

**The Higher Segregation:  
A Brief Look at African American Identity at Hanover College in the  
Mid-Twentieth Century**

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Mid-twentieth-century America can be summed up as a time of volatile metamorphosis. Calls for social and political equality were gaining visibility in popular discourse, igniting a discussion that drew sharp divisions between communities. As with most social movements, the most inflammatory zones were college campuses. The free flow of ideas, coupled with the push to engage in discourse, facilitated an atmosphere primed for debate both inside and outside of the classroom. Students impassioned with newfound idealism waged ideological battles daily with their opinions on war, racism, and oppression. But for one rural, liberal arts college in southern Indiana, this was not the case. Deviating from the standard of campus culture, Hanover College in all its tradition and caliber rivaled the norm of an era that was famous for its apparent distinctiveness – especially when it came to the rise of the Civil Rights protest. The entire period of the mid-twentieth century, of course, was largely defined by the social, political, and cultural movements of the African American community. Yet while most other institutions were reacting to the national baptism by fire, the overarching theme at Hanover College was to protect the equilibrium. By doing so, rather than allowing for an impactful legacy of transformation, the Hanover College mood instead showcased an ethic of resistance that, in many ways, reflected the antithesis of its values.

The social structure of Hanover College in the 1960s and 1970s deviated from the normal characterization of higher education as a prime habitat for controversy. It seemed as though Hanover was immune to the strife of the era – tucking itself into the sylvan paradise of Southern Indiana and refusing to come out. One can imagine that some hot-button topics came forth during classroom discussions, but they never culminated into a sustained, long term, campus-wide conversation.

“I always say, that place was like a bubble.” says Leroy Jenkins, who attended Hanover his first two years of college in the late 1960s. “You could basically put up a gate and lock it . . . it was like a little island. The whole world is going on around you, full of madness, but this was like a little idyllic Shangri-La.”<sup>1</sup>

Building upon the concept of a bubble, one begins to envision a peculiar place. Although constructed and maintained by a white majority, Hanover College for the most part accepted students on the merit of their personhood. Raymond Thomas, class of 1970, describes a flexible social ladder inside the Hanover Bubble that seemingly disregarded race. “One of the things that struck me, both at the time and in hindsight, was I had a friend who was also from Ghana. His social skills were much superior to mine in some respects, so that he was able to navigate the situation a little bit more easily than I was able to. So, in terms of personal friendship, he had more of those than I did. But in other ways he was much less comfortable than I was . . . . From

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Brunner, Interview with Leroy Jenkins (August 10, 2016).

where I sat as a student at that time, I thought that while there was overall a white environment in which blacks felt uncomfortable, there was also some level of – for individuals anyway – effect of what their social skills were.”<sup>2</sup>

Corroborating Thomas’ point, Leroy Jenkins also describes a neutral community structure that determined acceptance based upon how well one could adapt to the existing social architecture. “Freshman Year. First semester, I was actually very popular among the students, . . . and at that time we had class officers. And I said, ‘Oh well, I think I might run for class vice president.’ And then I said, ‘Well, no just run for president.’ And in the pool there was 3 people running for class president . . . and so I ran a fairly active campaign, but what happened was I eventually became class president because of the polarities – I was kind of the middle person . . . Therefore, I won the general election. And that showed the degree of my activity, and at that time there was still the five frats – and of course you know, that Hanover was about 90 percent Greek. So, in order to have a social life you had to be a member of a fraternity. Being a black student, I was limited in which fraternities I could join . . . . My limits were the Betas, the Lambdas, or the Fijis. And at that time, everyone had assumed that I would be a Beta . . . but I had decided that I would be a Phi Delt, but they had a race clause. They told me not to worry about the race clause, that they were getting rid of it in August. So I came back in my second year and became the first Black Phi Delt in the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Jenkins’ anecdote perfectly illustrates the way in which Hanover’s social climate was unique. On a surface level for some students, race was considered wholly inconsequential for the individual, a trivial inconvenience that contributed very little to one’s ability to cope within the greater campus community. For some students, this was a positive – to go about, and not be faced with the constant objection because of skin color, had a degree of liberation – but to many others, it was not.

Sarah Howard, class of 1969 (now Sarah Howard Jenkins), quickly became disenchanted with this approach. “I think . . . that may have been why I had pulled away, after graduating. Because it was so isolated . . . and I felt like people weren’t really in touch with everything that was going on, what life was like for people other than middle class white students. And I recognized that at that particular point I had become disenchanted with Hanover, I was becoming aware of what people had actually thought. Their lack of knowledge about human beings . . . in this cocoon we were living in . . . .”<sup>4</sup>

This bubble-like effect is what a post-racial society would attribute to the idea of *colorblindness*. In their book, *Racial Formation in the Twenty-first Century*, authors Daniel HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido describe colorblindness as “an ideological frame [that] denies race should inform perceptions, shape attitudes, or influence individual or collective action.”<sup>5</sup> In their definition, the point of colorblindness is that a society or individual can

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<sup>2</sup> Caroline Brunner, Interview with Raymond Thomas (August 19, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Brunner, Interview with Leroy Jenkins (August 10, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Brunner, Interview with Sarah Howard Jenkins (July 25, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido, *Racial Formation in the Twenty-first Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 309.

transcend the concept of race and achieve a certain idealized unity, echoing the classic proverb, “We are all one race, the human race!”

In the context of the Hanover cultural bubble, colorblindness was not meant to encourage solidarity. Rather, it was an escape route for white students to avoid racial contention. Struggle for racial equality held little significance to the white majority, for none of them had experienced it. Race among the Hanover College student body was recognized only when it posed a threat to white individualism – or the ability of a white individual to behave in a manner unrestricted by limits of social convention regarding race.

Colorblindness does not mean that racial problems do not exist. Rather, because the element of race is ignored, so too are the issues surrounding race. This brand of racism suddenly becomes normalized and operative, rearing its head through micro-aggressive and sometimes unconscious mediums, and, being recognized little, with the only individuals aware of its existence being the targets.

In 1964 a student named David Larson met and questioned then-research consultant for the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, Dr. Donald M. Royer. A sociologist from Chicago, Royer had been brought to Hanover under the sponsorship of the campus’ Civil Rights Committee. Larson’s questions focused on the Civil Rights movement and Dr. Royer’s personal thoughts on Hanover’s maturity regarding such. “I have a feeling that the Negro revolt is passing by Hanover without being noticed,” Royer told Larson, “Hanover operates within a social vacuum, and cannot be considered a real testing laboratory for civil rights. I see a need for a more conscientious student awareness of the nature and dimensions of the Negro problem. . . . There are too many factors preventing a Negro from wanting to come to Hanover – the cost, the admissions requirements, the lack of a full social life . . . .”<sup>6</sup>

The prevalence of racist attitudes in the context of Hanover College was shaped not by the contrast of black and white, but more by a spectrum of gray. For the mass of the student body at Hanover, apathy was the default. “The feelings of the American white are marked by ambivalence toward the Negro,” wrote Aaron Woods III, class of 1969. “This ambivalence is manifested in a standard of behavior to which the Negro is expected to adhere. Any deviation from this standard constitutes an assault on the power structure. The white man becomes alarmed because the Negro has refused to accept his traditional backseat and the white man’s definition of the Negro’s self and identity. It is this white-imposed standard that demands the Negro to be more farseeing and patient than whites and finds virtue in non-violence, inaction, and Tomism.”<sup>7</sup>

It was this same ambivalence born out of a colorblind ethos, that lacked just as much stamina as it did decisiveness. The very moment that the periphery of the social spectrum began to agitate the status quo, the middle of the spectrum – or the grey ambivalent majority – immediately took on more contrast and gravitated towards the margins of extreme opinion. It was not an evenly distributed polarization, however, and opinions of the masses were more inclined to shift towards intolerance and racism.

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<sup>6</sup> David Larson, “‘Rights’ Sociologist says Hanover Bypassed,” *Hanover College Triangle*, January 24, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Aaron Woods III, “Black Collegians Generate New Negro Mood,” *Hanover College Triangle*, Dec. 12, 1967.

The apathetic mood at Hanover took on a recurring theme: someone would challenge the cultural convention in a way that brought attention, emphasis or advocacy to the social condition of African American students. “You got the occasional person,” Judy Moffett says, “who would stick their heads outside the bubble. I was not the only one . . . We weren’t terribly unique. Maybe on this topic we were the first, but there were other subjects. I couldn’t tell you what they were, but I know there were people who weren’t followers. There were some good students, people who were thoughtful.” Noting that there was a small dissenting minority within the larger community allows for one to understand that there was, in some way, an existing group of dissenters who could and would push at the system. In response, the passive majority either took on racist philosophies or allowed those with racist attitudes to monopolize the matter. Even if there was no adoption of ideology amongst some, the indifference allowed for the dominant view – in this case, intolerance – to prevail.

A look at Andrew Katsanis, Jr.’s 1954 social survey on racial attitudes quantifies these complexities. Katsanis’ survey is a thorough investigation into the cultural climate of mid-century Hanover. His questionnaire was completed by 477 participants, constituting, at that time, 83% of the student body.<sup>8</sup> And while this data preceded the era being examined in this study, it provides the fullest documentation of the dominant general sentiments of the principal class of the student body, a class that stayed relatively static in terms of socioeconomic stratum, ethnic identity, age, and educational background moving forward.

The analysis of the data collected by Katsanis’ shows an overwhelming majority of students favored the admittance of black students into the college. Even more students were “willing to work with Negroes on committees, work projects, live in the same dormitory, and eat at the same table, and participate in all school activities with them.” However, on issues that required greater personal involvement in the overarching problem of racism, one can see the shifts in the spectrum’s dynamic. While roughly half the students questioned would accept a black student as a friend, only about 38% of them would be willing to room with a black student. And while half the students in Greek-letter organizations were willing to accept black students into the fold of their institution, only 9% would go against the race clauses of the National ruling body that barred African American members.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of this data, the emphasis must be put on where and when blackness was not allowed. Black Hanover students were very much accepted as a part of the community, but they could not expect to receive accommodation for their blackness. Anytime blackness encountered the white student’s individualism – whether in regard to his privacy or to his organization – it posed a threat. Most of the contentions that developed between white and black students at Hanover during the 1960s thus did not reflect the image of brutality and violence that

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Katsanis, Jr., “A Study of Certain Attitudes of the Hanover Student Body Regarding Negroes,” *Hanover College Triangle*, Jan. 9, 1954.

<sup>9</sup> Katsanis, “A Study of Certain Attitudes of the Hanover Student Body Regarding Negroes.” Author’s note: Through the interviewee’s narrative and the data presented by Katsanis, it is clear that Hanover College’s social sphere in that day was dominated by sorority or fraternity involvement. 228 of the 477 students who participated in Katsanis’s survey were Greek.

characterized the era on other campuses across the country. Rather, it constituted a mood of indifference – the gray area – that never gave room to intercultural conversations that manifested itself in the form of subtle “racisms.”

“I assumed that, I thought that Hanover students, were . . . a little more enlightened,” Sarah Howard Jenkins, class of 1969, says. “I lived in Donner hall; my roommate was from Richmond, Indiana; Phoebe was her name. . . . Phoebe and I got along really well. Most of the people on my floor were Indiana natives. We all got along really well, but I made a discovery that they were curious about things like . . . if I had a tail or not; I mean you would think that an intelligent human being living in the 60s, would know that black people do not have tails! We are human beings; we just have a different shade of skin. And I think I was just, amazed, that in that day and time, that people could be so . . . naïve about another human being . . . to have [ignorance of such an extreme level] exist at the college level, especially at an institution at the caliber of Hanover was surprising to me . . . .”<sup>10</sup>

Alongside these behaviors, it also must be noted that the more insidious and micro-aggressive forms of racism in this condition take on a certain nuance that deserves attention. Many of the Hanover students had never seen African Americans before, and, as a result, had never studied or been close to them.<sup>11</sup> Under conditions of such an overwhelming lack of diversity, tension develops whenever someone different from those who typically inhabit the space (such as a person of color) enters – or, in the perspective of those dominating the space, intrudes.<sup>12</sup>

In her 1963 article, entitled “Why We Are So Similar,” Judy Moffett discussed the issue of homogenous demographics at Hanover College. Here she explains that the reason that colleges such as Hanover fail successfully to establish diverse atmosphere is because the current college climate can only accommodate a white cultural context. Hanover College’s location, cost, and current student demographics all contributed to an unpreparedness of administration and student community to properly integrate, not just on a political level, but culturally and racially.<sup>13</sup>

Sarah Howard Jenkin’s anecdote reflects this, and calls emphasis to how the quality of blackness – a term that refers not only to the state of ‘being black,’ but also to engagement in the *culture* that surrounds ‘being black’ – affected her role in a community that was neither prepared nor willing to accept it. As an anomaly, she was dubbed as an ‘other.’ As a tactical mechanism of establishing identity, the process of ‘othering’ is when one individual exploits the difference between oneself and another – usually within the larger strata of society – in order to define oneself in opposition of the other individual.<sup>14</sup> Using racist frameworks, groups can use the method of ‘othering’ to fabricate labels and create stereotypes. It’s the sociological dramatization

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<sup>10</sup> Brunner, Interview with Sarah Howard Jenkins (July 25, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Brunner, Interview with Sarah Howard Jenkins (July 25, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Elijah Anderson, “The White Space,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (2015): 5, 17, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Judy Moffett, “Why We Are So Similar,” *Hanover College Triangle*, November 8, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (Hammondsworth, Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin, 1949), first used the label “Other” to refer to women, who had long been the “second” sex.

of a clique, characterizing individuals based on myths while never actually encountering the validity of such.

Anderson argues that this interplay between the White Space dynamics and the resulting tribal attitudes equates in a cultural tension that finds the dominant white group relying on its misinformed perceptions to justify behavior. “Whites and others often stigmatize anonymous black persons by associating them with the putative danger, crime, and poverty of the iconic ghetto, typically leaving blacks with much to prove before being able to establish trusting relations with them.”<sup>15</sup> These initial aggressions upon entering the White Space require black students to ever be conscious of their blackness. They must acknowledge that what makes them different is not as a source of pride, but of obstacle. It never explicitly denies acceptance into the fold, but it constitutes that in order to be accepted, blackness has to be censored.

The paradox of ‘we accept you, not your blackness’ that has been alluded to thus far, is a concept outlined by W. E. B. DuBois in his essay, *The Strivings of the Negro People*. In this work, there is a moment of decohesion that strikingly echoes other moments brought forth in interviews from alumni. “Being a problem is a strange experience,” DuBois states, “peculiar even for one who has never been anything else . . . It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day as it were . . . something put it to the boys’ and girls’ heads to buy gorgeous visiting cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card . . . Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap in heart and life and longing but shut out from their world by a vast veil.”<sup>16</sup>

The constant awareness of difference, and the following inner turmoil, is characterized by DuBois as being a sense of two-ness. In one soul, he has his blackness – the legacy of strife and unique cultural contribution that deserves a place in the consciousness of Americanism; In the other soul, lies the American – or rather the one that identifies with the consciousness of Americanism in the first place.<sup>17</sup> Through this juxtaposition, DuBois puts Americanism at war with blackness – which is very telling about the nature of both these aspects.

In the context of Hanover College, Aaron Woods III authored a particularly compelling article in the 1967 issue of *The Hanover College Triangle*, Hanover College’s student newspaper, regarding the construct of identity in a predominately white space, and how an African American man or woman navigates it: “Traditionally, when the infrequent negro was accepted at a white campus he was so elated that he worked frantically to become what he imagined the proper negro gentleman in a white environment [would be]. In his attempts to attain

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<sup>15</sup> Anderson, “The White Space,” 13. Anderson argues previously (p. 11) that the “ghetto” is a representation of a black spaces because of social systems that have fenced in African Americans there: “This ‘place’ was established during slavery and shaped by a history of state sanctioned racial segregation. As blacks arrived and settled in cities, they were typically contained in ghettos, a process vividly described in works by W. E. B. Du Bois (1899); Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, and Rod McKenzie (1925); St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945); E. F. Frazier (1962); Kenneth B. Clark (1965); William J. Wilson (1978, 1987); Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1998); and me (Anderson 1978, 1990, 1999).”

<sup>16</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1897, 194.

<sup>17</sup> Du Bois, “Strivings of the Negro People.”

the proper image he found himself confronted with an identity crisis and became what might be best termed a ‘white n--\_\_\_\_\_.’ Even though in the midst of the flow of activities and at the paramount of acceptance made possible by his assimilation, he became isolated from his true self by having to conform to standards and values that held little meaning and enrichment for him, since he could never realize the fruits of these values in a hostile color conscious society.”<sup>18</sup>

Anderson would describe this as one of the survival techniques for black students in white spaces. “Individual blacks are required to show that the ghetto stereotypes do not apply to them; in effect, they perform to be accepted. This performance can be as deliberate as dressing well and speaking in an educated way or as simple as producing an ID or a driver’s license in situations in which this would never be demanded of whites. Depending on how well the black person performs or negotiates, he or she may ‘pass inspection,’ gaining provisional acceptance from the immediate audience.”<sup>19</sup>

Using a DuBois based perspective, Woods believes the othering of African Americans acts as a censorship of black culture. Much like DuBois, Woods notes that there is a crisis of black identity when he or she is alienated from his blackness in order to promote ‘Americanism.’ According to his experience in a predominately white space, as long as a black man or woman disguised his blackness, and performed the role that would have him or her accepted – their “otherness” would be diminished. Woods says that once a black man or woman who has been confined within himself or herself for assimilative purposes “sees the situation in it’s true light” or rather, recognizes the whitewashing of self and limitation of autonomy, then it is hard to reconcile the “bitter emotions.”<sup>20</sup>

“The result of these factors is formation of Afro or all black clubs or societies” says Woods. “Afro black groups are formed for various reasons. Among them is the feeling that the curriculum in the American universities has omitted or degraded the Afro- American contribution to the nation’s history.” The issue of teaching the role of the African American in education plays a huge part in creating an oppression spaces that leads to groups that encourage the emphasis of “Afro-American-ness.” Consider this excerpt from Carter Woodson’s *The Miseducation of the Negro*: “Much of what [universities] have taught as economics, literature, religion, and philosophy is propaganda . . . When a Negro has finished his education in our schools, then he has been equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or European white man...The education of the Negroes then, the most important thing in the uplift of Negroes is entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them . . . The present system under the control of the whites trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or impossibility of his becoming white.”<sup>21</sup>

Sarah Howard also noted this in an article written in 1968, aimed at a certain ‘Mr. Phelan.’ This piece was written in response to Phelan’s argument regarding to the ‘proper’ – in

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<sup>18</sup> Aaron Woods III, “Black Collegians Generate New Negro Mood,” *Hanover College Triangle*, December 12, 1967.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, “The White Space,” 13.

<sup>20</sup> Woods, “Black Collegians,” 2.

<sup>21</sup> Carter Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C.: Africa World Press, 1990).

his mind – response to the questions of the plight of African Americans. Phelan’s answer was quite straightforward, but also sensible: education! By taking the black student out of his ignorance, African Americans would be perfectly equipped to serve society. As outlined by Carter Woodson, however, American education in many ways had perverted knowledge to serve as agitprop. Howard noted further, “One element which Mr. Phelan omitted in his basic presupposition was that the Negro of today is seeking a sense of dignity – a renewed faith in himself as a human being. The Negro has been stripped of his dignity, manhood, and self-respect...The ‘Black Power’ movement of today is but a means of reaffirming and re-establishing the Negro’s love of self . . . to use Mr. Phelan’s plan at Hanover would add insult to injury.”<sup>22</sup>

In reference to richer African American students, Howard questioned why someone with high qualifications would consider coming to Hanover when the college could not offer them anything profoundly exceptional. To attract and retain such students, Hanover would have to adapt drastically to accommodate blackness. “Firstly, [Hanover] must add courses oriented toward the black aspects of the American Culture; Negro History, Negro Literature, or Contemporary African History. Secondly, rid the campus of Greek organizations which have religious and/or racial clauses, agreements, etc.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, Howard suggested something that goes back to reference the idea of the Hanover Cultural Bubble: “[Hanover must be given] an injection called ‘life.’ The Negro Youth have been more exposed to the rudiments of life than his white counterpart and to be shipped to a ‘security island’ is a backward step for him.”<sup>24</sup>

Without overtly saying it, Howard’s article is echoing Woodson and Woods, by contesting that there is no outlet for the expression of blackness and consequentially the black Hanoverian cannot realize themselves fully. The constant sanitization of self leads to frustration, and feelings of demoralization. The creation of Afro groups is a result of the lack of visibility given to the role of African Americans in not just the past, but in the contemporary. Woods makes clear that these groups provide a sense of community that allows the African American student a place that does not require the augmentation of his existence. As alluded to by Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Nikitah Imani in *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, desegregation was not a mutual exchange that resulted in creation of cultural discussion, but rather a project to push the black student into the white mold and call it diversity.<sup>25</sup> Afro black groups directly challenge and, as Woods states, “reject white culture.”<sup>26</sup>

However simple in design, the spectrum of racial attitudes at Hanover proved to be an expression of a complex and delicate status quo. In the words of Judy Moffett: “Hanover College was a subdued powder keg of racial intolerance, despite the image of rural sleepiness it projects.”<sup>27</sup> The turn of students from passive or ignorant “racisms” to active or explicit displays

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<sup>22</sup> Sarah Howard, “Alternate Plan for Race Relations,” *Hanover College Triangle*, May 14, 1968.

<sup>23</sup> Howard, “Alternate Plan for Race Relations.”

<sup>24</sup> Howard, “Alternate Plan for Race Relations.”

<sup>25</sup> Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Nikitah Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 13.

<sup>26</sup> Woods, “Black Collegians.”

<sup>27</sup> Judy Moffett, “They Also Serve,” *Colorado State University Collegian*, Oct. 20, 1964.



of intolerance required minimal agitation of the existing cultural frame work. Moffett herself witnessed this first hand in her senior year when she, and fellow student Robb Baker, decided to found a student chapter of the NAACP at Hanover. The intention was to target local vendors, like barber and soda shops, to persuade them to give service to the African American students.

“The college president dissuaded me.” writes Moffett, “Leery of any campus organization subject to external control, he ‘suggested’ that was organize independently . . . and tread prudently with one eye on the trustees.” It was then that Moffett organized an open call meeting for any interested students, anticipating that those in attendance would be just that.

I got up and led the meeting and said a few words about why we had decided to try and start a group like this, and what our goals were. Mainly, for instance, to try and get more information about the situation, what the policies were, and then see what we could do about it if anything. But it seemed to be something that needed attention to be paid to it . . . And then a hand went up, and I called on the person, and he said, “Why are you really starting this group?” Very defensive. And I wasn’t expecting that! I had just explained what we were starting.

But I did learn within the two days was that all the Greeks organizations thought the administration had put some independents up to raising this question in order to expose the sororities and fraternities as segregated. I didn’t know it was segregated, I didn’t care about it. They didn’t mean anything to me, it didn’t occur to me that black students weren’t in them I just assumed they had better sense. And I was flabbergasted, first that they hadn’t believed what I said, and second that they were segregated. And several of my friends, who were in Greek life, quit because they didn’t know it was segregated either. So, a certain amount of consciousness raising did happen as a result of this, but mostly I found out was that the student body as a whole did not support this proposal, because they had self-interest at stake.<sup>28</sup>

From that point, Moffett’s attempt to create a fully functioning and resourced organization was stunted by opposition – perhaps not demonstrative, but wholly ideological. The aim of the proposed organization had turned inward, focusing now on campus discrimination. Thusly igniting a cold war of ethics, as Greek organizations – concluding that “the administration was using [the organization] to get rid of the sororities and fraternities because of their constitutional or de facto segregation” – now actively worked to stunt whatever activity the committee attempted.<sup>29</sup>

In a 1962 issue of the *Hanover Triangle*, David Larson wrote about the condition of the fraternities regarding race and the surrounding college perspective. The research question asked by Larson and his peers was simple: Does an African American student have equal opportunity in all phases of the Hanover Academic community? “It is reasonably certain that in the areas of administration and faculty, no racial discrimination of any kind is involved . . . within the student

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<sup>28</sup> Brunner, Interview with Judy Moffett (September 12, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Moffett, “They Also Serve.”

body, however, there is one area of racial discrimination and this relates to the membership requirements of fraternities and sororities.” Larson continued on to describe the situation, detailing that all college-owned property was required to be accessible to all, no matter race, color or creed.<sup>30</sup> The interesting point of Larson’s article, however, is the last section – wherein Larson mentioned that student’s involvement and management of change was the only way to ensure proper action is taken. Larson directly challenged students to realize that by overlooking the responsibility of reform, they were abandoning the tenets of the College’s values and destroying their own status. As mentioned by Moffett, the characterization of motivation was self-interest. The Cultural Bubble of Hanover College would always prevail as long as the students elected to perpetuate it. Inside of Moffett’s narrative was the blueprint to the framework of the spectrum model, a disturbance in the cultural stasis, that triggers a shift from apathy to aggression, and then sustains itself with the execution of purposeful, but indirectly racist objectives.

Following the publication of Larson’s essay, a letter was sent to the Editors of the Triangle – signed anonymously under the name “CONCERNED PARENT.” In the short but telling letter, one can see the aspects of white individualism being threatened by blackness or the support of blackness. In reference to a report of an institution mandating that it’s Greek affiliated houses integrate by 1965, the sender vehemently refutes that “social fraternities should not be denied the right to determine their standards of membership granted to them by two vital amendments to the *Constitution of the United States of America*: the right to ‘peaceable assembly’ and to the privacy of the ‘houses’ and ‘papers’ of all citizens.”<sup>31</sup> The “concerned parent” asserts that social rights are just as fundamental as civil rights, and that by confusing the two, mandated integration is violating the personal freedoms of affiliated students.

On April 7, 1969, *The Triangle* published the first in a series of unique articles that focused on the black experience at Hanover. The collection of articles, initially advertised as four but concluding in the second installment of the series, were based on recorded conversations of thirteen African American students. Moderated by Sarah Howard, participants engaged in panel-like discussions of varying topics and offered candid perspectives of the administration, faculty and students. These conversations were then transcribed, made anonymous, and edited for final publication. In 2016, several alumni present at the 1969 panel were interviewed for the present project; oddly, many failed to recall this 1969 panel ever having happened, while others were unable to say definitively which comments might have been theirs.

The content of these 1969 conversations, however, is particularly striking because it perfectly expresses the spectrum of opinion within the small black community at Hanover. Many points of discussion produced intensely sharp divisions amongst the group, while the ones that drew consensus reveal nuances of the black experience that otherwise are lost from an outsider’s perspective.

The first topic of discussion tackled by the panel was centered on the student relationships with the faculty and thoughts on how those relationships could serve to benefit – or

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<sup>30</sup> David Larson, “HC Greeks to Face Racial Problems,” *Hanover College Triangle*, April 3, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> Concerned Parent, “Letter to the Editor,” *Hanover College Triangle*, April 24, 1964.

impede – each individual. The answers brought forward sharply contrast one another, as some students claim that they had a healthy relationship while others critique the professors and expressed their wishes for a more diverse faculty. “I can agree with some points about the faculty being very good,” says one student identified as Participant N, “My only complaint is that there is not one black person on the faculty. And I think, as a black, there should be a black person I can go to for advice in some regard. I need someone who will understand my field as a black person, and to tell me or to guide me or to warn about downfalls, whereas a white person can tell me so much, I mean he’s not a black, he can’t fairly understand me or what I’m after or where I’m trying to go.”<sup>32</sup>

This grievance was met with varying shades of approval and disapproval, as participant K makes a very bold and polarizing statement: “Well, actually my feelings are, personally, that all black people should leave Hanover College and no blacks should be allowed to go here. My feeling is that Hanover should be totally white . . . I don’t think Hanover has anything to offer any black person in the entire country . . . .”<sup>33</sup>

Here, we see several students rush to either condemn or confirm the statement. Participant N is of the latter. “I agree with K. Unless this school becomes desegregated to the point where there is total equality – and when I say equality I mean freedom, the freedom to join and participate in any and everything . . . I’m not talking about phony Greek societies. I’m talking about in your department. For example, When I say I want someone to talk to, I don’t mean to tell me where to go, because I’m going to make my decision myself . . . I want a man who has more experience, a grown up above me who has been through where I am going to go, who can tell me when to watch . . . there may be a branch there, you step a little you might not trip. For example, I went to a certain professor, and I said I wanted suggestions for the best graduate school to apply to. He says to me; I should go to Indiana University where [I have] an “in” there. Well, IU is an ass of a school – pardon me – it has a rotten X department. He says you can’t get away from your blackness, why not go to an easy school.”<sup>34</sup>

By unpacking this, one can come to several conclusions. First, one can tease out the nature of the racial climate through different perceptions. Participant N and K are voicing their disdain for a system that they feel is actively putting them at a disadvantage, whereas there are several other voices that directly contrast these accounts, such as participant H, who said that N and K just want an easy way out and a black college professor that will tailor their needs. This highlights an interesting intra-group dynamic between the different personalities. It shows that the African American students were extremely diverse in opinion and didn’t totally have a completely homogenous experience at Hanover.

Second, it shows the intricacies of the student – faculty interactions. This intimate look is reflective of the way Judy Moffett and Leroy Jenkins claim that Hanover College was not properly equipped to handle black students. It also demonstrates a quality of Aaron Wood’s thesis of cultural identity and the creation of black groups being wrought out of this need to join

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<sup>32</sup> “14 Campus Blacks Discuss the College,” *Hanover College Triangle*, April 7, 1969.

<sup>33</sup> “14 Campus Blacks Discuss the College.”

<sup>34</sup> “14 Campus Blacks Discuss the College.”

in community with those of a collective experience. Instead in this instance one is not seeing a need for relatable peers; rather, we are seeing a yearning for a mentor who can relate to the students in a way that can address culturally specific questions that professors who are not from the same context would not understand.

The question of the administration can be summed up in a simple section of the interview where one of the participants asks the others if they believe the administration is really dedicated to improving conditions for African American students, to which the others unanimously agree, “No.”<sup>35</sup> As one student put it, “I think the students perpetuate the system, [but] the faculty helps it, I think you’d gain something from staying here, but I think you lose something in the long run.”<sup>36</sup>

In the words of another, who seems to echo elements of Aaron Woods’ article, “It seems like to come here, you have to pay a price to be a part of the system . . . I mean, it seems every encounter I’ve had with the administration has been unpleasant. They get in here and try to get me to fall in line and you know the first time it happened, I laughed, but the second time I realized the man was not kidding and it wasn’t funny. They will pick you out of a bunch and say, ‘We’re going to make an example out of you.’ It would be different if I had actually violated a college rule but the thing they have against you is your attitude . . . what does my attitude have to do with studies?”<sup>37</sup>

Here, one can see what can be believed to be an effect of a colorblind system through the question of black identity. While the administration was not targeting students overtly because of their race, the administrator’s perception of that race influenced the way they looked at that student’s actions and personality; leading them to hold onto their prejudices, while alleging that their contentions were towards individuals. Even though the administrators were not actively seeking to politically re-segregate, they still held African American students to a different standard than the white students. In his interview, Leroy Jenkins touched on the administration’s behavior towards him, and the other black students. “Dean [Glen Leo] Bonsett, the Dean of students, was a mess. He was the prime enemy, he was one of the reasons that I was like, I have to get out of here. He just did not have a clue. He was one of those people I think who did the job, did it cause he had to, but I think, he would have preferred the school to have been all white and he never really made any special effort . . . I was on scholarship, and I worked, I worked on Campus – Sophomore year I was a busboy at a sorority house and Freshman year I worked at the bowling alley and all this kind of stuff. So because my mom was a single parent, and she sacrificed, and bought me a car – a little GW. And so I had this car, and Bonsett took great offense with me having a car. I mean with me being on scholarship and how could I afford this car, I mean it was just . . . just very negative. And, he threatened my scholarship, and said, ‘Well, I don’t know if you’ll have that next year.’”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “14 Campus Blacks Discuss the College.”

<sup>36</sup> “14 Campus Blacks Discuss the College.”

<sup>37</sup> “Talk Centers on Naïve Whites,” *Hanover College Triangle*, May 8, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> Brunner, Interview with Leroy Jenkins (August 10, 2016).

As far as their relationship with students, the black panelists varied in opinion and degree of intensity. They generally agreed, however, that white students “perpetuated Hanover’s whiteness,”<sup>39</sup> and tended to be subtler about their racism. “But in some respects, that’s worse than the admitted white bigot from the south [because you at least know where they stand].” said one panelist. In some ways, the students found their experience at Hanover rewarding simply because they believed they were learning how to navigate the white man’s world. However, all 14 students agreed unanimously that they would not come to Hanover knowing “what they knew now.” One student even went as far as visiting every African American senior in their hometown that had alluded about possible attendance at Hanover and dissuaded them. “All I had to say was, Look, . . . this ain’t it. No matter what this man tells you, that ain’t what’s happening.”<sup>40</sup>

Hanover College during the 1960s and 1970s was a place of nuance. It was a sterilized environment, with its culture catering to and operating solely through the influence of white students. This contrasted with the national narrative in more ways than one. First, the evidence of racism was colored more by indirectness and ignorance than by outright hatred. Second, the community as a whole was able to maintain white individualism with little resistance. And third, the national mood was volatile and uncertain; while Hanover College achieved a floating stagnancy that in some way kept everyone from drowning, it also never allowed for forward progress.

It was through mechanisms such as the cultural bubble and the spectrum that Hanover manifested its perpetual lukewarmness. And while it never decidedly elected a posture more explicit than faint distaste, it was the implicit social conditioning and subtleties present that defined Hanover’s racial atmosphere concretely. The condition of Hanover in this mid-twentieth century context is an interesting case study because it seems to also provide contextualization for the current climate, much of which has stayed the same. But perhaps through the analysis of the past, the students of today can facilitate a shift that would decisively champion justice, equality and right.

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<sup>39</sup> Brunner, Interview with Leroy Jenkins (August 10, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Brunner, Interview with Leroy Jenkins (August 10, 2016).

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