed me to retest the restorative continuum model within a new context.

In the analysis of both questions, I coded the data until data saturation occurred. Data saturation is a point at which no new information emerges that will add to the researcher’s understanding or explanation of themes (Creswell, 2007). For the Facebook data, the College Republicans produced a large amount of data. Data saturation occurred after reviewing 285 Facebook posts to understand the nature of the College Republicans rhetoric. I continued to analyze the remaining data to find additional pieces of information that pertained to the College Republicans’ relationship with the University of Maine. For instance, the rhetoric of the College Republicans was consistent throughout their Facebook posts from August 2019 – May 2020, but

there was new information that emerged regarding their activities, and their relationship with the University of Maine. After analyzing all the data, I moved to the reporting phase.

Reporting

In the reporting phase, I offered a conceptual map. A conceptual map usually consists of themes, which are typically organized into subcategories, categories, and abstractions to illuminate the topic by offering insights to answer the research questions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Dey (1993) highlighted that bringing together categories is not just grouping similarities but also comparing differences. In this study I examined how the community was affected by College Republicans' misconduct at the University of Maine through the lens of restorative justice. However, it is possible some data may not fit with the categories that emerge (Dey, 1994) related to existing literature on restorative justice. In this case I shared these findings. I make this decision because I would be remiss not to share anomalies that arise in data analysis, specifically, to understand how these anomalies may be examined to inform the fields of higher education and restorative justice. Especially because College Republican misconduct is an area lacking research (Johnson, 2019; Kidder, 2015, 2017), these anomalies may signal the need for future research. "The abstraction process continues as far as is reasonable and possible" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 110)

As stated before, content analysis served to elucidate the following research questions:

1. How was the community affected at one historically white institution in Maine following one institutionally recognized College Republican group sharing 15th-century Spanish war propaganda about Native Americans?
2. How restorative were the institution's responses?

Although the conceptualization of this study is based on extant literature, as a qualitative inquiry, I anticipated encountering surprises along the way for which the research design may need to be adjusted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One surprise I encountered was the restriction that Facebook has placed on web scraping. This made the data collection and analysis process much more challenging than I had anticipated. In the next section, I discuss trustworthiness considerations.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was built into all stages of the study, including data collection, data analysis, and presentation of findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Dependability in this study was increased through the convergence of evidence, the aforementioned frequency of convincing, and compatible answers (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). I ensured trustworthiness by providing a thick and rich description of the data (Creswell, 2007; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Merriam, 2002). The thick and rich description may allow for the transferability of findings to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Researchers can increase the reliability of the study by describing the analysis process, through which the connection between data and results is exemplified (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Likewise, appendices and tables can help demonstrate the links between data and results (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Elo and Kyngäs (2008) noted, “To facilitate transferability, the researcher should give a clear description of the context, selection, and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

For credibility, triangulation was built into the study by analyzing multiple data sets (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Triangulation is a way to find

regularities in the data by relying on multiple sources such as various tweets, Facebook posts, emails, letters, and articles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To increase internal validity and reliability I positioned myself in the study to clarify and self-reflect on my biases and identities. Likewise, to examine biases I wrote memos during data analysis to document my insights and feelings—particularly because I am a white person examining the topic related to race (see Appendix A; Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Data that do not pertain to the themes that emerged or are ambiguous were analyzed and shared. To increase credibility the ambiguity or anomalous nature of data was discussed in the findings (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As another means to increase credibility I also worked with a peer to debrief and reflect on the research process, procedure, findings, and biases (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, quotations were offered as a form of external validity to increase confirmability for the reader (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Positionality Statement

I came to this topic through coursework, dialogue, and life experience. As I began to understand the extensive research documenting injustice, racial discrimination, and the laws that limited responses, I wondered why I needed to get a Ph.D. to understand racism as a white woman. I am certain many people do not need a Ph.D. to recognize racism, but that was my path to a deeper understanding. This problem perplexed me—there is an abundance of evidence that racism exists, but many white people, including myself at one time, could still deny it. As I learned that race is socially constructed and it was constructed for political and economic reasons (Hill Collins, 2004), I was able to see my own context with new eyes.

As a child I believed that everyone was treated equally, and racism was a thing of the past. In my late teens I had formative experiences that shattered my worldview of a colorblind, egalitarian society. For example, as a high schooler I attended various political engagement opportunities, culminating in working on a campaign formally titled “An Act to Extend Civil Rights Protections to All People Regardless of Sexual Orientation.” When canvassing for the upcoming referendum, I remember letting a voter know I was calling to clarify the bill was about civil rights, not gay marriage, as had been argued by the Christian Civic League. The Christian Civic League aimed to overturn protections for the LGBTQ+ community. Some voters were in support of civil rights even if they were against gay marriage, while others told me unabashedly: “I think gay people should stay in the closet and die there” (Unknown, personal communication, Fall 2005).

Following these formidable experiences, I attended Saint Anselm College where I worked for CNN to assist the U.S. presidential candidates in the Democratic presidential debate. I met Wolf Blitzer, Larry King, John Edwards, and Hillary Clinton and had a brief conversation with Barack Obama. These experiences gave me a window into the political arena and an opportunity to question what was really happening in political discourse. Lastly, in my senior year of college, I interned for the Demers Group, a lobbyist firm in Concord, New Hampshire, where I saw how relationships dictated much of political affairs. However, my worldview was shattered through campus encounters with racism.

One night in my second year of college I was headed to a party with some friends. A few people in the group were football players. When the football players ran into some hockey players, a brief confrontation ensued. Some name-calling and pushing started but it was broken up by the sirens and lights of police officers in the distance. All the white kids ran - including

me. Although all the white kids ran, my friend Marcus, one of the football players and the only Black student in the group, planted his feet and waited for the police to brutalize him—a reaction I now know was to stay alive. When I saw he was the only one not to run, I turned around from the stampede of white kids, stood with him, and put my hands in the air. We watched a police officer run at us—really him—from a distance, shaking his mace. I started to scream: “He’s not doing anything. He’s not doing anything.” Eventually, Marcus joined in, exclaiming: “I’m not doing anything.” Although there was more racism on display in this event, I realized that night that racism existed and I could not rely on my own experiences to understand the world.

Therein lies the issue: As a white woman I do not know the experience of being racially oppressed, yet I benefit from it. Additionally, solving the issue of white supremacy cannot be the burden of those who are oppressed by it. I have gained insight into my positionality by watching other researchers with dominant identities examine oppression. I have listened to scholars such as Jackson Katz, who identifies as a man but analyzes masculinity to end the plight of sexism. In watching one of his talks I felt a spark of sexism from him and simultaneously wondered why I was mad at one of the few guys who was trying to help. In this way I realize that just because I am researching racism and I hope my work contributes to the end of racism, it does not exonerate me from exercising racism. Simultaneously, if I let my white racial identity paralyze me from action, I will excuse myself from responsibility and be complicit in white supremacy.

Freire (2017) said the oppressors cannot liberate themselves, yet the oppressed cannot be liberated without the oppressors’ liberation—we all need conscientization for mutual empowerment. Subsequently, I engage in this work of problematizing white supremacy and the construction of race because it is wrong (Freire, 2017); however, I am likely flawed with implicit bias, as are the majority of people (Choudhury, 2015). I do not state this to diminish my privilege

but to contextualize it and highlight the paradox that white people need to help end racism but are often socialized into whiteness, which is performed subconsciously (Cabrera et al., 2016; Mills, 1997).

I have found that critical whiteness studies is a useful framework to understand my identity as it relates to the ideology of race, and how my actions are racialized. CWS comes from the critical paradigm and draws from scholarship that has identified how the construction of race has privileged and oppressed individuals through the social categorization of races (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leonardo, 2009). CWS recognizes whiteness is not coterminous with skin tone, but whiteness had to be invented and adjusted concomitantly with historic events (Leonardo, 2009). CWS focuses on the critique of whiteness for transformation. CWS centers the analysis of race on the idea race is a social construct and white supremacy is the problem. Furthermore, CWS foregrounds race but allows room to analyze the intersectional identities and contexts entangled in whiteness (Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Foste & Irwin, 2020; Mills, 1997; Patel, 2015; Robbins & Jones, 2016a).

CWS can incorporate an analysis that recognizes that race matters, both historically and presently, because race is still a tool of social stratification and oppression. Leonardo (2009) noted, “However, that race matters does not suggest that society should continue existing in a racial form, that race should keep mattering” (p. 64). CWS scholars hold the tension between acknowledging the material consequences of race and the seemingly impossible task of trying to dismantle these consequences (Leonardo, 2009).

From traditional research approaches, I would state that I center white supremacy to problematize it and, simultaneously, problematize my own positionality as a white researcher aiming to dismantle white supremacy. However, within restorative justice we are sharing power.

We are experts in our own experiences and when we connect on the human level first to build community and trust one another, we can more effectively address racism (Davis, 2019).

Restorative justice recognizes the harm of racism while holding to the notions of healing and accountability.

With this consideration, I outline my identities further here. I am a white, middle-class, bisexual, able, cisgender, documented U.S. Citizen, and thirty-five-year-old woman. Therefore, many of my identities are privileged. I have never been oppressed by racism. In fact, I know I have perpetrated colorblind racism in the past, and on occasion, I probably still do despite my intentions to act otherwise. Therefore, I come to this research as an imperfect ally. I am not able to liberate people of color, nor do I intend to speak for them. I will conscientiously work to eliminate or mitigate my defensiveness, entitled desire to understand or find absolution, or any narcissistic guilt. Rather, my purpose here is to use my privileged identities to bring attention and credence to the problem of racism; thus, making room for people of color's efforts of liberation. Specifically, I aim to problematize the dominance of whiteness and entrenched systems of domination. I conduct this research as an outsider who must constantly keep my biases in check so as not to perpetuate the inequities I am trying to problematize and dismantle. Lastly, it is pertinent to note I was a graduate student and worked at the University of Maine during the time of this study.

Implications

This study offers an analysis of how the community is affected by the misconduct of College Republicans. There is limited research on the College Republicans and less on their misconduct. Higher education administrators appear to be in a double bind when addressing

College Republican misconduct as they attend to seemingly contradictory expectations from laws, policies, commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a responsibility to ensure safety and community on campus. Research has indicated many HWIs embody campus cultures of hegemonic whiteness in which minoritized groups' needs are often not met (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009; Warikoo, 2016). Administrators play a key role in funding and advocating for programs, policies, and practices that create environments that can be dominated by whiteness or strive for inclusion (Squire et al., 2018). Likewise, administrators are key decision-makers when College Republican misconduct happens on campus (Johnson, 2019).

The formula for College Republican misconduct has been outlined by scholars and incited by political interest groups (Belew, 2018; Binder & Wood, 2012; Miller-Idriss, 2020). This study offers an opportunity to reexamine the way we define the problem and how we approach the problem through restorative justice practices. Johnson (2019) found the College Republicans' event on campus caused significant harm to the campus, especially for campus community members holding marginalized identities. Similar harm was also reported by news outlets in the case of the University of Maine (Anderson, 2020; Tanner, 2020). These reports highlight the impact College Republican misconduct may have on a community. This study offers an opportunity to examine the misconduct of the College Republicans from the lens of restorative justice through which we stop asking what is allowed or not allowed under policy regulations, but we begin to assess what harm has occurred, what the community's needs are, and how to prevent it in the future.

Summary of Chapter Three

Despite an abundance of evidence in higher education demonstrating the problem of hegemonic whiteness (Brunsma et al., 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2017; Gusa, 2010; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Robbins & Jones, 2016b) and some recognition of College Republican misconduct, there seem to be no solutions as of yet that address harm and healing (Belew, 2018; Kelderman, 2021; Miller-Idriss, 2020). This is a topic that requires scholarly inquiry.

This qualitative study will offer an understanding of how a community is impacted at one HWI when College Republicans engage in misconduct that is also legally protected as free speech. Likewise, I will analyze the approach the University of Maine administration took in addressing the College Republican misconduct, not from the legalistic perspective, which offers seemingly no practical solutions (Kaplin & Lee, 2013), but from a restorative justice approach which offers the opportunity to interrogate the policies, practices, and system itself.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The University of Maine College Republicans were cited as sharing racist, xenophobic, nationalist, and hateful speech by news publications such as Inside Higher Ed., the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, The Bangor Daily News, and the University of Maine's publication the Maine Campus. In this study, I collected data from August 2019 – May 2020, I offer a timeline of the event in Appendix B, but I will be analyzing the data through themes rather than the chronological timeline. Therefore, there are instances in which I will share the same quote or discuss an event multiple times to analyze it through the various themes. Publications, and those involved with the academic year-long conflict at the University of Maine identify the sharing of 15th century Spanish war propaganda as a significant moment in the relationship between the College Republicans and the University of Maine campus. Through this study I found that this shift likely occurred because it moved the primarily internal conflict of campus community members into a primarily public conflict via social media and mass media.

The incident that was cited as the starting point for the campus controversy was a Facebook post on October 4th, 2019 (Appendix C). The post with the accompanying images was said to be deleted but the caption was documented by Tanner (2020), and it appears to be identical to the College Republicans post that was publicly still available as of September 8, 2023. The College Republicans wrote the following in their rejection of Indigenous Peoples' Day, in an October 4, 2019, post.

Thank you, Nick Isgro, for standing up to the Radical Left-Wing agenda that is being pushed by Establishment Republicans in Augusta with the help of the Left. The most successful tactic of Communists is rewriting history and destroying our heritage. We must not forget the brutal societies that Christopher Columbus and other explorers

discovered in America. These societies [*sic*] were corrupted by ritual sacrifice and cannibalism. The bible [*sic*] is actually full of examples just like the Aztecs and we should be giving them praise? I do not think so.... (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, October 4)

This statement from the UMaine College Republicans employs a colonialist idea that the peoples of America were discovered by centering Europeans in this narrative and erasing thousands of years of people, culture, and community (Smith, 2012). This perspective erases the wealth of knowledge held by indigenous people that were connected to their environments and communities (Davis, 2019; Gavrielides, 2011; Smith, 2012). This statement also echoes two white power movement (WPM) ideas: replacement theory and a conspiracy theory that the U.S. government is being taken over.

The first is replacement theory, the WPM idea that white people are being replaced by people of color (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Replacement theory is exemplified when they stated that the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day is *destroying our heritage*. It also connects to another WPM conspiracy theory that the U.S. government is being taken over, in this case labeling left-wing politicians and even some establishment Republicans as communists.

The reference to Indigenous Communities as brutal societies generalized some practices, such as sacrifices to all indigenous societies. This is historically inaccurate (Gavrielides, 2011). This was not the practice of all Indigenous societies. Additionally, this is only a partial telling of history. The assertion that history is being rewritten is inaccurate. A more accurate telling of history would highlight that some practices in the continent of America included harm; however, there were extensive practices of maintaining right relations with the community and the environment, what we now call restorative justice practices.

The College Republicans' selective telling of history also ignores that the common practices of colonists toward communities they conquered were domination, war, genocide, sexual assault, and enslavement. Furthermore, during this same time period, the rulers who sent Christopher Columbus to explore were known as the Catholic Kings who institutionalized the Spanish Inquisition, which allowed for the murder and torture of non-Catholics or those suspected to be non-Catholic (Ryan, 2023). Therefore, this post and its portrayal of historic and contemporary events was inaccurate.

The University of Maine did not detail all of the harm in this post but offered a general statement about the content. A letter to the campus community from the University of Maine's Dean of Students, Dr. Robert Dana, and President Joan Ferrini-Mundy described it as a Facebook post that used "... 15th-century Spanish war propaganda to dehumanize indigenous peoples, implying all indigenous peoples of the Americas are brutal savages." It was the impetus for University of Maine administrators to finally address the College Republicans' white power movement (WPM) rhetoric. Once the administration addressed the issue publicly, attention from social and mass media ensued.

The College Republicans' controversial post sparked public debate about free speech and hate speech on campus, within Maine, and nationally. The College Republicans had a significant social media following on Instagram and Facebook. In a Facebook video, the Vice President of the College Republicans, Jeremiah Childs, stated that they had hundreds of thousands of views each month (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, March 2). "The group's Facebook page had about 400,000 views in December, Childs said." (Anderson, 2020, para. 8). This significant influence caused the controversy to spiral throughout the Maine community and beyond.

The College Republicans expressed a desire to instigate liberals and their campus, which they perceived as liberal. This desire to instigate liberals likely resulted in their invitation of controversial speakers such as Larry Lockman, and Michelle Malkins, who has ties to neo-Nazis and holocaust deniers. The College Republicans' association with antisemites eventually precipitated the club's faculty advisor, Amy Fried, to resign in November of 2019. However, because the speech of the College Republicans was largely on social media, in the public domain, it was protected as free speech, and it was able to spread quickly through the campus and beyond to local Maine communities and national news. Therefore, in this instance, the harm of the College Republicans' rhetoric immediately involved many beyond the University of Maine campus community. However, faculty, students and staff shared that this was not the first instance of the College Republicans engaging in dehumanizing rhetoric (Anderson, 2020).

In the next sections, I will analyze the College Republicans' rhetoric to contextualize the trend in their online engagement, and how this impacted the University of Maine community. However, before I analyze the College Republicans and later the University of Maine administrators, I need to highlight that a restorative justice framework aims to humanize all. Although I name individuals who have been publicly identified previously and name the harms these individuals caused, I do not do this to condemn them or ostracize them but to humanize them, and those who were harmed. The truth and storytelling of restorative practices offer hope that we, as a community, institutions, and society, will be able to recognize the humanity of all involved to produce a more united and peaceful society based on truth, trust, and healing.

Embedding White Power Movement Rhetoric: Hiding in Plain Sight

The College Republicans' rhetoric aligned with the white power movement by relying on dehumanization, reverse racism, and plausible deniability and vague messages. By using these tactics, the College Republicans were able to share harmful rhetoric and reframed it as not racist, not harmful, truth telling, and just conservative. I will explain these tactics and then offer a sampling of the type of rhetoric the College Republicans were sharing between August 2019 – May 2020. I offer this analysis to contextualize the campus relationships in order to set the stage for answering the two research questions in this study.

The first tactic used by the College Republicans is vague messages and plausible deniability. By using vague and plausibly deniable messages, and symbols, the College Republicans, at times, hid their bigotry. For instance, vague or plausibly deniable statements may have two meanings or interpretations. Through vagueness and plausible deniability, individuals can share bigoted information and simultaneously deny that it is bigoted. However, regardless of the intent, by sharing WPM rhetoric the impact is dehumanization and harm.

The College Republicans used a second tactic, reverse racism, to position white, cisgender, heterosexual, documented, Christian men as the true victims of racism, not groups who have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. By claiming reverse racism, they are positioned as the victims of racism, not the aggressors.

The third tactic used by the College Republicans was dehumanization. What I refer to in this study as the white power movement relies on exclusion and dehumanization to establish hierarchies and move society toward harm. “Dehumanization refers to language and beliefs that position entire groups of people as subhuman or less than human.” (Miller-Idriss, 2020, p. 6).

Miller Idriss asserted that dehumanization is the cornerstone of what Belew (2018), and I refer to as the WPM.

One common way to dehumanize a group is to equate them with animals (Miller-Idriss, 2020). By equating people with animals, it can convey a message of dehumanization without having to overtly call people non-human, and therefore, deserve less than real humans or even deserve harm. The next sections, document some examples of how the College Republicans used these three tactics to forward WPM views and continue to eschew claims of bigotry.

Plausible Deniability

Many of the College Republicans tweets used hashtags such as #Trump and #Americafirst. America First is a slogan that originated with the Ku Klux Klan and was made popular again by Donald Trump (Gantt Shafer, 2017). This statement is not racist on the surface. By that, I mean that America First does not use any slur and may even convey a message of patriotism. However, the use of these statements historically and contemporarily to dehumanize groups according to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or documentation status conveys racism, transphobia, homophobia, islamophobia, antisemitism, and xenophobia through apparently neutral terms.

For instance, the College Republicans tweeted the okay symbol by itself on September 4, 2019, a hand gesture that has been designated as a hate symbol which is meant to represent white power (Allyn, 2019). The College Republicans used plausibly deniable symbols such as the okay sign to communicate messages that align with the WPM's usage of the okay symbol. The hand gesture has historically meant okay but has been commandeered as a white power symbol. By commandeering the symbol conservatives and WPM individuals can instigate liberals into

calling the symbol racist. Once liberals call it racist the conservatives and those in the WPM then deny that it has any ties to racism and claim it only means okay. This tactic positions liberals as irrational and unjustified. The College Republicans often expressed their desire to instigate liberals, or the University of Maine campus that they perceived as liberal. This tweet from September 7th, 2019, exemplified this desire to instigate and offend liberals: “I think our next meeting we should all order Chick-fil-a and ask Drew Brees to come. Maybe the leftists heads will explode from all the "anti-LGBTQ" things at once. Or people complaining could grow up and eat a great chicken sandwich. #mepolitics #leadright #trump #trump2020 #usa <https://t.co/xY20UBFtYw>” (@umainecr). The College Republicans oscillated between being openly instigative and sharing messages that were vague or plausibly deniable. Through this post, it highlights that the College Republicans understood they could communicate anti-LGBTQ stances through symbols, and then deny the association.

Similarly, vague messages also offer room for plausible deniability (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). The College Republicans posted images of Pepe the Frog, a cartoon character that is meant to represent white power and is connected to the Gryopers group, a WPM organization (Miller-Idriss, 2020). This frog is another plausibly deniable symbol taken directly from WPM propaganda. In an August 17, 2019, Facebook post, the College Republicans shared an image of Pepe the Frog with a warning about the threat of liberals to freedom. In addition to plausible deniability and vague messages, the College Republicans also used reverse racism as a tactic.

Reverse Racism

In other examples, the College Republicans engaged race through reverse racism. In their social media posts, they eschewed allegations of racism by claiming women of color are the true

racists. This tactic is called reverse racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). By claiming reverse racism white people, and often white men, position themselves as the real victims of racism and any call for accountability or racial equity is racist. In the following quote the College Republicans targeted four women of color in government by sharing a Facebook post with the images and names of the squad: Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib. The post read, “DEMOCATS WE’RE NEW, BOLD, AND WE HATE YOU. We Hate Whites, Jews, Christians, Conservatives, Republicans & Patriots. We believe in Climate Change, Reparations, Abortion after Birth, Open Borders, Banning All Guns, Repealing the 2nd Amendment” (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, August 21). This rhetoric misrepresents calls for equity, inclusion, and harm repair, and distorts it into hatred. It also marries together racism, sexism, and the idea of replacement theory, which aligns with white power movement (WPM) rhetoric. By positioning liberal politicians as irrational, unjustified, or hateful, they can be used to undermine support for liberal politicians and policy in general.

The college republicans furthered their argument that White men are the victims of equity and inclusion in an October 2nd tweet: “Ah the evil white men. Blatant racism that I'm sure will never see the nightly news. What if it was the other way around and only white people could talk? 2019 is a crazy year to be alive. #mepolitics #leadright #trump #trump2020 #maga #usa <https://t.co/KIc3HIVTV5>” (@umainecr). These claims of being the innocent victim persisted despite regularly positioning people of color and immigrants as criminals, non-human, and misrepresenting calls for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The College Republicans also denied any connection between rhetoric and subsequent harm. On August 5th, 2019, the UMaine College Republicans tweeted: “@MrDavidGrant Unless Trump directly called for violence, rhetoric doesn't incite violence.” (@umainecr). In this tweet

the College Republicans are asserting that rhetoric is not responsible for action. This stance was also deployed to protect themselves under free speech when others were being harmed by their rhetoric.

Dehumanization

The College Republicans also used dehumanization tactics. The Vice President of the College Republicans, Jeremiah Childs, described his university as inhabited by vipers in a Facebook video introducing Michelle Mallkins (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, January 17). In another Facebook video he described the university's administrative approach to discipline as a Kangaroo Court (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, February 17). The reference to vipers incites a feeling that one must protect oneself, while the reference to kangaroos inspires a feeling of disorder or a feeling of lack of intellectual application of policy. Effectively, both statements project the idea of dehumanization.

College Republicans: The White Power Movement

The College Republican's rhetoric aligned with descriptions of white power movement (WPM) rhetoric. In this section I will discuss how the College Republicans' rhetoric aligned with WPM rhetoric through 1) aligning with extreme politicians, 2) attacks on diversity equity, and inclusion, 3) misinformation, and 4) ultimately harmed the campus and posed an unknown threat.

Similarly, to the WPM, the College Republicans prioritized the identity of white, cisgender, Christian, documented, heterosexual, men, which is the hallmark of the WPM. This prioritization of these identities was evident as their rationale was often contradictory depending on the circumstances, yet their criticism of equity and inclusion was steadfast. The College

Republicans consistently signaled Donald Trump as the moral leader to restore eras in which people with these identities were the totalitarian ruling class

Aligning with Extreme Politicians

Donald Trump was the president during the time of this study and some of the republican party's ideals supported WPM views. However, if a Republican individual, the Republican party, or a conservative news outlet appeared to be working against WPM ideals, then the College Republicans were quick to condemn them. This embrace or rejection of the republican party or individuals was dependent upon the utility of supporting and mainstreaming WPM ideals. The simultaneous embrace and rejection of the republican party is unique to the WPM (Miller-Idriss, 2020). The College Republicans demonstrated this same tendency. This rejection of established Republicans and government can signal some anarchist tendencies within the WPM, but it can also signal entryism. Entryism is a tactic used to insert WPM ideals into law and mainstream society. Through entryism, those who believe in the WPM hide their extreme views until they are entrenched in the system and can convert others to WPM ideals. Therefore, they present as just conservative or just Republican at first but then begin condemning fellow Republicans as too liberal and start to slowly introduce more extreme ideas (Miller-Idriss, 2020).

For instance, in some cases the UMaine College Republicans advocated for the Republican party as the only party that could maintain true American values and, in other instances, condemned the Republican party as corrupt. However, they consistently supported extreme politicians and figures such as Donald Trump.

For example, in a Facebook post, the College Republicans expressed their desire to see Alex Jones, an antisemitic conspiracy theorist, take the presidency over Mike Pence in case Donald Trump were to be removed (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, December 31). Their

embrace of a holocaust-denying conspiracy theorist and rejection of a conservative mainstream Republican signals the alignment of their rhetoric with extremism.

In the next tweet, the College Republicans directly criticize Republicans. On February 19th, 2020, the College Republicans tweeted: “The cancel culture “Republicans” strike again. Very low energy, very cringe!” (@umaineocr). Miller-Idriss (2020) highlighted that behaviors, such as rejecting mainstream Republicans for more conservative figures, signal an embrace of extremism. The College Republicans' rhetoric aligns with Trump and the WPM that embraced or rejected the Republican party based on their goals, which consistently protected white, cisgender, heterosexual, documented, Christian men at the expense of all other people.

The College Republicans continued to make their adoption of WPM rhetoric more apparent. In a Facebook post, the College Republicans praised Alex Jones, an antisemitic conspiracy theorist, for his understanding of the world. They stated: “Alex is usually the first person to expose corruption. I hope we can get him to come to our campus.” (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, August 14). In these ways, the College Republicans legitimized WPM messages and figures as conservative Republicans rather than WPM extremists.

Although the simultaneous embrace and rejection of the republican party are unique to the WPM, most frequently, their rhetoric relied on condemning people different than themselves who hold marginalized identities.

Reestablishing Dominance: WPM Attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I am offering a broader understanding of the College Republicans' rhetoric to help the reader understand that the sharing of 15th century Spanish war propaganda was not the only time that the College Republicans shared rhetoric in alignment with the white power movement. This

evidence is important to this study as it impacted community relations leading up to the campus controversy and demonstrated a deeper connection of the College Republicans to WPM rhetoric. The College Republicans consistently shared racist, xenophobic, homophobic, sexist, and transphobic messages via social media, which aligned with the WPM. In one Facebook post, the College Republicans shared an image of the Statue of Liberty with the following words: “Where does it say bring me hostile, freeloading, criminals waving their own flags?” (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, September 7). In this post, the College Republicans’ comment again aligns with WPM rhetoric that positions insults as truth-telling and vilifies historically marginalized groups. In this case, the College Republicans are vilifying immigrants. Like the WPM, the College Republicans do not use any sort of filter to euphemize their stance but directly call immigrants criminals, freeloaders, and hostile. In addition to immigrant groups the College Republicans also targeted other marginalized populations such as transgender children.

On October 7th, 2019, the College Republicans shared a meme in which they showed a child asking to do dangerous things three times. Each time the parent in the meme responds “no”. In the final section of the meme, the child states: “I want to cut off my genitals”. The parent then replies, “Whatever you say, honey. It’s your choice”. The College Republicans shared this with the following statement: “Parents need to start being parents again. Parents are not your friends, they are your parents to make sure you don't make life-altering [sic] changes at 5 years old because you feel a certain way. Science is real so start believing in it. #mepolitics #leadright #trump #trump2020 <https://t.co/3F7RKax83w>” (@umainecr).

The College Republicans reduced a complex topic to a meme. In this reduction they erased the complexity of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and Eurocentric societal gender norms down to a simple request from a child to cut off their genitals. In

positioning the request within other activities that are considered dangerous, “jumping off the roof, playing with matches, or driving a car”, it positioned the final request as dangerous and ridiculous. The request to cut off one’s genitals was also positioned as the primary request not an outcome of a mismatch between the human experience and societal gender standards.

The College Republicans argued science was real while ignoring all the research in psychology, social sciences, and biology. The statement that science is real is likely referring to an assertion that biological sex is real, which it is. However, in their assertion that science is real, they are simultaneously ignoring the plethora of research that highlights that gender and biological sex are not the same. One is biological, and the other is socially constructed. The College Republicans used memes and pithy quotes to delegitimize the harm that societal structures have caused to people holding marginalized identities.

In this way, their rhetoric and hashtags continuously recalled eras in which white, cisgender, heterosexual, Christian men were centered in the culture and controlled the lives of the rest of society. The College Republicans unwaveringly positioned themselves as the ones who know the truth or the ones who hold the moral authority and argued to invalidate people with different life experiences and identities than themselves.

Misinformation

Dozens of the College Republican Facebook posts were marked as misinformation. Posts were blurred out with the message: “False information. This same information was checked in another post by independent fact-checkers” (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, February 20). Likewise, one College Republican leader, Jeremiah Childs, began sharing information on Facebook videos that offered partial details of encounters between the College Republicans and

the University of Maine campus and administration (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, March 2).

Furthermore, Childs described community members with false terminology such as Amy Fried who he described as a Democratic operative. Likewise, one anonymous student shared Childs labeled her a lesbian spy when she attended a College Republican event to write an article. This misinformation and description of the campus as being led by vipers, communists, and democratic operatives was reminiscent of white power movement conspiracy theories. Yet, the College Republicans had hundreds of thousands of views of their misinformation that they presented as truth (Anderson, 2020). Scholars have noted that this legitimizes WPM rhetoric as just conservative, not extremist, thus, drawing more people into WPM ideals (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

Impact and Threat

The College Republicans positioned their behavior as free speech and not racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, or antisemitic, yet scholars have found that racist talk that dehumanizes groups can be conveyed through imagery and associations. Furthermore, using violent rhetoric is common in the WPM – and it does engender violence, but there is not a direct correlation (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Therefore, one cannot state that everyone who consumes WPM rhetoric will be violent. Yet, in the media, the mass shooters in the United States are often inspired by WPM rhetoric which dehumanizes groups and invokes violence (Belew, 2018; Fahey & Simi, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020a).

Although it is not a direct correlation it is in some ways more threatening because there is an ever-present risk that violent talk paired with racism will inspire violence in unforeseeable

ways (Simi & Windisch, 2020a). This threat was made real in this study because the College Republicans shared WPM rhetoric via social media. Via social media, the College Republicans' WPM rhetoric reached people and communities beyond the University of Maine campus. The language of the College Republicans was identified as harmful by University of Maine faculty, staff, and students. However, through the legal lens, when using a social media platform like Twitter and Facebook or when speaking at a public university, individuals have the right to free speech. The right to free speech was asserted by the College Republicans, the University of Maine administration, and the public to protect the WPM rhetoric of the College Republicans.

Harm

I found that the College Republicans' rhetoric was harmful and engendered a harm cycle. In this section I will share my analysis of the harm that occurred, I will conclude by classifying the harm according to restorative justice practices: 1) emotional/ spiritual, 2) material/ physical, 3) communal/ relational, and 4) inflamed structural/ historical (Karp, 2019b).

College Republicans shared their views on social media via Twitter and Facebook. By doing so, they shared these views not only with the University of Maine campus but with anyone on social media who happened upon their posts. Through social media, their messages immediately impacted and implicated people beyond the University of Maine. The people who engaged with the posts, whether to condemn or uplift their messages, bolstered the impact of the posts.

Social media use algorithms to share posts more widely based on engagement (Noble, 2018). Therefore, anyone who reacted to the post in support or disagreement bolstered the likelihood that more people would see it. The College Republicans shared their views via social

media and tagged University of Maine community members. Those individuals who were tagged by the College Republicans were then harassed and intimidated by unknown sources, presumably outside the campus.

Direct Threats to Individuals and Groups

There were many reports of harm. The forms of harm included direct harassment in person, via email, and on social media. Individuals and community members also felt intimidated to varying degrees. Some students stopped attending classes for a week (Anderson, 2020) and others considered withdrawing from school. As for faculty and staff, the intimidation via email and social media required the involvement of the University of Maine's police force to monitor the safety of individuals who were being targeted. One email to Dr. Fried asked the following question on January 16th, 2020: "Are you Jewish?" (1977doorwaytoheaven@gmail.com). This pointed question about one's religion or ethnicity was interpreted as antisemitic and a potential threat to Dr. Fried. However, like other WPM rhetoric, the message is vague and does not communicate a direct threat. When this message was shared with other administrators on the same day, one stated the following:

"Do you feel this is an implicit threat or intimidation? Should we be talking with UMaine police? At the very least it cannot be comfortable and I'm sorry." (dan.demeritt@maine.edu). Although this senior administrator offered regret via email, it is not clear that any protections or support were offered to Dr. Fried.

The campus community had differing views of the level of threat. However, one individual external to the University of Maine community reached out to Dr. Fried with the following warning which was forwarded to the administration on January 16th, 2020:

Hi Amy,

I hate having to reach out under these circumstances. I found a (pretty scary) Twitter account that was obviously created by one of the UMCR group this week. It's full of racial slurs and they posted a couple messages at you. Not sure what sort of security office UMaine has, but I would ask them to take a look. I've reported the account, but you never know how long Twitter will take. I feel somewhat responsible for stirring up Malkin and I am very upset that they are harassing you. If there is anything I can do let me know. <https://twitter.com/baseddogthing?s=20> (Support Maine's Future)

This email from a representative at Support Maine's Future linked an additional account to the College Republican leaders. According to this person's assessment, the College Republicans used racist slurs on another page that was not under the title of the University of Maine College Republicans. This email also highlighted the situation between the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration, faculty, and staff involved much of Maine's community and the public nationally. Many opined through periodicals and social media about the status and relations of the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration but those on campus continued to face uncertain threats and harassment, which were not being resolved. Dr. Amy Fried was targeted via email and social media. Dr. Fried wrote in one email to campus administrators and staff on January 16th, 2020:

I have also been harassed on Twitter and, in response, have blocked or muted those accounts. Whoever runs the Support Maine's Future account, which was involved in organizing the boycott of Malkin, sent me a direct message (below). Please also share this with the campus police.

Thanks. Amy

Ascertaining the level of threat was difficult for the University of Maine community. Dr. Fried stated that she was not intimidated via email to colleagues but also admitted to changing her behavior to avoid harassment.

In the next email, also on January 16th, 2020, Dr. Fried expressed the uncertainty of knowing what was and was not a threat. She shifted the message to a more unaffected stance, yet, she had altered her behaviors and was connecting with the University of Maine police about her personal safety.

Thanks, will do. I'm less intimidated than disgusted (especially by the antisemitic email), but you never know if these folks are dangerous. It does annoy me that the harassment is based on a smear, since I did absolutely nothing to interfere with anyone's free speech and never would. Best, Amy (amyfried@Maine.edu).

The harassment was referred to differently throughout the emails as trolling, bullying, or intimidation. There was a general consensus that it's hard to identify who is dangerous to one's physical well-being versus verbally harassing, even though both are harmful. Through email, the Dean of students frequently advised faculty and staff to stay vigilant. This call to stay vigilant legitimized the real threat felt by the campus community. It also highlighted the need to prioritize personal safety with the uncertainty of who the College Republicans were inviting to harm the University of Maine community.

There was another email that raised concerns about an imminent threat. In the email, an unidentified University club and Dr. Fried received the following message with the subject line curious.

How many babies do you rape at your meetings? How often do you sacrifice humans to your sun god? Is every male in your group either a homosexual or an incel? How many of your lesbians secretly wish for a big black penis to set them straight?

Thank you and have a nice day. (klmalay1@gmail.com)

This email was forwarded by Dr. Fried and the deidentified student club to administrators and the chief of police for the University of Maine. However, the level of threat was difficult to ascertain by those being harmed or the few administrators involved. There were many requests for the University of Maine's police to offer protection but no evidence that police protection was increased for the campus, or the individuals being targeted.

In one email to senior administrators, Dean Dana stated in a January 16th, 2020, email: "We've got supports up around Amy and will be vigilant. Police will monitor for threats." (rdana@maine.edu). This email is likely referring to Dr. Amy Fried, yet it's not clear what support means or how the police were monitoring. Ultimately, according to restorative justice practices, there's no evidence that the community was checking in with those being threatened to ascertain their feelings of safety. Dean Dana's recommendation to "stay vigilant" appears to put this responsibility upon those being targeted. There were also no examples within the emails that showed a feeling of safety was achieved for those who were being targeted. For example, one student stated the following in a January 16th, 2020, email:

I hope you're doing well and had a great break! I wanted to bring to your attention an email myself, our VP X, and our advisor Amy Fried just received. I'm concerned that Charlie Henoken and Jeremiah Childs, the heads of the now inactive UMaine College Republicans, through they're [*sic*] recent activities—including repeatedly tagging our club Facebook page in extreme posts on their page, and inviting

speakers who promote extreme right wing [*sic*] conspiracy theories to UMaine and other places in the state—are encouraging people to actively target our club. X

and I are starting to get nervous for our clubs safety. This is not the first letter we have received from these types of people. We have received messages on our Facebook page as well as letters in our mailbox. We have asked both Henoken and Childs to stop engaging with our club in this manner repeatedly, but they have not. Is there anything the University can do to help with this situation? Thank you for helping us with this and I look forward to hearing from you soon! (anonymous).

In the email, the student explained that they have been repeatedly targeted on social media by the leaders of the College Republican group. They are even able to identify the individuals who were targeting them. The students reported receiving repeated threats and harassment. They were asking for protection from University of Maine administrators yet there is no evidence that protection was given. There is no evidence through the emails that these individuals or groups were able to continue their academic and personal lives safely. This email was not the only report of harassment, on January 20, 2020, another person reached out to discuss their growing concern for their physical safety and their gut feeling that harm was imminent. This email identified the group Young Americans for Liberty, Dr. Amy Fried, and the Maine GOP liaison as targets of the College Republican leaders. Like this email and other reports of individual students being harassed, there was no evidence of a resolution, safety, or healing.

Although the communications of the College Republicans may have, at first, been a case of harm between campus community members, the posts from the College Republicans, potentially, instigated people beyond the campus to harm fellow University of Maine community members. Therefore, the scope of the harm expanded because of the use of social media to

garner support and stoke controversy. This invited threats upon the University of Maine community from unknown sources. Likewise, through the emails between the University of Maine administrators, there is a significant amount of effort to present the University as tolerant and inclusive by supporting the College Republicans' free speech. There is no evidence of senior leaders discussing how to address the harassment or threats to community members on campus. The harm and needs of the community were not the focus of the University of Maine administration in this study. Rather, the University of Maine administration and the College Republicans were entrenched in a battle of legal rights and technicalities which will be highlighted through these findings.

Inflamed Structural/ Historical

In this study, one type of harm that was most pervasive was the inflamed structural form of harm. "According to RJ facilitator Jasmyn Story, inflamed structural/ historical harm evokes or alludes to traumatizing structural or historical violence. The original structural or historical harm may span generations of communities leaving a legacy of group trauma." (Karp, 2019, p. 43). In this case, the groups who were targeted were Native Americans, the LGBTQ community, Immigrant communities, the Jewish community, the Young Americans for Liberty, and College Democrats. These groups are not nebulous demographic groups but real people, many with real histories of exclusion and harm. The Wabanaki people here in Maine have survived state-sanctioned genocide, which sent children to abusive boarding schools, communities to reservations, and stripped them of their ways of life. In this way, hearing an institutionally recognized organization such as the College Republicans dehumanize Native American people

and garner the support of local politicians and the public, activates past trauma and highlights the risk of continued trauma through governmental and educational systems.

This same template is true for all the communities affected by inflamed structural/historical harm. In a neighboring city to Orono, Maine, Charles O. Howard was murdered in 1984 for being gay. These traumas are not forgotten by the communities and families that suffered them. The language, subjugation, and threats of harm can reactivate generational and individual trauma while offering the threat that more harm may arise. The inflamed structural/historical harm may also be connected to other forms of harm such as communal relational harm.

Communal Relational Harm

In this study, there was communal relational harm. Some examples included a lack of communication or relationship between senior administration, Native American students and faculty, the Wabanaki Center, the College Democrats, the LGBTQ community, the College Republicans, College Democrats, Young Americans for Liberty, and campus police. Throughout the study, those harmed and those who harmed continuously refer to a disconnect from the campus and senior administration. There was a lack of community prior to the harm but a distinct inability to have meaningful community solutions once harm did arise.

Material/ Physical Harm

Harmed parties expressed material physical harm through the changes they made to their daily lives, such as not attending classes for a week, stopping their use of social media, or considering withdrawing from school. Dr. Amy Fried, the organizer of the End Racism protest, and other anonymous students who emailed concerns to the University administration, reported

abstaining from daily activities such as social media use or attending classes to try to ensure their physical safety. The threat of physical harm likely leaked over to emotional and spiritual harm as students were advised by their potential assailants, and university administrators to stay vigilant. The threat of physical harm likely took an emotional/ spiritual toll on those who perceived a threat in this study.

Emotional-Spiritual

Emotional-spiritual harm was evident from student groups, faculty, staff, and reports of individuals' behavior in this study who expressed worry, sorrow, and anger. The threat of physical harm would have caused emotional and spiritual harm to those who adjusted their daily lives. Although those who were directly threatened in person or via social media would have likely experienced emotional/ spiritual harm there are other ways that social media can engender harm.

Social media that document threats of violence to historically marginalized communities has also been found to cause harm (Keels, 2019) which would be classified as emotional-spiritual harm according to restorative justice. It is also salient to note that there were no meaningful ways for the community to come together to process these emotional-spiritual harms and this likely caused more harm.

The University of Maine President and Dean of Students said they invited the community to discuss Free Speech and the roots of Indigenous Peoples' Day (Dana, 2019). This call to discuss topics related to the harm did not address the harm. Discussions that did not offer trust, safety, or a framework for the community to process the harm posed the risk of further harm.

Likewise, discussing Free Speech as a community ideal and the roots of Indigenous Peoples' Day is an academic undertaking. It was not a process to meet the needs of the community. The College Republican's WPM rhetoric was one harmful event, but having the institution initially not respond, then offer a cursory reprimand and conclude by continuing to promote the College Republican's right to free speech without offering emotional, spiritual, psychological, or physical safety is a second form of harm.

A University Community Under Fire: Exposing Conflict on Campus

The harmful rhetoric of the College Republicans likely would have caused conflict without any other factors. However, their portrayal of the University of Maine as censoring their free speech within the public sphere brought scrutiny to the University of Maine administration. In this section, I will identify how the conflict was intensified by 1) drawing politicians and extremist speakers into the throes of campus conflict, 2) Internal conflict, and 3) making the conflict public. The scrutiny of the public and mass media exposed the conflict between the College Republicans, University of Maine administrators, and the rest of the campus. In the image below, Figure 1 offers a visual representation of who was involved in the campus controversy.

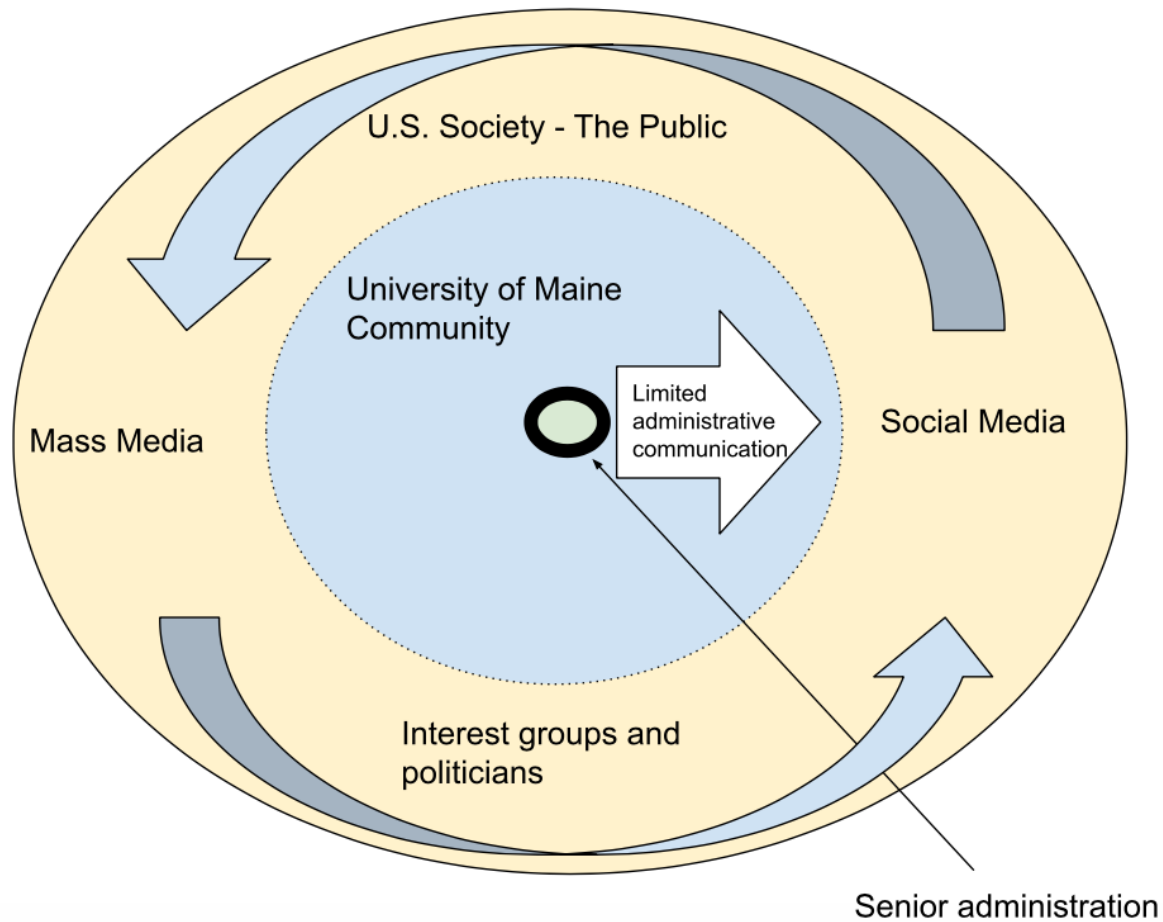


Figure 1.

Figure one is meant to give an idea of how communication was flowing. The line between the institution and the public, mass media, social media, interest groups, and politicians are perforated to show that there was little to no boundary as information and communications flowed freely, influencing one another. Yet, much of the communication was antagonistic, without opportunities for community building, trust, or listening. Although the information flowed freely to the senior administrators, the thick boundary between the senior administration and the institution and the public is meant to represent the lack of communication from the campus leaders. The senior administrators in this study were; the President of the University of

Maine, the dean of students, the executive director of public affairs University of Maine System, the senior director of public relations division of marketing and communications, the chief of staff, and general counsel, the chancellor of the University of Maine System, the director of government and community relations, some board of trustee members, the senior director of procurement, and the chief of staff for the President of the University of Maine.

In the previous findings I have highlighted that the rhetoric of the College Republicans was harmful, and it aligned with the white power movement (WPM). In the following sections, I will continue to analyze how the sharing of 15th-century Spanish-war propaganda impacted the University of Maine community.

To recap, after months of sharing harmful rhetoric on social media, in early October of 2019 the College Republicans posted 15th-century Spanish war propaganda that depicted indigenous people as brutal civilizations and dehumanized these communities. According to a Facebook post from the College Republicans, they were asked to meet with the University of Maine administration on October 7th (UMaine College Republicans, 2019, October 7). On this same date the administration sent a message to the community in which part of the message stated:

The positions reflected and reposted on that page are neither supported by nor reflective of the University of Maine's values and principles of inclusivity and equity. For those of you who are not aware, the Facebook post uses 15th-century Spanish war propaganda to dehumanize indigenous peoples, implying all indigenous peoples of the Americas are brutal savages. We fully understand that this sort of material is upsetting to many members of our community, and it does not align with our values or the stated values of the university.

The University of Maine administration positioned the College Republicans' rhetoric as "upsetting" rather than harmful. Their positioning of the rhetoric as upsetting gave the illusion that it may be displeasing to an individual or community rather than harmful. Additionally, understanding the rhetoric as harmful implies a long-term negative impact rather than something that can be easily forgotten. The post from the College Republicans dehumanizes Native American communities.

The University of Maine is sitting on the ancestral lands of the Wabanaki, Penobscot nation. Many of the people who survived genocide, boarding schools, violence, and discrimination for centuries live 4.6 miles from the campus on a reservation called Indian Island. The University of Maine has established the Wabanaki Center on campus, and there are Native American students who attend the University despite all the obstacles that historically white institutions pose to students of color.

Therefore, this statement does not recognize that the harm of racism is ever present and that this post activates and furthers that racism within the campus community. Furthermore, this post sparked more harm for University of Maine community members who were threatened and intimidated by known and unknown sources. Lastly, this message tries to disown the College Republicans as part of the University of Maine community by claiming they are not representative of the institution. Yet, they are part of the institution, and therefore, they reflect a truthful part of the institution that needs to be attended to, not disowned, or left to fester.

The College Republicans did not appear to feel any sense of responsibility to the University of Maine community as they chastised the administration for condemning their speech. The College Republicans reshared the message from the President and dean of students to their personal Facebook page with the following message:

We are horrified by Dean Robert Dana's destructive behavior. His email today has created a hostile political environment even more extreme. He clearly has no regard for the personal safety and wellbeing [*sic*] of the members of the UMaine College Republicans. If ANY of our members are attacked, bullied, or intimidated as a result of his actions, we will hold him personally responsible. Just this afternoon, on October 7th, we met with members of his administration and were assured that there would be no action taken against us for exercising our rights to free speech. We demand a formal apology for this blatant misrepresentation of our views and are standing by our Facebook posts supporting Nick Isgro and Columbus Day (a national holiday). If you'd like to voice your concerns over the clear overreach and politically motivated attacks by this administration on our club and party, please contact them via their info below:

Dean Dana :

Email: rdana@maine.edu Tel: 207.581.1406

Office of the President:

Email: umpresident@maine.edu Tel: 207.581.1512

(UMaine College Republicans, 2019, October 7)

In their Facebook post the College Republicans positioned themselves as victims of the University. The College Republicans argued that when the University publicly denounced their racist sentiments and stated that it did not align with the University's values, it might put the College Republicans in danger. This was followed by sharing contact information for the President and Dean of Students for the University of Maine, a practice called doxing in which one can make the name and contact information of an individual available to the public. By doxing someone those individuals can be harassed by other people, not the person who instigated

the harassment. The College Republicans also cited support from a Maine politician, Nick Isgro. This tactic of involving local politicians and national activist organizations drew more people, communities, and organizations into the conflict between the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration.

Drawing Politicians and Extremist Speakers into the Throes of Campus Conflict

During October, their social media pages continued with pro-Trump rhetoric that aligns with the WPM. On October 30th, the College Republicans invited a local Maine politician, Rep. Larry Lockman, to the University of Maine campus. Lockman had previously praised a WPM figure who killed a federal agent because he believed the government had been taken over by Jewish people and touted anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric (Tanner, 2020). Lockman’s talk was titled *Crisis at the border: A citizen’s guide to Racist Immigration Policies* in Maine. “The Bradley Republican is closely aligned with former Gov. Paul LePage and has a history of making inflammatory statements about homosexuality, rape, abortion and immigration.” (Pendharkar, 2020). Pendharkar reported that there were counter-protests surrounding Rep. Lockman’s event which was co-sponsored by the University because the College Republicans were a recognized student organization.

Following the controversy, some College Republican members left the group to develop their own conservative organization that would not be so controversial. On November 20, 2019, the College Republicans tweeted, “@MaineMayorNick @michellemalkin We would love to have you @michellemalkin! Students up here could sure use a schooling on the facts of Illegal Immigration. <https://t.co/slBPuLvVLA>” (@umainecr). They posted a similar message on their

Facebook page. Michelle Malkins then responded to their Facebook post with the following message:

Hi- I did not see this invitation until today, when I read that your adviser resigned in protest without bothering to contact me before doing so and instead citing a smear article by a partisan hit organization masquerading as a journalistic enterprise. I would be glad to speak to your group if the invitation still stands. Contact me at michellemalkininvestigates@protonmail.com” (Michelle Malkin).

Throughout the study, the College Republicans continued to connect with local Maine politicians and national organizations and speakers such as Michelle Malkins, Alex Jones, and the Freedom for Individual Rights and Expression. These connections and associations pushed the internal conflict at the University of Maine into the public arena.

Internal Conflict

On November 21, 2019, Dr. Amy Fried submitted her resignation to the leaders of the College Republican group. At the start of the spring 2020 semester, the College Republicans had no advisor and were notified that they were no longer recognized as a University of Maine organization. Below is the email exchange from January 13th, 2020, between the University of Maine Student Government, which oversees the recognition and formation of UMaine clubs and organizations, and the leaders of the College Republicans:

Hi Charlie and Jeremiah,

I hope you have both had an enjoyable break thus far. I am reaching out to ask that you please remove "UMaine" from the advertising for the event that you are holding this Friday. As you are no longer a recognized group under UMSG or the Office of Student

Involvement, you should not be using "UMaine" in your group's title or advertising. I will be sending out an email to all organizations within the next few minutes, to be sure that all organizations are aware of this policy. Thank you for your cooperation.

Best,

Taylor Cray

she/her/hers

In this email the President of the University of Maine's student government does not address the harmful nature of the College Republicans' WPM rhetoric. Rather, the email only asks that the University not be associated with the College Republican group or their event. The leaders of the College Republicans responded with the following statement on January 14th, 2020.

Hi Taylor,

My break has been quite eventful so far. I am fascinated that you have decided to begin enforcing policies with our group, although we know this is nothing new. We will be holding our event with Michelle Malkin this Friday as the UMaine College Republicans, a group of current Republican UMaine students. We will be applying to be reactivated from inactive status as a UMSG recognized club once the semester begins as we have been for years, given our unjust and utilitarian suspension orchestrated by the intolerant Amy Fried and other students. We currently have around 10 candidates we are looking at for advisor [*sic*]. It's certainly very frustrating that an overly beaucroatic [*sic*] process has been employed against us as the only means to combat our rights. Additionally, we are currently engaged in a dispute with a couple administration members given their attempts to personally attack, berate, belittle, and shut us down, and would like to discuss this abhorrent behavior of faculty with you as well.

Enjoy the rest of your break,

Charlie Honkonen

Through this email, the College Republican leader feels that policies are being enforced discriminately to silence his group. Honkonen stated that the group was suspended out of intolerance for their views, which would be a violation of their right to free speech. This group fervently defended their behavior through one free speech policy, yet when they were told that they were violating another student government policy by not having a faculty advisor, they claimed the policy should not be applied to them. Describing the process as unjust, while claiming their rights have been violated, positions them as the victims rather than the offenders. Through this email, Honkonen also conflates the two policies and claims that the policies are being applied with ulterior motives.

Honkonen made it clear that the relationship between the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration and faculty was confrontational. Honkonen described the behavior of administrators and faculty as belittling, berating, and abhorrent. There is only evidence of one meeting between the College Republicans and University of Maine administrators on October 7th, 2019. The rest of the communications between the two sects of campus appear to be indirect via letters to the campus community, emails about policy and policy violations, letters from attorneys on behalf of the groups, social media posts, and mass media interviews.

Making the Conflict Public

In January, the height of the tensions arose. The College Republicans and the organizations and individuals that supported them were stating that the University was censoring

them and violating their freedom of speech. However, there is no evidence of the University trying to interfere with the College Republicans' freedom of speech. There is only evidence of the University withdrawing formal recognition of the group because they did not have an advisor and, therefore, did not meet the criteria to be recognized as a University of Maine student organization. Through email between the student government president and administrators the administration seems more concerned with the University of Maine's brand than the harm of the College Republicans' rhetoric. In the email below, a mid-level administrator, the associate dean of student life, is offering coaching to the President of the University of Maine Student Government. The mid-level administrator is offering guidance about navigating a response in line with legal and public relations practices in a January 14th, 2020, email.

Taylor,

You don't need to respond to this message. If you want to, it might be appropriate for to respond to this on behalf of UMSG. He could explain that you are reminding groups because upon deactivation, they did not disaffiliate with the University as instructed. They were told not to use the name and they are choosing to misrepresent themselves as an organization of the University of Maine. When the University receives phone calls and complaints that the organization is saying they are UMaine affiliated and they are not, we will respond with the truth. I would also remind them of the process to re-apply and the date and time of the meeting. Call me if you wan [*sic*] to talk.

Lauri Sidelko

Assistant Dean & Director of Community Life

In this email the assistant dean is not making any moral judgment of the College Republicans but following the legal and public relations model forwarded by many higher education institutions (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). However, the college Republicans positioned the dispute differently.

The College Republicans consistently positioned themselves as the victims of the University of Maine. They embraced or rejected the legal system based on their needs. In one instance they claim protection through law and policy in relation to free speech. However, in the next instance, when they are made aware that they do not meet the criteria outlined in policy to be recognized as a student group, they deem the policy invalid. Therefore, they framed the conflict with the University of Maine as intolerance of their viewpoint. By reframing the entirety of the conflict as a matter of free speech on social media they drew in support from the public and conservative politicians and organizations.

In the next section, I will analyze how the public sharing of harmful speech by the College Republicans engendered pressure on the University of Maine administration from those within the institution and many outside of the institution.

Reverberating Pressure

Much of the public scrutiny was aimed at the University of Maine administration and the former advisor to the College Republicans, Dr. Amy Fried. The administration was responding to 1) pressure from organizations and individuals with national influence, 2) pressure from the public, and 3) pressure from Maine politicians. In these sections I will detail the many media inquiries from journalists who wanted to write about the story, private citizens who wanted to express their opinion of the University of Maine administration, or individuals and organizations who hoped to influence the re-establishment of the College Republicans.

Media inquiries came from Inside Higher Ed. a national publication, the College Fix, a national conservative news outlet, the Bangor Daily News, and the Mainer News Cooperative, both local publications. The incident was later written about in 2021 in the Chronicle of Higher Education, another national news outlet. Most outlets wanted interviews with administrators to tell the story of what had transpired between the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration from a relational standpoint. Other inquiries, such as those from the College Fix, wanted to know about policies and question the decision-making of the administration.

Pressure from Organizations and Individuals with National Influence

There were emails from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which has been identified as an organization with conservative funding that aims to put legal pressure on higher education institutions to ensure free speech is upheld regardless of any potential or actualized harm. One report stated, “the conservative-movement funding, premises, strategy, and practices of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which purports to protect “free speech” on college campuses but expends more energy blaming—and chilling—“politically correct” activists and administrators” (Sleeper, 2016, para. 2).

In this study, FIRE came to the defense of the University of Maine College Republicans. FIRE offered the following rationale for its involvement in its email to the University of Maine dated January 28th, 2020:

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending liberty, freedom of speech, due process, academic freedom, legal equality, and freedom of conscience on America’s college campuses.

FIRE is concerned about the state of student expressive rights at the University of Maine (UMaine) in light of a decision by the University of Maine Student Government, Inc. (UMSG) to withdraw recognition of the UMaine College Republicans (UMCR)¹ and subject the group to an onerous re-recognition process after its faculty advisor resigned due to the group's political views. This decision does not comport with UMaine and UMSG's obligations under the First Amendment, and therefore UMSG must reinstate UMaine College Republicans.

Miller-Idriss (2020) documented that the infiltration of WPM views into college campuses is supported by organizations that have significant financial, political, and relational resources. Organizations with significant financial, political, and relational resources, such as FIRE, move the conflict from an interpersonal and community-based matter to a battle of institutions and organizations. Similarly, the invitation of Michelle Malkins to campus also incurred the invitation, attention, and association of other organizations with public and political influence to protect the College Republicans' WPM rhetoric further.

Michelle Malkins, a nationally recognized public speaker who has praised neo-Nazis and holocaust deniers, also emailed Dr. Amy Fried directly to question the University's actions. Malkins had been a political commentator with popularity among mainstream conservative groups but lost her endorsement by some conservatives as she began aligning herself with neo-Nazis and antisemites such as Nick Fuentes and a group called the Gryopers in 2019. Michelle Malkins was invited to Maine by the College Republicans to speak on her anti-immigrant stances. On January 14th, 2020, Michelle Malkins reached out to senior leaders to interrogate their involvement and communication with her speaking venue.

Hello, I am Michelle Malkin, the journalist and author who was scheduled to speak at the Portland Sheraton at Sable Oaks this coming Friday. I have learned that university officials/faculty contacted this private business to complain about University of Maine conservative students who invited me to speak. The hotel manager told me that an "assistant dean" called the hotel's sales office. I would like to confirm the identity of the person from your university who contacted the sales office and confirm the content of the phone call. I am on deadline for a nationally syndicated newspaper column to be filed tonight at 7pm [sic] Eastern. Please feel free to call or write back with your timely response. Best, Michelle -- Michelle Malkin www.michellemalkin.com (writemalkin@gmail.com).

Michelle Malkins and Nick Fuentes shared statements supporting the University of Maine College Republicans and positioned them as victims of a leftist, intolerant University (Tanner, 2020). These messages were shared via social media. The significant influence of the College Republicans' following, with over 400,000 views in December on Facebook (Anderson, 2020) and hundreds of thousands of views monthly, according to the College Republicans' Facebook page (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, March, 2). Michelle Malkins has two million Twitter followers as of September 7th, 2023. It is unclear how many followers Nick Fuentes had as he was kicked off of Twitter several times for his antisemitic bigotry and calls to violence (Singh, 2023). This broad reach within Maine and nationally likely inspired individuals to contact the University of Maine to support the College Republicans.

There were also two publications that wrote sympathetic articles about the College Republicans and shared their perspective of being censored. The College Fix and The Sun Journal both wrote articles that depicted the College Republicans as just conservative and being

censored by the University of Maine, and leftists in the state (Laflamme, 2020; Pease, 2020). The author of the College Fix depicted the College Republicans as suspended, rather than unable to maintain standards necessary for recognition. UMaine administrators and Dr. Fried noted inaccuracies via email which resulted in corrections to Pease's original article. However, the sentiment in these articles that the College Republicans were being mistreated resonated with many in the public.

Pressure from the Public

Emails were also being received from individuals who had no affiliation with the University but believed the University was infringing on First Amendment rights. One individual wrote to the President with the following message on January 18th, 2020:

Dr. Ferrini-Mundy,

My name is Steven Schoenfeldt and I live in Grand Rapids, MI. I and my wife are graduates of the University of Wisconsin, she with a math degree and I with an engineering degree. I've just read an article which stated that a speech by conservative speaker Michelle Malkin, which was to have taken place on your campus, has been canceled. I may not know all the details, and if not, I would encourage you to give them to me, but my impression is the cancellation has to do with the conservative views of this speaker. Should that be the case, then my opinion of the University of Maine is that it has joined with many other institutions, groups, and left leaning [*sic*] views in that while our first amendment [*sic*] guarantees freedom of speech for/to all, all now means only if you have the politically correct message to deliver. Pathetic that you and your university should stoop to that anti American position. If I'm wrong then please state your case.

Steven Schoenfeldt

Sent from my iPhone (sjschoenfeldt@comcast.net)

The email from Steven Schoenfeldt prioritizes the free speech of the College Republicans through a legal framework. By labeling WPM views as conservative, Michelle Malkins and the College Republicans' rhetoric is deemed free speech and not recognized as inflicting and engendering harm. However, he also designates any objection to the speech of the College Republicans as leftist and political correctness.

I argue that political correctness is used to narrowly define diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by reducing it to a matter of word choice. Therefore, I argue that political correctness in practice has come to mean a disingenuous attempt to pacify historically marginalized groups through performative actions such as word choice or highlighting historically marginalized groups on a limited basis. Therefore, many who criticize political correctness, that is, the use of terminology that marginalized groups prefer, deem historically marginalized groups as being over-sensitive and ridiculous.

The political correctness argument ignores the lived experiences of marginalized communities and the real effect that words have to position people as legitimate members of communities who have needs and concerns versus marginalized individuals whose needs and concerns are not important to the community. The use of the term political correctness conveys a performative nature of using the correct term. The use of political correctness as a term erases the inequity, injustice or harm that exists for the communities that have been marginalized. Political correctness again centers the white, cisgender, heterosexual, documented, Christian man as the one who knows the truth and the one who can decide whether another person's experience is valid or invalid. The public, who was exerting pressure on the University of Maine

administration, used some of the same tactics as the College Republicans. For instance, another individual accused the University of bigotry and bias. This email was directed at Public Relations on January 23rd, 2020.

Dear Madam Nagle,

I am concerned that your public funded institution has demonstrated clear bigotry and bias by unlawfully attacking the republican club on your campus and thwarting the free exchange of ideas by blocking Michelle Malkin from speaking. This should result in [*sic*] investigation and possible sanctions by the state of Maine. This also is an indication that you are indoctrinating instead of educating your students. “If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful ‘brethren!’ Be careful teachers!” Martin Luther King Jr.

Stephen Mitchell Captain USNR Retired

The individual invoked Martin Luther King Jr.’s teachings to misappropriate them to protect racist rhetoric. Through political correctness, they position any calls for equity as ridiculous and performative. Lastly, by asserting bias from the University administration, those aiming to further their racist speech are positioning themselves and dominant groups as the true victims of marginalized groups’ calls for equity. This argument again positions dominant identities as the ones who know the truth and are entitled to exact their power over others especially anyone who is not a white, Christian, documented, heterosexual, cisgender man.

Through these emails from private citizens and Michelle Malkins a legal approach is forwarded. The argument is that free speech is protected even if it is harmful. By deeming any objection to the College Republican and Michelle Malkins’ speech as free speech, they shift the

focus away from what they are saying and the harm of their speech to a legal approach that is only concerned with the rules, not the human impact.

In the legal approach, the question is not, is this harmful? But am I allowed to do this and even am I allowed to harm? Furthermore, these individuals argued that as a public institution, the public is entitled to direct the university since the institution received taxpayer's dollars. Lastly, they argue both against and for a punishment model. They argue that the College Republicans are being unduly punished but ask for "sanctions" against the University. Through these requests, the individuals again, rely on a legal approach that views exacting harm as justice. Through this argument, they reify the idea that some deserve harm, such as liberals and the University, but others do not, such as conservatives and the College Republicans even if they are expressing racism.

Pressure from Maine Politicians

The University of Maine administration also received some direct letters from Maine politician Nick Isgro, who claimed the Maine Republican Party held the authority to recognize University of Maine clubs and organizations. Nick Isgro then condemned the University of Maine's actions. However, this politician was revealed to have acted inappropriately when a fellow Republican politician exposed Nick Isgro's misrepresentations in a letter that was shared via email on January 28th, 2020.

To whom it may concern,

Recently we became aware that you received a letter from Nick Isgro supporting two past officers of the College Republicans at your campus. He identified himself in the letter as the Vice Chair of the Maine Republican Party. The issue is that Vice Chair Nick Isgro

misunderstood the organizational structure of the College Republicans. Mr. Isgro did not understand that we do not charter any College Republican group, it is not in our By-Laws to do so. Additionally, Nick did not speak to me, the Executive Committee or the members of the State Republican Committee to ask for guidance and authorization to send out a letter to the University of Maine representing all of us. Therefore, Vice Chair Nick Isgro was not speaking for the Maine Republican Party. The Maine Republican Party does not charter or recognize any College Republican group as that decision rests solely on their national chartering organization as well with the college/university campus pursuant to their policies for recognizing or chartering on-campus groups. I apologize for any confusion that Mr. Isgro's letter may have created about the organization and/or the structure of the College Republicans. If I can provide any other information or clarity, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully, Dr Demi Kouzounas

Chair of the Maine Republican Party

Dr. Kouzounas' email, like others, offers a legal framework to address the College Republican organization, and the appropriateness of Nick Isgro's behaviors. However, through the message, Dr. Kouzounas' makes it a point to state that Nick Isgro's actions were not discussed or approved by the other members of his party. Although Nick Isgro's actions were a breach of protocol and an attempt to misrepresent policy and potentially law, no legal framework is forwarded to discuss any investigation, sanctions, or other punishments for inappropriate use of position and power. It's unclear if Nick Isgro refrained from inappropriately representing the Maine GOP after becoming aware of his supposed misinterpretation since there is a letter after

January 28th, 2020, dated February 4th, 2020, in which the Maine GOP again is stating they have the authority to recognize University student organizations that are College Republican groups.

From the data, only one person questioned the University of Maine's free speech policy. The reporter questioned via email on January 16th, 2020: "Also, given the history of antisemitic posts on the UMaine CRs Facebook, why has no action been taken prior against the group?" This person focused on the harm of the College Republicans' rhetoric from a human perspective, something that was not acknowledged by those who used a legal framework to rationalize and legitimize the harm caused by the College Republican's rhetoric.

Administrative Response: Disempowered and Working within the Systems

To answer the second question: How restorative were the institution's responses? I analyzed the data through the restorative continuum (see Appendix A) from the University of San Diego. The restorative continuum examines 1) collaborative decision-making, 2) addressing harm and needs, and 3) relational approaches. Each aspect is evaluated on a continuum from very restorative, somewhat restorative, to not restorative. The University of Maine's responses were not restorative across all dimensions.

First Dimension of the Restorative Continuum: Collaborative Decision-Making

Within the framework of restorative justice (RJ), collaborative decision-making empowers the community to find solutions to problems that meet the needs of those who have been harmed. It also offers an opportunity for the community to take responsibility for any way in which community behavior, in this case, policy and procedure, may have contributed to the harm. Through the restorative continuum, I analyzed the dimension of collaborative decision-

making through three components: 1) excluding key stakeholders, 2) top-down decisions, and 3) formulaic outcomes. In this study, there was no evidence of collaborative decision-making at the University of Maine.

Component one of the Collaborative Decision-Making Dimension: Excluding Key Stakeholders

The University of Maine administration's response, according to the restorative continuum, was not restorative as they did not involve key stakeholders. It's important to note that key stakeholders, according to restorative justice, are those people who were directly affected by a harmful event. I labeled the exclusion of key stakeholders according to restorative practices as limiting information and communication internally. Approaches to harm that are not restorative value individuals with positional power within institutions, not those who were harmed. The University of Maine followed the traditional, not restorative, approach.

Within this component, some of the more concerning pressure came from inside the University of Maine System. For instance, one trustee emailed senior administrative leaders at the University of Maine to support the free speech of the College Republicans. Trustees often hold significant power within a higher education organization (Kaplin & Lee, 2013). In collaboration with other trustees, they are responsible for appointing and confirming presidential positions. This is one of the only people who would potentially be able to directly punish, sanction, or remove the President of the University of Maine. Likewise, the social networks of Trustees are usually enmeshed with other people who are wealthy donors, politicians, lobbyists, and other organizational leaders. One trustee sent the administrative leaders of the University of Maine the following email on January 14th, 2020:

Jim, Kelly, Dan, Joan, and Jim,

In case you were not aware, the University of Maine College Republicans had planned on hosting conservative talking head Michelle Malkin for an event at Sable Oaks this Friday.

I have just heard from several sources including a prominent State Representative that the University of Maine has pressured Sable Oaks to cancel this event.

If this is true, this is highly distressing and is a blatant violation of the free speech of our students. I ask that you investigate this issue and take corrective action if needed.

Regards.

Trevor Hustus --

Trevor J. Hustus, Trustee

(trevor.hustus@maine.edu)

Trustee Hustus was a student trustee and has had an extensive work history with republican politicians such as Republican Senator Susan Collins from Maine. At the time of this study the former Trustee, Trevor Hustus, is working for Rep. Lisa McClain, a Republican from Michigan.

From a legal framework, one could argue that the trustee was merely concerned with avoiding any legal confrontations. Likewise, the trustee could be concerned about the fiduciary needs of the institution as publicity about racial controversy has negatively impacted other institutions (Shonekan, 2020). However, Trustee Hustus does not share any concerns about being sued or how this could impact the financial well-being of the institution. He does state that he is highly distressed that he feels the College Republicans have been silenced. The bigotry from the College Republicans is not shared at all as a concern, but rather, this Trustee aims to protect their ability to continue sharing racist rhetoric. Rather than recognizing the extreme and dangerous

nature of Michelle Malkin's rhetoric, as the Southern Poverty Law Center has stated (Gais, 2021), he referred to her as conservative, which would imply that her views are mainstream in society and normal. As a university that has diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, the message being communicated is simply to protect bigoted speech, which is antithetical to diversity, equity, and inclusion, or a safe campus. Trustee Hustus does not express any concern for the well-being of the Wabanaki people on campus, the LGBTQ community, students, faculty and staff of color, undocumented students on campus, or anyone else who may be harmed by the rhetoric and aftermath of the College Republicans' bigotry. Through this email, the trustee signals that a legal framework to protect bigotry is the only concern senior leaders at the University of Maine should be attending to.

Through these emails, we can see a different level of response from administrators dependent on the positional power of the individual who is inquiring. For the private citizens there was often no response shared. The only instance in which the President of the University of Maine directly responded to anyone who forwarded a concern about the College Republicans was to the only trustee who inquired. For instance, President Joan Ferrini-Mundy sent the following email promptly on the same day January 14th, 2020:

Thank you Trevor.

I was briefed on this matter earlier this evening by VP Robert Dana, and am confident that, although UMaine did provide factual information to Sable Oaks on this situation, that did not include pressure to cancel the event. Dean Dana and I would be happy to provide you with the details in a phone call if you wish.

Thanks,

Joan (joan.ferrinimundy@maine.edu)

This is the only instance in this study in which the President offered access to discuss the matter personally with anyone other than her own administrative team. However, senior administration and the President were also being pressured by politicians and political activist organizations in Maine. In the next email, which was sent between administrators, the Director of Government and Community Relations for the University of Maine System states that they are getting inquiries from legislators. “I’ll call in the morning to get background, as I’m getting inquiries from legislators now” (samantha.warren@maine.edu). There was a level of responsiveness and exigence that was afforded to those who held positions of control over the university, such as trustees, donors, and politicians. Likewise, people who were seen to have political influence also garnered increased responses. The next email was sent to the president by the leader of the Christian Civic League, an organization that has lobbied for conservative ideals, including the discrimination of the LGBTQ community. The email was sent on January 22, 2020.

Dear Dr. Ferrini-Mundy,

I am very concerned about the behavior of the University toward Jeremiah Childs and the College Republicans. A university campus should be a venue for all sides of an issue and thought to be heard. Free speech is essential to a free society. Students must not be told what to think, but be able to hear from everyone’s perspective. Students should be taught to make up their own minds after hearing the entire issue from all sides. As the president of the system, I’m sure you’re aware of this and I would like to hear an explanation as to why this didn’t occur. I don’t want to hear that they misused the logo of the university or that they weren’t a viable club at the time. The University clearly abused the College Republicans’ right of their 1st Amendment. Publicly funded university that you are requires an explanation. I will wait to hear from you.

Thank you.

Penny Morrell

This email, and others like it were shared between senior leaders to identify their affiliation to the university or their political power. The highlighting and sharing of these inquiries signal a heightened level of concern and accountability to these groups that were not afforded to their own community members who were being harassed and harmed by the College Republicans' misconduct. This is evident by the email from the Director of Government and Community Relations for the University of Maine System, who was emailed to discuss an interview but redirected the conversation to her priority in responding to legislative inquiries.

Likewise, the emails from private citizens were only shared whereas the emails from political activists and politicians were discussed, analyzed, and strategized for responses. Although the President only responded to the trustee directly, she directed communications through her administrators.

In response to the email from the Christian Civic League, the President directed her staff as follows on February 4th, 2020: "Please advise - minimal acknowledgment?" One staff member, in coordinating a response, questioned the person's potential affiliation and influence on the campus in a February 5th, 2020, email. "Do we know who Penny Morrell is? Alumna? Donor? We could thank her for expressing her concerns and assure her we celebrate, teach, and encourage free speech in all that we do." (james.thelen@maine.edu). These selective and curated responses show that the administration did not treat all people equally within the community. Their decision to include or grant access to the most powerful people in the institution was often dictated by the person's financial and political affiliation with the University of Maine.

The University of Maine's highest-level administrators stayed in communication with each other consistently. Information from lower-level administrators and staff was funneled up to the senior leaders of the institution. Mass media and social media posts were of particular interest to the administration. The administration frequently shared social media posts from politicians and activists such as Adrienne Bennet and Michelle Malkins with each other. However, the email chains that shared information discussed strategy, reviewed messaging, and scheduled meetings to discuss the College Republican's misconduct were limited to senior leadership members of the community. These senior leaders included the President of the University of Maine, The Dean of Students, The Executive Director of Public Affairs University of Maine System, The Senior Director of the Public Relations Division of Marketing and Communications, The Chief of Staff and General Counsel, The Chancellor of the University of Maine System, The Director of Government and Community Relations, some board of trustee members, the senior director of procurement, and the Chief of Staff for the President of the University of Maine. The limited sharing of information and the limited communication amongst the University of Maine community excluded key stakeholders and engendered top-down decision-making.

Component two of the Collaborative Decision-Making Dimensions: Top-Down Decisions

According to the restorative continuum, the University of Maine administration's response was not restorative as they enacted top-down decision-making. In this section, I have labeled it hierarchical decision-making. Decision-making was primarily focused on maintaining the University of Maine brand, eschewing responsibility from administrators, and avoiding any discussion of harm to the University of Maine community. Decisions to send out a message to the media or respond to an inquiry were carefully considered.

For instance, in this email from the senior director of the public relations division of marketing and communications, she appeared to be displeased that someone decided to communicate on their own in her January 15th, 2020, email. “It's difficult to give an interview to one news outlet and a statement to all others, which is why I was pushing for a statement — primary points — this morning for the BDN. Yet an interview was given. I look forward to seeing your statement on this. Let me know when it is approved. And you are correct: Robert and his team are terrific in media interviews. Thanks” (nagle@maine.edu). The BDN refers to a local publication, The Bangor Daily News. The senior leaders strategized on who should be the spokesperson and what the focus of the message should be.

In the next excerpt, from a January 16th, 2020, email, it shows this was a purposeful decision to only allow certain individuals to speak. “Dan, can you let me know where you are in responding to this writer? I recommend all institutional responses come from one source. Just let me know. Thanks.” (nagle@maine.edu). Even though guidance was being given from the top leaders of the University of Maine, some board of trustee members, and the Chancellor of the University of Maine system, this advice was being funneled through spokespeople. For instance, the President sent the following email on January 14th, 2020: “Robert et al., Do we need a statement that explains the situation clearly that we would release? Seems like we need to address the perception that UMaine pressured the hotel. Thanks, Joan” (joan.ferrinimundy@maine.edu).

This coordination was also extended to other members of the community who provided information which is demonstrated in the next quote from a January 16th, 2020, email. “Can you please take at [*sic*] look at the DRAFT responses to Andy O'Brien that would come from me. I got the contract information from Kevin Carr, our Senior Director of Procurement Services:”

(Dan.Demeritt@maine.edu). By funneling responses through PR representatives, it shielded senior leaders from making statements for which they might receive further criticism. It also allowed for the controlling of what information or framing of the information would be shared. A preference for responding in writing was clear through numerous statements and light reprimands from PR. In the previous message, *draft* is written in all capital letters to warn everyone that this is still in the process of being curated to stay on message and not ready to be shared publicly. Many messages, such as the next one, consistently highlighted a preference for writing in this January 6th, 2020, email. “Good morning Robert. Let me know if I can help with this, including putting responses forward in writing. Thank you.” (nagle@maine.edu). This allowed for the controlling of the message and discussion so that it focused on a policy and procedure, not harm or morality.

Component three of the Collaborative Decision-Making Dimension: Formulaic Outcomes

In this study, the University of Maine’s administration aligned with the not restorative response of formulaic outcomes, according to the restorative continuum. I labeled and described these formulaic outcomes as controlling the conversation and messaging publicly. The controlling of messaging was effective in limiting the conversation to talking points and framing the conversation through a legal and procedural framework. One reporter reached out with the following inquiry about the University of Maine community on January 4th, 2020:

Hello Mr. Dana,

My name is Greta Anderson and I’m a reporter for Inside Higher Ed. I’m working on a story about the decision of political science chair Amy Fried to step down from her short time as adviser for UMaine’s College Republican group in November, after she took

issue with their rhetoric on social media. Professor Fried suggested I reach out to you for responses to questions I have about the number of students involved in the group and their search for a new adviser and said you have been temporarily overseeing the group. I'm hoping to connect via phone on Monday morning for some questions about this and the university's response to the group's Columbus Day post, which Fried said offended many in the indigenous community.

I've CC'd Ms. Nagle as well in case she can assist with my inquiry. My deadline for the story is 3 p.m. on Monday and it would be great to speak before then. Let me know when you have some availability. Thank you so much and I hope to hear from you soon.

(greta.anderson@insidehighered.com)

Anderson's questions focused on decision-making – why did Amy Fried step down? And how is the University responding to the College Republicans' rhetoric? These are questions about interpersonal relationships and community relationships. The response Anderson received reframed the conversation to a legal and procedural conversation in a January 6th, 2020, email from a senior public relations staff.

Hello Greta.

Thank you for your email and voicemail. Currently, the group has no acting adviser.

When Amy Fried resigned, the group's Student Government recognition was deactivated. With an adviser and paperwork submission, the group can request to be considered again for recognition, a process that involves the Student Organizations Committee of Student Government, and the Student Senate. The group has at least 12 members, the minimum requirement for recognition. An institutional message related to the group's Columbus Day post was issued Oct. 8.” (nagle@maine.edu)

Anderson's email was directed to the Dean of Students but was responded to by a senior PR staff. This PR professional focused almost exclusively on policy and procedure without meaningful consideration for individual or community harms that had occurred. A link to the prepackaged statement on the College Republican's Columbus Day post is the only piece of information that makes any reference to community relations. In this message, the administration positioned the College Republicans as not representative of the campus and stated that their rhetoric may be upsetting rather than harmful.

Greta Anderson emailed the university on January 4th, yet a statement from October 8th was issued to discuss the relationships on campus. Between these two dates the relationships on campus had significantly deteriorated with reports of harassment, intimidation, and direct threats of physical violence. Not only did this approach practically ignore the harmful impact of the College Republicans' rhetoric but University administrators also promoted a commitment to protecting the harmful rhetoric of the College Republicans. Again, given the chance to speak more freely via phone, the senior leaders continued to opt for statements in writing in which the message and discussion could be controlled and limited.

When responding to another media inquiry from the Bangor Daily News, one senior public relations staff provided the following written responses on January 14th, 2020:

Here is our written answer to your question. If you do choose to write about this and need to use the statement, please attribute it to me.

"The freedom of expression, assembly, and the free exchange of ideas are rights that are protected in university policy for all UMaine students. The University of Maine college republican student government recognition was deactivated in the fall when the

organization lost its faculty advisor. As a result any event hosted by these students would not be an official university function.”

"The university communicated that status in response to questions about an event that had been scheduled by UMaine students at the Portland Sheraton at Sable Oaks but did not suggest that the event be cancelled."

These communications again highlight limiting the conversation and controlling the messaging. By focusing strictly on policy and procedure the University did not need to comment on the harm that the College Republicans’ rhetoric was causing. It also eschewed any further action from the administration through the legal argument that the College Republicans were just exercising their free speech. This view does not consider the substantial harms that were experienced by community members because of the College Republicans’ rhetoric.

Like other coordinated efforts to control the messaging, this senior PR staff shared these responses with other senior leaders and offered the following guidance on January 14th, 2020: “I think that is important context for whatever reporting she does on the story, and hopefully we can provide it. The fact that the university is willing to accommodate a new application for recognition should also be included.” (dan.demeritt@maine.edu). In this email, the question of harm that the University of Maine College Republicans have inflicted is not considered. However, privately, this senior leader was discussing issues of harassment and threats to individuals’ and communities’ physical, emotional, and mental safety. Yet, this senior leader highlighted that the important thing for this reporter to write about is the fact that the University would support the reinstatement of the College Republicans and protection of their harmful rhetoric.

These leaders who claimed to support free speech also had messages that could be interpreted as dissuading the discussion of the harm and conflict that came from the College Republicans. In the message above to a Bangor Daily News reporter, on January, 14th 2020, a senior PR representative emphasized, “If you do choose to write about this and need to use the statement, please attribute it to me” (dan.demerit@maine.edu). This reporter has invested the time and energy to write about this story; thus, the continued use of contingencies seems to overly emphasize the choice to not write about the controversy or identify individuals involved. For example, “If you choose to write about this, and need to use the statement ...” these directions exude a subtle pressure that the reporter could opt to just not use her free speech rights. This same senior leader had already emailed other senior leaders to state that this reporter had carefully considered whether to write the story. Therefore, highlighting the choice to write about it or needing to quote someone could be conveyed as pressure to not write about the College Republicans’ misconduct and the University of Maine’s administrative response.

In another email on January 6th, 2020, from a senior leader he also questions the utility of exercising free speech to discuss the College Republicans: “Thanks. Lauri, copied here, is more in touch with this group. It’s an old story, and I’m not sure reopening it is likely to be fruitful. Perhaps Lauri can give some indication of current student involvement and, if need be you could cobble the rest of the information together. Happy to discuss. RQD” (rdana@maine.edu). This statement from the Dean of Students that the story is *old* conveys that the situation has been resolved, yet during this time, students, faculty, and staff reported being harassed and intimidated by the College Republicans and those that they inspired to join them. This also could dissuade someone from exercising their free speech to discuss a topic of public concern. Lastly, this

statement goes against the Dean of Students' advice following the College Republican misconduct.

In his joint letter with the President of UMaine, on October 8th, 2019, he stated: "The best remedy for speech we do not like or disagree with is more speech, and many are expressing their feelings to us and perhaps even on Facebook. We are asking faculty, staff, and students to discuss these matters with each other and to weigh in on these important discussions. Student Life will be co-hosting group discussions with Student Government on the roots of Indigenous Peoples Day and free speech as a community ideal. That is essential if we are to be engaged and working to make change in our society."

In this message, the Dean of Students makes a commitment to free speech as the antidote to speech we do not agree with. He states that the university is opposed to the views of the College Republicans as it does not align with their values. Yet, his communication could be read as questioning the utility of exercising free speech to discuss the harm of the College Republicans' behavior, or at a maximum, trying to subtly dissuade a reporter from discussing the events. Although there were many emails to analyze in this study some of the emails highlighted a need to discuss a topic offline.

Taking the conversation off-line

In the case of the Bangor Daily News article, there were emails from the Dean of Students that the author had held off on writing the story for personal reasons that could be discussed via phone – not email. This was seen in other instances in which the President of UMaine and other senior leaders stated they could discuss the topic via phone or give more information via phone. These desires to discuss something off-line were purposeful and seemed

to indicate the discussion would involve information that was not to be shared widely. This desire to keep a conversation out of an email is likely because emails can be discoverable information in a lawsuit and in the case of this study, via a request through the Freedom of Access Act which would make emails public. The University of Maine administrators relied on a legal framework that limited communication and community involvement. The silencing of the community eschewed the harm being experienced by the community and their needs.

Second Dimension of the Restorative Continuum: Harm and Needs

The restorative continuum examines 1) collaborative decision-making, 2) addressing harm and needs, and 3) relational approaches. The second dimension of the restorative continuum is addressing harms and needs. The University of Maine administration's response to harms and needs was not restorative in this study. The components of the second dimension for a not restorative response are: 1) Harmed parties not involved, 2) Primary focus on the person who caused harm, 3) Passive accountability, 4) Punitive, and 5) Procedural/Evidence-focused. In this study, the University of Maine was not able to punish the College Republicans for their white power movement (WPM) rhetoric, but they were able to remove their recognition as a student organization which I discuss in the relational dimension of the restorative continuum.

Component one of the Harm and Needs Dimension: Harmed Parties Not Involved

According to the restorative continuum in the harms and needs dimension, not involving harmed parties is a not restorative approach. In this study, there is no evidence that harmed parties were involved in a meaningful way so the harms could be understood to provide an appropriate resolution. The meetings in this study were limited to senior leaders at the University

of Maine and the University of Maine system. The topics of concern for senior leadership's meetings and emails were not human harm or healing for the community. One senior leader who is a PR staff suggested the following topics for discussion on January 15th, 2020: "Summary of Engagement From Yesterday Talking Points / Responses for Key stakeholders BDN and Interview Requests to come Social Media Posts [*sic*]" (dan.demeritt@maine.edu).

The topics of concern for senior leaders focused on responding to *key stakeholders*, usually donors, board of trustee members, politicians, and the media. These key stakeholders could impact the financial well-being of the University of Maine through donations, brand damage, or the job security of senior leaders. Other institutions that have had public conflict regarding race, such as the University of Missouri, Mizzou, faced public backlash, financial struggles for years following the incident, and senior leaders were removed or left the institution (Shonekan, 2020). These findings suggest that one way to avoid financial harm to the University or harm to senior leaders' jobs was to focus their meetings on appeasing key stakeholders, controlling the messaging, and limiting who communicated and what they communicated about. This happened despite the reports of threats to individual and community safety.

However, some students did exercise their free speech in opposition to the College Republicans' misconduct. Taking the Dean of Students' advice, community members gathered to protest the College Republicans' misconduct and the lack of action by the University of Maine administration. One publication shared: "Desiree Vargas, a fourth-year anthropology student and one of the event organizers and speakers, directly criticized both members from the UMCR club who were in attendance and UMaine administrators. Vargas directly addressed the UMCR group for their "racism" and "bigotry," and the UMaine administration for failing to adequately discipline the club after their online comments had surfaced." (Cramer, 2019).

Even in the face of student protests on campus and criticism of the University of Maine administration, the University of Maine administration still reframed the message as something positive rather than taking accountability to provide a safe and inclusive campus – per their purported equity and inclusion goals. The dean of students reframed the criticism of himself and UMaine’s senior administrators as follows:

“Our community came together to resist and decry the darkness and horrors of racism and exclusion,” Dana said concerning Monday’s “End Racism” protest. “History is full of examples from which we must learn. Monday’s coming together was an opportunity to reflect on the brutal treatment of Native Americans throughout history and across the land, including here in the Penobscot homeland. I am thankful our community came together to support Indigenous Peoples and all marginalized people.” (as cited in Cramer, 2019).

In this message, the Dean of Students shifted the purpose of the protest to historical harms suffered by Native American peoples and then expanded this to an abstract commitment to supporting all marginalized communities. This shifting of the discussion away from the real harms that community members were experiencing while celebrating it as if the University Administration had contributed in some way was misleading.

In the instance of the College Republican rhetoric, the Dean of Students and President wrote in an October 8th, 2019, letter to the campus: “The positions reflected and reposted on that page are neither supported by nor reflective of the University of Maine’s values and principles of inclusivity and equity.” (Dana & Ferrini-Mundy, 2019). This message disassociates the University of Maine and College Republicans.

To state that the College Republicans do not reflect the values of the University of Maine is false. The College Republicans are members of the University of Maine. Therefore, their values of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia are part of the University of Maine community and an accurate reflection. Denying the reality that there are harmful views permeating the institution and filtering into Maine and national political discourses shows a lack of commitment to equity and inclusion. These actions may demonstrate to the campus community and students, who are future leaders, that you preserve the status quo and longevity of an institution above the well-being of the people who make up the institution. Furthermore, one interviewee opined that the University Administrators released a statement condemning the College Republicans - not by their own accord or because of a commitment to equity and inclusion, but because of public pressure.

I created many social media posts, emails and phone calls in complaint of the College Republicans which went viral, in addition to other...complaints to the point the administration responded publicly to the College Republicans” Vargas said. “The rally today was in response to the lack of action at first from the university and because of the College Republican’s discriminatory behavior over the course of time and their post on Indigenous Peoples Day was the straw that broke the camel’s back. (Cramer, 2019, para. 4)

The assertion that the University of Maine administration only released a statement due to public pressure aligns with the behavior shown by the administrators throughout this study.

Component two of the Harm and Needs Dimension: Primary focus on the Person Who Caused Harm

The University of Maine's response was also not restorative because its primary focus was on the College Republicans, the group that caused the harm. The University of Maine administration did not show a primary focus on the needs of those who were harmed or the community. The University of Maine claimed that they held values of equity and inclusion but addressed the College Republicans' misconduct from a legal approach which protected the College Republicans' misconduct.

Through the legal approach, punishing the College Republicans was not an option. With punishment and sanctions removed as options the University of Maine was incapacitated. They were able to regurgitate policy and try to limit the discussion of the College Republicans and their own involvement. They aimed to move the conversation away from the harm that happened to the discussion of the legality of bigotry. They aimed to use some socially justice-minded members of the campus as representatives of the University while concurrently disowning the College Republicans yet offering to institutionally support their bigoted rhetoric. They claimed to hold values of equity and inclusion, but senior leaders focused on preserving the University of Maine brand and eschewing any claims of wrongdoing on the part of University of Maine administrators. This focus persisted despite the real threats and harm happening to individuals and groups on campus.

Component three of the Harm and Needs Dimension: Passive Accountability

As was demonstrated in the previous data analysis, the University of Maine administrators prioritized responding to *key stakeholders*, which were the donors, trustees, and

politicians. They also focused on controlling the messaging and limiting the discussion of harm in the media. This stance was engendered by taking on a legal framework to address the issues. The administration effectively dodged taking accountability as an institution by claiming that the College Republicans were not representative of the campus. Additionally, by approaching the College Republicans legally the university supported the College Republicans rhetoric through Free Speech and limited their engagement with the College Republicans to the myopic scope of policy. This resulted in neither the University nor the College Republicans taking accountability for their role in the harm.

In this study, the senior leaders were also not presenting the safety of the campus as a priority – they were focusing on presenting an image of cohesion, liberty, and safety as a façade, not a reality. This prioritization of image over reality came from the legal framework. Therefore, in this study the University of Maine administration did not facilitate an opportunity for the College Republicans to take accountability for their actions. Additionally, in this study the administration themselves did not take accountability for their actions.

Component four of the Harm and Needs Dimension: Punitive

Two components of the harms and needs dimension of the restorative continuum are passive accountability and punitive responses. The University of Maine administration was not able to punish the College Republicans according to the legal framework. Thus, in this study there was no formal punishment. The University of Maine administration took a disempowered stance and waited for the impact of harm. Through the legal approach, there was no option to stop the College Republican's white power movement rhetoric due to Free Speech. Therefore, there was no procedure for punishment. Without the traditional tools to discipline and punish the

community their primary focus was distancing the University of Maine brand from the College Republicans. Their communications also focused on eschewing responsibility or wrongdoing from the senior administrators and promoting an image of the University of Maine as tolerant and inclusive – even though there was substantial evidence of conflict, harm, and dissonance. Emails from key stakeholders and the public criticized the University of Maine for the perception that the College Republicans were being silenced and their First Amendment rights were being violated. Their messages to the media were controlled and limited to avoided questions that would result in addressing the dissonance between the University’s purported equity and inclusion values and the human harm that was happening. In this way, their efforts were often reactionary to the stories in mass media and on social media. Emails such as the following on January 14th, 2020, were frequent:

“Robert and Margaret, Eesha at the Bangor Daily News would like to talk with UMaine about this tweet from Adrienne Bennett, a candidate for the Republican nomination for the Second Congressional District and others in #mepolitics space. I think it will be important to get the context out around the challenges the group has had in keeping an advisor. Eesha has stayed off the story in the past despite the chatter for reasons I can discuss by phone. Best, Dan” (dan.demeritt@maine.edu).

Administrators were monitoring what media outlets, politicians, and political groups were claiming that the College Republicans’ First Amendment rights were being violated. They were not focusing on how to promote an equitable and inclusive campus despite political organizations that were protesting Michelle Malkins’ WPM rhetoric. Therefore, there were other political organizations that they were aware of that would have focused on equity and inclusion

to align with their values yet there's no evidence that senior leaders made efforts to engage these organizations for political support or to better the campus relations.

Component five of the Harm and Needs Dimension: Procedural, Evidence-Focused

According to the second dimension of the restorative continuum, the University of Maine administration was procedurally focused on evidence not harm. By engaging in a legal framework specialized legal knowledge was privileged not the experiential knowledge of those most affected. The approach of the University and its free speech critics was from a legal framework. This moved the discussion away from human harm and focused on the legality of inflicting harm. The following is a small excerpt sent to the President of the University of Maine Student Government. It was sent to this student from FIRE on behalf of the UMaine College Republicans on January 28th, 2020:

Derecognition of student groups due for viewpoint-based reasons violates the First Amendment. In keeping with its constitutional obligations, UMSG must employ only content- and viewpoint-neutral criteria when determining whether a recognized student organization has met its obligations to remain on active status. See *Bd. of Regents of the Univ. of Wis. System v. Southworth*, 529 U.S. 217, 233 (2000) (“When a university requires its students to pay fees to support the extracurricular speech of other students, all in the interest of open discussion, it may not prefer some viewpoints to others.”). The Supreme Court has repeatedly and explicitly made clear that disparate treatment of a student organization based on its political, religious, or other expression violates the First Amendment. See, e.g., *Healy*, 408 U.S. at 187–88 (finding administrator’s disagreement with “repugnant” views of a student organization was not a sufficient basis to deny

recognition to the organization); *Rosenberger v. Rectors of the Univ. of Va.*, 515 U.S. 819, 836 (1995) (observing that “[f]or the University, by regulation, to cast disapproval on particular viewpoints of its students risks the suppression of free speech and creative inquiry in one of the vital centers for the Nation’s intellectual life, its college and university campuses”). Criteria may be found to be unconstitutionally content- or viewpoint-based either because it is impermissible on its face or because its application is impermissible. See *McCullen v. Coakley*, 573 U.S. 464, 485 n.4 (2014) (discussing that an otherwise-neutral law may be unconstitutional as applied if its use discriminates between speakers of different viewpoints). In other words, a requirement imposed upon a student group to maintain its recognized status may appear content- and viewpoint-neutral in its language, but may be applied to a specific group at a specific time in a manner that discriminates based on content or viewpoint. Both facial and as-applied viewpoint discrimination are equally invalid under the First Amendment. *Id.* 19 Further, UMSG promises students the right to free expression in its constitution. UNIV. OF MAINE STUDENT GOV’T, INC., Constitution of the University of Maine Student Government (Dec. 27, 2017), <https://umaine.edu/umsg/wp-content/uploads/sites/145/2018/03/Constitution.docx>.ⁱ

FIRE used a legal framework to claim the free speech rights of the College Republicans were being violated. FIRE simultaneously ignored that the organization did not meet the criteria to be recognized as a student organization under the argument that the University was applying this policy in a biased way (e.g., their advisor resigned due to the student’s viewpoint). By using the legal approach FIRE engaged with terminology and case laws that are specialized knowledge among attorneys.

By using this specialized knowledge, it disenfranchised many in the community who are not attorneys. This specialized legal knowledge limited who could or could not participate in addressing harm or finding solutions. Therefore, those directly involved stopped engaging each other and left it to attorneys to handle. Even senior administrators had to consult with legal counsel in their emails. Therefore, when FIRE sent a letter to a student who was the leader of student government claiming that the organization had infringed on the UMaine College Republicans' free speech rights this person also had to relinquish their voice to an attorney who could argue within the specialized legal framework. The choice to defer to attorneys, like the decision to defer to public relations professionals, was another way those community members involved in the campus conflict were disempowered and silenced. The claims from FIRE that the University of Maine had infringed upon the College Republicans' First Amendment Rights appeared to have concerned the university's senior administration since the email was directed to a student but forwarded to the President of the University, Dean of Students, and Vice Chancellor and Chief Legal Officer on the same day it was received. Below is the January 31st, 2020, response from the attorney in student legal services, who is on staff at the University of Maine to offer legal counsel to students.

Ms. Rank

As requested, here is our response to the letter you sent to our President. We appreciate the time and thought your organization has put to this matter, we can assure you that over the past several months the issues surrounding the University of Maine College Republicans have been quite involved, and we very much agree with those wishing for an end to this recurring matter. We appreciate the patience all students have shown throughout the process, and we hope to make changes so that this does not happen again.

We also wish to respect the speech and activity of the college republicans [*sic*] as we do for all our hundreds of student organizations. There are some inaccuracies in your relation of the facts, some differences of legal opinion, and some additional context which we'd like to address. First however, we would like to indicate that this is not likely to be an issue of recognition of this group. We fully expect now that the original college republicans group have found a professor willing to be their advisor, that they will be recognized by the Student Senate next week. From the perspective of the officers of UMSG, so long as the two groups of republican students in question can articulate some reasonable difference between them, we are happy to see them both recognized so they can become an outlet for republican students of diverse political opinion. Encouraging more kinds of political speech is a general goal we share. The only two issues from our perspective that are outstanding are: both groups have claimed the same name and we need one to be different so they can be distinguished, and secondly, can these advisor and recognition issues be prevented or better managed for other student clubs going forward. We have told the groups that if they select different names, preferably by agreement, we can be done with this matter and we can all move on. We hope that some arrangement can be reached and will continue to work towards it.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: This communication, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipients and may include privileged or otherwise confidential information. Any unauthorized copying, use, disclosure or distribution is strictly prohibited and may be unlawful. If you received this message in error, or have reason to believe you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by listed contact information, and destroy all copies of the original message P. 2

of 5 P. 3 of 5 P. 4 of 5 THE UNIVERSITY OF Student Legal Services 5748 Memorial Union, /51 Floor Orono. ME 04469-5748 MAINE STUDENT GOVERNMENT INC.

The student legal services attorney, like the senior administrators, focused on the legal argument of free speech that the College Republicans are allowed to share their white power movement (WPM) rhetoric. This attorney did not engage with the questions of human harm to the community or the violation of equity and inclusion goals on campus. Within this response it would appear there has been no harm and the only issues are finding an advisor and picking a new name for one club. This view again avoids the real issue that was being experienced on campus.

Furthermore, at the bottom of the email it stated that this message was made confidentially. Therefore, only the attorney, the President of the student government, and those few who were invited to collaborate were privy to these communications. This again replicated a disenfranchisement of the community which does not afford the opportunity to understand the human harm that occurred due to the College Republicans' rhetoric.

Third Dimension of the Restorative Continuum: Relational

The restorative continuum examines 1) collaborative decision-making, 2) addressing harm and needs, and 3) relational approaches. The third dimension of the restorative continuum is relational. The relational response of the University of Maine administration was not restorative. The components of a not restorative response in the relational dimension are: 1) Exclusionary, 2) Emphasis on separation and isolation (e.g., no contact, loss of privileges, removal from community), 3) Mandatory participation, and 4) No attention to trauma. The College Republicans' WPM rhetoric was divisive and controversial on campus, but it was also

divisive and controversial within the College Republican group. Some members were reported to have left the group in the fall after the Columbus Day Post and hosting Rep. Larry Lockman on campus (Anderson, 2020; Pendharkar, 2020). These findings highlight that the WPM rhetoric resonated with some but not all College Republican students. It was the leaders of the College Republicans in the Fall of 2019 who are cited most widely as forwarding the WPM rhetoric. However, College Republican members, regardless of their adoption or rejection of WPM rhetoric, felt disconnected and excluded in some ways from the University of Maine campus.

Component one of the Relational Dimension: Exclusionary

The University of Maine's response was not restorative in the relational dimension. Exclusion is one of the components of a not restorative relational dimension of the restorative continuum. The University of Maine practiced exclusion through policy and the College Republicans cited an informal legacy of excluding conservative students.

In this study, the feeling among the College Republicans was that they had a history of being excluded even before the adoption of the white power movement (WPM) rhetoric. The feeling that the College Republicans are not treated fairly and have not been treated fairly was shared by College Republican members including the leaders of the College Republicans and a former leader, Palmieri (Stockley, 2020). It's unclear if Palmieri embraced or rejected the WPM rhetoric of the College Republicans. The former executive board member stated:

Our mission is to promote the GOP agenda and platform. Our events are meant to allow students on campus to get another point of view and to further the political dialogue. All of our events are open to the public and we welcome people of all political affiliations to

come,” Palmieri said. Palmieri stated that he did not feel as though the group was disbanded and that the group did not express any reaction to the loss of UMSG support. “I don’t think we were ever ‘disbanded.’ However, it was unfortunate what happened to our group. We have never once called on other groups to be shut down. I think it is quite disgusting to wish to shut down political speech this way. Sadly, many on campus have openly called, helped and cheered our club when it seems like we no longer would be allowed to exist. We hear a lot about wanting to make a safe learning environment on a college campus but that safety hasn’t been extended to us. Many people in our club have expressed concerns about this,” Palmieri said. “The [group formerly known as the] UMaine College Republicans have been leading the charge as it pertains to promoting political dialogue on campus. We hold events open to everyone and attend events with an open mind trying to understand those who disagree with us. It seems to me that the problem people have with our club has nothing to do with rules or inviting speakers but simply the fact that we are conservative (Stockley, 2020, para. 9).

The description offered by the College Republican member aligns with descriptions of many College Republicans nationally who feel excluded from the community or even targeted; even though the College Republicans were not being denied their First Amendment rights. These feelings may have arisen from the protest which directly named the College Republicans as bigoted in October of 2019 (Cramer, 2019) and the opinion letter which was published by the University of Maine’s publication the Maine Campus. In the letter to the campus titled “The group formerly known as the UMaine College Republicans deserves to be ousted,” the author explained their stance through name calling such as referring to the College Republican’s behavior as childish, idiotic, and ignorant (Karam, 2020).

The opinion letter pulls loosely on history and politics and has a meandering rationale as to why the College Republicans deserved to be ousted. However, the naming of the College Republicans, name-calling, and targeting of the College Republicans paired with a lack of trust, safety, or opportunity for community dialogue is not restorative and damaging to the community. This letter offers the opportunity to further misidentify the College Republicans as innocent of any wrongdoing and has the potential to position them as the victims of the University of Maine.

The Vice President of the College Republicans, Jeremiah Childs, discussed his relationship with the campus in several Facebook videos. In one Facebook video Childs stated that he had been pulled from his dorm room by police to be questioned in the middle of the night (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, February 17). Child said this happened in his first year of college. He stated another member had been investigated and interviewed by the FBI. These statements highlight the real threat of the rhetoric that the College Republicans were engaging with. It also highlighted that the College Republicans had a legacy of tense and combative relationships with the University and law enforcement.

There was a significant amount of anger toward the College Republicans for the harm that they caused. This anger was communicated via social media, protests, and mass media coverage. On March 9, 2020, a letter to the Maine Campus, the University of Maine's campus publication was shared. In the letter Jeremiah Childs, the leader of the College Republicans shared how the rhetoric of the College Republicans had impacted him.

One of the things that Childs had not anticipated when getting involved with the former UMaine College Republicans is the way that people interact with him now. He says that he has avoided public areas on and around the UMaine campus, such as the Old Town Hannaford, because people will approach him.

“I don’t want to deal with being a public persona,” Childs said. “I’m different than what people expect me to be. People always think that I’m angry, but I don’t yell. I don’t have a military haircut or anything like that. People don’t understand that my Facebook presence [on the UMaine College Republicans page] isn’t my constant state of being. I don’t sit on the internet waiting to respond to angry comments or whatever.” (“A look into the life of Jeremiah Childs of the former UMaine College Republicans”, 2020, para. 11).

In another quote from Childs, he stated that he has resolved himself to participate in online spaces as an outlet such as gaming. He identified the comfort in online spaces since he has difficulty participating in everyday events on campus without being confronted by community members. The College Republicans appeared to align with Republicans in general who felt excluded or belittled by academics and Democrats. In a January 28th, 2020, tweet the College Republicans shared a Cable News Network (CNN) video in which a host and his guests insult the intelligence of Trump and his supporters while hysterically laughing at their expense. The College Republicans tweeted the following message with the video: “America, this is what CNN thinks of you...” (@umainecr). This tweet may serve to divide republicans and democrats and depict democrats as intolerant. Additionally, it may also be used to show people feeling ostracized that they could find individuals who would accept them by embracing groups opposed to democratic ideals. These findings connect to scholarship highlighting that anomie is one of the strongest predictors for individuals to adopt extremist views (Blazak, 2001)

In this study, the view that the College Republicans were being excluded from the campus and, therefore, were the victims of the University of Maine’s intolerance was shared by all the emails from the public except for one. The view that the College Republicans were

ostracized on campus was shared by many who heard of the story. One individual wrote the following message to University of Maine administrators on January 16th, 2020:

I can't believe your organization is not open to hearing all sides of an issue. I read about your blatant discrimination against Michelle Malkin and free speech. I am so appalled and can't believe you are so partisan. John (john@jmcappello.com)

These findings align with Miller-Idriss' (2020) scholarship that found punishment, or the perception of punishment toward College Republicans shifts the public discourse to view the groups as the victims rather than recognizing the harm they have caused.

The relationship between the University of Maine administration and the College Republicans was primarily litigious. The University of Maine administration and College Republican discussions were based on a lack of relationship as outlined by Palmieri and Childs. The University of Maine administration's arguments for support or withdrawing support were based on legal obligation; the College Republicans engaged in the same manner. In an interview one College Republican leader shared:

But Childs said his group is looking into taking legal action against UMaine and the student government. "We're the only voice on our campus for conservative students, and they want to end this," he said. "They tried to steal our group in an effort to shut us down because they think we're some sort of hateful group because we're conservative."

(Pendharkar, 2020, para. 27)

In addition to the College Republicans, public citizens, trustees, and politicians questioned how the University of Maine was treating the College Republicans and the media also questioned the application and merit of policy in one January 8th, 2020, email.

Could you explain all this to me? I'm curious about the administrative policy decisions that lead to this, and why" a faculty advisor must be on board for a student org to be active. Why is this so? Thanks, Alexander (alexanderpease40@gmail.com).

The feeling from the conservative media and public who supported the College Republicans and the College Republicans themselves was that the University was exposing a loophole to silence them. They did not think the lack of an advisor was the real issue but rather that the University was using this technicality to disassociate themselves and hopefully silence the group.

Component two of the Relational Dimension: Emphasis on Separation and Isolation:

Litigious Relations

The second component of a not restorative response in the relational dimension of the restorative continuum is an emphasis on separation and isolation. In this study, the College Republicans were not disbanded because of their rhetoric but lost recognition because of a lack of advisor. The College Republicans felt that the University of Maine was exposing a policy loophole to silence their group and remove them from campus. When notified that the College Republican group had lost official standing with the University and, therefore, would not have any of the benefits or associations afforded to officially recognized student groups, the College Republican leaders responded as follows in a January 14th, 2020, email:

Hi Taylor,

My break has been quite eventful so far. I am fascinated that you have decided to begin enforcing policies with our group, although we know this is nothing new. We will be holding our event with Michelle Malkin this Friday as the UMaine College Republicans, a group of current Republican UMaine students. We will be applying to be re-activated

from inactive status as a UMSG recognized club once the semester begins as we have been for years, given our unjust and utilitarian suspension orchestrated by the intolerant Amy Fried and other students. We currently have around 10 candidates we are looking at for advisor. It's certainly very frustrating that an overly beaucroatic [*sic*] process has been employed against us as the only means to combat our rights. Additionally, we are currently engaged in a dispute with a couple administration members given their attempts to personally attack, berate, belittle, and shut us down, and would like to discuss this abhorrent behavior of faculty with you as well.

Enjoy the rest of your break,

Charlie Honkonen

In this email, the College Republican leaders feel that they are being excluded from the benefits of the University of Maine student clubs and organizations. However, in one instance they hold tight to their rights under free speech and in the next they asserted that they should not be subject to policies that they do not like. The University of Maine does not express any concern about the harmful nature of the College Republican rhetoric but is primarily concerned with disassociating the University from the College Republican group. As quoted in the Maine Campus the leaders of the College Republicans expressed concern over their right to free speech even though that was not the policy issue that was being forwarded against them.

The College Republicans and the University of Maine administration engaged each other on various institutional policy and legal issues. Their legal and policy challenges were not based on the harm of the College Republicans' speech but based on technicalities. The statement from one College Republican leader below highlights the legal approach's inability to directly address the harm but rather examine and challenge the group through any policy that may apply. The

application of various myopic policies does not afford an opportunity to examine the totality of the harm or human experiences. The quote below highlights that the issues are clear to those involved, but the issues are forced into loosely related policy or left unattended.

When asked for his thoughts on the university's electronic communications policy, Childs said that because his group was not in violation thereof, he did not expect any punitive administrative action to be taken but opined that "the only thing stopping the school from ending free speech on campus is federal funding (as cited in Cramer, 2020).

This quote highlights again that various policies can be applied such as an electronic communications policy, but it does not encompass the complete problem being experienced. The full problem included the following: The College Republicans felt silenced and punished by the University of Maine. Communities such as Native Americans, LGBTQ, Democratic, and other diverse community members have been targeted, harassed, intimidated, and threatened and reported feeling unsafe. All these groups expressed a disconnect between the community and the University of Maine administration. However, the totality of these harms and relationships have been dissected and decontextualized through limited policies that simultaneously strip away the human experience to focus not on relationships or those harmed but, often, inflicting more harm through punishment.

In this message, Childs highlighted that it is only because of potential punishment sanctioned through policy that the University is not silencing the College Republicans. Through the University of Maine's disowning of the College Republicans and their direct condemnation of the College Republicans' white power movement (WPM) rhetoric the institution identified their speech as a problem. However, they challenged the College Republicans through other avenues by attempting to disassociate with the group since they could not legally stop their

rhetoric without punishment from the U.S. government. The feelings of the College Republicans in the previous quote highlight that the reason behind institutional policy enforcement can be prompted by other motives. The supposedly dispassionate application of policy means that the rules are set, there's often no discussion of context, impact, or ulterior motives, it can be a myopic assessment of what rules exist and what evidence exists to support the documentation of a violation. Even when considering challenging the application of a policy one must often engage in a separate policy process to stop the inequity of another policy. In sum, Childs was not the only one to feel the College Republicans were not treated fairly even some College Republican members who opposed the adoption of WPM rhetoric felt like there was a longstanding divide between College Republicans and the university community.

Component three of the Relational Dimension: Mandatory Participation

In this study, there was no evidence of mandatory participation because the University of Maine had no policy through which to punish the College Republicans.

Component Four of the Relational Dimension: Attention to Trauma

The final component of a not restorative response within the relational dimension of the restorative continuum is no attention to trauma. This aspect was most notably absent when examining the types of harm. In this study, some individuals were being harassed and directly threatened. The resounding recommendation from senior administrators was to stay vigilant which highlights the continued threat of harm without ensuring safety. Likewise, some forms of harm in this study such as inflamed structural/ historical harms were not recognized as harms that are traumatic, may span generations, and pose a threat of future harm.

Legality of Inflicting Harm vs. Morality of Inflicting Harm

Within this study, those who supported the white power movement (WPM) rhetoric did not engage in any discussion of harm to the community. Those who supported WPM views under the guise of conservatism questioned the legitimacy of the student government's policy when they felt it was appropriate, but they did not engage in any discussion of free speech versus hate speech. These individuals vehemently defended their rights to say whatever they wanted despite the harm. Those harmed by the College Republicans' rhetoric directly questioned how free speech was protecting the College Republicans' harmful behavior. Each group approached the issue of the College Republican's WPM rhetoric through a different lens which meant there was not a common perspective to begin the conversation.

Community members were harmed by the rhetoric shared by the College Republicans. Their frequent doxing and tagging of UMaine community members in their social media posts led to the harassment of many. Several students reported being directly threatened by College Republican members in emails to faculty and administrators. When asked about this in the inside higher ed. interview one leader of the College Republicans stated that no one in his group has ever been found guilty of harassment. The emails that were released showed that members of the College Republicans were being investigated by the institution for harassment.

This investigation is also cited in the legal argument set forth by FIRE. The harm of this case was documented for senior leaders yet there were no discussions of stopping or intervening in the harm. Even for the specific concerns about physical safety put forth by faculty and students there is no evidence that they were offered protection that would create feelings of safety for these individuals. The willingness of the University of Maine to support the harmful

speech of the College Republicans was questioned by one staff member in the Wabanaki Studies Program, John Bear Mitchell, who stated:

“Any group that partakes in any racism or hate or direct threats to any students should be easily removed. But they’re not -- they’re protected,” he said. “I wouldn’t say that we should eliminate any Republican club. But anybody who engages in hate and racism should be removed, without question. (as quoted in Anderson, 2020).

The College Republicans claimed they had been censored. The University shared information with the University of Maine police department but none of this seemed to stop the group from directly harassing or encouraging the harassment of University of Maine community members. Even after much of the legal battle between the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration, the College Republicans were still emboldened to directly tag their former advisor in another post on January 18th, 2020.

Antifa and the Left-Wing outrage mob FAILED. Tonight we had a PACKED house of over 200ppl for @michellemalkin in Sebattus ME. We are the face of #AmericaFirst and we will NOT be silenced! Hope you caught the livestream @ASFried
#MalkinBannedInMaine #freespeech #mepolitics

In the post they link the University of Maine administration and their former advisor to a domestic terrorist group Antifa. Those who were targeted by the College Republicans reported that the action of tagging UMaine community members in social media posts resulted in direct harassment and implicit and explicit threats to their physical safety. However, during this conflict some across campus expressed a need to find a new way to engage that was not so harmful or confrontational.

Stopping The Harm

Some of the members of the College Republican group disagreed with the WPM rhetoric that the student club was endorsing (Anderson, 2020). However, in this study these members either continued in the group or left. Two members expressed a need to engage differently as a community. One student, Palmieri, who was quoted earlier stated that the College Republicans have not been treated fairly on campus even before the WPM rhetoric began. However, some College Republican members were still interested in finding a new way to engage with the community to have more peaceful interactions. These sentiments were put to action when some College Republicans aimed to establish themselves as the new leaders of the group once the original leaders of the College Republicans failed to secure a faculty advisor. When the new group of College Republicans, who rejected WPM rhetoric, was established, the message from the leaders was one of comradery and productive discussion of opposing views.

The quote below is an excerpt of a message in which the new leaders of the College Republicans hope to reengage with the community and stop the harmful rhetoric of the previous iteration of the College Republicans.

Zmistowski clarified that the new executive board hopes to create a dialogue about Republican candidates in a way that is respectful to the climate of the UMaine community. “We want to allow for a more open, but respectful, political discourse on [the UMaine campus],” Zmistowski said. (Stockley, 2020, para. 3)

There were calls for change from everyone involved in the College Republican misconduct except for the University of Maine administration. Some who were harmed also drew on traditional ways of engaging through a legal approach.

In a legal approach, the answer for harm is often more harm. Desiree Vargas called for punishment of the College Republicans, but this may be due to the nearly exclusive use of legal and policy approaches to address issues. Even though some wanted change but not harmony, other people across campus were hoping to cultivate a peaceful community. John Bear Mitchell stated that the harm should be easily stopped not protected but that is not what happened in this case. The use of a legal framework protected the harmful behavior and perpetuated the problem.

In a letter to the University of Maine's publication, the Maine Campus, one student put into question the dilemma that the University was stuck in as a public institution that must ensure free speech and also ensure equity and inclusion (Therriault, 2019). In this letter Therriault highlighted that the University could not only rely on a legal framework to address the conflict on campus but highlighted the University's responsibility to cultivate and ensure a safe campus for all. In sum, the legal approach exacerbated the harm in this case and did not create a more safe or united campus. The legal approach incited more conflict and only addressed pieces of the problem. The limited policy and legal considerations, paired with the hierarchical structure of the institution, left the harms experienced by community members and their needs unaddressed.

Humanizing All

It is often easy to feel connected and caring toward people who have been mistreated (Sered, 2019). It is often more difficult to feel a connection and care toward someone who has caused harm. The people who were harmed in this study through direct threats, online harassment, and the threat of violence, should not have been harmed by the College Republicans or their followers. These harmed people deserved safety. However, restorative practices operate

from the premise that we are all interconnected human beings; thus, the first step in building connection and resolving conflict is to examine our shared humanity.

Often, when examining a topic through the lens of humanity and harm many perspectives can be revealed. Multiple perspectives and experiences reveal many who were harmed and many who harmed. This study offered a unique opportunity to gain insight into the reasons why the meshing of the white power movement (WPM) with conservative politics resonated with the College Republican leaders.

In a March 9th, 2020 letter to the Maine Campus, the University of Maine's publication, Jeremiah Childs, shared some of his experiences and some insights as to why conservative politics ("A look into the life of Jeremiah Childs of the former UMaine College Republicans," 2020) aligned with his life experiences. However, in this study I have found it was not conservatism that aligned with his life experiences and beliefs, but the white power movement (WPM). Childs shared that he grew up in rural Maine which relied on factories for the economic well-being of the community. When the factories were closed, and many families and communities became economically depressed there was a simultaneous surge in opioid addiction.

Childs said that because of this economic shift, many of the members of his community felt the effects of income loss, and families started to fall apart. In the town that Childs lives in, many community members have suffered from Maine's opioid epidemic, with family structures falling apart as young parents succumbed to opioid addiction. Maine's opioid crisis personally affected Childs, as his mother struggled with an opioid addiction throughout his childhood and eventually went to prison for reasons related to opioid use. Childs now cares for his younger sister and works at an insurance company in order to

help provide for his family while he works as a full-time student to complete his undergraduate degree. (“A look into the life of Jeremiah Childs of the former UMaine College Republicans”, 2020, para. 4)

Childs described experiences that, through a restorative lens, would be classified as harmful and traumatic. Recognizing that Childs was coming from a place of harm and survival this may have been why the white power movement’s message of scarcity, ever-present threats of foreigners taking your job, or the need to protect people like you resonated with him. Even though Childs’ actions caused harm, Childs also described experiencing exclusion. Childs discussed being attacked for sharing his views and needing to avoid the University of Maine campus or public places like the grocery store because of the possibility of being confronted.

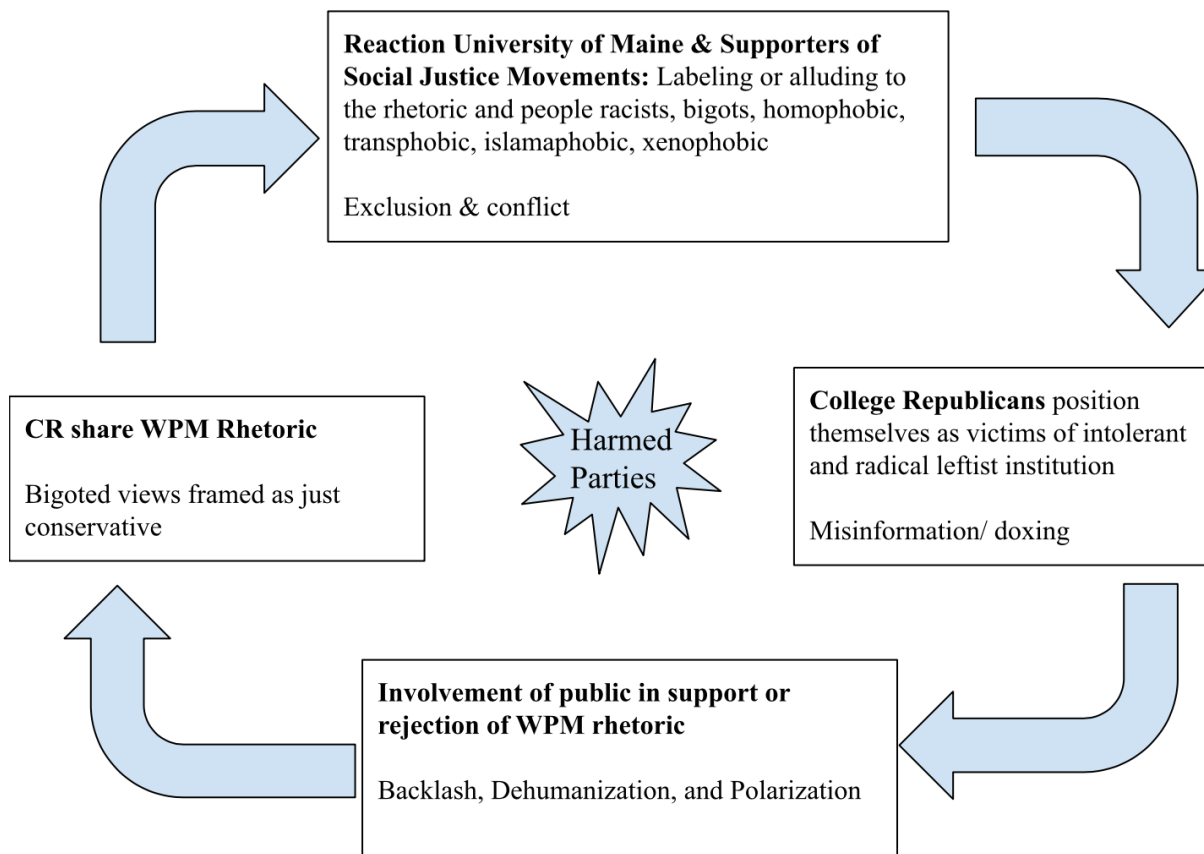
In our current society, where the prescribed antidote to hate speech is protest or exclusion via canceling, it’s essential to recognize that this is not actually working to stop bigotry, prevent harm, or heal from past harms. This is not to say that it is ineffective or always inappropriate to protest or remove someone from a place of influence. However, from a restorative justice standpoint we are not healing our relationships or communities through one-sided sharing or excluding everyone who causes harm.

Belew (2018) and Miller-Idriss (2020) have documented that punishing and protesting the WPM results in more recruitment of mainstream U.S. citizens to the WPM. Also, this desire to exclude and punish the WPM positions those individuals as victims rather than people who have caused harm. I assert through this study that this is the perpetuation of a harm cycle. In this study, relying exclusively on these limited measures furthered the harm cycle that operates in relation to a legal framework. This is especially true in the age of social media in which communication is often one-sided and lacks dialogue or understanding of one’s ideological

opponent (Bouvier, 2015; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Mouffe, 1999, 2000; Rosenbaum, 2018).

Figure 2. Offers a visual understanding of the harm cycle in this study.

Figure 2.



Through a restorative justice framework, the use of social media to exclusively silo oneself with like-minded individuals and use antagonistic communication toward ideological opponents engenders disconnection, dehumanization, and harm. The findings from this study build upon the scholarship on restorative practices (Andreu-Darling, 2019; Bolitho, 2012; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Braithwaite, 2002; Consedine, 1999; Davis, 2019; Flores, 2022; Gavrielides, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2022; Johnstone, 2014; Karp, 2019b; Lustick, 2021; Maglione, 2017; Olson & Sarver, 2022; Pali, 2019; Schiff, 2013; Schweigert, 1999; Young, 1999; Zehr, 2003, 2004).

The findings in this study suggest that the harm cycle is engendered by a legal framework, the need to present a façade of equity and inclusion rather than be equitable and inclusive, one-sided communication, and exclusionary practices. Restorative practices can interrupt the harm cycle by humanizing all involved and potentially restoring society and communities to right relation.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

This study has illuminated the harmful impact and ripple effects of the College Republicans' rhetoric and the administrative decision-making process. The emails and publications showed a community that was deeply affected by feeling unsafe on campus. Although there were social media posts and publications that discussed these events the emails from senior administrators offered insights into institutional decision-making and processes that are usually not shared publicly. Although publications shared some reports of harassment and intimidation, publicly there was no comment on student conduct cases from University of Maine administrators. Through the email data, it is shown that senior leaders were aware of the harm happening on campus. Yet, in this study, there was very little discussion or action by senior leaders privately to increase the safety of the campus.

In restorative practices, when harm occurs the first goal is to tell the story of what happened and identify harm (Sered, 2019). This step humanizes those who have been harmed and allows them to potentially begin the healing process through storytelling and connection with the community. Subsequently, needs are identified. Lastly, those people who committed harm are invited to take responsibility, identify the impact on others and themselves, commit to never committing the same harm again, and repair the harm to any extent possible. The community is also given an opportunity to identify any ways community practices or dynamics contributed to the harm.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will follow the same format that a restorative process would follow to identify these aspects from the data available in this study. I will begin by discussing the harm, the needs, the impact of the harm, and how institutions and society can stop perpetuating the same types of harm.

Restorative Process: Harm

The harm in this study was significant. There were individuals such as faculty and students who were directly targeted and harassed via social media, email, letters, and in-person threats. The threats of physical harm were both implicit and explicit. There was a level of confusion that was palpable among those harmed and those senior leaders who were receiving these reports. The Dean of Students and senior PR representative were both sympathetic to those who were being harassed.

The resounding call to be vigilant showed that this was a time in which the community needed to beware of their campus and community members. The call to be vigilant marked the campus as unsafe. Scholars have highlighted that we need a safe environment to learn and connect with others (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Keels, 2019); this environment was interrupted for those affected community members at the University of Maine. It was not clear if it ever returned to a place in which they could feel safe. One student reported wanting to withdraw from the university. Other unidentified student groups expressed their fear for their safety on campus. Numerous emails were sent to the University of Maine police department, but there is no evidence that this created a safer environment. The harm in this case and the needs were left unaddressed. This was clear through the College Republicans' leader's assertion that they were never found guilty of harassment and the affected students' reprimand of University of Maine administrators for not stopping the College Republicans' actions.

All four types of harm were present in this study: emotional/ spiritual, material/ physical, communal/ relational, and inflamed structural/ historical. Some individuals reported emotional and spiritual harm publicly at the End Racism protest, in mass media, social media, and letters to the community. There were likely many others who experienced harm but did not have a safe or

meaningful way to process these emotional and spiritual harms, this was evident through the two student letters to the campus and the End Racism protest. One letter reprimanded the College Republicans the other was contextualizing the situation and asking for a new way forward.

There were threats to physical safety which caused material/ physical harm. Those who felt threatened were advised to stay vigilant of their surroundings to protect themselves with no evidence of any assurance of safety or increased protection. This resulted in individuals adjusting their daily lives or abstaining from activities. The communal/ relational harm in this study was identified by those who were harmed and those who caused harm. The College Republicans and organizers of the end racism protest both identified a disconnect among the community, especially with senior administration. The communal/ relational harms were identified as prolonged issues not just outcomes from the College Republicans' adoption of the white power movement.

Lastly, the use of the white power movement rhetoric, paired with the institutional protection of the College Republicans' harmful rhetoric, activated inflamed/ structural harms. These harms spanned many groups who have been historically and contemporarily marginalized. Inflamed structural/ historical harm recalls the generational trauma of the past with the threat of continued harm in the future. These harms were significant and the needs that arose from these harms were largely unaddressed, which likely caused more harm.

Restorative Process: Needs

The needs of the community were not met. The needs identified by harmed parties were to stop the College Republicans' rhetoric and to stop the harassment and intimidation inflicted or inspired by the College Republicans. The calls from the community to stop the College

Republicans' WPM rhetoric were not met. In two publications, staff and students questioned why the College Republicans have not been stopped yet there appears to be no response to their needs from University of Maine administrators (Anderson, 2020; Feinberg, 2019). Rather, the University's administrators dodge the complaint and reframe it as a celebration of free speech and marginalized people. In the emails between students and senior administrators the students ask if there is anything that the University can do to stop the harm being inflicted by the College Republicans. The student even identified the people responsible, but we see no evidence of a resolution or even a response. It is possible that the administrative response was not included in the emails that were released through the Freedom of Access Act, yet we see more evidence that the needs of those harmed were not met.

Although the University of Maine and College Republicans engaged through a legal approach even the formal complaints against the College Republicans appeared to have no impact. One leader of the College Republicans stated that he and his group had never been found guilty of harassment. From this, it appears that the College Republicans were not held accountable under the legal system approach.

The harms that were raised by the community were siphoned through a legal model. In the processing of these harms through a legal model, the epistemology of legality is centered. By centering a legal approach, the human experience is filtered through a legal framework. The filtering of the human experience through a legal framework stripped away the totality of the experience to the pieces that are deemed legally important. Through the legal approach the individual does not determine the importance of their own human experience but is told what does or does not matter. This means that the full harm and the individuals' needs are not addressed. The legal approach in this study disempowered all people involved and positioned

each as a cog in a system rather than a human who connects with another human to unite a community. The people harmed were left to endure harassment and intimidation with no options but to ask the administration for protection.

In this study, the administration took a disempowered stance by only examining the problem through the legal lens, protecting free speech, and enforcing student government bylaws. This choice allowed them to almost completely avoid addressing the harm that was happening on campus and avoid taking a meaningful stance, which could have supported the University's purported equity and inclusion goals. However, it's important to note that the administrators are also operating within their prescribed roles in an institution that is structured to protect itself from the law not to allow people to act according to their beliefs or values. The legal approach did not offer an avenue to address the harm to the community. It is important to note this because publications and even scholars have judged administrators as morally inept (Squire et al., 2019) rather than recognizing they are also trapped within a legal system that limits their actions.

Lastly, the College Republicans may have also been stifled by the legal framework. In a system in which harm is met with harm, they took the legal stance repeatedly and never took accountability for their actions or tried to make amends. However, if a restorative approach had been used and the adversarial legal approach had been stopped, perhaps the College Republicans could have taken responsibility and made amends. Although restorative justice practices recognize that there is never an excuse for harm there are often reasons that people perpetuate harm. Therefore, understanding how the College Republicans as a group or individually may have felt ostracized from the campus or been harmed previously is also important to achieve the goal of restoring a community to right relation and preventing harm.

Restorative Process: Impact of the Harm

In this study, I found that the impact of the College Republicans' rhetoric was harm. The legal approach to addressing College Republican misconduct exacerbated harm. A legal approach is defined by rationalizations of what is wrong or right according to the law. In the legal approach one questions what harm is allowed under the law not how to interrogate, understand, and stop harm. Through the legal approach, the administration was focused on what they could or could not do to the College Republicans. This led to the University of Maine administration focusing on the College Republicans and largely ignoring harmed parties. Those who were harmed received some acknowledgment through formal complaint processes but there is no evidence that this increased their safety on campus.

Harm was minimally recognized by University of Maine senior administrators. The epistemology of the institution approached the harm from a legal standpoint, which centered on the College Republicans. The University of Maine stated publicly that the rhetoric of the College Republicans did not align with the University of Maine's values, yet their legal approach did not address the problem of WPM rhetoric harming the campus community. The University of Maine either protected College Republicans' free speech or aimed to control the group through student government bylaws. This desire to control the College Republicans through bylaws was meant to separate the University of Maine from association with the College Republicans not to stop the College Republicans' WPM rhetoric. In this way, the University of Maine did not actually address the harm of the College Republicans.

Rather, they examined what harm is allowed under the law and what harm the institution is allowed to inflict on others. This approach has been the approach of legal, educational, and criminal systems in the United States since its colonial founding (Sered, 2019). The

epistemology of these approaches does not center the harmed parties nor the needs of those harmed. Therefore, those who are harmed often are not cared for within these legal system frameworks (Davis, 2019; Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019).

Restorative Practices: How Institutions and Society Can Stop Perpetuating the Same Types of Harm

The harm that started with WPM rhetoric being shared within the College Republican group expanded to impact the University of Maine campus, the state of Maine, and the United States. The harm circulated through social media and mass media. This harm reverberated throughout the University of Maine, the state of Maine, and the nation as support for the College Republicans, Michelle Malkins, and their WPM rhetoric were elevated and shared more broadly. The people who were harmed by the College Republicans' support of the WPM were vocal through their protests. The idea that the WPM messages being shared by the College Republicans were just conservative pushed WPM rhetoric further into mainstream society. The College Republicans were consistently positioned as the victims of a liberal, intolerant campus.

The WPM rhetoric of Michelle Malkins and the College Republicans was legitimized as mainstream through their association with the University of Maine and their support from Maine politicians. The College Republicans garnered support from Nick Isgro, the mayor of Waterville, Maine, and Vice Chair of the Maine GOP. Nick Isgro even went so far as to misrepresent the Maine GOP and try to exert inappropriate pressure on the University of Maine.

The College Republicans also garnered support from Adrienne Bennet who was running for office as a U.S. congresswoman. They also aligned themselves with State of Maine representative Larry Lockman. The sharing of WPM rhetoric caused more harm to communities

by spreading the hate of the WPM and dividing municipal, state, and national communities. Interestingly, those who shared the WPM rhetoric and those who were harmed by the WPM rhetoric both reported experiencing harassment. Therefore, harm happened to all involved in this case.

The adoption of the WPM rhetoric by the UMaine College Republicans legitimized the rhetoric as conservative and normal. The association of WPM rhetoric with the University of Maine and Maine politicians further codified the rhetoric as normal and just conservative. These associations, thus, pushed the WPM further into mainstream politics and increased recruitment to their worldview. This finding aligns with other scholars' work that College Republicans have been a conduit for the mainstreaming of WPM rhetoric (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020). By not addressing the harm that originated on the University of Maine campus, it left the handling of the conflict to the public discourse of social media, mass media, and legal systems. Once the public was engaged the University of Maine administration spent most of its efforts cultivating a positive image of the University as a façade and appeasing institutionally powerful stakeholders.

Implementing Restorative Practices within Institutions to Prevent and Address Harm

The University of Maine approached the harm using a legal lens. The use of a legal approach to harmful speech and misconduct means that the University is positioned in a reactionary stance. They are not preventing harm from happening but waiting to apply policy and law once harm does happen. The legal approach offers limited options to administrators. Restorative practices can operate alongside legal practices and help to support legal rights (Gavrielides, 2014). Therefore, administrators and community members can add restorative practices to share in ensuring inclusive and equitable communities in right relation.

In restorative practices, a community aims to build and maintain strong connections to prevent harm. With a foundation of building and maintaining strong connections, the community can respond to harm to restore themselves to a harmonious place. However, this was not the case at the University of Maine. Through the legal approach, the College Republicans' rhetoric was protected under free speech and therefore, the University aided the College Republicans in continuing their WPM rhetoric regardless of the harm.

The University of Maine administrators were largely disempowered through the legal approach. There is no room for the feelings or desires of the community through a legal approach. The feelings of the University of Maine administrators were controlled through the public relations campaign which explicitly limited what could be said and who could speak. The public relations campaign positioned the College Republicans as not representative of the campus but fully supported by the campus in their free speech yet condemned for their stance that did not align with the University's equity and inclusion goals. With this seemingly contradictory or at least confusing rationale, the legal approach did not address the harm but aimed to avoid punishment under the law or in public opinion. In this study, the legal approach is the only position that was shared by senior administrators. The legal approach allows for these confusing and seemingly contradictory actions because the law is created and applied inequitably (Sered, 2019; Alexander, 2010).

The adoption of the legal approach also shielded administrators from answering their community and the public. It shielded them from discussing the harm or taking actions to stop the harm. However, this public relations campaign relied on the legal approach and is one that is followed by most institutions and individuals when harm occurs (Cole & Harper, 2017; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Harper, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2018). Public relations approaches to protect the

institution from ridicule mirror the legal model which encourages silence not admitting guilt and not taking responsibility for one's actions. The public relations approach is effective in protecting an individual or an institution from facing legal repercussions or taking accountability for themselves or their community but ineffective in addressing or healing harm. However, with all the calls for change and accountability our legal system and the public pose obstacles to these goals.

Harm and Society

The harm within this study affected not only the University of Maine but also the state and nation through social media and mass media. The harm that was done was committed by individuals who have aligned themselves with the WPM.

The approach of the University of Maine was a legal approach which protected and exacerbated harm. The legal approach also disempowered the community. Those who were harmed had no place to voice their concerns in meaningful ways that produced solutions to meet their needs. Those who were administrators had limited options through the legal approach in which their actions perpetuated the harm by framing the harm as only a matter of freedom of speech. The administrators also approached the College Republicans' status through a policy framework, which interrogated the technicality of whether they had an advisor but fully avoided the harm of the College Republicans' rhetoric. The university's senior administrators disempowered themselves through the legal approach in which they were protected from ridicule and lawsuits but allowed the community to continue to be harmed. However, they also followed the prescribed model through public relations in which truth, vulnerability, and discussing harm

has been eschewed as it may open the institution and individuals to legal or personal attacks from the public.

Therefore, this study raises questions not just for the University of Maine but all institutions in the United States and the public within this country. How can we ask institutions to change if we punish them for admitting their faults? The punishments U.S. society offer can be legal or punishment through public opinion, boycotting, or cancelling. Within this study, the University of Maine administration and the College Republicans were both trying to avoid punishment. The University could not stop the College Republicans' harm through a legal approach because they would have been punished for it by violating the student groups' free speech. The College Republicans were trying to avoid punishment for their harassment, intimidation, and hate by claiming free speech. Is the legal approach the correct approach if it can be used to protect harm and punish accountability and healing?

Public institutions are currently placed in a quandary. Public institutions are required to support free speech, yet they are also being pushed through Title IX and Title VII policies to create more inclusive, and equitable campuses. These commitments to Title IX and Title VII are often codified in diversity, equity and inclusion commitments and strategic plans. Yet, in this study, the law limited the University of Maine's administrators' ability to stop the harm.

Furthermore, through social media and mass media the events in this study garnered pressure from the public which was aimed at the University of Maine administration. The pressure from the public and media also resulted in political pressure from state politicians and organizations. It's important to note that these pressures are not just a matter of someone disagreeing or not liking the institution. Higher education institutions that have had public conflicts on campus have struggled to sustain themselves following public ridicule (Shonekan,

2020). Likewise, some of the politicians who were reaching out to criticize the University of Maine may also be individuals who vote on the funding for the University (Heller, 2011).

Therefore, conflicts such as these could significantly hinder or stop an institution from being able to educate students.

It is clear through this study that not everyone at the University of Maine, in the state of Maine, or in the nation supports diversity, equity, and inclusion. Although diversity equity and inclusion have been increasingly politicized in recent years with the banning of curriculum, theories, books, and in some instances, the DEI field, I assert the ideas of diversity, equity, and inclusion are synonymous with being in right relation with our communities. The tactics set forth by the College Republicans in this study have been shown to increase polarization within communities and increase harm.

To unite communities and stop the cycle of harm people within institutions will need a different way to engage other than a legal framework. The original harm shared in this study was a Facebook post by the College Republicans which had ripple effects that extended to other communities and individuals. However, the harm of the College Republicans was also connected to previous harms of colonization, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, and Islamophobia.

The continued classification of harm such as WPM rhetoric in this study, as unique, not representative of our community or an isolated event - is false, and harmful (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). By not recognizing that harm to marginalized communities is prevalent in all U.S. communities, harm was treated as isolated incidents rather than historic and systemic problems. We have not reckoned with our history and it continues to cause ripple effects into our present-day communities and institutions (Sered,

2019). Just as institutions often aim to handle harm as isolated incidents, often, the law also handles violations as isolated events in a decontextualized way that erases the human harm and human experience. Restorative justice offers a framework to understand the connection between one event of harm and countless others for the purpose of stopping harm and engendering healing.

Restorative Approaches for Society: Healing

The Problem with the Legal Approach

Audre Lorde famously wrote, “the masters tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 2018). Applying this to a legal framework, it is time to stop expecting a legal framework that has sanctioned harm to undo itself. Laws have allowed the United States to dehumanize people and sanction colonization, slavery, Jim Crow, Japanese internment camps, the separation and imprisonment of Hispanic children at the border, and the disproportionate imprisonment of Black and Brown people. Laws created our unequal systems and have been a tool to perpetuate harm. However, through mutual empowerment, community building, and healing, restorative justice practices have been shown to engender healing and prevent harm.

Through a restorative justice lens the totality of the human experience and one’s connections to others can be recognized by the community. In this study social media and mass media were used to limit and control messages. This was true of the administration to purposefully curate messages and limit who could speak. However, in different ways this was true of the College Republicans and those who resisted their racism.

Communication

In this study one-directional communication was consistently used via protest, invited speakers, social media, and mass media. On social media users can silo themselves with like-minded people or engage in antagonistic communication toward their ideological opponents (Bouvier, 2015; Dreher, 2009; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Mouffe, 1999, 2000; Rosenbaum, 2018). The practice of staying in online silos and consuming one-sided information is dangerous to all.

Scholars have found that individuals are radicalized by increasingly consuming vague and plausibly deniable WPM messages that continue to draw them into the more violent and overtly bigoted content (Belew, 2018; Fahey & Simi, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2020; Simi & Windisch, 2020a; Simi et al., 2015). However, the people most at risk to be radicalized are those who feel anomie or a disconnect from other people – their community (Blazak, 2001).

It's important to note that the primary way white power movement (WPM) messages were combated in this study was through one-sided communication via protest, social media, or mass media. Although this can support affinity groups and combat the messages being shared, it did not engender safety or stop the harm. Scholars have documented the continued cycle of harm that comes from one-sided communication (Bouvier, 2015; Dyer & Hakkola, 2020; Wojcieszak, 2009) and the propensity to polarize communities and society (Gantt Shafer, 2017; Mouffe, 1999, 2000).

Restorative Justice Analysis

Through restorative practices, the findings in this study suggested that the cause of harm is not just the white power movement ideology but our way of communicating and relating to each other that has allowed the University of Maine community and U.S. society to disengage

from building and maintaining strong relationships, which allowed people to dehumanize each other. This finding builds on the work of other scholars (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020) and suggests if we continue to fight against the white power movement and dehumanize those who belong to it, these efforts will continue to fuel the harm cycle. If the WPM, polarization, and hatred are understood as part of the harm cycle and the outcome of poor relations among community the root cause of broken relations can be addressed (Davis, 2019).

Through this humanistic and relational framework there is room to understand disparate experiences and perceptions. Restorative justice practices can humanize all. The foregrounding of humanization allows for the community to support the needs of the people harmed and hold the people accountable for committing the harm while recognizing the humanity of all. The University of Maine community expressed their desire to find a new way forward.

A New Way Forward

In the quote from John Bear Mitchell, he questions why this group was allowed to continue its harmful rhetoric. College Republican member Zmistowski expressed her desire for a closer more harmonious relationship between the College Republicans and the University of Maine campus. These are examples of people who came from different areas of campus, one organization that caused the harm, and the other, an indigenous organization that was the target of the attack – and both were looking for safety and a closer community. This opportunity was missed by the University of Maine administration due to their wholesale adoption of a legal framework.

The research on College Republicans and WPM radicalization shows that those who feel anomie and a sense of disconnection from the community are then predisposed to be radicalized

(Belew, 2018; Blazak, 2001; Miller-Idriss, 2020). Additionally, scholars have found that punishment or the perception of punishment toward College Republicans from higher education administrators has also been shown to bolster the WPM rhetoric in mainstream society (Belew, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

In this study, like others when administrators punished or were perceived to punish College Republican groups, the College Republicans are then seen as the victims of leftist, intolerant institutions of indoctrination. These findings suggest that the solution will not be found through increased confrontation and punishment in a legal approach. Therefore, a framework that engenders community to purposefully include individuals who may be at risk of feeling ostracized from the community for various reasons (e.g., racial identity, socioeconomics, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political views, or lack of inter-cultural understanding) may be able to come together with others to see the shared humanity and build a community of trust to explore differences. Restorative justice practices meet the needs of addressing power differentials and connecting a diverse community.

Restorative Justice practices have been found to mitigate hierarchical, and racial power imbalances (Gavrielides, 2014). In this study, power imbalances allowed for the disenfranchisement of those who were harmed as well as for disenfranchisement of those in the community. Further, the power imbalance perpetuated the harm. Gavrielides (2014) and Schiff (2013) propose that restorative justice may be the way to undo the cycle of harm. Restorative justice practices can be implemented alongside legal approaches, which are obligatory by offering informal processes to prevent and heal harm rather than wait for harm to happen (Davis, 2019; Karp, 2019b; Schiff, 2013; Sered, 2019).

There are many concerns about implementing restorative justice practices alongside legal approaches. There is the risk that restorative justice practices could be co-opted by institutions to present communitarian approaches to harm as a façade. In this study, that is a significant concern since the administration was primarily focused on presenting an image of equity and inclusion but there was sparse evidence that they tried to cultivate an equitable and inclusive community. Despite these risks, scholars agree that the option to maintain the status quo will continue to perpetuate harm (Davis, 2019; Gavrielides, 2014; Karp, 2019b; Schiff, 2013; Sered, 2019).

In the next section, I will outline what a restorative approach could have looked like in this study.

Restorative Response: How the University of Maine Could Have Responded

The University of Maine is well suited to implement restorative practices. The University of Maine offers a Foundations in Restorative Practices Program through the Hutchinson Center. The facilitators in this program could have been called upon to support the community in this instance. Waiting to use restorative practices when harm occurs is not an authentic adoption of restorative practices as the goal is to build and maintain strong community relations through tier one practices which include: sitting in circle, also known as community building (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Karp, 2019b). However, offering a restorative resolution when harm occurs is always recommended even if the community has yet to implement tier one practices of community building. In this instance, the University of Maine could have drawn upon its own restorative practitioners or practitioners in several local organizations including The Restorative Justice Project Maine and The Restorative Institute of Maine. The University could have also called upon national organizations such as the University of San Diego's Center for Restorative

Justice, the National Center on Restorative Justice, or Suffolk University's Restorative Justice Center.

Once the University of Maine had secured facilitators, they could have identified key stakeholders according to restorative practices. Key stakeholders in restorative practices are not donors, politicians, or trustees unless they would be affected by the event or involved in the planning and delivery of a resolution. In restorative practices key stakeholders are those who were directly affected by the event and those who will support the resolution of the harm. Key stakeholders in this study would have been those harmed by the College Republicans. These individuals who would have likely been harmed would be Desiree Vargas, who organized the protest against racism event in reaction to the College Republicans, Dr. Amy Fried, community members from The Wabanaki Center, The College Democrats, the student groups that reported harassment, and anyone else who reported harm but may not have been identified in this study. The College Republicans and University administrators would have been identified as key stakeholders as well. Since the University of Maine police were frequently mentioned it might have been helpful to involve them in the process as well.

An important aspect of a restorative process is ensuring everyone who wants to participate in a restorative process is ready and that the process will not cause more harm (Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019; Sopcak & Hood, 2022). Some of the criteria used to evaluate the readiness and appropriateness of restorative practices by restorative practitioners are the following:

1. There is no risk that the restorative resolution process could lead to additional harm.
2. The student must take full responsibility for their actions and show a willingness to reflect on the harms their action has caused, as well as on how that harm might

be repaired. Any deflecting or minimizing of responsibility will normally make the case unsuitable for a restorative resolution attempt.

3. The affected parties voluntarily consent to participating in a restorative conference/ resolution attempt.
4. The affected parties need to show a genuine interest in repairing harm and the situation. This includes the harmed parties' willingness to restrain retributive or vindictive urges. (Sopcak, & Hood, 2022, p. 560).

There were three groups of people directly involved in this case: the people who were harmed, the University of Maine administration, and the College Republicans. There might be multiple restorative processes that would happen between; those who were harmed and the University of Maine administration; those who were harmed and the College Republicans; and the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration.

Volition

Anyone in restorative practices can choose to participate or not. Volition is important to restorative processes as mandating people can be a form of punishment. Mandating participation disempowers individuals and may engender performative apologies but not real accountability (Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019). A restorative process is also confidential. Therefore, information from a restorative conference should not be taken and reused in a legal proceeding, conduct hearing, or any other punitive system.

A restorative process begins by identifying key stakeholders as I described above. This is often a snowball process in which the facilitators meet with the individuals directly involved and then identify those who were incidentally affected or who are key community members to

support a resolution. The facilitators would begin by getting the names of those directly involved. After reaching out to the College Republican leaders to ask if they would like to participate in a restorative process the facilitators would then reach out to the University of Maine administrators to ask if they would like to be involved in the restorative process. The facilitators would then reach out to the harmed parties to offer the same option of participating in a restorative process.

By asking the people who committed harm first the facilitators could give the harmed parties a more accurate idea of whether the people who harmed them are willing to take responsibility and make amends. Even if the College Republican leaders and the University of Maine administration had declined to participate the harmed parties and their community members still could have come together to support each other. Even a community conference without the College Republicans or University of Maine administrators could have identified measures to meet their needs and prevent harm in the future.

Of course, it is ideal to have those who harmed take responsibility. However, even in their absence a restorative process can still move forward. This may have taken the form of a support circle for the harmed parties or an opportunity for the community to step in as a surrogate for those who committed harm. Individuals who were harmed also have the same volition; they are not required to participate in restorative processes but can engage according to their comfort level.

Conversely, if the College Republicans had wanted to participate in a restorative process but those they harmed did not, the process still could have proceeded to invite the College Republicans to stop the harm, take accountability, and heal their relationships with the

community to the degree possible. In essence, if at least one group was willing to participate in restorative processes restorative conferencing or support circles could have happened.

Pre- conferencing

If restorative conferencing were pursued with the harmed parties and parties that harmed, the process would begin with pre-conferencing. During pre-conferencing participants are asked the following questions to prepare themselves to discuss the event. The restorative questions in harm repair are: 1) What happened? 2) What were you thinking at the time? 3) What have you thought about since? 4) Who has been affected by what you have done? (Sered, 2019). These questions divert from the legal perspective that looks for violations to categorize harm and shifts to a human perspective to understand all who were involved.

In this instance, once the participants were identified the facilitators would conference with the harmed parties and those who harmed separately until the facilitators felt that both parties were prepared to meet for a restorative conference. The facilitators would be continuously evaluating the harmed parties to ensure they are ready to see the people who harmed them in person (Sered, 2019; Sopcak & Hood, 2022). The facilitators would be evaluating and discussing whether seeing the individuals who caused harm would cause any additional trauma or harm.

The readiness of the harmed party is significant in the restorative process. Harmed parties are not allowed to continue the cycle of harm. For instance, violent communication such as yelling, swearing, or degrading words are not permitted and would signal that the harmed parties are not ready to conference.

Likewise, conferences are not meant to achieve revenge. Therefore, the harmed parties would be considering what peaceful resolutions would meet their needs to repair the harm to the

degree possible. It is also important that harmed parties are not expected to forgive those who harmed them (Sered, 2019). Although forgiveness is a common outcome of restorative processes, forgiveness is never an expectation to be put upon someone who is harmed but something that restorative processes make room for as a possibility.

In restorative practices it is recognized that harm can never be undone. However, individuals responsible for the harm can take accountability by: 1) acknowledging responsibility for their actions, 2) acknowledging the impact of one's actions on others, 3) expressing genuine remorse, and 4) Taking actions to repair the harm to the degree possible and no longer commit similar harm (Sered, 2019). These actions are processed during the pre-conferencing. In the restorative conference these actions are often fulfilled when an action plan is mutually created from the harmed party, the party who harmed, and the community. The restorative conference offers participation for those directly involved but also allows space for the community to take responsibility for any way it contributed to the harm that occurred.

In the pre-conferencing phase, it would be important for those directly affected to engage with the facilitators in pre-conferencing, harmed parties, administration, and College Republicans. If the facilitators felt one group was not ready, they would not proceed to the restorative conference with those individuals. However, this does not mean that the option of restorative practices would be gone. Unlike punitive processes that determine fault and sanctions, a restorative process can occur whenever those who were involved are ready.

Space

For the restorative conference it would be important for facilitators to choose a location that is most comfortable for those who had been harmed, perhaps in the Wabanaki center, or

another space on campus that might elicit feelings of safety and comfort for those who have been harmed (Gavrielides, 2014). This is an important step to engender trust and egalitarianism as administrators often invite the community to their space in which power differentials often persist and discourage truthful and honest sharing. By shifting the context to the spaces of communities that have been historically marginalized it offers the opportunity for a more egalitarian community meeting. Likewise, it would push the administration and College Republicans out of their traditional spaces that may engender feelings of superiority or control. Ultimately, the decision-making about space should be purposeful and involve the community in deciding on an agreed-upon space.

Sharing

Once in the chosen space and in the restorative conference, those harmed could have shared how they had been affected personally. As one person shares everyone else is invited to listen. Only the person with the talking piece speaks and everyone else is invited to listen deeply, from the heart. In this space the individuals who were being harassed and intimidated by known and unknown sources could have shared their fear of violence, their inability to attend classes, or their thoughts of withdrawing from the University, social media, or any other aspect of their daily lives. These individuals could have shared how they reached out to the community for help by asking the College Republicans and university administrators to stop the harm from happening but received no assurance of safety. This would have given the community an opportunity to understand how this was affecting each individual 1) emotionally/ spiritually, 2) materially/ physically, 3) communally/ relationally, and 4) historically inflamed/ structurally

(Karp, 2019b). The sharing of these harms would humanize the communities that the College Republicans had dehumanized through white power movement (WPM) rhetoric.

It would also offer an opportunity for the University of Maine administrators to understand how the community and individuals harmed had really been impacted. It would offer an opportunity for the administrators to realize that they too had caused harm. Through these meetings the administrators might have recognized the following harmful behaviors that were identified in this study: 1) conceptualizing these events as not representative of the campus, 2) offering vague and generalized commitments to equity and inclusion, 3) offering incessantly to reinstitute the College Republicans and protect their harm, 4) controlling and limiting the sharing of information, 5) engaging hierarchical decision-making and excluding those directly affected, 6) recommending that the community stays vigilant to protect themselves, and 7) focusing their attention on the College Republicans and the University of Maine brand at the expense those who were harmed and the community. In sum, the administration might have understood that they too had harmed the community.

Next, the individuals who caused the harm could share. The College Republicans would only be involved in a restorative process if they had recognized their behavior as harmful. If they did not take responsibility and accountability, they would not be involved in a restorative process with those they harmed. Harm repair processes can continue even if one party does not want to participate. Options include surrogates taking the place of one of the parties or increased community participation. From analyzing the data and watching videos of Jeremiah Childs I feel this would have been challenging. The College Republicans likely would have needed to build relationships and trust with the University of Maine administration, had an opportunity to be

understood as human beings, and had voluntary opportunities to learn why their rhetoric is part of the white power movement, harmful and hateful.

If they were able to identify their harmful rhetoric or if some but not all members of the College Republicans were able to take responsibility and accountability, they would be able to partake in the restorative process. Through listening to other community members they would have an opportunity to witness the human impact to those people affected by their actions (Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019). This would also give them an opportunity to take responsibility for their action and identify more fully how their behavior impacted fellow community members. The individuals who committed the harm could then express genuine remorse and begin making amends through a harm repair agreement. This would also offer them an opportunity to redeem themselves in the community.

Jeremiah Childs stated in Facebook videos and interviews that he had been labeled a white supremacist and was harassed (UMaine College Republicans, 2020, January 17; UMaine College Republicans, 2020, March 2). In this harm repair process College Republican members would also be humanized. They would likely be able to share how they may have felt ostracized from the campus as College Republicans for years. They might discuss how this was a long legacy on the campus and not something new that came about with the adoption of the white power movement. The leaders might also discuss their own personal stories. They might explore why the white power movement was something that they connected with. A feeling of anomie was discussed extensively by those College Republicans who supported the white power movement.

During this time the College Republicans might also identify tensions and discomfort with the campus and administration of the University of Maine. Although the College

Republicans would be able to identify the reason behind their behavior, it would not be an excuse. It would, however, give those harmed, the administration, and the community an opportunity to understand why this happened and how they can prevent it in the future.

Lastly, the administration would be able to share their experiences. Likely, the administrators would share that they are stuck within a legal system that offers clear directives of what they must do and what they are not allowed to do. They would be able to be humanized to share their personal feelings and emotions. These feelings may also be fear, regret, shame, or anger. This would be a time in which the administrators would not have to curate statements to be filtered through public relations professionals but an opportunity to speak truthfully and freely from the heart. With the assurance of confidentiality, this would offer a space that administrators were not afforded in this study.

Once everyone had shared, the facilitators would offer a summary of the discussion and offer a break, usually with some refreshments. After the break the group would come back to the circle and begin building a harm repair agreement. The harm repair agreement would focus on the needs of the harmed parties. Once the needs were identified, the group could shift to how the College Republicans and the University of Maine administration could take responsibility and make amends. The community would also have an active role in creating a stronger community connection.

A harm repair agreement would depend upon the harmed parties' needs and what would satisfy these needs. Some individuals might feel that they want the College Republicans to attend certain cultural events on campus to build community and understand perspectives of the communities they harmed. Some people may not feel comfortable ever interacting with the College Republicans again. The harm repair agreement can accommodate both as the agreement

is created according to the needs of each individual. This may have resulted in multiple harm repair agreements. Since the harm in this case was public on social media and mass media a form of harm repair might have been the College Republicans identifying how their previous messages were wrong and harmful publicly via social media or mass media. The administration might send out a message as well discussing what errors they made and how they plan to build a stronger, more transparent connection with the community in the future not a curated image filtered through public relations.

In sum, the restorative conference would not just be the end of the harm but the beginning of the healing. During the conference the facilitators and community would identify who would check in to make sure each action step was taken and completed. As a commitment to this work the institutional adoption of restorative practices would signal a deep and true desire to build and maintain community.

Furthermore, when appropriate, the community could share examples of restorative practices tier one community building via social media and mass media to offer the community, other institutions, and U.S. society examples of different ways to engage each other. This would be a commitment to institutional change that would genuinely commit to an equitable and inclusive campus. This action would also avoid co-opting restorative practices in cases of harm and then returning to regular practices of ignoring community relations.

This hypothetical resolution is a list of possibilities. However, there were many possibilities for outcomes and the needs of those harmed are not fully known since this process did not happen. It is salient to note that even if the College Republicans never took responsibility for their actions the participation of the University of Maine administrators could have met some of the needs of the harmed parties. Additionally, the shift of the University of Maine

administration from engaging in a legal framework to a restorative framework could have offered an example of an institution committed to healing harm in an imperfect system. A restorative approach could have humanized all involved and offered a community response. A visual representation of a not restorative approach is represented visually in Appendix D, and a visual representation of a restorative approach is conceptualized in Appendix E.

Humanizing All

In this study, there were a lot of harmful behaviors that were identified and many of the people who committed those harms were named. It's important to recenter this discussion to the restorative practice of humanizing all. Restorative practices recognize that everyone commits harm at some time but in our current U.S. society we often don't have a framework or practice for healing harm that we commit.

In first recognizing the needs of the harmed parties we can see people who have been dehumanized. The practice of hearing other peoples' stories and connecting with them humanizes groups that have been historically and contemporarily dehumanized. It is through dehumanization that we are able to commit harm. However, restorative practices criticize the United States' current approaches to addressing harm. In the United States the typical frame of reference is to harm those who cause harm (Karp, 2019b; Sered, 2019). We cannot heal if we continue to dehumanize each other – we cannot be in right relation if we dehumanize each other to allow harm to others (Davis, 2019; Sered, 2019). Therefore, restorative practices ask us to do the seemingly impossible task of humanizing those who have dehumanized and harmed.

In this study I have told part of the story of how the College Republicans harmed many in their community from the data that was public. In an article to the Maine Campus, one author

also shared how one leader of the College Republicans, Jeremiah Childs, experienced significant harms as a child that likely influenced him to connect with the white power movement. These are not excuses but reasons that the University and U.S. society must understand if we aim to heal the harms in higher education and our communities.

I have also shared how administrators harmed the community by engaging through a legal framework. Administrators' use of a legal framework in this study eschewed the need to take responsibility or action, protected the harmful rhetoric of the College Republicans, and protected administrators from increased scrutiny or accountability.

However, these administrators are also humans stuck in a legal system. They do not get to choose which policies and laws they are subject to, but they are legally required to comply or they face punishment. These realities are not fully acknowledged in current scholarship (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Squire et al., 2019). Likewise, the public relations approach to conflict and harm is dehumanizing to all. Administrators are not able to express their feelings or emotions in an environment where conformity, staying on message, and appeasing powerful stakeholders is the status quo. However, administrators are human beings, they feel, and they have various identities both privileged and marginalized. This was highlighted when one person in this study, Jim Thelin, ultimately resigned in a presumably unrelated event and cited stress as the reason for his departure (Duggan, 2022). Senior administrators deal with significant issues in a legal system that sometimes protects harm.

Lastly, I want to identify myself in this study as a form of accountability. I too was an administrator at Husson University which is geographically close to the University of Maine. Although the College Republicans at the University of Maine received significant media

attention during the 2019-2020 academic year, the event was still being discussed in the media in 2021. In the Summer of 2021, Kelderman shared the following in his article:

Several other College Republican chapters have since shown some connections to Fuentes and the groypers, according to the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, a nonprofit watchdog of the far right. Clubs at Arizona State, Husson, and San Diego State Universities, and at UCLA, the University of California at Berkley, and the University of Maine, are among those the institute identified as having connections (Kelderman, 2021, p. 15).

Kelderman also shared that the Husson College Republicans and UMaine College Republicans had co-sponsored calls for the banning of immigration to the United States in the Spring of 2020. When this information was shared with me as the diversity, equity, and inclusion officer, I began looking at the social media pages of the Husson College Republicans which showed content similar to the University of Maine College Republicans. After reading the article and seeing the references and evidence it was clear that this had happened, and seemingly, this was the first any administrators at Husson were hearing about it. I quickly had a Zoom meeting with senior leaders.

At the meeting I came prepared with a letter to the community to take accountability for our actions as an institution and the need for the community to come together to examine this aspect of our community in relation to our values and core beliefs. Despite sharing my letter with those administrators in attendance, few even looked at it, as I could see on Google Docs. During the meeting it was quickly announced that we would not be addressing this issue. The rationale presented was that the people believed to be associated with co-sponsoring events with University of Maine College Republicans had graduated and they did not want this to get out to

the media any further. I shared that the Husson College Republicans' social media pages were concerning. I was assured that student life would speak with them about their content and remind them about the need to present a professional profile for employment.

I was crushed. I felt like I was not the diversity, equity, and inclusion officer but just hired to present a façade. I wanted to dig in, look at our community, and do the work. I wanted to live up to the values and beliefs that we espoused as an institution.

However, in that situation facing leaders with more seniority and influence than I and considering my need for employment - I did nothing. It was a split-second decision really. I said okay and complained with a co-worker after the meeting about how awful we felt. Then I did nothing. I share this because I am not trying to vilify anyone in this study. I have taken similar actions to the senior administrators who I criticized in this study.

However, we need to ask ourselves what change will ever come if individual administrators are not allowed to speak up without risking termination. How are institutions to change if we do not allow them to be flawed? If admitting fault means risking financial ruin institutionally or individually, how can we really expect change? How are individuals supposed to challenge systems that are flawed if silence and conformity are taught as institutional practices? Humans are responsible for harm, but humans are not able to escape the systems of control within U.S. society. Therefore, if we begin to implement practices that humanize us and empower us, perhaps we can accomplish the paradoxical goal to change the systems to which we are subjected (Gavrielides, 2008). Perhaps then these systems would serve our needs rather than perpetuate the harms of the past. In the next section I examine the limitations of this study.

How Institutions can Adopt Restorative Practices

Institutions that are interested in implementing restorative justice practices should not wait for harm to occur to engage restorative practices (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Karp, 2019b; Karp & Sacks, 2014). To be authentic to restorative justice practices and avoid co-opting RJ, by only using it in cases of harm, it's essential that institutions begin with tier one practices to build and maintain strong community relations (Andreu-Darling, 2019; Gavrielides, 2012; Karp, 2019b; Karp & Sacks, 2014).

Individuals interested in bringing restorative justice practices to their institution might begin by exploring resources from the National Center on Restorative Justice. There is a page dedicated to higher education and information on certificate programs and professional networks.

To begin implementing tier one practices, someone within the institution would need to find a group of individuals on campus, preferably who already engage one another in some regularly occurring setting (e.g., student club, department, class, committee). The individual who has an interest in implementing RJ would likely need to invite facilitators who specialize in RJ to introduce the practices to the community. The training may be a couple of days of commitment or be broken into sessions that last several hours over the course of several months. Another option would be for a group from the institution to earn a certificate in restorative practices and teach the practices to their community. In either case, once a group understands the practices they can begin facilitating (i.e., what restorative practices call co-keeping) circles for themselves and their community.

To implement restorative practices within an institution it's important to teach the practices to as many people as possible (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Karp, 2019a, 2019b). This culture change would likely take years to undertake. As with other changes within

institutions there are some key individuals such as leaders of the institution that would be important allies for an institutional adoption of this kind. However, it's important to note that restorative practices can be implemented in any community, such as a classroom, club, or department, even if the whole institution has not adopted the practice. The focus on volition is also important. Restorative practices should not be forced upon individuals as this would contradict restorative practices' philosophy. Therefore, my practice as I was taught by the University of San Diego's Center for Restorative Justice and Suffolk University's Center for Restorative Justice is to begin where there is interest and let the practices spread organically.

Tier two and tier three practices should be introduced after the institution has a strong practice in tier one (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Karp, 2019b). Tier two and tier three would necessitate additional training. The University of San Diego's certificate includes training in tier one, tier two, and tier three practices. The institutional adoption of restorative practices would be necessary to build restorative options for harm repair. Restorative options for harm repair are built into existing policies.

For instance, it is recommended that institutions keep their traditional policies but introduce restorative options in instances of harm (Karp & Sacks, 2014). Institutions have used restorative justice practices for many types of harm including academic integrity issues, misconduct, assault, and sexual assault (González et al., 2019; Karp, 2019a; Karp & Sacks, 2014; Lustick, 2021; Sopcak & Hood, 2022). One study that surveyed 569 instances of harm found that students reported greater learning through restorative practices compared to traditional approaches to student conduct violations (Karp & Sacks, 2014). Likewise, subsequent research shows that an institutional adoption of restorative practices cultivates an "institutional environment that responds not only to incidents of aggression and harm but also to all

relationships that occur in schools including administrator interactions, policy decisions, teacher pedagogy and curriculum, and professional and institutional development” (Gonzalez et al., 2019, p. 218). Many institutions have used or adopted restorative justice practices such as Dalhousie University, The University of Michigan, The University of California San Diego, MacEwan University, and Vermont Law School. In the next sections I will discuss limitations of this study and consideration for future research.

Limitations

This study has several important limitations to note. First, as one researcher I am limited in time and resources to conduct this study. Likewise, the trustworthiness of the study may decrease as further developments emerge in the fields of higher education or restorative justice. This single study will not be generalizable; thus, more research will be needed. The data in this study was limited to the information that was made public through social media, publications, campus statements, or the Freedom of Access Act. Therefore, the data in this study is not comprehensive of every communication that was had regarding this campus controversy. Facebook has made it more difficult for researchers to collect public data now that web scrapping is not permitted on their platform. This is concerning because Facebook is one of the leading social media platforms and has a significant potential to impact democracies (Bouvier, 2015). Manually collecting data offers greater opportunities for human error and was therefore a limitation in this study.

Future Research

Future research should continue to look for opportunities to examine information that is traditionally confidential. Scholars should continue researching how institutions implement

restorative practices in situations involving public campus controversy. Scholars and practitioners might consider when it is appropriate to publicize peace-making practices such as harm repair circles so that institutions and the public have an opportunity to learn these practices and adopt a new paradigm for harm repair. Publicizing harm repair would remove the confidentiality of the process, but it may be appropriate in some instances. Publicizing harm repair would offer a new paradigm that gives people an example other than seeking punishment when harm occurs.

While research is valuable to examine phenomena, the problems in this study are embedded in our governmental systems and institution and have dominated the way we have addressed harm in the United States over the last several hundred years. Therefore, practitioners are needed across institutions, and within our media to engage from a place of peace-making. Future research might also examine how institutions draw upon their mission, vision and diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. This research pertains to many fields, some of which are communications, higher education, peace and reconciliation studies, political science, sociology, and restorative justice practices. The continued examination of this topic in an interdisciplinary manner may be the best approach because this topic is complex, and a singular focus may continue to overlook the reality of the harm cycle.

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Appendix A. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONTINUUM

	Not Restorative	Somewhat Restorative	Very Restorative
Collaborative Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down decisions • Key stakeholders don't decide • Formulaic outcomes or sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholders consulted • Mix of formulaic and discretionary outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottom-up decisions • Empowers stakeholders • Design thinking • Active collaboration for creative solutions
Addressing Harms and Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary focus on person who caused harm • Punitive • Passive Accountability (receiving punishment) • Procedural/ evidence-focused, not harm-focused • Harmed parties not involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative outcomes incorporated into menu of discretionary outcomes • Some individual harms addressed, typically material through restitution • Attention to anonymous or confidential reporting • Limited involvement of harmed parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multipartial focus on harmed parties, person who caused harm, and community • Harms clearly identified, including emotional/spiritual; material/physical; relational/community; inflamed structural/historical • Needs clearly identified • Outcomes clearly address harms and needs • Active accountability (making amends) • Active participation of harmed parties and Community
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusionary • Emphasis on separation and isolation (e.g., no contact; loss of privileges; removal from community) • Mandatory participation • No attention to trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some attention to rehabilitation • Some attention to trauma-informed response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma informed • Diversity-Equity Inclusion informed • Community/trust building • Conflict capacity Building • (Re)integration Focused • Voluntary • Participation

Appendix B. TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Fall 2019 Semester:

- October 4th: College Republicans shared 15th century Spanish War propaganda
- October 7th: UMaine administration released a statement regarding CR post identifying it as:
 - 15th Century Spanish War Propaganda
 - Message is upsetting to many in the community
 - Does not align with UMaine's equity and inclusion values
 - Free Speech: necessary and supported
- October 9th: News Center Maine Article
- October - November: Dr. Fried advised UMaine College Republicans
- October 29th: Maine Public Article
- November 4th: End Racism Protest held on campus
 - Maine Campus Article
- November 20th: Michelle Malkins responded to a UMaine College Republicans Facebook post and exchanged contact information
- November 21st: Dr. Friend resigned as advisor

Spring 2020 Semester:

- January 6th: Inside Higher ed. Article
 - Published reports of harm on campus - claims of harassment by students and student organizations.
- January 13th: UMSG president notified the leaders of the College Republicans that they are not recognized as a student organization due to their lack of advisor
- January 14th: Portland Press Herald Article
- January 15th: College Fix Article
- January 17th: Michelle Malkins spoke in Sebattus, ME
- January 17th: Bangor Daily News Article, The Sun Journal Article
- January 27th: Maine Campus Article
- January 28th: Letter from Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
- February 2nd: Maine Campus published a letter
- February 5th: UMaine College Republicans reinstated as Constitutional Republicans
- February 24th: Maine Campus Article, News Center Maine Article
- February 28th: Bangor Daily News Article
- February 2020: Leaders of UMaine College Republicans attend CPAC
 - Leaders of CR group take pictures with extremists (Alex Jones, Nick Fuentes, and Milo Yiannopoulos, Infowars)
- March 9: Maine Campus article
 - Jeremiah Child's life and exclusion on campus
- March 13: Michelle Malkins announces on Facebook her FOIA request
- April 22: Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights

Appendix C. October 4th FACEBOOK POST: COLLEGE REPUBLICANS' FACEBOOK

PAGE



UMaine College Republicans

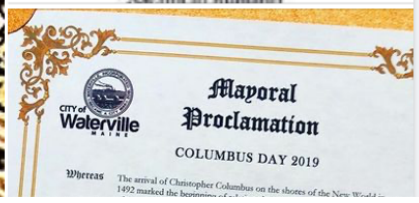
October 4, 2019 · 🌐



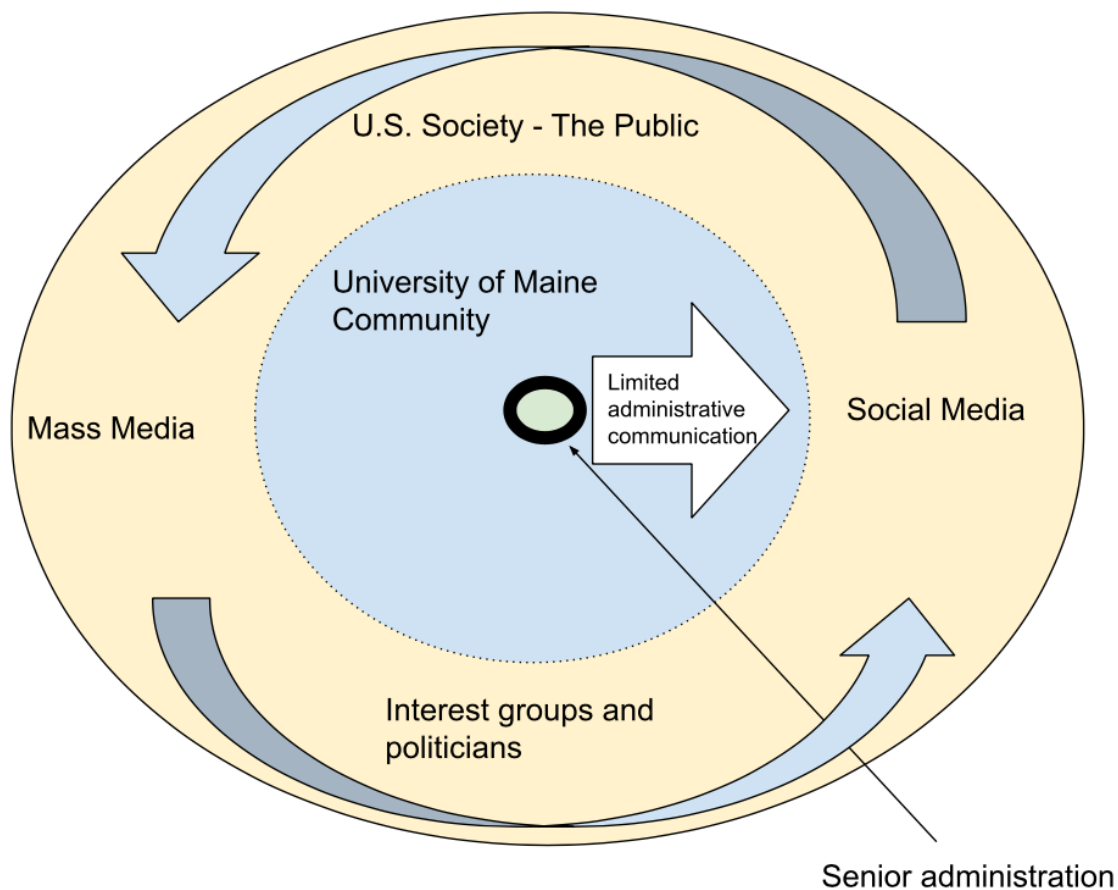
Thank you, Nick Isgro, for standing up to the Radical Left-Wing agenda that is being pushed by Establishment Republicans in Augusta with the help of the Left. The most successful tactic of Communists is rewriting history and destroying our heritage. WE must not forget the brutal societies that Christopher Columbus and other explorers discovered in America. These societies were corrupted by rampant ritual sacrifice and cannibalism. The bible is actually full of examples just like the Aztecs and we should be giving them praise? I do not think so....



Sacrificis humano



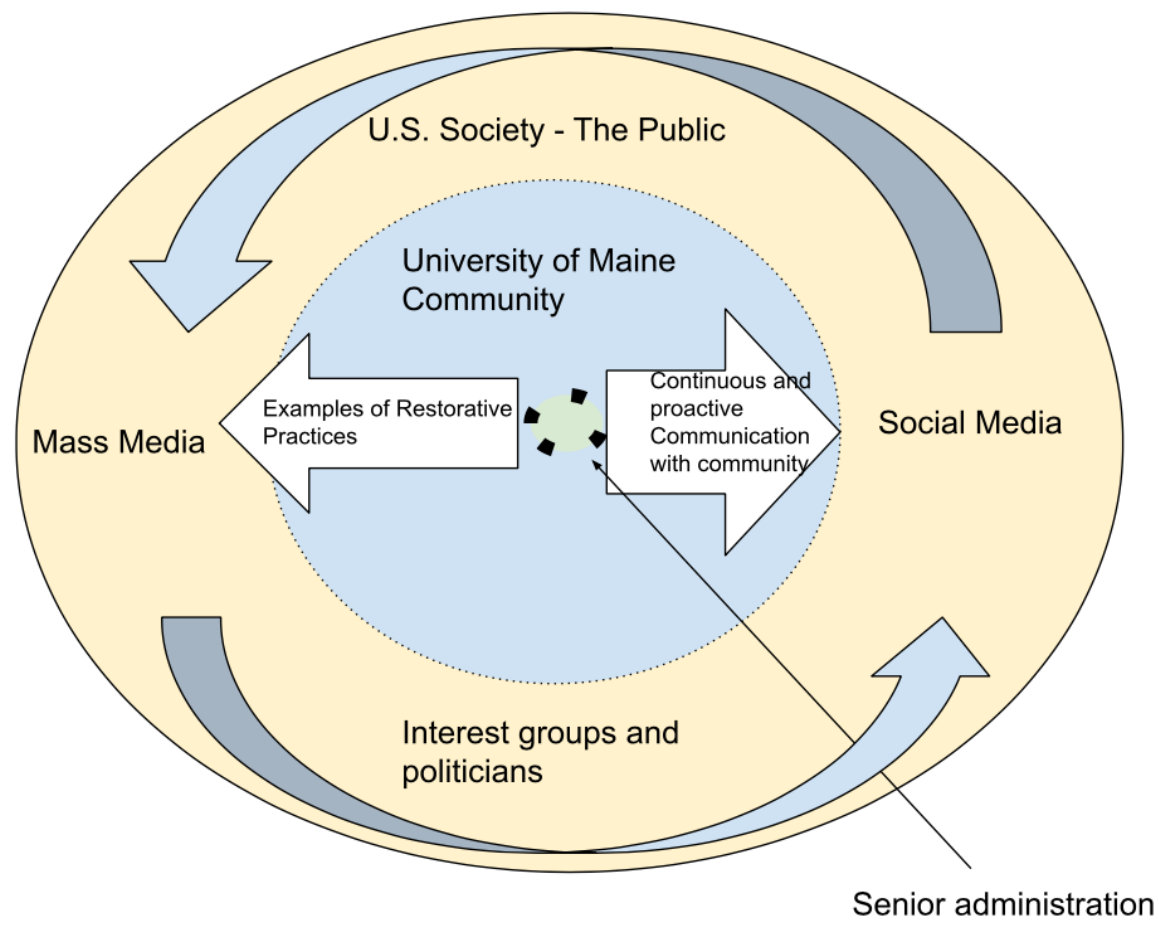
Appendix D. NOT RESTORATIVE APPROACH



Senior Administration:

President of the University of Maine
 Dean of Students
 Executive Director of Public Affairs University of Maine System
 Senior Director of Public Relations Division of Marketing and Communications
 Chief of Staff and General Counsel
 Chancellor of the University of Maine System
 Director of Government and Community Relations
 Board of Trustee Members
 Senior Director of Procurement
 Chief of Staff for the President of the University of Maine

Appendix E. RESTORATIVE APPROACH



Senior Administration:

- President of the University of Maine
- Dean of Students
- Executive Director of Public Affairs University of Maine System
- Senior Director of Public Relations Division of Marketing and Communications
- Chief of Staff and General Counsel
- Chancellor of the University of Maine System
- Director of Government and Community Relations
- Board of Trustee Members
- Senior Director of Procurement
- Chief of Staff for the President of the University of Maine

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Sarah J. V. Dyer has worked in education since 2011. Sarah has been a k-12 teacher; department head; academic advisor; instructor; and diversity, equity, and inclusion officer. She has conducted research examining diversity in hiring committees and researched discourses about race on Twitter following the Alt-right march in Charlottesville. Sarah is a restorative justice practitioner and facilitated the institutional adoption restorative practices at Husson University. She is a candidate for the PhD degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Maine December 2023.
