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Understanding the Black College Student Experience: The Relationships Between Racial Identity, Social Support, General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate, and GPA

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Understanding the Black College Student Experience: The relationships between Racial Identity, Social Support, General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate, and GPA

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Understanding the Black College Student Experience

Abstract

According to the US Department of Education (2001), Black college students, when compared with other racial groups, have the highest drop out rate at both two-year and four-year colleges. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine factors that might place Black students at risk of discontinuing their higher education. A path analysis was conducted on 187 Black students attending four-year Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) of higher education and Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Overall results indicated that for Black students at PWIs and HBCUs alike, completion of college is both directly and indirectly related to a blend of individual, environmental and racial experiences which, speculatively, may be affected by interventions designed to reduce Black student drop out rates.
Understanding the Black College Student Experience

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Research has shown that many Black students are failing to complete either a 2-year or a 4-year college degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Failing to do so places them at a risk of earning a significantly lower annual income compared to those with a college degree, having fewer career opportunities, being incarcerated, not having access to healthcare services, and not being exposed to culturally enhancing experiences that serve to broaden worldviews (Attewell & Lavin as cited in The economic benefit of higher education for blacks and their families, 2007; CollegeBoard, 2008; Kapur, Rogowski, Freedman, & Wickstrom, 2006; Lochner & Moretti, 2004; U.S. Department of Labor, 2006; Webster & Bishaw, 2007).

Studies designed to understand the cause of Black college student attrition are scarce and dated. Overall, these studies have found that pre-academic history (as measured by grade point average and quality of school), racial composition of the university (whether attending a historically Black college/university (HBCU) versus. a predominately White institution (PWI)), and perceived level of social support (family, peers, faculty; Astin, 1975; Graham, Baker, & Wapner, 1985; Lichtman, Bass, & Ager, 1989; Rugg, 1982) influence drop out decisions. Nonetheless, none of the research on Blacks and attrition has investigated the influence of racial dynamics on withdrawal decisions.

Researchers have illustrated how racial experiences such as discrimination or lack of cultural congruency on campus can be a stressful experience (Brown, Morning, & Watkins, 2005; Davis 1994; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Solorzano, 2000). Furthermore, the
retention literature illustrates the importance of studying racial identity in understanding how a student may or may not be hindered by on-campus racial dynamics (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Cokley, 2001; Cross, 1991; McDonald & Vrana, 2007; Nasim, Roberts, Harrell, & Young, 2005; Parker & Flowers, 2003). In addition, scholars point to the potential impact, positive or negative, that a campus environment (e.g., academic resourcefulness, support from peers and faculty of the similar and or different race, and discrimination), as well as personal social support networks (e.g., family and peers), have on persistence rates (Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali & Pohler, 2004; Karema, Reuben, & Sillah, 2003; Kim, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Nicpon, Huser, Blanks, Sollenberger, Befort, & Robinson-Kurpius, 2006-2007).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further examine what helps a Black college student succeed academically; academic success was determined by their grade point average (GPA). This study also investigated how racial identity, along with views of general campus, academic, and racial climate, as well as perceived levels of social support, influenced college GPA. This study also examined the effect that racial identity has on perceptions of general campus, academic, and racial climate, and on perceived levels of social support.

In this chapter, I will begin with a brief history of Blacks and higher education. Then I will discuss the current trend on Blacks and college attrition followed by an illustration of the benefits of earning a college degree. Finally, I will conclude with an overview of the research questions I investigated.
History of Blacks in Higher Education

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted Blacks in the United States educational opportunities that were previously denied to them as a result of societal racism. As a result, White colleges and universities were forced to racially integrate their schools. Prior to this law, Blacks were not given equal opportunities throughout society for years, specifically within higher education (Brown & Yates, 2005). Dating back to pre-abolishment of slavery, in an effort to maintain White superiority in the South, the opportunities for Blacks had been determined largely by slave codes, one of which prohibited Blacks from learning how to read and write (Fleming, 1981b). Recognizing the importance of education, many Blacks privately learned how to read and write despite barriers posed by southern laws. Secret schools and local churches served as venues for such education and in rare instances enslaved Blacks even learned from their masters (Brown & Yates, 2005; Fleming, 1981b). Additional attempts by freed Blacks were made towards educating their community by establishing schools, but these institutions largely depended upon the support of mostly White people and therefore failed to thrive. In addition, there were Whites who were willing to teach Blacks, but upon completion of their education, the Blacks were expected to migrate to Liberia or Haiti (Fleming, 1981b).

Ultimately, because Blacks realized the imperative need to create their own schools, the 1850’s saw the beginning of HBCUs. Despite floundering financial resources, by 1930 these institutions helped to decrease the Black illiteracy rate by more than 50%. After then, college enrollment of Blacks steadily increased (Fleming, 1981b). During the Post World War II era, greater access to financial aid and improved high
school graduation rates contributed dramatically to higher literacy among Blacks. Moreover, the establishment of more 2-year community colleges was appealing because of their affordability, accessibility, and flexible admission policies (Mingle, 1981). Currently 105 HBCUs exist throughout the United States, comprising 3% of all institutions of higher education. They produce almost 25% of all African American undergraduates (United Negro College Fund, 2007).

**Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), annual college enrollment rates for Blacks have been slightly over 50% since 1993. However, troubling statistics reveal that although Blacks are successfully enrolling in higher education, over 50% of those who enroll fail to complete either a 2-year or a 4-year degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The U.S. Department of Education (2001) performed a 6-year longitudinal study on post-secondary students from the United States, who enrolled in either a 2- or 4-year private or public institution in 1995; racial demographics on the institutions (HBCU vs. PWI) were not specified. At the end of the study, the findings revealed that Black students who attended a 2-year institution had the largest attrition rate (58% compared to 47.6%, 43%, and 36.9% for Hispanic, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander respectively). For those students enrolled at a 4-year institution, Blacks also had the largest dropout rate (28.2% compared to 25.7%, 19.4%, 18.5%, and 14.8% for Hispanic, White, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander, respectively). Thus, regardless of institution type (2-year or 4-year), Blacks continue to be the racial group with the highest attrition rate.
The U.S. Department of Education (2001) study also compiled data on characteristics of the students who dropped out (but did not include potential variations by race). The information showed that at 2 and 4-year institutions, a majority of the students who dropped out from a public (vs. private) institution were enrolled in school part-time and worked a full-time job. With regard to family schooling and economic background, their parents’ highest level of education was a high school diploma or less, and they claimed their financial status as independent. The highest academic status earned by these students was a college certificate. The data also revealed that a majority of the students at a 2-year institution were from a lower social class, and the annual family incomes of those who were dependent on their parents were less than $25,000. For those students at a 4-year institution, a majority of them were also from a lower social class, and for those who were dependent on their parents, their family income ranged from $25,000-$44,999.

Given these statistics, and the fact that Black students are of the greatest risk of dropout, there is a significant need to examine the causes of attrition rates specifically for Black students. There are monetary, individual, and societal benefits to be gained from a post-secondary education. These benefits can only serve to enhance opportunities for Black graduates.

*Monetary Benefits*

According to Webster and Bishaw (2007), among the racial/ethnic groups in the United States, there is a lower percentage of Whites, Asians, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander living in poverty (9.3%, 10.7%, & 16.1% respectively), compared to Blacks, American Indian and Alaska Indian, and Hispanic (25.3%, 26.6%, and 21.5%
respectively). The significant disparities in poverty rates can be correlated with the attrition rates among Blacks versus Whites. The economic benefits of a post-secondary education vary significantly according to level of degree attainment. Baum and Ma (2007) report U.S. median annual incomes of $40,600, $50,900, $61,300, $79,400, and $100,000 for people who have earned an Associates Degree, Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree, Doctoral Degree, and Professional Degree, respectively. Currently, Blacks, on average, earn $32,272 annually and constitute the racial group with the lowest average annual income. Asians and Whites have the highest annual incomes ($63,642 and $51,429 respectively; Webster & Bishaw, 2007). According to the Journal on Blacks in Higher Education (2007), increasing college graduation rates for Blacks is one way to help close the earnings gap between racial groups.

**Societal Benefits**

In addition to economic advantages, a post-secondary degree also provides several societal benefits. In particular, Blacks with post-secondary degrees are more likely to encourage their children to attend college. Moreover, Black families with college-educated parents tend to have parenting practices that often consist of reading to children, increased parental participation in children's lives through school and community activities, and providing enriched cultural experiences (Attewell & Lavin, as cited in The economic benefit of higher education for blacks and their families, 2007). As reported by the CollegeBoard (2008), the college experience can help enhance intellectual ability, and encourage students to have an open perspective on individual world views. In addition, college educated individuals are more likely to become
involved in charitable organizations and participate in civic activities, such as voting (Wolfe & Haveman, 2002, as cited by Hill, Hoffman, & Rex, 2005).

**Individual Benefits**

The benefits of a college degree can also have a large impact on a person. For instance, completing a post-secondary degree expands an individual's career opportunities. Most companies are looking to hire people who have at least completed some college training. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2006), of the 205 most commonly reported occupations, only 9 are comprised of individuals with only a high school diploma. The remainder of occupations largely consists of individuals with at least some college training, a bachelor's degree, or more education. In addition to increased career choices, college educated individuals are also more likely to have access to better health care services. Kapur et al. (2006) performed a study with 20,227 participants who were enrolled in Medicare, and found a positive correlation between higher educational attainment and health insurance coverage. Results also revealed that those with higher levels of education were more likely to invest in and appreciate physician specialist services.

Completing higher levels of education can also assist in reducing the likelihood that an individual will become incarcerated. Lochner and Moretti (2004) performed an analysis on the FBI Uniform Crime Reports and the National Survey of Youth and found that with each additional year of schooling, incarceration rates are decreased by .10% for Whites and by .37% for Blacks. They concluded that the gap in educational development between Blacks and Whites explains 25% of the differences in incarceration rates between the two groups. The U.S. Department of Justice (2008) reports that as of 2001,
Blacks comprise the majority of prison inmates (40%), with Hispanics, American Indians, Asians, and mixed races at 19%, 1%, 1%, and 3% respectively. Therefore, it appears that educational enhancement is a significant tool for diminishing the vulnerability of Blacks to captivity within the penal system.

The encouraging research demonstrating the positive impact of higher education on the lifestyle of African Americans highlights the urgent need for understanding the factors influencing the college dropout rate among this population. Unfortunately, after an extensive literature review on this topic, research on Black college student attrition is extremely scarce and dated, with only three identifiable studies directly addressing this issue (Astin, 1975; Lichtman et al., 1989; Rugg, 1982). Researchers have consistently found that the following variables have a strong influence on college student dropouts in general: financial problems, lack of social support, interpersonal difficulties, and poor academic preparation and performance (Bean, 1982; Daugherty & Lane, 1999; Johnson, 1997; Maudal, Butcher, & Mauger, 1974; Snell, Mekies, Green, & Tesar, 1993; Mohr, Eiche, & Sedlacek, 1998; Snell, Mekies, Green, & Tesar, 1993; Tinto, 1993) with only one study honing in on the influence of racial composition of the institution (Graham et al., 1985). Regarding this latter study, research has demonstrated that Black college students directly or indirectly refer to racial dynamics as a factor affecting their psychological well-being while attending a PWI. This is clearly illustrated in the subsequent studies below.

June, Curry, and Gear (1990) performed a quantitative study on Blacks attending a PWI. Becoming acclimated to and comfortable within the college environment was a reported concern, along with finances and psycho-emotional concerns (e.g., racism-
related stress; monetary pressure, and feelings of loneliness because of social isolation). Correspondingly, Kirkland (1998) performed a qualitative study on African American undergraduate nursing students attending a PWI to determine what stressors they experienced. Lack of sensitivity and support from White faculty and peers and scarce African American role models were two reported stressors along with concerns related to fear of academic failure, financial difficulties, problems within social networks (e.g., family & friends) and personal issues (e.g., organizing time, loss of a loved one, lost property, & health concerns).

Fleming (1981a) performed a qualitative study on Black students attending an HBCU and a PWI. Consistent with findings from Kirkland (1998), based on the results, a majority of the students reported having problems related to their academics and interpersonal interactions with Black and White faculty, staff, and administrators. Additional problems were issues that affected their psychological well-being (e.g., some Black students at a PWI reported high levels of anxiety as they transitioned into a new, majority-White environment), relationship difficulties, traumatic events (e.g., loss of a loved one), and obstacles that prevented them from reaching their goals (e.g., lack of finances and needing to work). Results also revealed that Black students attending a PWI were more likely to report experiences related to interpersonal stress.

Negga, Applewhite, and Livingston (2007) performed a quantitative analysis on students attending an HBCU and a PWI to determine what various stressors are experienced. Comparisons between the Black and White participants revealed that African Americans attending a PWI reported having lower levels of social support when compared to the White students and to those Blacks at an HBCU. Moreover, findings
showed that all students reported academic stress (e.g., poor grades; time management) as one of their primary stressors; however, when comparing Black and White students at both universities, higher levels of academic stress were found among African Americans. Finally, students at a HBCU reported higher levels of interpersonal stress (e.g., death of a loved one, relationship problems) compared to both Black and White students at the PWI.

Clearly, there is evidence of a common racial theme in each of the aforementioned studies. The Black students enrolled at a PWI generally reported higher levels of dissatisfaction due to various social and interpersonal factors compared to those enrolled at an HBCU. The literature on Black college student retention and persistence illustrates how a student’s race may significantly impact upon his or her overall adjustment to college life and subsequent success in completing their degree (Brown, Morning, & Watkins, 2005; Cokley, 2001; Davis, 1994; Nasim et al., 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Parker & Flowers, 2003; Solorzano, 2000). For that reason, in order to examine the types of direct and indirect relationships that exist between those variables, the following questions were addressed in this study:

**Research Questions**

1. How do levels of Black racial identity, perceptions of campus climate, and social support, influence the academic performance of Black students enrolled at a PWI or a HBCU?

2. How does Black racial identity influence academic performance?

3. How does Black racial identity affect the perception of campus climate?

4. What is the effect of Black racial identity on perceived levels of social support?
Hypothesis

1. Students enrolled at a HBCU will report having higher levels of racial identity, more positive perceptions of campus climate, and higher levels of perceived social support. In comparison to those attending a PWI, the racial identity variable will have an indirect positive effect on GPA as mediated by the perceptions of campus climate and social support variables.

2. There will be a direct positive relationship between levels of Black racial identity and academic performance for those students enrolled at a HBCU. For those enrolled at a PWI, there will be a direct negative relationship between high levels of Black racial identity and academic performance.

3. There will be a direct positive relationship between levels of Black racial identity and perception of campus climate for those students enrolled at a HBCU. For those enrolled at a PWI, there will be a direct negative relationship between high levels of Black racial identity and perception of campus climate.

4. There will be a direct positive relationship between levels of Black racial identity and perceived social support for those students enrolled at a HBCU. For those enrolled at a PWI, there will be a direct negative relationship between levels of Black racial identity and perceived social support.

Conclusion

Research in this area is invaluable to the Black community. The remuneration of higher education warrants the need to further investigate how to assist in decreasing the college attrition rates within this population. Furthermore, as mental health professionals, educators, and family members, it is our responsibility to advocate for socio-political
changes within higher education and aim to close the racial divide in graduation rates among various racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Equal opportunities should be granted to all individuals, regardless of race.

In the following chapter, I will provide an extensive appraisal on factors influencing retention among Black college students. I will also thoroughly review the existing literature on Black student attrition. Then, I will discuss the racial identity theory and how highly influential this may be in understanding the drop out process. Finally, I will discuss the influence of racial identity, perception of campus academic and racial climate, as well as social support on academic achievement of Black students.

Definitions

**Academic Success**- A cumulative GPA that falls above the academic probation average, as determined by the institution. Academic success will be operationally defined by the participant indicating his or her overall GPA on the demographic form located in Appendix A.

**Attrition/Drop out**- An individual who has failed to earn a college degree (associates or bachelors) and is no longer pursuing the degree (Astin, 1975). Attrition will be operationally defined as a student who dis-enrolls from an institution and does not obtain a college degree.

**Black/African American**- Descendants of African origin, including individuals of Caribbean descent who identify as Black. Black/African American will be operationally defined by the participant indicating his or her race/ethnicity on the demographic form located in Appendix A.
Historical Black College and University- HBCU and predominately Black colleges will be defined as an institution that has over 75% of Black enrollment ("Black Excel", 1997-2005).

Persistence- motivation of a student to remain at an institution and complete a degree (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Persistence will be operationally defined as a student who remains at an institution and graduates with a degree.

Predominately White Institution- Based on the literature review, the classification of an institution being labeled as a PWI were based on a White enrollment rate percentage that ranged from 56%-80% (Allen, 1992; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton & Willson, 1999; McDonald & Vrana, 2007; Nasim, Roberts, Harrell, & Young, 2005; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). For the purpose of this study, PWI will be defined as an institution that has over 50% of White enrollment.

Racial Identity- An internalized psychological process in which individuals progress towards a healthy racial self-concept amidst a world where experiences of racism and oppression are paramount (Helms & Cook, 1999). Racial identity will be operationally defined by using the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver, Cross, Fhagen-Smith, Worrell, Swim, & Caldwell, 2000).

Retention- Institutional factors that enable the student to persist (e.g., campuses that foster a supportive environment for both diversity and positive faculty-student/peer-peer interaction; and campuses that openly demonstrate concern for the welfare and continued social development of their student bodies; Berger & Lyon, 2005). Retention will be operationally defined as a student who continues enrolling at an institution each semester.
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I begin with an analysis of the variables that impact on Black student retention. Then, I review the research on Black student attrition and, thereafter, conclude with a presentation of the racial identity theory in the context of the college experience. It is important to note that data on the various topics presented are, for the most-part, scarce and, in some instances, dated. Moreover, researchers generally have neither defined nor distinguished between “Black” and “African American.” The terms are used interchangeably for racial identification.

*Blacks and Retention*

Retention efforts gained importance during the 1930’s as colleges and universities grew in popularity, and individuals recognized the career and mobility benefits of obtaining a degree. As institutions diversified by serving a wider variety of ethnically diverse populations (e.g., Jews, Catholics, and African Americans), the retention of students became a more challenging mission because administration lacked training on how to foster an environment that was conducive to assisting students of various cultural backgrounds. The maintenance of diversity was threatened during the 1940’s to 1950’s as many colleges and universities found it difficult to retain African American students. Incongruities between their culture and the campus environment fueled an alarmingly high attrition rate among Blacks (Berger & Lyon, 2005). This cultural disconnect still exists today and was powerfully illustrated by two research studies. In the first, Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) conducted a qualitative analysis on 15 Black students (6 males and 8 females) attending a PWI in order to understand obstacles they confronted while
enrolled in the institution. Their results highlighted three general themes: (a) racial stereotypes—students spoke of the racial stereotypes that were held against them by White students, (b) intellectual competence—students reported feeling they needed to prove their intellectual competence, and (c) physical characteristics—students were insulted regarding race-based physical characteristics such as hair texture and skin complexion. Examples of each theme are as follows:

**Racial stereotypes.**

I was just so amazed every day in sociology... This White guy told me that all the Black people he knew drank Colt 45. I told him, "I know many more Black people than you know, and I can't think of anyone who drinks Colt 45." (p.425)

**Intellectual competence.**

As far as my major, I am one of a few African American students and it's hard for me to see what people think or whatever. But when I first got here I had to prove myself, prove myself, and prove myself. It was not like I would go up to them and say, "now you see?" But it's like they kept doubting me and doubting me. (p.426)

**Physical characteristics.** One student even reported that when “she walked into the classroom with a scarf on her head... several White students started making comments like, ‘Oh, what happened to your hair? and asking her why she was wearing a scarf (p.426).” Such comments of course diverted attention away from class subject matter and caused her to feel quite uncomfortable.

Such feelings of discomfort caused by students’ minority status are similar to the findings of Greer and Chwalisz (2007). Greer and Chwalisz performed a quantitative
study investigating objective parameters of minority-status stress as well as subjectively perceived discomfort among 203 African American undergraduate students attending both HBCUs and PWIs. Students were administered The Minority Student Stress Scale (Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley, 1989 as cited by Greer and Chwalisz, 2007; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993 as cited by Greer and Chwalisz, 2007), a survey that assessed five areas of race and ethnic minority status stress: (a) campus climate stressors (e.g., coursework not congruent with one's racial/ethnic experience, (b) interpersonal stressors—difficulties with relations between individuals of similar or different racial/ethnic backgrounds, (c) within group stressors—feeling pressured to remain loyal to one's racial/ethnic group, (d) stress related to experiences with racism and discrimination, and (e) stress related to academic self-confidence—confidence in one's success as a student.

Overall, they found that there were significantly higher levels of minority status stress at the PWI. The type of institution attended and the year level of the student significantly affected levels of minority-status stress, with junior and senior level students at PWIs feeling more stressed. In addition, those students at PWIs reported having higher levels of campus climate, interpersonal, and within-group stressors.

Evidently, many Black students experience stress due to a sense of alienation and a lack of social support. Thus, there is increased pressure on colleges and universities to prioritize retention efforts by creating an academic atmosphere that is more appealing and encouraging to Black students (Bergen & Lyon, 2005).

Cross and Astin (1981) conducted a 2-year longitudinal study to compare the factors that influence persistence among 16,657 Black and White students enrolled at various colleges and universities. They sought information regarding the impact of race,
institutional type, and financial access on college persistence. For the Black student participants, pre-collegiate history, involvement in campus life, and racial composition of the university predicted persistence. Therefore, it appears that higher high school grade levels and SAT scores, increased social interactions, and greater prevalence of Blacks on campus positively influenced persistence rates. Moreover, the levels of financial borrowing and debt had a negative effect on persistence.

Allen (1985) conducted a study to investigate the fit between 695 Black college students and the PWI they attended. Results indicated that students with positive faculty-student interactions reported higher levels of social involvement. They were involved in Black clubs, readily interacted with other racial groups, and attended institutional support services. In addition, lower degrees of social interaction were found among those individuals who held pro-Black beliefs. Academic achievement, as measured by grade performance, was positively related to high school grade point average, higher socioeconomic status, and closer connections with faculty.

Gloria et al. (1999) performed a qualitative study assessing factors that serve to enhance college retention rates among 98 African Americans (27 males and 71 females). Results showed that social support (e.g., family, friends, mentors) and self-confidence were positively related to persistence. In addition, those who felt comfortable within the university environment reported having a positive cultural connection, which in turn related to higher levels of self-esteem.

Efforts to understand Black student retention point to a need to foster an environment that is culturally sensitive to and socially supportive of the Black student community. However, institutional retention efforts fail to capture the gamut of causal
factors that lead to withdrawal, as evidenced by several studies of college and university students (Allen, 1985; Cross & Astin, 1981; Gloria et al., 1999). It is not only crucial to understand what enables some Black students to persist, but also to know more definitively why others drop out prematurely. This will be addressed in the subsequent paragraphs.

**Blacks and College Attrition**

In order to better understand the reasons for dropping out of college, Astin (1975) performed a 4-year longitudinal assessment of 16,544 Black and 84,456 White students enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the US. Astin defined dropout as any student who: (a) has failed to earn a bachelor’s degree and is no longer pursuing the degree, (b) is not pursuing a graduate or professional degree, (c) is not a full time undergraduate student, and (d) has not been continuously enrolled since the initiation of the study. By the end of 4 years, 24.3% of students had dropped out with over 80% having left during their first year. A large percentage of the dropouts were Blacks who attended a PWI. In a follow up survey, when asked about the reasons for dropping out, the dominant causes reported by the Black students were financial difficulties and marital concerns, whereas the causes for the White students were different, and included lack of interest in the course work and feelings of discontent regarding the program study structure.

Overall, based on data from this sample, Astin (1975) found that pre-collegiate history (e.g., grade point average, quality of schooling, and class rank) was the best predictor of attrition. Consequently, a past of poor academic performance resulting in a low class rank and lack of substantial academic assistance are likely to result in college
dropout. Similarly, Rugg (1982) performed a longitudinal study comparing non-minority and minority first-year college student dropouts, with 90% of the minority sample being Black. The results showed that minority students were less likely to voluntarily withdraw as a result of poor academic performance. Regarding involuntary withdrawal, academic dismissal occurred twice as frequently for minorities with low ACT composite scores. Nonetheless, these outcomes are contradictory to the results found by Lichtman et al. (1989) in their longitudinal study with 2,220 Black and 8,062 White college students enrolled at a 4-year, urban commuter university. Lichtman et al. found that over 50% of Blacks dropped out compared to 37% of Whites. Reasons for dropout were not attributed to academic performance (as measured by ACT scores and college grade point average). In fact, it was statistically significant that Blacks who performed well academically still dropped out at higher rates compared with Whites. Therefore, there may be additional variables that have an impact on the ability to remain in college. As evident in Astin’s study, in addition to pre-academic history, a number of factors had significant influences on dropout occurrence: (a) a lack of religious affiliation, (b) an economically disadvantaged background, (c) less educated parents, (d) small-community rearing and subsequent exposure to a large campus environment, (e) career aspirations in the fields of nursing, forestry, secretarial and electrical work, (f) poor study habits, (g) older age, (h) a history of frequent cigarette smoking, (i) extended work hours, (j) commuter-student status, and (k) institutional incongruity with personal cultural background.

Graham et al. (1985) illustrated the influence of race on college attrition. They performed a longitudinal study on 42 Black students (13 males, 29 females) attending a PWI, assessing their levels of college adjustment based on the racial composition of the
neighborhoods in which they were raised and of their high school. The results showed that racial demographics of the neighborhoods had no effect on adjustment to college, but that there was a significant relationship between having attended a majority-Black high school and dis-enrolling from the PWI. Eighty-three percent of the students from predominately Black high schools discontinued enrollment at the PWI by the beginning of their senior year. There was no follow up study conducted to determine why these seniors disenrolled. Students may encounter difficulties with race-environmental fit, and therefore experience culture shock as they transition into a university setting that is atypical of the racial climate in which they were accustomed to in high school. This transition illuminates the potentially powerful impact of racial dynamics on college completion, and underscores a critical need to include this parameter when analyzing dropout rates.

As evident by the scarce research on Black college student attrition (Astin, 1975; Graham et al., 1985; Lichtman et al., 1989; Rugg, 1982), Black students are dropping out at higher rates than Whites. It appears that academic history along with personal family and social support structures impact decisions to leave school. But the dearth of research in this area limits our full understanding of whether and how racial experience plays a decisive role. To illustrate the critical importance of focusing on race in attrition research, I shall proceed with a discussion on racial dynamics within colleges and universities. First I will define stereotype and briefly review the different stereotypes about Blacks. Then I will discuss stereotype threat and the impact of this threat on the performance of Black college students. Following this discussion, I will review the literature on racial identity theory, and discuss the impact of racial identity on college adjustment and
academic performance. Finally, I will examine the literature on racial climate, academic climate, and social support and discuss how this impacts the academic achievement of Black college students.

Racial Dynamics in College

Stereotype. The Editors of Webster’s II New College Dictionaries (2005) defines stereotype as an “oversimplified opinion, conception, or belief (p. 1107). “Ignorant, rude, rebellious, self-pitying, religious, tolerant, aggressive, lazy, loud” (Smedley & Bayton, 1978, p.532) along with “sociable/friendly, athletic, intelligent, and disobedient” (Chang & Demyan, 2007, p. 101) are merely a few of the reported positive and negative stereotypes regarding Black students. Although both positive and negative in nature, Whites may have the tendency to focus solely on negative beliefs. Sedlacek and Brooks (1970) measured the racial attitudes held by 365 Whites towards Blacks. Overall findings showed that participants held negative reactions regarding Blacks. Current research shows that Blacks continue to be labeled and are often portrayed as exhibiting negative behavior, such as laziness (Carter & Cook, 1992, as cited by Helms & Cook, 1999), and as non-intelligent in comparison to their White counterparts (Sue & Sue, 2003).

As a result of these reported findings, we may conclude that stereotypes exist and that negative perceptions regarding Blacks are unabated within many Whites. It is therefore critical to understand how internalization or awareness of stereotypes affects the psychological well-being and academic performance levels of Black college students.

Stereotype Threat. As defined by Steele (1997), stereotype threat is:

A situational threat—a threat in the air—that, in general form, can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists. Where bad
stereotypes about these groups apply, members of these groups can fear being reduced to that stereotype. And for those who identify with the domain to which the stereotype is relevant, this predicament can be self-threatening. (p.614)

Vulnerability to stereotype threat may exist regardless of whether or not an individual assigns validity to that stereotype. For example, an automatic reaction could occur in which an individual is aware of the assumption and therefore acts accordingly (Steele, 1997). For example, a Black man crossing paths with two White females begins to smile, due to his awareness that he may be stereotypically portrayed as an aggressor despite his disbelief and non-relation to the label. The degree to which the stereotype threat is experienced varies from person to person and often heightens upon which the stereotype is congruent with the context (Steele, 1997). Utilizing this example, two White females passing by a Black male is consistent with the stereotypical threat that the Black male may be harmful. Working to disprove the stereotype may seem everlasting and overwhelming, and may sometimes be impossible if certain individuals do in fact manifest characteristics of the stereotype (Steele, 1997). Devastatingly so, internalization of negative stereotypes may prove to be overpowering and have detrimental effects on an individual, therefore resulting in their becoming victims to the stereotype threat.

To illustrate the profound effects of stereotype threat, Steele and Aronson (1995) performed four quantitative experimental studies on 114 Black and White undergraduate students at Stanford University. Based on the assumption that Blacks internalize the stereotype of being intellectually inferior to Whites, their first study investigated the effect of stereotype threat on the intellectual performance of African American college students. Participants were randomly divided into three groups. In group one, the
diagnostic group, subjects were told that their performance ability was being measured upon completion of an intellectual test. Group two, the non-diagnostic group, was given a problem-solving assignment and were told that ability to complete the task was not being measured. Group three, the non-diagnostic challenge group, was told that ability was not being measured, but was informed that the assigned task would be a difficult challenge and would determine how stress affects motivation. Overall, the results showed that White cohorts performed at a higher level than Blacks in each group, with the diagnostic challenge group scoring higher than the Black non-diagnostic group and the diagnostic group respectively. Participants were also given measures to express their perception of the test and their self-perception of performance. Overall, Blacks viewed the test as more biased compared to Whites, and within the diagnostic group, Black participants’ self-ratings regarding performance were less than those in the non-diagnostic group and the non-diagnostic challenge group.

In order to determine the level of resistance towards fulfilling the intellectual inferiority assumption by Blacks, Steele and Aronson (1995) applied the same scenario from study 1 (with the exception of the non-diagnostic challenge group) to 20 Black and 20 White undergraduate students at Stanford University. Participants completed questionnaires designed to measure their level of stereotypical views, competence perception, evasion of stereotypes, and self-handicapping. Compared to the non-diagnostic group, Blacks in the diagnostic group reported: (a) having higher levels of self-doubt about their performance, (b) feeling higher levels of stereotype threat, (c) being most resistant towards conforming to stereotypical views about African Americans,
and notably (d) Blacks constituted the only group to not have 100% of its members indicate their race on the demographic survey.

Steele and Aronson (1995) performed another study to further investigate the influence of internalization of stereotypes on performance. They applied a methodology similar to that of study number one to determine the effects of stereotype threat on the performance of 35 Black (9 males, 26 females) and 33 White (20 males, 13 females) undergraduate students. However, they eliminated the verbal instruction that ability was being tested. Participants were divided into two groups: group 1, the race-prime group, consisted of those participants who indicated their race on a demographic questionnaire; group 2, the no-race-prime group was comprised of those remaining participants who omitted reporting their race. Overall, Black participants acknowledged experiencing higher levels of stereotype threat compared to Whites. Blacks in the race-prime group performed significantly poorer than both Whites and Blacks in the race and no-race-prime groups. Additionally, Blacks in the race-prime group, made fewer guesses compared with those in the no-race group, whereas the opposite outcome occurred for White participants.

Cohen and Garcia (2005) performed an experimental study with 63 Black undergraduates at Yale University (19 males, 44 women) to investigate the effects of collective threat on self esteem, while also measuring its effects on stereotype distancing, racial stereotype activation, and seating distance. Participants were divided into threat versus no-threat groups, as modeled by Steele and Aronson’s (1995) study, and were given similar verbal information regarding measurement of ability. To determine collective threat, two confederates, one of Asian descent and the other African American,
were placed in the same room as the participant examinees. Results indicated that self-esteem, stereotype internalization and inhibition, were lower among participants in the threat group, and seating distance from the Black confederate was increased.

In a follow up experimental study, Cohen and Garcia (2005) sought to determine the effect of collective threat (stereotypical views) on impression formation. A new group of 63 Black undergraduates was asked to complete questionnaires assessing self esteem, stereotype distancing, racial stereotype activation, and perceived exposure to evaluative scrutiny. Impressions were formed by having the participants divide into three groups (one threat group, and two non-threat groups, as modeled after their initial study). Utilizing stereotypical Black (Jamal) and White (Jeffrey) names and voices, participants in the threat group were told that Jamal and Jeffrey were completing an IQ test, whereas intellectual performance was de-emphasized in the no-threat group. Interestingly, results showed that participants in the threat group rated Jamal as having a lower self esteem. Finally, individuals with higher levels of racial identification were impacted more by collective threat.

Smith and Hopkins (2004) performed a quantitative experimental study using methodology similar to Steele and Aronson’s (1995) diagnostic and non-diagnostic group categorization. One hundred sixty African American undergraduates attending an HBCU were divided into threat (diagnostic) and no-threat (non-diagnostic) groups and administered a spelling and arithmetic test. They evaluated the effects of cultural identification, internal and external locus of control, and stereotype threat on academic performance. No significant differences were found on performance level between any of the variables except for completion of the arithmetic section. Completion of the
arithmetic section reflected higher levels of cultural identity and internal locus of control, and had a positive affect on the participant’s level of academic performance. Contextual factors (e.g., attending a predominantly Black institution) may have mediated the negative effect of stereotype threat on the performance that was so blatantly apparent in the previous discussion of research (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Steele, 1995).

Marx and Goff (2005) performed a quantitative experimental study to investigate the effect that experimenter race and participants’ level of endorsement of stereotypes has on test performance. Participants were 32 Black and 27 White undergraduates at Harvard University. Overall, performance level was worse for those Black participants who were administered the test by a White examiner. On the contrary, when the test was administered by a Black examiner, Black participants scored significantly higher. Black participants reported higher levels of stereotype threat and endorsement, particularly when given the exam by a White examiner. For White participants, stereotype threat was lower compared to Blacks when the examiner was White, but no difference in level of threat was found between the groups when the examiner was Black. Furthermore, for White participants, endorsement of the stereotype was not found to be significant by race. Finally, it was also found that Black participants reported higher levels of self-doubt when the examiner was White, and White participants reported increased levels of self-doubt when the examiner was Black. Hence, as illustrated above, stereotype threat is alive, permeates the minds of Black students, and often plays a debilitating role (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Marx & Goff, 2005; Smith & Hopkins, 2004; Steele 1997; Steele et al., 1995). The next few paragraphs will show how racial identity can influence the way an individual adjusts to racially charged experiences.
Racial Identity Theory

Cross (1991) developed a Nigrescence Model that discusses the healthy progression of the development of the Black identity. Ultimately, individuals engulfed in the various stages, learn to fully embrace and appreciate their Blackness. The Nigrescence model consists of five stages: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-commitment. Individuals transition from pro-White toward Pro-Black attitudes and toward a full dedication to understanding and respecting the Black race, culture, and values.

Utilizing this model, Cross (1991) discusses the psychological component of the Nigrescence Model as it relates to adjustment in society. Individuals engulfed in the pre-encounter stage neglect to see race as a salient factor and therefore may denigrate the reality and negative influential impact of racism on Blacks. Consequently, this denial may serve as either a buffer towards racist experiences, or may place them at a harmful risk of not being psychologically prepared to cope with racist encounters. During the encounter stage, race arises as a salient factor. This is often a result of being impacted by several racial events that challenge pre-encounter world views. As a result, individuals may feel uncertain, apprehensive, and depressed as they begin to re-frame the value of their racial identity. During the immersion-emersion stage, a strong anti-White attitude view is internalized and an attempt at alienation from Whites is made. This stage is characterized by hypersensitivity to encounters with bigotry and enragement over such experiences. During the internalization phase, individuals adopt a high level of Black identity and are synchronized and content with their new level of Blackness. They are more mature and refined in their approach towards handling racism; they more often
utilize support mechanisms (e.g., religion), and may resort to blaming "the system" for racial problems, as opposed to acknowledging any self-culpability, even when appropriate. Finally, individuals engulfed in the internalization-commitment stage typically devote a life-time towards serving the Black community. In addition, racial experiences are managed in a similar manner to those in the internalization phase.

Application of the Nigrescence Model to research examining Black college students (although scarce) illustrates the important influence that racial identity may have on campus dynamics (i.e., adjustment to college, academic performance, perception of racial/academic climate, and perception of social support). The following paragraphs will illustrate how racial identity can impact the college acclimation process.

**Racial Identity and College Adjustment**

Cokley (2001) conducted a quantitative study investigating the effects of gender on level of racial identity, academic self-concept, and academic motivation. Participants consisted of 258 African American undergraduate students (92 men, 165 women, 1 unidentified, ages 18-57) enrolled at an HBCU. Results indicated that the female participants whose race was an integral part of their life, experienced higher levels of academic self-concept as well as increased levels of intrinsic motivation.

Parker and Flowers (2003) performed a quantitative study to see how racial identity impacts a student’s perception of his or her academic and campus climate. Participants were 118 African American undergraduate students (59% male, 41% female) enrolled at a PWI. They were administered the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Parham & Helms, 1981 as cited by Parker & Flowers, 2003) and Perception of Campus Connectedness Scale (Lee & Davis, 2000 as cited by Parker & Flowers, 2003). Results
showed that those students with higher levels of racial identity (internalization stage) experienced higher levels of campus connectedness. Individuals in the Immersion-Emmersion stage experienced difficulties with connecting to the campus environment.

McDonald and Vrana (2007) performed a quantitative study of 45 Black (6 male, 39 female) and 82 White (17 male, 65 female) students enrolled at a PWI to determine the effects of racial social comfort on college adjustment. For Black students, positive college adjustment was related to levels of self-comfort regarding interaction with both races (Internalization phase; Cross, 1991). On the other hand, the adjustment experience of Blacks worsened as levels of discomfort with Whites increased (Immersion/Emmersion stage; Cross, 1991). For the White students, there was a positive relationship between college adjustment and interaction with other White students, but a negative one between college adjustment and interacting with Black students.

Clearly, as illustrated in the research above, level of racial identity has an impact on the process of adjusting to college. It also seems to impact a student’s ability to succeed academically. The proceeding paragraphs will illustrate how academic performance can be largely influenced by racial identity.

Racial Identity and Academic Performance

Nasim et al. (2005) performed a longitudinal quantitative study investigating the impact of racial identity on academic achievement. Participants were 250 African American undergraduate students enrolled at either a PWI or an HBCU. They were administered measures of (a) academic pursuits and achievements, and (b) identification with and commitment toward one’s race. The results showed that students enrolled at the PWI experienced higher levels of oppressed minority status (as measured by the
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity; Sellers, Rowley, Tabbie, Shelton, & Smith, 1997 as cited by Nasim et al.). In addition, being able to understand and cope with racism, along with having a social support person was positively related to academic performance. The results also indicated that Black students enrolled at an HBCU garnered higher levels of social support and were better able to cope with and manage adverse racial experiences. With respect to academic performance, having a positive self-concept was the strongest predictor of performing well in school.

Anglin and Wade (2007) performed a quantitative assessment of 141 Black students attending a PWI (27 male, 56 female) and racially diverse institution (28 male, 30 female) to determine the impact of race on college adjustment. Consistent with Cross’ (1991) internalization stage, results indicated that students who embraced a multicultural identity (e.g., accepting their own culture as well as others) adjusted better to college. Those students with an Afrocentric racial identity (immersion-emmersion stage; Cross, 1991) had lower academic performance; this may have been related to the noted incongruence between their personal racial identity and the racial atmosphere of the PWI.

Evidently, the variance in being able to cope with racial experiences on campus has both positive and negative effects on Black students’ overall scholastic performance. It is critical to understand how external factors within the college environment impact academic performance. In the next few paragraphs I will discuss how the racial atmosphere of an institution may powerfully impact academic achievement.

**Racial Climate and Academic Achievement**

Davis (1994) performed a quantitative study on 4,094 Black males enrolled at either a HBCU or PWI. His aim was to investigate the effects of campus environment
(e.g., social support, racial congruity) on GPA. Overall, students at the HBCU obtained higher GPA's compared to those at the PWI; they reported being more integrated into the campus life, and felt higher levels of support compared to those students attending a PWI.

Nora and Cabrera (1996) performed a quantitative study to investigate factors that impact a student’s ability to continue his or her educational pursuits in college. Participants consisted of 831 undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI, with 10.7% of the sample being African American. Overall, results showed that the minority students performed lower academically, and this had a negative effect on their ability to adjust well to the college environment. In addition, the students reported more instances of discrimination and feelings of racial discomfort as they interacted with faculty, staff, and peers on campus (racial breakdown of these interactions were not provided). Support from parents, positively impacted all participants' academic and intellectual progress, performance, and commitment to the university.

Solorzano (2000) performed a qualitative study on 34 African American students (16 males, 18 females) enrolled at a PWI to gather information regarding their experience of racial dynamics on campus. Overall, based on the results, several themes emerged: (a) students expressed feeling racial tension both inside and outside of the classroom setting, (b) racial separateness was present among the student body, (c) Black students tended to feel negatively stereotyped by White faculty and peers, and (d) many Black students also perceived negative stereotyping regarding their academic abilities. Ultimately, these experiences resulted in two additional themes: (a) higher levels of self-doubt, and (b) increased feelings of helplessness. As a result, many students performed poorly,
academically and/or withdrew from the institution. Examples of each theme are provided below:

Racial Tension. “I think that when the professors see that there’s fewer of you, they’re less likely to address your concerns” (p.65). Another student stated, “They look at you and think, ‘oh that’s another dumb black girl in the class.’ That’s how they make you feel..so you don’t feel like saying ‘well maybe it isn’t me cause you second-guess yourself’ ” (p.66). This shows that heightened awareness of one’s Blackness can negatively impact levels of academic confidence, and feelings of visibility and self-worth. A student reported a similar experience in the next theme.

Stereotyped. “Every time I leave my room I’m conscious of the fact that I’m Black. I’m really conscious of the fact that people are looking at me and saying, ‘she’s here on affirmative action’ ” (p.67). Evidently, this illustrates the profound influence that racial awareness has on a person’s daily living. The next three themes will show how individuals may be maltreated as a result of their race.

Racial Separateness.
I’ve had times when a guy in the class...said ‘well I don’t want to work with you because you’re Black’ And he told me to my face...And it was upsetting’cause...I came here thinking that it wouldn’t be like this, and that was naïve (p.67).

Clearly, this shows that students may transition into an environment with the expectation that they will receive support from peers regardless of race. Unfortunately in some instances students encounter a hostile environment and get treated unfairly. This type of mistreatment is similarly illustrated in the following two themes.
Stereotyped on academic abilities.

I decided to go see a counselor because I wanted to do pre-med and I wanted to make sure I was on the right track. The counselor was very discouraging... not supportive at all. She finally said, “well I don’t think that you should take all of those classes. You’re not gonna be able to do that.” I personally thought she discouraged me because I was African American. (p.68)

Unfortunately this illustrates the reality that many students are deterred from certain course work, because they are Black, despite the student having confidence in his or her academic abilities.

Self-Doubt/Helplessness.

She got a B in physics before she came. She took physics again. She did her problems, got everything in and got a D on her exam. She looked at her friend’s exam; he was a white person, and he had gotten an A, and they had the same, almost the same exact answers on the exam. So she went up to the graduate student instructor and asked him ‘what’s going on’ he says to her, ‘Well, I have not really been around Black people, or people like you before...I don’t think you did well on the test.’ So she went up to the professor, and the professor didn’t do anything. She went to the chancellor. The chancellor had her drop the class. Her parents are the ones who are paying for her education, but see, the first thing the chancellor asked her was whether or not she was on financial aid. So now she’s mad, upset, and going to be transferring to Howard University. (p.70)

As evident in the above example, students may feel frustrated and helpless as a result of biased practices. Rather than fight the injustice of the educational system, some may
choose a more passive route and transfer to a HBCU with the hope that they will be treated more justly.

Brown, Morning, and Watkins (2005) wanted to investigate student’s overall perception of campus climate and its effect on persistence. Participants consisted of African American engineering students enrolled at either a PWI or an HBCU. The results showed that commitment to a university largely depended upon lesser experiences with racism and discrimination. Further results indicated GPA being negatively associated with reports of racist and discriminatory encounters. In addition, students enrolled at the HBCU reported higher grades and more favorable views of their campus atmosphere compared to those at the PWI.

The racial environment at a college or university can either hinder or support the academic progress of a Black student. Therefore it is necessary to understand the role of the academic climate on success. The subsequent paragraphs will show how certain academic climate variables such as faculty and peer interaction, financial support, and educational opportunities may influence levels of academic achievement.

*Academic Climate and Academic Achievement*

Kuh and Hu (2001) examined the relationship between student-faculty interaction and student educational and personal progress. The population consisted of 5,409 students at a PWI, with 5% of the population consisting of African American participants. Overall, the African American students reported having more interaction with faculty (race of faculty was not provided). Moreover, African American students’ academic functioning (e.g., study habits, classroom readiness) were described as better in
direct association with the intensity of their involvement in such student-faculty relationships.

Karemera, Reuben, and Sillah (2003) performed a quantitative study to see which academic variables influenced student educational behavior and performance. Participants consisted of 223 African American undergraduate students (93 males, 129 females) enrolled in a business program at a HBCU. A majority of the students had parents whose highest level of education was a high school diploma, and whose family household income ranged from $20,000 to $50,000 or more. Results showed that students are better able to perform and be content with school if provided with better academic services (e.g. sufficient classroom facilities, internship and work opportunities, and technology services such as computer access). Such services enable students to have access to educational experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, which in turn enriches their learning development. Results also indicated that there were no statistically significant relationship between level of parent education and academic performance, as well as between household income and academic performance.

Kim (2007) performed a quantitative study to investigate the influence of loan usage on degree attainment for students across the racial and ethnic spectrum as well as socioeconomic status (as determined by parental dependent or independent status). Participants consisted of 3,251 students enrolled at a four-year institution who were active in the previous study performed by the National Center for Education Statistics. Results showed that Black students with more loans were less likely to graduate. Therefore, loan debt may be a factor affecting scholastic motivation and success.
Clearly, being immersed in an environment that stimulates student development is conducive to the success of Black students. Social support can also serve as a means of helping Black students progress despite challenges they may face while in college. Studies specifically examining the impact of social support on the academic success of Black college students have been limited in number (Gloria et al., 1999). The existing studies will be reviewed below.

**Social Support and Academic Achievement**

Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohlert (2003-2004) designed a study investigating the impact of self-esteem and social support on a student’s ability to become acclimated to the academic and social environment on campus. In addition, they were interested in learning how level of adjustment to campus affects a student’s dedication towards their academic pursuits and to the institution they attend. Participants consisted of 118 first generation, low income undergraduate students (24% male, 76% female), with 7% of the sample being African American. Institution type was not provided. Results showed that students with high levels of self-esteem were more socially involved. In addition, students who reported having a great social support network indicated being acclimated to the social and academic environment on campus; this resulted in an increased commitment on the part of these students to their educational goals and to the institution.

Nicpon, Huser, Blanks, Sollenberger, Befort, and Robinson-Kurpius (2006-2007) performed a quantitative study to determine: (a) how gender, and commuter status affects perceived levels of social support, and (b) how perceived levels of social support affect academic performance and persistence, and feelings of loneliness. Participants consisted
of 401 students (147 males, 254 females) enrolled at a PWI, with 4.2% of the population being Black. Results showed that females and non-commuter students reported having greater levels of social support networks. Results also indicated that both non-commuter students and students with high perceived levels of social support were less likely to feel lonely; these students reported higher levels of commitment to their educational goals. Non-commuter students also reported higher grade point averages. It is evident that having a social support network can be beneficial to the academic success of Black college students.

Additional studies (Adan & Felner, 1995; Allen, 1992; Nasim et al., 2005) yield similar results regarding the various interracial experiences of Blacks who attend either an HBCU or a PWI. However, regarding my own research question, scholars have yet to examine how racial identity theory influences perception of general academic and racial climate, and the availability of social support, as well as how these variables impact GPA.

Conclusion

Empirical research has shown that only three studies have attempted to understand the Black college student attrition phenomenon (Astin, 1975; Lichtman et al., 1989; Rugg, 1982;). Just one study addressed the possible influence that race has on the drop out process (Graham et al., 1985). As is evident by research on Black student retention (Allen, 1985; Cross & Astin, 1981; Gloria et al., 1999), stereotype threat (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Marx & Goff, 2005; Smith & Hopkins, 2004; Steele, 1997) and Black college adjustment (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007) it is necessary to consider how intensely racial dynamics influence the drop out process (Adan
& Felner, 1995; Allen, 1992; Anglin & Wade, 2007; Brown et al., 2005; Cokley, 2001; Cross, 1991; Davis, 1994; Grant-Vallone et al., 2004; Karemera et al., 2003; Kim, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; McDonald & Vrana, 2007; Nasim et al. 2005; Nicpon et al., 2006-2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Parker & Flowers, 2003; Solorzano, 2000) Therefore, this study addressed the possible influence of racial identity on impressions of general campus, academic, and racial climate, and on perceptions of social support, as well as how these variables effect the cumulative GPA of Black college students. It was anticipated that this investigation would enhance the general knowledge base necessary for creating academic environments that are more conducive to the success of Black students. And, that the analysis would help minimize or even eliminate certain racial divides that are currently inherent in the higher education experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I shall provide details about the sample obtained for this study. Then I shall discuss the various measures used along with their psychometric properties. Finally, I shall discuss how participants were recruited, the steps taken to screen the data, and the statistical design of the study.

Participants

A total of 187 Black/African American undergraduate students participated in the study (60 males [32%] and 127 females [68%]). Seventy-one (38%) were enrolled at predominately White 4-year institutions, and 116 (62%) were enrolled at predominately Black 4-year institutions. Of the total sample, the mean age was 21.2 years (SD=3.11). The most frequent semester enrolled in school at the time of completing the study was the eighth, and the most frequent reported goal for degree obtainment was a Bachelors. Participants were asked their family generation status in the United States as well as in regards to college attendance. They most frequent reported status were third and second generation respectively.

Power Analysis

Using Faul and Erdfelder’s (1992) program, G*Power (2), with an alpha set at .05 and power at .80, this study required approximately 102 subjects. Since 187 participants were sampled, there was a statistically increased likelihood of determining whether or not an effect existed among the variables being studied.
Measures

The measures used in this study were the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver, Cross, Fhagen-Smith, Worrell, Swim, & Caldwell, 2000), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988), the General Campus, Academic, and Racial Subscale (GCARS; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003), and the researcher’s demographic measure.

Cross Racial Identity Scale

The CRIS (also known as the Cross Social Attitude Scale; a 7 point likert scale wherein 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) was used to assess undergraduate college student levels of racial identity development. There are six subscales for the CRIS: (a) Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) – individuals in this stage place more value on being American than on being a member of their own racial group. (b) Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM) – people in this phase personalize stereotypes and other negative information regarding their Black racial background. (c) Pre-encounter Self-Hatred (PSH) – in this period individuals intensely dislike those personal traits that are characteristic of or remindful of their Black race. (d) Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) – during this interval individuals exhibit strong hatred towards Whites. (e) Internalization Afrocentricity (IA) – in this span an appreciation for unique or hallmark aspects of a person’s Afrocentric background is paramount, and (d) Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI) - in this final stage, individuals embrace an identity that is comprised of three or more social groups (Cokley, 2005, as cited by Cokley & Helm, 2007; Vandiver et al., 2000, as cited by Cokley & Helm, 2007).
A previous study used two sets of samples to validate the psychometric properties of the CRIS. The first sample consisted of 296 African American students attending a PWI, and the second sample consisted of 336 African American students attending a PWI. The CRIS illustrated very good internal consistency. Cronbach alpha’s for each subscale were: PA (.83), PM (.78), PSH (.88), IEAW (.90), IA (.82), and IMCI (.86). Reliability estimates for each subscale were: PA (.85), PM (.78), PSH (.89), IEAW (.89), IA (.83), and IMCI (.82). Convergent validity of the CRIS was tested against the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) as cited by Vandiver et al. (2002). The CRIS IA, and IEAW positively correlated with the MIBI Nationalism scale, and CRIS IMCI, and PA positively correlated with the MIBI Oppressed Minority and Assimilation scales, respectively. CRIS’ IEAW and PA had an inverse correlation with MIBI’s Humanist and Nationalist Scales, respectively. Finally, there was a negative relationship between PA and MIBI’s Centrality scale. (Vandiver et al., 2000). For this study, adequate reliability estimates were also found for each subscale of the CRIS: PA (α=.86), PM (α=.78), PSH (α=.77), IEAW (α=.90), IA (α=.86), IMCI (α=.73).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The MSPSS (a 7 point likert scale wherein 1= very strongly disagree and 7= very strongly agree) was used to assess undergraduate college student perceptions of support received from family, friends, and significant others. There are three subscales for the MSPSS: Family; Friends; and Significant Others.

Previous samples used to validate the psychometric properties of the MSPSS were: 265 pregnant females; 74 European adolescents; 55 medical residents working within the area of pediatrics; and 222 urban African American adolescents (Canty-
Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Zimet, Powell, Farley, Werkman, & Berkoff, 1990). These studies showed that the MSPSS demonstrated very good internal reliability with Cronbach alpha coefficients, ranging from .85-.89 for the subscales of Significant Other, Family, and Friends (Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Zimet et al., 1990). The MSPSS was also found to be negatively correlated with symptoms of anxiety and depression, providing evidence of concurrent validity (Zimet et al., 1990). Discriminant validity was evident between the Family subscale and the Friends and Significant Other subscales (Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000). The current study also had very good estimates of reliability with Cronbach alpha scores of .94, .93, and .95 for the subscales of Significant Other, Family, and Friends respectively.

**General Campus, Academic, and Racial Subscale**

The GCARS (a 7 point likert scale with 1=strong agreement to 7=Strong disagreement) was used to assess undergraduate college student perceptions of the racial and academic climate. The previous study used to validate the psychometric properties of the GCARS consisted of the following samples: 182 African Americans; 212 Latinos 358 Asian Americans; and 671 Whites. Adequate estimates of reliability have been found for the scale.

The General Campus Climate (GCC) subscale ($\alpha = .72$) consists of five items that measure a students overall view of the institution. The Academic Climate (AC) section consists of three subscales: (a) the student's ratings of instructors influence on the academic climate ($\alpha = .75$), (b) the student's self-perceptions as defined by feedback received from instructors and peers ($\alpha = .75$), and (c) the student's value-rating of the climate according to its social and intellectual context ($\alpha = .68$). The Racial Climate
section consists of two subscales: (a) reports of any negative racial experiences on campus \( (\alpha = .70) \), and (b) the student’s self-perceptions of the university’s ability to embrace and support diversity \( (\alpha = .76; \text{Reid} \ & \text{Radhakrishnan, 2003}) \).

In regards to the current study, certain reliability estimates were found to be adequate for the GCARS scale, while others were inadequate. Cronbach alpha values are: .50 for the GCC subscale; .73, .51, and .41 respectively for the AC subscale; and .78 and .77 respectively for the racial climate subscale. Therefore of the three scales, only the CRIS and the MSPSS scales were found to be adequate for this study.

The researcher’s demographic survey was designed to gather additional information about the participants that might further inform this study. Information was solicited regarding gender, age, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, semester in school, undergraduate institution name and type (predominately White or predominately Black), intentions/plans for degree, current grade point average, high school racial breakdown, participant’s generation status in the United States, and participant’s generation status in terms of college attendance.

**Procedure**

Recruitment tactics consisted of this researcher contacting the social networks (e.g., fraternities and sororities, friends, faculty, and students on college list serves) at PWIs and HBCUs (please refer to the definitions above for the classification criteria of a PWI and HBCU). Contact was made via email, in-person, and/or by phone. Based on these contacts, this researcher (with approval from the faculty) was able to visit classrooms at various institutions and solicit students for participation. Also, using snowballing techniques, the letter of solicitation was forwarded to additional individuals
via the web. The researcher was able to obtain participants from the following 4-year 
institutions: Howard University (1% White, 69% Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009e), 
Hampton University (10% White, 89% Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009d), Temple 
University (58% White, 16% Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009h), Rider University (73% 
White, 8% Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009f), Rutgers University (52% White, 9% 
Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009g), Farleigh Dickinson University (69% White, 7% 
Black; StateUniversity.com, 2009c), Drew University (62% White, 8% Black; 
StateUniversity.com, 2009b), University of Memphis (57% White, 35% Black; 
StateUniversity.com, 2009i) University of Tampa (64% White, 6.2% Black; 
StateUniversity.com, 2009j) and The Pennsylvania State University (80% White, 4% 
Black; StateUniversity.com, 2008). Students from 2-year institutions completed the 
measures, but were eliminated from this study because the colleges did not meet the 
racial demographic criteria for either a HBCU or PWI.

During recruitment, the students were told either verbally or by email to complete 
the study online via the Academic Survey System and Evaluation Tool (ASSET; 
Wachsmuth, 2008). The researcher used a cover letter to explain the purpose of the 
investigation, the time commitment required to complete the study, and to inform 
participants of their right to request and receive the study results. To ensure anonymity, 
the ASSET was set to “anonymous”, such that the identity of the participants would 
remain unknown. Only the researcher had access to the completed surveys. The 
researcher used implied consent, such that voluntary completion of the measures reflected 
an individual’s consent to participate. These procedures assured that ASSET participation 
was truly anonymous and consensual. Participants were also informed that a packet.
comprised of the measures requiring their completion could be delivered to them by hand or mail (170 participants chose this method, with only 17 completing the study via ASSET). Since the researcher waited in the classroom while the students completed the measures, to ensure confidentiality participants were instructed to not include identifying information on any of the measures. Implied consent was used for this method as well, in that voluntary return of the completed packet signified an individual’s consent to participate. Participants who received a packet by mail were provided with addressed, stamped envelopes in which to return the completed information. Finally, the researcher also provided the participants with contact information in the event that questions or concerns arose regarding the study.

Participants completed a packet of measures that consisted of the demographic survey, CRIS, GCARS, and the MSPSS. Students who opted to complete the measures online received a thank you message from the researcher which was posted prior to their beginning the study. The researcher provided snacks to participants who chose to meet in-person.

*Data Screening*

Using SPSS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., 2008), the researcher performed a data screening following the guidelines of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) and Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino (2006). The screening process was conducted on nine continuous variables: GPA, Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive, General Campus Academic and Racial Climate, and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Using SPSS procedures, the data set
was screened for assumption violations, coding errors, missing values, outliers, and degrees of normality. Overall, the data set produced no coding violations and variables were within range of the respective scales. Less than 5% of the data was missing from two variables: GPA (3/186) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (1/188); the amount of missing data was not significant enough to necessitate deletion of the variables. Univariate outliers were found for GPA (Case 30), Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (Case 134) and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (Case 10). Cases 10 and 134 were detected as multivariate outliers with \( p < .001 \), and were eliminated. 187 cases remained for analysis. Normality curves showed that most variables had a normal distribution, with the exception of Pre-Encounter Self Hatred, which was extremely positively skewed. This variable was transformed with a base-10 logarithm and afterwards produced a more normal distribution. Linear relationships were found satisfactory.

Table 1

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Understanding the Black College Student Experience

### Statistics

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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistical Design

A path analysis was performed to determine what type of relationship existed between the following variables: racial identity attitudes; perceived social support; perception of general campus, academic, and racial climate; and GPA. Students enrolled
Understanding the Black College Student Experience

at predominately White institutions were compared with those enrolled at predominately Black institutions. Data was analyzed using SPSS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., 2008) and AMOS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., 2008).

Hypothesized Path Model. First, it was hypothesized that relationships would exist as follows: (a) racial identity attitudes would indirectly influence GPA, as mediated by perceptions of the campus climate, and (b) racial identity attitudes would indirectly influence GPA as mediated by perceptions of social support. Second, it was also hypothesized that racial identity attitudes would directly predict GPA. Third, it was hypothesized that racial identity attitudes would directly influence perceptions of campus climate. Finally, it was hypothesized that racial attitudes would directly influence perceptions of social support. This hypothesized model is further illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Hypothesized path model illustrating the predictive relationships between the following variables: (a) racial identity attitudes (Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Log Pre self-hatred, Immersion-Emmersion Anti-White,
Internalization Afrocentricity, Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive), (b) General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate Scale, (c) Grade Point Average, and (d) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

Chapter IV will delve more deeply into this analysis and discuss the overall findings of this study.
Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the following variables: (a) Black racial identity attitudes (b) impressions of general campus, academic, racial climate, (c) perceptions of social support, and (d) grade point average. This chapter will provide a detailed overview of how the completed measures were scored and analyzed, and will conclude with an overview of the findings as they relate to the aforementioned hypotheses.

Scoring Procedures

The GCARS score was derived by totaling each item’s raw score. Items 4, 5, 14, 16, 17, and 19-25, were recoded so that lower numbers indicated higher perceptions of the general campus, academic, and racial climate (Reid et al., 2003).

The MSPSS was scored by totaling each item’s raw score and dividing that number by 12 so that an average could be obtained. Each average score ranged from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived social support (Cecil, Stanley, Carrion, & Swann, 1995).

The CRIS is a 40 item measure, with 30 of those items comprising 6 CRIS subscales: Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. Each subscale was scored separately by calculating the average; thus the 6 final scores represented racial identity attitudes. The average scores ranged from 1 to 7, with higher scores suggesting higher endorsement of that attitude (Worrell, Vandiver, & Cross, 2004).
Analysis

AMOS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., 2008) and Meyers et al.’s (2006) textbook guidelines were used to evaluate the hypothesized model by means of the chi-square test, the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Also, path coefficients were assessed for statistical significance at $p<.05$, and practical significance at $\beta > .3$.

Findings

PWIs. The path-analytic model for the predominately White institutions is shown in Figure 2. As Tables 3 and 4 illustrate, the chi square test yielded significant results, $\chi^2 (11, N=71) = 44.988$, and the NFI (.555) and CFI (.394) produced results that showed poor goodness-of-fit. This indicates a poor match between the proposed model and the observed data. Furthermore, as shown in Table 5, the RMSEA’s value of .210 signifies a poor fit of the model. Finally, Table 6 illustrates that only seven path coefficients demonstrated statistical significance ($p<.05$), and two of those seven were also practically significant ($\beta > .3$). This development of this path model was based on the research findings illustrated in Chapter II (Adan & Felner, 1995; Allen, 1992; Anglin & Wade, 2007; Brown et al., 2005; Cokley, 2001; Davis, 1994; Grant-Vallone et al., 2003-2004; Karema et al., 2003; Kim, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; McDonald & Vrana, 2007; Nasim et al., 2005; Niepon et al., 200-2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Parker & Flowers, 2003; Solorzano, 2000). Model respecification was not performed because none of these research findings suggested other possible direct and indirect relationships between the variables chosen for this study.
Figure 2. Path-analytic model for PWIs: Relationships between (a) racial identity attitudes (pre-encounter assimilation, pre-encounter miseducation, log of pre-encounter self hatred, immersion-emersion anti-White, internalization afrocentricity, internalization multiculturalist inclusive), (b) perceptions of general campus, academic, and racial climate, (c) perceptions of social support, and (d) current grade point average.
Table 3

*Model Fit Summary*

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Note. The chi square score is located in the default model row under CMIN.

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*Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)*

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Note. *p<.05; †β >.3

Table 7

*Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)*

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<td>General &lt;-- LPSH</td>
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<td>General &lt;-- IMCI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support &lt;-- IMCI</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support &lt;-- LPSH</td>
<td>.143</td>
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</table>
HBCUs. The path-analytic model for the predominately Black institutions is shown in figure 3. The chi square test yielded significant results, $\chi^2(11, N=116) = 42.177$, and the NFI and CFI produced results that showed poor goodness-of-fit (.731 and .721 respectively [Tables 8 and 9]). This indicates a poor match between the proposed model and the observed data. Moreover, as illustrated in Table 10, the RMSEA's value of .157 signifies a poor fit of the model. Table 11 shows that only five Path coefficients demonstrated statistical significance ($p<.05$), and four of those five showed practical significance ($\beta > .3$). This development of this path model was developed based on the research findings illustrated in chapter two (Adan & Felner, 1995; Allen, 1992; Anglin & Wade, 2007; Brown et al., 2005; Cokley, 2001; Davis, 1994; Grant-Vallone et al., 2003-2004; Karema et al., 2003; Kim, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; McDonald & Vrana, 2007; Nasim et al., 2005; Nicpon et al., 200-2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Parker & Flowers, 2003; Solorzano, 2000). Model respecification was not performed because none of these research findings suggested other possible direct and indirect relationships between the variables chosen for this study.
Figure 3. Path-analytic model for HBCUs: Relationships between (a) racial identity attitudes (pre-encounter assimilation, pre-encounter miseducation, log of pre-encounter self hatred, immersion-emersion anti-White, internalization afrocentricity, and internalization multiculturalist inclusive), (b) perceptions of general campus, academic, and racial climate, (c) perceptions of social support, and (d) current grade point average.

Table 8

Model Fit Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>NPAR</th>
<th>CMIN</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>CMIN/DF</th>
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<td>Independence model</td>
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Table 9

**Baseline Comparisons**

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<th>NFI Delta1</th>
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<th>IFI Delta2</th>
<th>TLI rho2</th>
<th>CFI</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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Table 10

**RMSEA**

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<th>HI 90</th>
<th>PCLOSE</th>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>.172</td>
<td>.000</td>
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Table 11

**Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

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<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Label</th>
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Note. *p<.05; +β>.3
Table 12

*Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)*

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<td>General ---- PM</td>
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<td>General ---- IEAW</td>
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<td>General ---- IA</td>
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<td>General ---- IMCI</td>
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<td>GPA ---- IMCI</td>
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The results of this study illustrate that even though the overall fit of the hypothesized model is poor for both White and Black institutions, some paths were indeed supported by the data. For students enrolled at PWIs, the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable was directly influenced by IA and IMCI. Specifically, as IA and IMCI increased 1 standard deviation, the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable increased by 6.2 and decreased by 7.2 standard deviations respectively. GPA was directly influenced by the variables (a) Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate, (b) Perceptions of Social Support, (c) PA, (d) IEAW, and (e) IMCI. As variables (a) Perceptions of General
Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate, (b) Perceptions of Social Support, and (c) PA increased 1 standard deviation, GPA decreased by .004, .01, and .01 respectively. And, as IEAW and IMCI increased 1 standard deviation, GPA increased by .12, and .03 respectively.

For students enrolled at HBCUs, The Perceptions of Social Support variable was directly influenced by the PM subscale. Specifically, as the PM subscale increased 1 standard deviation, the Perceptions of Social Support variable decreased .38 standard deviations. The Perceptions of General Campus, Academic and Racial Climate variable was directly influenced by the PA, PM, and IEAW subscales. And, GPA was directly influenced by the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable. Therefore, GPA was indirectly influenced by the PA, PM, and IEAW subscales by way of the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable. As the PA, PM, and IEAW subscales increased 1 standard deviation, the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable increased 5.4, 6.5, and 3.6 standard deviations respectively. And, as the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable increased 1 standard deviation, GPA decreased .01 standard deviations. Subsequent paragraphs further integrate these findings into the aforementioned hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

Regarding students at HBCUs it was hypothesized: that higher levels of racial identity would result in increased Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial climate, and increased Perceptions of Social Support; that these variable increases would impact positively on GPA; and that opposite observations would tend to occur upon
comparing the experiences of Blacks at PWIs. This hypothesis was not supported by the
data. Instead, results demonstrated that for Black students attending HBCUs: an increased
Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable was associated
with lower racial identity attitudes, as identified in the PA, PM, and IEAW subscales; a
decreased Perceptions of Social Support variable was associated with a lower racial
identity attitude, as identified in the PM subscale; GPA was negatively affected by the
Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable. Conversely, for
Black students enrolled at PWIs: an increased Perceptions of General Campus,
Academic, and Racial climate variable was associated with higher racial identity attitude,
IA, and a decreased Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial climate
variable with racial identity attitude, IMCI; and GPA was positively influenced by higher
racial identity attitude as identified in the IEAW and IMCI subscales, and negatively
related to the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable.
Also, GPA was negatively related to lower racial identity attitude, PA. (It is notable that
the influence of the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate
variable on GPA was negative at both PWIs and HBCUs.)

Hypothesis 2

It was hypothesized that higher levels of Black racial identity would positively
impact GPA for Black students enrolled at HBCUs and negatively impact GPA for those
enrolled at PWIs. This expected outcome was not supported by the data. Non significant
findings occurred between racial identity status and GPA for Students at HBCUs. Black
students at PWIs with higher racial identity status, IMCI, had higher GPAs.
Hypothesis 3

It was hypothesized that higher levels of Black racial identity would result in increased Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial climate scores for students at HBCUs and decreased scoring for this variable for Black students at PWIs. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Black students at HBCUs who had lower levels of racial identity (PA, PM, IEAW subscales) scored positively on the Perceptions of the General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable. Black students at PWIs who had a high level of racial identity (IA) had similarly positive Perceptions of the General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate scoring. And Black students at PWIs who had a high level of racial identity (IMCI) reported lower perceptions of the General Campus, Academic, and Racial climate scoring.

Hypothesis 4

It was hypothesized that higher levels of racial identity would be associated with higher Perceptions of Social Support variable scoring for Black students at HBCUs and lower such perceptions of scoring for Black students at PWIs. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Black students at HBCUs, who had lower racial identity scoring (PM subscale), had lower Perceptions of Social Support variable scoring. Black students at PWIs demonstrated no significant relationship between racial identity and Perceived Social Support variable scoring.

In sum, although the results did not match well with the stated hypotheses, other statistical findings are notably interesting. These will be further discussed in Chapter V.
Chapter V

DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide an overview of the findings related to the study's research. I shall begin by summarizing the study's results and interpreting its findings. An overview of limitations inherent to the study will ensue, followed by a conclusion that will include suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Overall, results observed do not support the study's hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 projected that the data for Black students at HBCUs would profile a positive correlation between high levels of racial identity and GPA, and that this relationship would be indirect because of its facilitation by two variables: (a) Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate, and (b) Perceptions of Social Support. This hypothesis presumed that Black students at PWIs would exhibit less correlation or even inversion of this relationship. Hypothesis 1 was not supported by the data. Results in fact identified among Black students at HBCUs: a negative correlation between low levels of racial identity and the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable; a positive relationship between low racial identity levels and the Perceptions of Social Support variable; No relation between racial identity levels and GPA; and a negative relationship between the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable and GPA. The relation between the Perceptions of Social Support variable and GPA was non-significant.

For Black students at PWIs: there was a positive and negative correlation between high racial identity levels and the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial
climate variable; the relation between racial identity levels and the Perceptions of Social Support variable was non significant; there was a positive correlation between high racial identity levels and GPA; there was a negative relationship between the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable and GPA; and there was a negative relationship between the Perceptions of Social Support variable GPA.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a similar positive correlation between high racial identity levels and GPA for Black students at HBCUs, and a negative relationship between the two at PWIs. Indeed, the opposite occurred: at HBCUs no relation was observed between racial identity levels and GPA, while at PWIs there was a positive correlation between high racial identity levels and GPA.

Hypothesis 3 put forth that while a positive relationship would exist between high racial identity levels and the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable at HBCUs, a negative correlation between these would occur at PWIs. Study data did not bear out this hypothesis. In fact, low racial identity levels were found to negatively correlate with the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable at HBCUs, while high racial identity levels were positively correlated with the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate at PWIs.

Hypothesis 4 suggested a positive correlation between high racial identity levels and the Perceptions of Social Support variable for Black students at HBCUs, and a negative relationship between the two at PWIs. Such was not supported by the study. Indeed, the data identified a positive relationship between low racial identity levels and the Perceptions of Social Support variable at HBCUs, and no significant relationship between racial identity levels and the Perceptions of Social Support variable at PWIs.
Interpretation of Findings

PWIs

Results showed that: students with greater Internal Afrocentricity (IA) subscale levels scored more positively on the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable; students with greater Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI) subscale levels had lower Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate variable scores. It is possible that students with stronger IA perspectives may have been more adept at locating support groups on campus geared specifically towards Black Americans. On the other hand, students in the IMCI stage, by characteristically embracing multiple ethnic backgrounds, may have experienced difficulty “connecting” with ethnically focused, on-campus support resources. According to Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, and Cross (2001), individuals engulfed in the IA phase embrace an Afrocentric ideology and seek other ways of thinking outside of the typical Western/Eurocentric worldview. Thus, IA-Blacks may tend to feel liberated upon gaining an African perspective. Contrarily, individuals in the IMCI phase embrace two or more identities in addition to their blackness and therefore may be inclined to seek-out other cultural groups besides African American. Thus, the overall campus environment may have been more conducive to cultural adjustment for those who perceived themselves within the context of a single ethnic group, as opposed to those with multiple cultural identities.

The current study also found that students with higher scores for the Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate as well as with the variable, Perceptions of Social Support, had lower GPAs. A qualitative study by Yazedjian,
Toews, Sevin, and Purswell (2008) investigating the strategies used by undergraduate students to succeed in college identified two relevant patterns: (a) In one, students acknowledged making great efforts at social interaction in order to avoid feeling isolated. Prioritization of on-camps sociability for these students detracted from academic studying and resulted in lower GPAs. (b) In another, students recognizing a need to improve weak grades joined study groups, brushed up with friends, or sought help from faculty. Thus, already lower GPAs make have heightened the perceived value of social support as a resource for academic improvement.

In addition, results illustrated that students in the PA stage performed less well academically. This fits with Nasim et al.’s (2005) research study findings wherein the strongest predictor of performing well in school for students attending PWIs was having a positive self-concept. Students in the PA stage are at the very beginnings of identity formation and have not yet learned to embrace and accept themselves; in fact, they lack the desire to explore their identity, and deny certain aspects of their background in order to assimilate into Euro-American culture (Vandiver et al., 2001). Furthermore, with respect to stereotype threat, these students may have unconsciously internalized negative beliefs about their levels of academic competency and therefore exacerbated pre-existing feelings of low self-worth; such a sequence might well have sabotaged their ultimate scholastic achievement (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Finally, the current study shows that students in the IEAW and IMCI stages performed well academically. During the anti-white phase of IEAW, individuals tend to adopt an attitude that denigrates Whites; encounters with racism cause feelings of enrage and may, in turn, fuel students’ motivations to perform well academically,
graduate, and thereby insulate themselves from disparaging, racist encounters (Cross, 1991). In addition, research shows that people at higher stages of racial identity (IMCI subscale) are able to adjust more effectively to diverse environments and thus tend to perform better academically (Nasim et al., 2005).

**HBCUs**

The current study found that students in the PA, PM, and IEAW stages had high scores for the variable, Perceptions of General Campus, Academic, and Racial Climate. A possible explanation for this may be that students and faculty at HBCUs empathize with the esteem issues that confront Blacks and, valuing racial commonality, are apt to support one another through the various racial identity stages. As Davis (1994) illustrated, HBCU students generally feel well integrated into their campus environment and hold favorable views of their faculty. Consequently, regardless of their racial identity level these students seem to connect well with one another.

In contrast, current-study students in the PM stage scored lower on the Perceptions of Social Support variable. A possible explanation is that PM-engulfed Blacks tend to internalize negative stereotypes about themselves and develop a strong inner self-hatred (Vandiver et al., 2001). These students’ off-campus social networks may be less empathetic to “identity difficulty” and therefore are not as responsive, tolerant or helpful regarding related issues.

Finally, results revealed that as perceptions of general campus, academic, and racial climate increase, academic performance worsens. As mentioned above, many students are occupied with trying to fit in on campus so as to not feel socially secluded. Thus, this hinders their scholastic performance. In an attempt to raise poor grades, they
reach out to peers and faculty for assistance (Yazedjian et al., 2008). Therefore, it could be that the students who are at an academic risk are more likely to locate supportive networks on campus for additional help.

Limitations

A number of constraints are applicable when interpreting aspects of this study’s outcome. The sample size within compared populations is one. That a majority of the respondents came from HBCUs (116/187, 62%) may compromise the validity of certain direct comparisons between HBCUs and PWIs. Alternative student selection processes aimed at bringing the HBCU or PWI percentages toward 50% would have been ideal. While both path models were poor, the HBCU data did produce a slightly stronger model; an occurrence that might have resulted from the larger HBCU sample size.

A second limitation of this study is that many students at PWIs and HBCUs alike were selected from African American Studies (AAS) classes. AAS curricula are designed to include analyses of past and present accomplishments, political issues, racial conflicts, social challenges and cultural variations involving people of African descent. These courses intentionally challenge accepted Euro/Western worldviews with the goal of encouraging students to become more knowledgeable, analytical, critical, and proud of their African heritage (Stateuniversity.com, 2009a). This AAS influence may have impacted scores on the racial identity measure at PWIs where the abiding institutional culture is not Afro-centric and where Black students, who perceive themselves as minorities, may be prone to identity frustration. Contrarily, the influence on racial identity may have been positive for students at HBCUs, in which they are immersed in African American culture, and where institutional missions focus on enhancing racial
identity and providing an educational experience that is positively intertwined with Black tradition and history (SallieMae, 2009). Furthermore, according to Freeman (1999) as cited by Freeman and Thomas (2002), some of the primary reasons students choose HBCUs include a desire to explore their African roots genealogically and geographically, a need to better comprehend the sociopolitical influences of Americanization, and a yearning to connect philosophically and emotionally with cohorts of the African Diaspora.

A third limitation is that some of the respondents at PWIs were members of the institution’s Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). The EOP, a state funded program, enrolls eligible students from economically and academically disadvantaged backgrounds, provides financial assistance, tutoring, and counseling, and is a motivating resource for educational success (NJ Commission on Higher Education, 2009).

According to Pan, Guo, Alikonis, and Bai (2008), students involved in such programs report higher levels of motivation, feel better acclimated to college life, and report greater satisfaction with their educational environment; also, these students are more apt to remain in school and achieve higher levels of academic performance. A comprehensive support program like EOP may have had an advantageous scoring influence on the GCARC and MSPSS measure of PWI and HBCU respondents compared with those who were non-EOP students.

A fourth limitation involves respondents at Temple University; a PWI situated within an urban community that is 50% Black and only 25% White (Stateuniversity.com, 2009h). Although Temple itself is a majority-White university, its location within an ethnically diverse community that approximates the racial makeup of HBCUs may have
altered the racial environment perceptions and variable scores of its PWI respondents, rendering them similar to the perceptions and scores expected of HBCU participants.

A fifth limitation relates to the questionnaire's self-administration design. The opportunity existed for participants to provide social desirable or self-desirable responses (Edwards, 1957, as cited by Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991; Nunnally, 1978 as cited by Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Students wanting to view themselves more positively may have provided favorable answers rather than candid responses. Also, attentiveness to the survey may have been compromised. Students who completed the questions at the end of a class, for example, may have responded hastily and without due reflection because of needs or desires to be elsewhere.

Finally, a sixth limitation is that the climate and academic subscales of the GCARS had poor reliability estimates. This indicates that the scale was not consistent when assessing the constructs that it was intended to measure. Such poor reliability results in the likelihood of an error occurring and a chance of not obtaining significant effects due to reduced power (Parker, 1993). The population used to validate the GCARS consisted of only 13% African Americans (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003) – a percentage possibly too low for reliable accurate sampling estimates; this could account for why the current study (whose population sample is 100% Black/African Americans) produced different psychometric results.

**Future Research**

A consideration of directions for future research is predicated upon continued usage of path analysis methodology. Path analysis permits both the gathering of information about relations between dependent and independent variables and the
exploration of direct and indirect relationships between these variables. Such capability fits well with the current research’s purposes, hypotheses, and questions.

To enhance the validity of certain comparisons between HBCUs and PWIs, future sample sizes should be equal at both institutions and larger in order to increase the statistical power.

The neighborhood setting of a college or university may impact on respondent answers to certain questions. In other words, neighborhood characteristics may be projected upon or assigned to the university. While this tendency may not necessarily invalidate responses, it may challenge certain comparisons between PWIs and HBCUs. One example in the current study, as mentioned, is Temple University and its geographic location within an ethnically diverse external community. A given PWI, as an academic community, may be quite isolated from or uninvolved with such diversity. Its Black students however may be very attentive to or engaged in that external environment and their consequent perceptions may be inappropriately attributed to the overall PWI experience. Analogous considerations may be applicable to PWIs, as well as HBCUs, in urban vs. suburban vs. rural settings. Future design might do well to include such categorizations.

Moreover, the impact of selecting students from AAS classes, EOPs, and other potentially bias altering situations should be weighed. This might be readily accomplished by selecting equal numbers of respondents who are outside of such parameters and determining whether the parameter influence is indeed influential.

In order to achieve a better fitting path in future research studies, additional or substitute measures (e.g., the GCARS with a more reliable scale) should be considered.
Such measures might explore: (a) social parameters such as the types and levels of students’ pleasure-related activities, extracurricular athletic endeavors, college living arrangements (on vs. off-campus housing, existence of roommates, roommates’ racial backgrounds, personal marital and employment situations, family financial status, family college education background), (b) study habits such as the quantity and quality of non-classroom study preparation, personal grade performance goals, involvement with study partners, and availability and use of tutoring and mentoring resources, and (c) the impact of mentors who provide academic and personal support to students during their progress throughout college.

Regarding social exploratory measures, Astin’s (1999) student involvement theory suggests that a successful student is one who is highly connected to the campus environment throughout several domains (e.g., devotion to studying, participating in student organizations, frequently remaining on campus, and having positive relations with faculty and peers). With respect to measures that would examine personal study patterns, Krohn and O’Connor’s (2005) demonstrated the influence of study habits on academic performance. The authors revealed, in one instance, that students put less effort into studying by the time of mid-term examinations, and suggested that this could be a result of students having reached a level of personal satisfaction that required less exertion; prior to reaching that point students may have studied excessively until becoming aware that less effort was needed to achieve satisfactory grades.

Including such social-pattern and study-habit assessment variables in future designs would better illuminate the direct and indirect relationships between students’ racial identity attitudes, their impressions of campus academic and racial climate, and
their perceptions of social support. A path model enhanced in this way would add depth and nuance to the study’s findings and interpretations.

A final recommendation is to explore and compare retention rates at HBUCs and PWIs. Since the purpose of this current study is to examine factors that contribute to poor academic performance, a logical follow-up would be a focused exploration of colleges/universities that have high drop-out rates. The ultimate goals of cumulative studies would include the identification of avoidable or reversible situations that culminate in adverse educational outcomes, the capture of at-risk students, and the formulation of implementable remedies to benefit students and academic institutions alike.

**Conclusion and Clinical Implications**

It is evident that, at HBCUs and PWIs alike, direct and indirect relationships exist between students’ racial identity attitudes, their discernment of campus racial and academic climates, their perceptions of social support, and their academic performance. Although some of the identified interrelations were unanticipated, overall findings support and illuminate concepts illustrating an important interweaving of college success for Black students with personal and environmental racial dynamics. While this outcome was prevalent at both HBCUs and PWIs in ways that may be compared and contrasted speculatively, the study supports an ongoing need for the presence on campus of socially conscious educators, psychologists, counselors, and mentors to strengthen the success of Black students. Such persons could, for example, conduct skilled, diversity-focused workshops with goals of strengthening campus social support and improving academic performance. The workshops might be designed specifically to: (a) facilitate the positive
growth of racial self-awareness and broaden cultural sensitivity on campus; (b) improve student perceptions of institutional concern, and (c) assist students who experience culture shock (particularly at PWIs) with acclimation to college life.

By adding to the existing literature regarding Black college students and scholastic achievement, this and sequent studies should support a continued development of resources that ameliorate the college experience and enhance the academic success of Black students.
References


Retrieved February 17, 2008, from
http://www.census.gov/compendia/statatab/education/


Appendix A
Demographic Survey
Please fill out the following information:

a) Male____  Female____

b) Age____

c) What is your Race/Ethnicity? ______

d) Are you currently enrolled as an undergraduate student (yes or no)? _____

e) What is your semester in school? _____

f) Please indicate the name and type of the current institution you attend:
   a. Name of Institution _________________________
   b. Type of Institution:
      i. Predominantly White Institution: YES NO
      ii. Historically Black College/University: YES NO

g) What are your intentions/plans for degree?
   a. No Plan____
   b. A.A./A.S____
   c. B.A./B.S.____
   d. M.A./M.S.____
   e. Ph.D.:____
   f. M.D.____
   g. Other (please specify)_____________________

h) What is your current cumulative grade point average? ______

i) Please describe the racial demography of your high school:
   i. Predominately White____ ii. Predominately Black____

   % White students:____ % Black Students:____

j) What generation are you in the U.S.?
   i. First Generation____ ii. Second Generation____ iii. Other____

k) What generation are you in terms of college attendance?
   i. First Generation____ ii. Second Generation____ iii. Other____
Appendix B

Cross Social Attitude Scale
Cross Social Attitude Scale

Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answer can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree/disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. As an African-American, life is good for me.
2. I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of my racial group.
3. Too many Blacks "glamorize" the drug trade and fail to see opportunities that do not involve crime.
4. I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black.
5. As a multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).
6. I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people.
7. I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective.
8. When I walk into a room, I always take note of the racial make-up of the people around me.
9. I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.
10. I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about being Black.
11. My relationship with God plays an important role in my life.
12. Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.
13. I believe that only those Black people who accept an Afrocentric perspective can truly solve the race problem in America.
14. I hate the White community and all that it represents.

15. When I have a chance to make a new friend, issues of race and ethnicity seldom play a role in who that person might be.

16. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (e.g., Asians, Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Whites, etc.)

17. When I look in the mirror at my Black image, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see.

18. If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be "American," and not African-American.

19. When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.

20. Many African-Americans are too lazy to see opportunities that are right in front of them.

21. As far as I am concerned, affirmative action will be needed for a long time.

22. Black people cannot truly be free until our daily lives are guided by Afrocentric values and principles.

23. White people should be destroyed.

24. I embrace my own Black identity, but I also respect and celebrate the cultural identities of other groups (e.g., Native Americans, Whites, Latinos, Jews, Asian Americans, gays & lesbians, etc.).

25. Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

26. If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

27. My feelings and thoughts about God are very important to me.

28. African-Americans are too quick to turn to crime to solve their problems.

29. When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong racial-cultural themes.

30. I hate White people.

31. I respect the ideas that other Black people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve problems is to think Afrocentrically.

32. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues.

33. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).

34. I have developed an identity that stresses my experiences as an American more than my experiences as a member of a racial group.

35. During a typical week in my life, I think about racial and cultural issues many, many times.

36. Blacks place too much importance on racial protest and not enough on hard work and education.

37. Black people will never be free until we embrace an Afrocentric perspective.

38. My negative feelings toward White people are very intense.

39. I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

40. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Native-Americans, Asian-Americans, etc.).
Appendix C

General Campus, Academic, and Racial Subscale
General Campus, Academic, and Racial Subscale
Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

1 = Strongly Agreement  2  3  4  5  6  7 = Strongly Disagreement

General Campus Climate
1. In general, I fit in with other students here  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
2. If I had to do it all over again, I would still attend the university.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
3. I have found the atmosphere at this university to be very friendly.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
4. I feel left out of things here at the university.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Instructor
5. I feel my instructors show little interest in my opinion.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
6. In general, my instructors help me feel confident of my abilities.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
7. The advisors here are sensitive to student needs.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
8. My work is evaluated fairly.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
9. I feel comfortable approaching my instructors for advice and assistance.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
10. I feel free to participate in class by asking questions or making comments.
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Perceptions of Seriousness
11. My instructors view me as a serious student.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
12. Other students view me as a serious student.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
13. I am progressing as well as the other students in my major.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agreement</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7=Strongly Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel somewhat out of place in the classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am called on in class as often as other students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel less confident as a student now than I did in high school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Perceptions of Respect**

| 17. Other students make fun of me sometimes. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 18. I have had instructors encourage me to major in their field. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 19. When I try to speak up in class, I am sometimes interrupted or ignored. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 20. I have been treated unfairly on this campus. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

**Racial Experiences**

| 21. I have experienced racial insensitivity from other students. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 22. I have experienced racial insensitivity from faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 23. The interracial climate on this campus is tense. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 24. In my opinion, this campus is more racist than most. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 25. Students of other races or ethnic groups seem uncomfortable around me. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

**University Perceptions**

| 26. The university makes a genuine effort to recruit racial and ethnic minority students. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 27. The university fosters respect for cultural differences. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 28. The university has made a special effort to help racial and ethnic minority students feel like they “belong” on campus. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
Appendix D

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.
Circle the “1” if you Very Strongly Disagree
Circle the “2” if you Strongly Disagree
Circle the “3” if you Mildly Disagree
Circle the “4” if you are Neutral
Circle the “5” if you Mildly Agree
Circle the “6” if you Strongly Agree
Circle the “7” if you Very Strongly Agree

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO
3. My family really tries to help me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO
6. My friends really try to help me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri
8. I can talk about my problems with my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO
11. My family is willing to help me make decision. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri

The items tended to divide into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or significant other (SO).