

What Matters for Black Students?  
A Question of Sense of Belonging, Campus Climate, Perceived Discrimination, Gender,  
and Institutional Satisfaction

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

Shari N. Dade

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sherri L. Turner, Ph.D., Advisor

July 2015



## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this dissertation was made possible by the many people who have wandered along this journey with me. These encounters are the product of a significant amount of serendipity leading to fortuitous meetings with people who have influenced my academic career. My family has always encouraged me to walk this journey with pride and honor, even when it would have been easier to turn back. My parents, Loretta and Michael, gave me fearless determination of which I am forever indebted. Although my father did not get to finish this journey with me here on Earth, I know he never stopped cheering me on.

I would like acknowledge my committee members, Pearl Barner, Ernest Davenport, and Darwin Hendel. Your support throughout this process will forever be remembered and valued. Thank you for your openness to provide guidance, answer questions, and calm anxieties. I would like to give special appreciation to my advisor and mentor Sherri Turner, who has been instrumental in my endeavors throughout graduate school. You have worked without fatigue to ensure this process was filled with learning, understanding, and gratitude for the field of healing. Also, Tabitha Grier-Reed, you have provided me with great encouragement and inspiration throughout these years. I want to give a special thank you for allowing me to work with AFAM and trusting me with such an amazing group of Black students.

Lastly, all of my friends, both near and far, who have supported me with prayers, laughs, and spaces to express my experiences; you are forever valued and loved. Thank you all. Because of you the journey has been completed!

## Dedication

*For Michael. My daddy. My angel.*

When great trees fall,  
rocks on distant hills shudder,  
lions hunker down in tall grasses,  
and even elephants lumber after safety.

When great trees fall in forests,  
small things recoil into silence,  
their senses eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,  
the air around us becomes  
light, rare, sterile.  
We breathe, briefly.  
Our eyes, briefly,  
see with a hurtful clarity.  
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,  
examines, gnaws on kind words unsaid,  
promised walks never taken.

Great souls die and our reality,  
bound to them, takes leave of us.  
Our souls, dependent upon their nurture,  
now shrink, wizened.  
Our minds, formed and informed by their radiance,  
fall away.  
We are not so much maddened  
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance  
of dark, cold caves.

And when great souls die,  
after a period peace blooms,  
slowly and always irregularly.  
Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration.  
Our senses, restored, never to be the same,  
whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.  
We can be.  
Be and be better.  
For they existed."

- Maya Angelou

## Abstract

In an effort to understand what matters for Black students attending predominately White educational institutions, the purpose of this study was to predict relationships among psychosocial factors, person factors, and environmental factors, and institutional satisfaction within this population. I hypothesized that Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate for diversity and diverse perceptions, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender would be predictive of their institutional satisfaction. Additionally, I hypothesized there would be significant differences in Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction as a function of gender.

Participants in this study were comprised of 228 Black undergraduate students who were representative of students at various stages of their undergraduate careers ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> semester (incoming) first year to 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (graduating) senior, from a Midwestern public research university. Of the participants, 43.8% ( $n = 74$ ) were male, and 56.2% ( $n = 95$ ) were female, with ages ranging from 18-54, and with a mean age of 21.22.

Data consisted of a secondary analysis of an archival dataset. Procedures used to collect the data that were analyzed are described in this section. Data regarding social belonging, perceptions of campus climate, students' witnessed discrimination, students' experience of discrimination, and students' institutional satisfaction were measured by scales from the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Core Survey created by the

Higher Education Research Institute (HERI; <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/dleoverview.php>) at the University of California, Los Angeles (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013).

Results of a standard multiple regression suggested that 55% of the variance in institutional satisfaction was predicted by sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender; with campus climate shown to have the strongest relationship to institutional satisfaction. Results of a one-way multivariate analysis of variance revealed no significant differences in sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction by gender. In discussing and describing needed interventions, critical race theory was utilized to highlight the role race and racism plays in the experiences and perceptions of Black college students within the educational system. Limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice are also outlined.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Significance of the Problem.....	7
Variables Defined and Delimitations of the Study .....	11
Summary of Chapter One .....	13
<b>CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Black Students at Predominantly White Institutions .....	15
Using Critical Race Theory to Understand Race and Racism .....	20
Critical Race Theory: A Brief Overview .....	22
Critical Race Theory for Education .....	24
Critical Race Theory in Psychological Research and Mental Health .....	28
Influences on Black College Students’ Experiences at PWIs.....	31
Sense of Belonging .....	31
Perceptions of Campus Climate.....	36
Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination.....	42
Institutional Satisfaction .....	45
Gender as a Factor .....	50
Conclusion .....	56
Purpose of the Study .....	56
Hypotheses .....	57
<b>CHAPTER THREE: Method</b> .....	<b>59</b>
Participants.....	59
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics.....	61
Procedures.....	63

Measures .....	64
Data Analysis .....	67
Summary of Chapter Three.....	69
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: Results.....</b>	<b>70</b>
Descriptive Statistics.....	70
Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Alpha Reliabilities ..	71
Tests that Data Met Assumptions of Normality .....	72
Correlations of Dependent Variables and Independent Variables .....	74
Table 3: Correlations of Dependent Variables and Independent Variables.....	75
Standard Multiple Regression.....	76
Table 4: Summary of Regression Analyses .....	77
Multiple Analysis of Variance .....	78
Table 5: Significant Multivariate Effects.....	79
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Summary of Major Findings .....	81
Descriptive Statistics.....	81
Results from Inferential Statistics.....	82
Clinical Implications and Recommendations .....	85
Suggestions for Future Research .....	89
Limitations of the Study.....	90
Summary .....	92
Conclusion .....	93
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>112</b>
APPENDIX A: Electronic Informed Consent Form.....	113
APPENDIX B: List of Variables and Constructs .....	116

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics .....	61
Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Alpha Reliabilities ..	71
Table 3: Correlations of Dependent Variables and Independent Variables.....	75
Table 4: Summary of Regression Analyses .....	77
Table 5: Significant Multivariate Effects.....	79

## **Chapter One** **INTRODUCTION**

In this dissertation I will discuss the varied factors that impact Black students enrolled at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Specifically, I will explore relationships among these psychosocial factors: sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed and experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction. In Chapter One, I will highlight the importance of taking a look, past the differences in academic performance, into the lived experiences of Black students at PWIs. In Chapter Two, I will provide an overview and a critique of relevant literature, and highlight the results of those studies that bear directly on this current research. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the format and methodology of this study. In Chapter Four, I will provide a review of the study results. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the findings of the study and the limitations of this study, and will provide suggestions for practitioners, as well as, suggestions for future research.

The attempts to discuss, explain, define, and describe the state of Black students in higher learning institutions has grown exponentially; increasing with every instance of piqued focus on diversity efforts at universities. The task of making sure that all students are treated equitably in educational contexts can be often seen as insurmountable due to the complex nature of what equity entails, and the unclear pathways to ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for Black students. However this topic's importance can also seem looming for researchers and institutions due to the increase of Black students enrolling in higher learning institutions. The past decades have witnessed the beginning and the aftermath of dramatic increases in the number of Black students enrolling in

predominately White colleges and universities (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). The increased access to enrolling in college and the subsequent increased enrollment in college has often been touted as the remedy to the less than satisfactory gains in educational outcomes among Black students, such as proportionally fewer Black students than White students receiving college degrees (e.g., Cokley, 2003). However, simply calling attention to increased enrollment heightens the danger of not attending to the challenges that Black students have in persisting to graduation.

Although Black students have been enrolling in post-secondary institutions at a steady rate since the 1970s, they are characteristically shown to have very different experiences than their White and Asian counterparts. In this decade, the percentages of those Black students successfully completing degrees within their institutions have decreased (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Thus, more attention needs to be given to those academic and psychosocial factors that could support Black students in college if Black students succeed at post-secondary institutions.

According to a recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), only 39.5% of Black students who started at four-year colleges in 2004 graduated within six years compared to 61.5% of Whites who started at the same time. Available data from one PWI indicated that the 4-year graduation rate for even the highest ability students was approximately 25% higher for Whites than for Blacks (Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008). This gap in attainment between Black and White college students at PWIs has yet to be effectively addressed by counseling psychology researchers. Research in this area should be guided by questions such as: “What factors

correspond to Black students' in PWIs persistence and graduation?”, “Are these factors missing from their environments?”, and “What can be done to ensure these factors are a part of the dialogues of administrators, faculty, and practitioners involved in the development and progression of Black students in academia?”.

This research suggests there is still ample work to be done around preparing Black students for the college experience and supporting them once they are enrolled. These challenges leave the administrators, faculty, and staff of PWIs searching to find factors that can help Black students remain steady in their progress towards degree completion. It will be beneficial to examine how Black students navigate towards survival and thriving in a setting that may be uncharted territory for themselves or their families (Grier, Ehlert, & Dade, 2011). The importance of examining factors that allow Black students to have favorable outcomes and experiences at PWIs are imperative. Moreover, providing a research basis for the discussions concerning why the experiences of Black students are so unique in the academic environment will aid in creating programs and interventions for these students that can assist them in reaching their educational goals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In their first 18 years of life, individuals spend about 15,000 hours in schools (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991), which does not take into account the amount of education that individuals might experience in post-secondary educational institutions. From this, one can presume that the process of education can be marked as one of the most essential occurrences of the human experience. Because of the importance of

education to the quality of individuals' lives, in this dissertation, I analyzed data comprised of students' responses to survey items that provided insight into their sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed and personal experiences of discrimination, and satisfaction with their choice of colleges. I did this in order to contribute to the literature in the areas of Black students' experiences in PWIs and to provide a basis for promoting a greater understanding of what is needed for Black students to thrive on campuses".

Research shows that students of color in general, and African American students in particular, experience higher levels of isolation and exclusion during their graduate training programs at PWIs (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2008). However, feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness to an institution has been theoretically and empirically linked to persistence and institutional satisfaction in higher education (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Feeling as though there is a supportive campus climate with peer groups and university networks can have a great effect on students' performance (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Conversely, experiences of discrimination can have an adverse effect on students' desire to continue to stay at an institution. Walton and Cohen suggest that people are sensitive to the quality of their bonds and that in academic settings, members of groups that are often socially stigmatized or discriminated against are more uncertain of the quality of their connectedness and thus more sensitive to issues of belonging. Considering that possessing a sense of belonging and being a part of a supportive campus environment is important to academic achievement, Black students could suffer a disadvantage in

settings where they see members of their group numerically under-represented.

Investigation of students' sense of belonging and how it is related to their perceptions of campus climate represents yet another way to explore the impact of connectedness on their institutional satisfaction.

Psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950) refers to the evolution of one's identity in relation to social, interpersonal, and environmental interactions (Pope, 2000) and serves as a foundation on which individuals build healthy interpersonal relationships, approach sovereignty, and establish their individuality (Foubert & Grainger, 2006).

Understanding the challenges to Black students' psychosocial factors, such as their sense of belonging, can give an indication into what is needed to overcome obstacles that may hamper development. This is especially important at PWIs because research has shown that Black students at these institutions have poorer psychosocial adjustment than their Black counterparts at historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Nettles, 1988). Also examining these factors to explore how they are related to satisfaction in institutional choice can give psychologists more insight into how to better assist Black students in advancing toward their educational goals.

Additionally, many Black students are tasked with making significant personal, family, and social adjustments in order to be successful in PWIs, especially if the campus is geographically distant from their homes. This task can also increase added adjustment stress onto Black students at PWIs. In their study to highlight the experiences of Black students on a large, PWI campus, D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) surveyed 146 undergraduate students at a PWI and revealed aspects of Black students' personal lives

that influenced their differing experiences on campus when comparing them with White students. Black students' personal experiences were shown to exert more influence on their campus experiences than did their pre-college academic backgrounds. This finding suggests that Black students at PWIs have shared negative experiences that can affect the way they adjust, perform, and advance; and that these shared experiences do not stem back to their academic preparation and readiness. More specifically, the results of this study could be interpreted to mean that regardless of the level of academic achievement one possesses; Black students will have different experiences than their White counterparts. These different experiences can impinge upon the attainment of success at PWIs and can relate closely to the way Black students rate or discuss their environments on PWI campuses. Studies such as this suggest there is still ample work to be done to decrease the emphasis placed on Black students' pre-collegiate experiences and increase discussion around what is needed to support Black students once they are enrolled in PWI colleges and universities.

As briefly discussed, a great deal of past and current research has focused in on differing racial groups and the ways in which these differences affect educational matriculation on a larger, more generalized scale. However, studies based solely on Black students are few and many of the ones that do exist use a comparison model that focuses on different subgroups of Black students. For example, much of the research done on the academic achievement of African American college students compares students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with students from PWIs (Cokley, 2000). In this study, I used a different mode than has most often been used by examining

variables only within Black students at PWIs. In this way, I could focus on how their perceived experiences and their satisfaction with the institution were related. In this way, I have provided a better understanding of how Black students' at PWIs motivational processes mutually influence each other. This study could provide a foundation that could be built upon by additional investigations of relationships among motivational processes and persistent and differential educational outcomes experienced by Black students (Allen, 1988; Ford, 1996).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that I intend to address in order to explore the lived experiences, psychosocial factors, and environmental factors of Black students and the relations of these factors to their institutional satisfaction include the following:

1. Do Black students' at a predominately White institution sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate for diversity and diverse perceptions, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender predict their institutional satisfaction?
2. Are there significant differences by gender in sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction for Black students enrolled at a predominately White institution?

### **Significance of the Problem**

Many people would agree that college years are often considered a period of growth and development for young adults. Parents, students, and communities depend on

institutions to educate their children to aid with this cognitive and psychosocial development. Institutions have a responsibility to provide an atmosphere where the healthy adjustment and development of its student body can occur, regardless of students' races or ethnicities. However, extant literature indicates that for Black students, the college experience seems especially challenging (Fries-Britt & Tuner, 2001; Solorzano, Allen, and Carroll, 2002). Lett and Wright (2003) state, "when students are accepted into an institution of higher education, the responsibility lies with the university to envelope, develop and graduate students, who are psychologically and academically sound, and in so doing, provide an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance". Institutions show a commitment to the advancement of Black students when interventions that are intentionally designed to focus on both the cognitive and psychosocial needs of Black students are implemented within the university structure and mission.

Researchers have suggested that students' adjustment to the college environments plays a vital role in persistence, college satisfaction and lower levels of stress during college (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Prellow & Guarnaccia, 1997; Solorzano, 2000; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008). This adjustment period can also play an essential role in the outcomes and accomplishments that Black students experience at PWIs. These findings have been echoed by Lang (2001, 2002) who suggests that liaisons between the student and institutions are especially crucial for the success and persistence of Black students at PWIs, but institutions continue to ignore the social and psychological needs of Black students, relying instead on the general perception that Black student attrition is due to academic inadequacy and financial problems. Counselors and

educators are in an ideal position to assist in preparing Black students and their families for the unique sociocultural challenges they face in college and beyond.

For many years, studies of Black students and their majority counterparts have tended to disregard the importance of the role that psychosocial factors play in differential experiences among races in academic settings. Additionally, institutional barriers such as racism, discrimination, or glass ceilings may encumber positive experiences for Black students at PWIs. As a result, there is an incomplete and non-representative view of Black students in higher education that suggests that compared to White majority students, African American students do not have similar abilities or motivations to succeed. This continues to foster a lesser understanding of the aspects that encompass the experiences of Black students at PWIs. Discussing how individual and institutional characteristics either assist or undermine the well-being and satisfaction of the Black student is pivotal in uncovering factors that foster successful adjustment and progress in academia. If educators can understand the relationship between such factors and successful adjustment, they may be better equipped to address the issue of equity in education and better able to explain why some minority students attain a sense of membership and accomplishment within predominantly White academic communities while others do not (Kraft, 1991).

Research investigating the predictors of satisfaction among Black college students at PWIs can help us understand the multifaceted experiences of often negatively stereotyped students in mainstream settings (Walton & Carr, 2011). Within the breadth of literature, it can be concluded that Black students enrolled at PWIs live a different

experience than their non-Black peers during their college years. Although there has been considerable discussion concerning where those differences originate, there is general agreement among theorists and researchers that these differences in experience can have a lasting impact on Black students. This glimpse into Black students' perceptions of social belonging and their more negative daily experiences on campus suggests that the problems they encounter are multifaceted. Examining the environmental dynamics of the institution and the extent to which Black students have integrated themselves into the institutional community can be beneficial to a better understanding of the experience of the Black student enrolled in PWIs. This more informed understanding of the Black student experience could become a catalyst in the creation and development of successful interventions and programs. Thus, college counselors and institutions alike can benefit from the findings of this study.

Furthermore, this discussion is also essential to counselors and educators assisting in the transition and integration of Black students to college at PWIs. Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) highlight the discouraging observation that although counselors have become leaders in promoting social justice in education, disseminating research on effective multicultural counseling processes, and identifying links between racial/ethnic identity development and mental wellbeing, little attention has been paid in counseling literature to understanding the Black college student experience at PWIs. This dissertation is written in order to assist the counseling psychology community with developing further understanding about how Black students' satisfaction with their post-secondary institution as well as their sense of belonging at college is associated with their

perceptions of discrimination and campus climate. If researchers and counselors can determine how and which factors are associated with differential outcomes for Black students, the information could be utilized to enhance the development of interventions seeking to lessen institutional deficiencies.

### **Variables Defined and Delimitations of the Study**

For the purposes of this study, *Black* is a term used in reference to a self-identified primary ethnic background in any of the black racial groups of Africa origin, excluding persons of Hispanic origin. The term has been used to categorize a number of diverse populations (e.g. African American, African, and West Indian, and so on) into one common group. Because the students in this study identify as African American, African (e.g. Somalian, Ethiopian, Nigerian, Kenyan, Cameroonian, Ghanaian, Ugandan, and so forth), Trinidadian, Black, Creole, etc., I used the term ‘Black’ when referencing them as a group. However, African American, Black, and Black American were used interchangeably when citing other authors’ if that was their usage of the term.

*Sense of Belonging* is a term used in reference to perceived feelings of being a part of a community. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) proposed that perceived cohesion, or “the extent to which group members feel ‘stuck to,’ or part of particular social groups” (p.482), consists of the individuals’ sense of belonging to a group as well as their sense of morale regarding group membership (Hausman, Schofield, & Woods, 2007).

*Campus Climate* is used to reference students’ level of satisfaction with the campus climate for diversity and diverse perspectives.

*Discrimination* consists of dominant group members' actions, which are systematic and result in differential and negative effects on subordinate racial/ethnic groups and conceptualized within the stress and coping framework (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Harrell, 2000; Scott, 2004; Sellers, Morgan, & Brown, 2001). Conceptualizing racial discrimination within a stress and coping framework has a number of advantages including linking it to a well-established literature and providing possible mechanisms through which racial discrimination can be linked to mental health outcomes (Hoggard, Byrd, & Sellers, 2012). For the purposes of this study discrimination was separated into two categories, Witnessed Discrimination and Personal Experienced Discrimination, given that these two types of discrimination can affect minority college students in different ways (Woodford, Han, Craig, Lim, & Matney, 2014).

*Predominantly White institutions* (PWIs) are institutions of higher education where the dominant race of students, faculty, and staff is White (Willie, 2003). It is imperative to study students' level of satisfaction when attending PWIs because literature suggests Black students have a very different experience at this type of institution. It is a greater likelihood that the campus culture, environment, and psychosocial factors will be different from the environment of communities in which they are from, thus they have a difficult time integrating into campus since it is different from their home setting (Harper, 2009). Examining the predictors of students' experiences of institutional climate at PWIs is the aim of this study.

## **Summary of Chapter One**

In Chapter One, I discussed the varied factors that impact Black students enrolled at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). I developed the rationale for my research questions, including stating the problem and the significance of the problem. I also stated the research questions guiding this study. Finally, I operationally defined the variables used in this research, and stated the delimitations of the study. In Chapter Two, I will provide an overview and a critique of relevant literature, and highlight the results of those studies that bear directly on this current research.

## **Chapter Two** LITERATURE REVIEW

Possessing some form of formal college education holds many positive advantages in today's society, yet many Black students who venture into education at PWIs do not accomplish this for a variety of reasons. Although PWIs enroll a much larger percentage of African American students than they have in the past, these students receive a disproportionately low percentage of the degrees awarded (Rodgers & Summers, 2008). Black students also experience the process of becoming college-educated very differently than their majority counterparts. It has been shown throughout the research literature that the experiences and the perceptions held by Black students play an important role in their progression and satisfaction, which is especially true for Black students at PWIs.

In order to examine the factors that promote positive experiences for Black students enrolled in PWIs, the purpose of this Chapter is to review research and theory related to belongingness, experiences of discrimination, campus climate, and gender. Exploration of the interplay of these factors will also include the ways in which they promote the satisfaction of Black students with their institutions. In the following sections, I will review and critique theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature regarding those college experiences that are unique to Black students on the campus of PWIs, focusing on the variables that will be examined in this study. This will be done by utilizing current student personnel, counseling, and psychology literature that centers on describing and testing the unique experiences of Black college students.

## **Black Students at Predominantly White Institutions**

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which declared equal access to education for all Americans, was celebrated in 2014. Since then, there have been significant gains for Blacks and their educational accomplishments. For example, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Black students enrolled at PWIs over the last 60 years. However, this triumph of higher enrollment has far too often been counterbalanced with the dropping out of Black students prior to degree attainment. Despite the fact that Black students are more likely than ever to earn high school diplomas and to attend college, they continue to be far less likely than White students to earn college degrees (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Student personnel professionals at PWIs often make intensive efforts to recruit minority students, but find that subsequent retention is a significant problem. Studies of Black students suggest that many have negative experiences in White institutions that are often associated with or related to lower achievement and higher attrition than White students (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007; Nettles, 1988;).

At the turn of the century only 40% of eligible Black students went to college, with only 46% of the 40% graduating within 6 years (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). Additionally, research indicates that Black students experience feelings of rejection, non-acceptance, and discrimination at their institutions (e.g., Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). (While this study does focus on social/emotional factors for Black students at PWIs, it does not focus on academic outcomes. It is still important to note these stark differences

because they gives rise to the discussion of what is experienced by these students during their matriculation in these institutions.)

While exploring the literature, it was noted by previous studies that the transition to college has been difficult for underrepresented groups. This is especially the case for racially marginalized groups; particularly when they attend a PWI (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Littleton, 2003; Nelson-Laird, 2007; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

For instance, Greer and Chwalisz (2007) performed a study of 203 African American undergraduate students (101 from a medium-sized predominately White university in the Midwest and 102 from an HBCU located on the central East coast), and found that campus climate and race relations are important influences in the college life of Black students, especially those enrolled at PWIs. The purpose of the study was to explore the stress levels and coping styles of Black students through utilization of the stress transaction framework. The authors utilized the Minority Status Stress Scale (MSS; Prillerman et al., 1989; Smedley et al., 1993) to investigate experiences of stressors associated with minority status (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) was utilized to explore appraisals of stressful experiences (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). A MANOVA was used to test the effect of school on MSS and PSS subscales.

Results from analyses on these scales indicated that Black students attending PWIs experienced greater stress than those attending HBCUs due to being discriminated against as well as other toxic factors related to their minority-status. Findings showed that the type of school attended did not influenced *overall perceived stress experience*;

however the type of school attended was the strongest predictor of *minority status stress*, whereas other factors (e.g., age, sex, marital, parental status, employment, educational aspirations) were insignificant in predicting minority stress (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). These findings reinforce the importance of a diverse college campus environment, where students do not feel they are estranged from the racial and cultural composition of the institutional community. It is important to note that the study was limited by the subscales on the MSS measure being highly correlated and although the authors could have created a total sum score for the measure, they elected not to because that limited their ability to measure the effects of each subscale. Regardless, these findings present critical information regarding the well-being of Black students on PWI campuses. This finding was reiterated by a longitudinal study conducted from 1994 to 2006 which found that as the composition of PWIs became increasingly more diverse, the percentage of students who occasionally or frequently witnessed racially insensitive behavior declined (Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010).

Second, categorizations, such as minority and underrepresented, can fail to recognize the important cultural differences that exist among the various racial and ethnic groups that live in the United States. Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) concluded from their findings, regarding the purpose of exploring whether Black students have equal expectations to succeed in post-secondary education, that majority and minority status plays a major role on the transition into college. Their study included 1,079 students from both HBCUs ( $n = 296$  Black students) and PWIs ( $n = 723$  White students;  $n = 60$  Black students) who were given a survey that was developed specifically to learn how

new students make the transition into and remain in college. Their findings illustrated that different students have different paths to success in college and therefore need different services. The authors utilized discriminant analysis to describe which variables best determined second-year enrollment in college (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004, p. 100).

Findings from this study suggest that Black students enrolled in PWIs have to work harder than either White students at PWIs or Black students at HBCUs in order to remain enrolled. Brower & Ketterhagen (2004) state, “Black students at PWIs appear not to be handling their college life task domains in stride; they instead seemed to have had to work harder to negotiate between academic demands and social demands, and have had to work harder to determine how much time they spend alone or with others (p. 109). However, this study warrants several critiques, such as the use of a convenience sample with uneven sample sizes. Additionally, the measure of success (enrollment) is a narrow measure and uni-dimensional of student success, which is by nature a complex phenomenon. It raises the question; could success look different for Black students enrolled at PWIs and HBCUs and White students enrolled at PWIs?

In lieu of these limitations, the authors asserted limited research examining these specific factors; therefore, the authors urged institutions, specifically PWIs, to not just open their doors to the enrollment of diverse students and expect all students’ paths to well-being and success to be the same, but also to strategically interweave diversity into all aspects of student life – into the way the campus operates and serves its students. These authors suggest that institutions focus on “thoughtful and planful ways to create an

integrated, multicultural educational environment” for all students (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004, p.114). This highlights that the “one size fits all” perspective is not an effective approach for Black student adjustment and satisfaction.

Finally, sense of belonging literature shows that Black students often feel isolated, unseen, alienated, and unwelcomed at PWIs, and do not feel like they are a part of the college community. Many earlier studies regarding Black students have suggested that their experiences are strongly related to the primary racial composition of universities (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1981; Smith, 1981). One illustration of this is found in a study conducted by Fries-Britt and Turner (2002), which examined Black students’ challenges and supports to academic success. Of the 34 students sampled, 15 were enrolled in a traditionally White institution (TWI) and 19 were enrolled in a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The authors utilized the interview and focus group methods to collect data concerning the students’ personal experiences during their college careers. From the students’ responses, two themes emerged regarding experiences of Black students at both types of universities. These themes included “establishing support and campus involvement”, and “focusing on how Black students’ energy is either cultivated or diverted by their interactions on campus” (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002, p. 319). The authors found that there were different experiences for Black students enrolled at TWIs and HBCUs. Results indicated that the students enrolled at the TWIs reported feeling more alone and not a part of the community than students at HBCUs.

Many of the students reported having substantial support from peers and faculty at HBCUs, while students at TWIs did not report this same experience. One example of

this is an account from one student enrolled at an HBCU expressing the belief that “HBCU staff went far beyond the call of duty to provide encouragement and support” (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002, p. 321). In contrast, the authors found that many of the students enrolled at TWIs revealed ways in which they felt the campus, including the faculty, worked against them, and the students expressed various accounts of feeling disconnected from the campus community (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). The second theme was centered on involvement demonstrating that students enrolled at TWIs often shared the feeling that activities on campus were “geared for Whites” (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002, p. 322). This is a stark contrast to students at HBCUs who noted that they appreciate that activities were designed for them.

One significant limitation of this study is the composition of the students who participated in this study. Many of the participants who were enrolled in HBCUs had transferred from a PWI, thus the data could have been confounded. (For example, students’ positive feelings toward college once they were in the HBCU environment could have been influenced by negative experiences at the PWIs they attended.) This limitation should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data. However, the data from the TWIs would not have been confounded; thus, this limitation does not apply to those students’ accounts.

### **Using Critical Race Theory to Understand Race and Racism**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed from the work of legal scholars, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, in the mid-1970s in response to the need to adequately address the effects of race and racism in the U.S. legal system

(DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). The goal of critical race theory was to theorize how to bring about the kind of change needed in order to implement social justice into American institutions (Crenshaw, 1995). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) brought the utilization of CRT to educational research. Since then, it has also been applied to psychological research, and the construction of psychological interventions. This was because the field of education called for a change and the use of more explicit models highlighting race and racism in educational research for people of color (Tate, 1997). For instance, Weinberg (1977) argued that research for people of color, should move from frameworks and paradigms entrenched in inferiority scripts, and move towards less assumptive research that directly focuses on race and racism in American society and the impacts these constructs have on education. He suggested that educational research regarding people of color include; 1) information regarding historical backgrounds, 2) ideology of racism, 3) continuous examination of the role of race in learning, 4) discussion on the influence of disenfranchised communities on schools.

More recently, Harper (2012) continued to echo this attitude and reiterated the importance of and detrimental effects of continuing with the inferiority paradigm and not examining race and racism. He conducted a qualitative data analysis of 255 peer-reviewed journal articles utilizing NVivo in order to document how scholars write about and “make sense of racial climates and experiences of minoritized persons on predominately White campus” (p.11). He found that many of the publications avoided labeling or naming racism and discussed the experiences of minoritized students through semantic substitutes. Furthermore, Harper (2012) concluded that the issue of discussing

“race without racism” will circumvent progress in research by allowing scholars to perpetuate, through unintentionality, the very construct they are attempting to deconstruct.

### **Critical Race Theory: A Brief Overview**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was first introduced as a paradigm to conceptualize and study the notion that the law is not neutral. CRT focuses on the intersection between race, law, and power, and how racism is engrained in culture, context, speech, institutions, and systems that comprise American society. CRT identifies ways in which basic power structures perpetuate the marginalization of people of color (UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2012). CRT provides researchers with a paradigm to examine how changes and new perspectives can be implemented, and how diverse interventions can be constructed. CRT is an active theory that “challenges traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race and gender by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color” (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 63). CRT is focused on encouraging change and thus it does not end with discussions and challenges. CRT was developed to examine disenfranchisement among communities, and to offer a method to analyze racial and gender discrimination (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

There are at least five core assumptions that comprise the theoretical framework of CRT. Each of these can be used to analyze how racism appears and how it is sustained in American life. Thus, these tenets allow CRT to be used as a tool for the analysis of racism and its effects. The core assumptions of CRT are:

- (1) **The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism.** Racism is a permanent component of American life, and is a central (rather than a marginal) factor in defining and describing individual experiences of people of color. Racism intersects with other forms of subordination such as gender and class discrimination, but does not allow for class discrimination alone to account for racial oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993).
- (2) **The challenge to dominant ideology.** Dominant society's claims to neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and the assumption of meritocracy (i.e., a social system that gives opportunities and advantages to people on the basis of their ability rather than their position in society) must be challenged as a camouflage for self-interest, power and privilege (Calmore, 1992).
- (3) **The centrality of experiential knowledge.** Experiential knowledge "is appropriate, legitimate, and an integral part to analyzing and understanding racial inequality" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Experiential knowledge is appropriate for teaching about racial subordination, and is used in ways that draw explicitly on the person of color's lived experiences by including such methods as storytelling, narratives, biographies, and family histories (Delgado, 1995)
- (4) **An interdisciplinary perspective.** Analyses of racism must be placed in both a historical and a contemporary perspective using interdisciplinary methods (Delgado, 1995). The ahistoricism and unidisciplinary perspective has led to ignoring the legacy of historical discrimination. CRT challenges this

interpretation as color-blind, and eschews the simplistic ideal that to end racism, we simply have to stop making legal decisions based on race (Somekh & Lewin, 2011).

- (5) **The commitment to social justice.** CRT is a social justice framework that is committed to a social justice agenda to eliminate all forms of subordination of people) (Matsuda, 1991).

### **Critical Race Theory for Education**

Two theorists, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), argued that a critical race theory for education be created as a parallel to the one created for legal scholarship. Thus, theorists, such as Solorzano and Yosso (2000) structured the Critical Race Theory in Education paradigm. This theory was used to undergird the analysis of the racist practices in academia and the social inequality associated with these practices. Solorzano and Yosso defined CRT in education as: “. . . a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of students” (pp. 40-42).

There are five central tenets that comprise CRT in education. These are the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, counter-storytelling, interest conversion, and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010). These central tenets are akin to the five core assumptions of CRT

**The permanence of racism.** The permanence of racism is akin to the Critical Race Theory assumption of the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism. This

tenet suggests that racism and the effect it has on political, social, and economic structures within U.S. society are always prevalent (Hiraldo, 2010). Racism privileges White individuals in most areas of life. It cannot be escaped and is an inherent part of the society in which we live. “Racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). This tenet addresses institutional and systematic racism as structures that are intrinsically built into the makeup of our society, and reinforces the notion that racism should always be considered when studying the experiences of Black students at PWIs.

**Whiteness as property.** Whiteness as property is akin to the Critical Race Theory assumption of the challenge to dominant ideology. Whiteness as property stems in America from the legal legacy of slavery wherein Blacks had no property rights, and from the legal seizure of all Native American land in a society that is informed by racist and ethnocentric themes (Harris, 1993). Whiteness as property is characterized as both ownership of things and ownership of rights, such as the right of possession, the right of use and enjoyment, the right of disposition, and the right to exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Hiraldo, 2010). Whiteness as property carries with it the notion of legal, moral, ethical, and social entitlements. These entitlements legally and socially inure to the benefit of those who hold their racial status as White.

In higher education, Whiteness as property is demonstrated through the underrepresentation of Black Americans in PWIs, the selection into honors and gifted programs wherein fewer Blacks receive the benefit of both the acknowledgement of their gifts and talents and wherein fewer have access to more rigorous education provided by

these programs (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), and curriculum ownership by faculty that does not reflect multiculturalism or respect for diverse students and their communities (Hiraldo, 2010). The ideological stance of Whiteness as property is in direct opposition to creating and fostering a diverse environment because it validates entrenched systems of power, dominance and privilege of which Blacks have never been a part (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

**Counter-storytelling.** Counter-storytelling is akin to the Critical Race Theory assumption of the centrality of experiential knowledge. Counter-storytelling is defined as a method of telling the story that “exposes and critiques normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). Counter-storytelling is used to demonstrate challenges to stereotypical representations and dialogue and allow for a voice to be given to groups that were historically bereft of narratives pertaining to their development and experiences. Counter-storytelling can take the form of personal stories/narratives, other people’s stories/narratives, or group stories/narratives concerning marginalized experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Hiraldo (2010) posits that counter-storytelling can help with analyzing campus climate at PWIs by highlighting the challenges and negative experiences students’ experience.

**Interest convergence.** Interest convergence is akin to the CRT challenge against ignoring the legacy of historical discrimination, and using simplistic interpretations of racism and how to counter it. CRT challenges this interpretation as color-blind, and eschews the simplistic idea that to end racism, we simply have to stop making legal

decisions based on race (Somek & Lewin, 2011). This perspective is detailed in Critical Race Theory assumption of the interdisciplinary perspective.

Interest convergence refers to the principal as stated by Bell (1980) that “whites will promote racial advances for blacks only when they also promote white self-interest”. White individuals are the primary beneficiaries of the civil rights legislation (for example, desegregation disproportionately effected Black students who were bussed in droves to White suburban schools) (Ladson-Billings, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010). Gains for Black individuals are filtered through the interests of advancement for White individuals.

Hiraldo (2010) discussed how diversity initiatives in U.S. schools are increasingly focusing on the recruitment of international students at PWIs, while ignoring American ethnic minorities as potential college student candidates as an example of the more negative effects of interest convergence on Black students. He stated that PWIs benefit financially from bringing international diversity due to international students’ inability to qualify for financial aid, and simultaneously, increasing their diversity ranking.

**Critique of liberalism.** Critique of liberalism is akin to the CRT core assumption of commitment to a social justice paradigm, and critiques liberalism as an ineffective approach that cannot stem the perpetuation of racism. “CRT scholars favor a more aggressive approach to social transformation as opposed to liberalism's more cautious approach, favors a race conscious approach to transformation rather than liberalism's embrace of colorblindness, and favors an approach that relies more on political organizing, in contrast to liberalism's reliance on rights-based remedies” (Delgado &

Stefancic, 1993, ). The critique of liberalism challenges the idea of color-blindness and neutrality of the law (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). It challenges allowances that are provided to people and institutions that ignore the systematic perpetuation of racism through policies and procedures.

Regarding the critique of liberalism, DeCuir and Dixson (2010) state that there is an assumption that “[all] citizens have the same opportunities and experiences. Race and experiences based on race are not equal, thus, the experiences that people of color have with respect to race and racism create an unequal situation. Equity, however, recognizes the playing field is unequal and attempts to address the inequality” (p. 29). In order to take steps towards eradicating racist thought and practice, *equity* instead of *equality* must be required (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

### **Critical Race Theory in Psychological Research and Mental Health**

CRT was initially focused on the racial aspects of law and then it was re-envisioned as a theory that could describe educational processes. Since then, it has also been brought into the psychological arena, and has provided a framework for psychological research and the construction of psychological interventions.

CRT in psychology is a psychological paradigm that has been used as a framework to examine various aspects of mental health from a social justice perspective. For example, using CRT in psychology, researchers have examined the help-seeking behaviors of various groups of people. These researchers have found, for example, that the help-seeking behavior of people are profoundly influenced by their racialization (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005; Trahan & Matthew, 2014).

This validates the importance of the integration of a theory that utilizes an identity-conscious framework when referring to interventions.

McDowell (2010) posited that CRT, when utilized within psychological research, offers a critical lens for considering racial dynamics in the field and practice. Adams and Salter (2011) discuss *critical race psychology* as a branch of CRT that requires a more critical reflection of the role of racial identity in the construction of knowledge through psychological science and research. The assertions within these articles urge psychological researchers to reject the color-blind ideal of pure science and encourage the field to become more self-critical and identity-conscious (Adams & Salter, 2011, p. 1364).

Within the field of psychology, CRT focuses on improving the study of race and racism's influence on psychological health and illness. Brown (2003) explores CRT in mental health research and surmised three approaches that psychological researchers and practitioners can use when examining race in relations to mental health. These are:

- 1) a study of the social conditions (e.g. poverty, joblessness, crime) or risk factors (e.g. perceived experiences of discrimination) associated with racial stratification that might be likened to poor mental health,
- 2) a critique of standard indicators of mental health status and the construction of psychiatric disorders, and
- 3) an examination of the unique manifestations of mental health problems produced by racial stratification (p. 295).

These approaches are essential to producing racially influenced knowledge as well as creating interventions for meeting the specific needs for persons of color.

Trahan and Lemberger (2014) assert that even when psychological researchers and practitioners are invested in multiculturalism, they are not exempt from the tenets of CRT. Psychological researchers and student personnel professionals can use the tenets of CRT to become more ethically sound and effective when working with Black students enrolled at PWIs. Understanding the institutional constraints and racism that exists within education can aid in the decision-making processes when creating and implementing interventions for Black students.

### **Critiques of the Critical Race Theory**

CRT is not a theory that is exempt from criticisms and cautionary notes. Hiraldo (2010) discussed two critiques that have been noted regarding the use of CRT for educational research. First, he states the referring to racism as an integrated piece into the tapestry of U.S. society can be unsettling for some when there are individuals who are applying significant amounts of effort to eradicate its existence and influence. Secondly, he notes that CRT fails to include social class and gender in its primary framework and states that taking one identity status without the others ignores the complexities of the human experience.

In sum, a review of CRT highlights the role race and racism plays in the experiences and perceptions of Black college students and the educational system. As stated by Ladson-Billings (2010), “It is because of the meaning and value imputed to Whiteness that CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction,

reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9). The upcoming sections will provide a critical review of the factors utilized in the study using race as a centralized characteristic.

### **Influences on Black College Students’ Experiences at PWIs**

As shown in the existing literature, the experiences of Black college students enrolled in PWIs differ in numerous ways for numerous reasons. Across institutional contexts it is seen in the literature that interactions with faculty, staff, and peers, as well as campus composition and campus environment are central to the experiences of Black college students. The following sections will explore factors that have been shown to be salient to the success of Black students enrolled at PWIs.

#### **Sense of Belonging**

Significant questions that people ask themselves when deciding whether to enter, continue, or abandon any efforts toward completing college are, “Do I fit in here?” or “Should someone like me be here?” For Black students, these questions may be revisited many times throughout their academic career. Baumeister and Leary (1995) define belonging as an individual’s sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others. Sense of belonging is defined by Hagerty and associates (1992, p. 173) as “The experiences of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment”. Belongingness or connectedness to one’s environment has been denoted among the most powerful human motives with people having the strong innate need to form and maintain social bonds

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This need is overarching and can be observed in diverse domains of functioning. A sense of belonging in classrooms and on campus has been found to be associated with adaptive motivation for success (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007).

For Black students enrolled in PWIs, this sense of belonging is connected to positive outcomes because students who feel as though they belong in the academic setting become part of a supportive environment that reinforces academic advancement. Feeling a part of the university is sometimes just as important as having passing scores for a record of high academic achievement (Walton & Cohen, 2007). However, as a consequence of under-representation and negative stereotypes, members of marginalized groups may chronically wonder whether they belong in academic settings (Walton & Carr, 2011). Many authors suggest that the PWI campus does not present a hospitable atmosphere for minority student learning (Harper, 2007; Cuyjet, 2006).

A consistent finding from a variety of studies is that the "integrating experiences" of involvement, engagement, and affiliation are central to students' development and progress in college (Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002; Pace, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Black students who feel a sense of integration or affiliation to the university are more likely to feel as though they belong at the university and can contend with the rigorous expectations associated with the post-secondary experience. The emphasis on student involvement and perceived integration is consistent with the idea that developing a sense of belonging is important to outcomes in college (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007).

Tinto (1987, 1993) is widely used when looking at student outcomes in college. Although, this paper does not utilize Tinto's model as a foundational theory, one feature of the model highlighted in this section is related to the mechanisms by which it explains becoming integrated into the college community. His model predicted that to the extent that students do not become integrated members of the college community is the extent to which they are more likely to withdraw and have negative outcomes. Embedded within his theory was that a sense of belonging, as determined by social and academic integration, is a central feature of Black student success in the academy.

While Tinto's theory has been critiqued by various scholars (Guiffrida, 2006; Braxton et. al, 2000) for its lack of applicability for multicultural groups, the basic tenets have been consistently utilized throughout retention and academic success theories. In many ways, the perceptions of belonging for college students have a more dramatic impact on a number of outcomes (Pascarella, 1980). Addressing how these factors look for Black students is one step towards understanding the dynamics of what effects, if any, these relationships have on perceptions of social belonging, campus climate, and discrimination experiences.

Unfortunately, a common reality for many Black students is that they do not feel that they are a part of their universities. Often, students may feel as though their struggle is to fit in without compromising their own identity. Students can feel like a *visitor on campus* or *invisible on campus*. Events that threaten one's social connectedness can have major effects on those contending with a threatened social identity. When students believe that no matter how well they perform, they will still be treated poorly and

devalued because of their race, they could be overly sensitive to actions that could be interpreted to mean that they are not fully included and valued (Walton & Carr, 2011). Finding any validation that they do not belong could suggest for students that they do not fit or are not ‘cut out’ for academics, and thus can affect the ways in which these students engage and connect with their environments, faculty, and peers.

One research study conducted by Walton and Cohen (2007), examined how feelings of belonging in academic environments affect the ways in which people interact within the environment. The authors posited that members of socially stigmatized groups are more apt to question their belonging throughout their academic career than other groups. They may believe that “people like me don’t belong here”. The authors define this state as *belonging uncertainty*, and suggest that it contributes to racial disparities in academic performance.

The authors conducted two experiments to test how belonging uncertainty can undermine motivation to perform and also can negatively affect the academic outcomes for students whose group is often negatively viewed in academic settings. For both studies, the undergraduates were grouped by race to test these effects. Experiment 1 was formed to explore belonging uncertainty regarding student’s beliefs about whether they belong in particular fields of study due to having friends within the field, and whether race was related to this belief. The participants consisted of 70 students ( $n = 36$  Black students,  $n = 34$  White students;  $n = 29$  males,  $n = 40$  females). The students were asked to “generate eight friends who had personal characteristics...that might make them likely to fit in well at [school name’s] Computer Science Department or two such friends”

(Walton & Cohen, 2007, p. 83). The students were then given a measure to check the difficulty with generating friends fitting the characteristics; also, their sense of academic fit was measured.

Experiment 2, which took place in 3 stages, was developed to investigate the levels of uncertainty in sense of belonging by minority students in academic settings. Walton and Cohen (2007) utilized “a pre-manipulation assessment of individual differences, a laboratory session, and daily diaries” (pp. 88-89). This experiment utilized an intervention that was intentionally designed to de-racialize the meanings of hardship and doubt associated with college. Both of these experiments presented findings suggesting that in academic settings, members of socially stigmatized groups are more uncertain of the quality of their social bonds and thus more sensitive to the issues of social belonging. Black students in Experiment 2, who were told hardship and doubt are characteristic of all students regardless of race, were more likely to have an improved sense of belonging and a belief that they can succeed.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by potential ethical concerns regarding the intervention. The treatment message was fabricated in order to alter beliefs about hardship and doubt. The authors note this potential ethical limitation and further explain the importance of further study regarding this notion, asserting “most university students regardless of race, question their belonging, particularly during their 1<sup>st</sup> year of college” (p. 94). Regardless, findings reveal events that threaten one’s social connectedness and belonging, which can have large effects on those contending with a threatened social identity.

## **Perceptions of Campus Climate**

Campus climate, as defined by “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Bauer, 1998, p. 2), has historically examined differences in perceptions of climate between groups of students in higher education (Rodgers & Summers, 2008). These authors provide a more comprehensive examination of Black students’ perceptions of campus climate by investigating environmental factors that affect how these students connect on campus. These perceptions can inspire or inhibit students’ sense of belonging, campus involvement, and performance. For students, college is meant to be a time of freedom and exploration, but for those students who feel that they are not wanted, be it in the subtle glance of the eye that asks, “What are you doing here?”, the avoidance of eye contact that indicates “invisibility”; or the sudden quietness that occurs when the topic of race comes up with classmates or faculty members of the majority race, the effects of racial microaggressions can be devastating (Feagin, Hernan, & Iman, 1996). Students facing these, sometimes traumatic, experiences may begin to become familiar with feelings of regret, decreased confidence in their ability, and noticeably lowered satisfaction with their college experience.

Research indicates that even though some minority students come to college with limited academic preparedness, it is what occurs within the institutional environment that matters most in determining their success (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzi, 2005). In a study by Solorzano, Allen, and Carroll (2002), the pressure of being a racial ethnic minority on a predominantly White campus was examined by looking at the associations of microaggressions, campus racial climate, and educational experiences of students of

color. The authors utilized a mixed-methods design consisting of focus groups, questionnaires, historical archives, institutional records, and published research to gather data. Specifically examining the eight focus groups conducted at the University of California, Berkley with 25 (7 females, 18 males) participants, the authors shared parts of vignettes regarding their experiences based around microaggressions in social and academic environments. Solorzano et al. defined social microaggressions as “notions that People of Color pose a threat to public spaces” (p. 40), and academic microaggressions as “overall assumptions that Students of Color are academically inferior”. The students, discussed within this study, reported that these instances often led to feeling frustrated, isolated, and wanting to increase the number of students and faculty of color on campus. The authors’ interpreted their findings to mean that “because of the negative campus racial climate, the educational playing field is uneven for students of color” (Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002, p.47).

Beyond the findings of the study, the authors illustrated a suggestion of what a positive campus climate might look like by presenting these six criteria:

- 1) The inclusion of student, faculty and administrators of Color (critical mass);
- 2) A curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of people of color;
- 3) Programs to support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color;
- 4) Faculty and administration that are open and responsive to the concerns of students of color;

5) A college/university mission that reinforces the colleges' commitment to diversity, and

6) The absence of racial conflict on campus

(Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002, p. 29).

It should be noted that the authors were stating the ideal rather than the actual, and that most campuses focus only on implementing a few of these. Campuses that strive to meet more of the criteria may do a better job at creating a climate that is more beneficial for their Black students.

To that end, institutions must take the healthy development of Black students seriously and foster a mission filled with multicultural initiatives in order to build success in these students. Without this effort PWI campuses may be problematic for Black students leading to greater failure in their academics (Allen, 1988, 1992; Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004). Black students at PWIs may experience the campus climate as threatening, racist, or isolating. This has been shown to negatively affect their involvement and sense of belonging, and thus their satisfaction with their institutional choice. For example, a study of campus climate conducted by Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that students who perceived a more racially hostile campus climate also felt a decreased sense of belonging to the larger campus community.

Perceptions of the campus racial climate are influenced, in part, by students' interactions with others from different racial/ethnic groups (Hurtado, et al., 1999). First, Black students' interactions with their peers outside of their racial/ethnic group play a significant role in their comfort level in college. Many Black students are accustomed to

attending schools where they comprise the majority, thus experiences such as attending classes with large numbers of majority group students are novel and can be uncomfortable. Bjerklie (2001) reported in *Time* magazine that “upward of 70% of Black students went to school with more than 50% minority enrollment, and 36.5% of these students went to school with a minority enrollment of 90-100%”. This is very different from the PWI campuses. In fact, with the recent change in Affirmative Action in university admission in states across the country, Black students may be experiencing environments that look less and less like the environments with which they are familiar (Antonovics & Backes, 2014).

Black students’ interactions with faculty and administration can also play a significant role in their perceptions of campus climate. If faculty and administration are operating on the basis of negative stereotypes in the classroom, whether consciously or not, Black students may be uncomfortable, mistrustful, or demoralized (Davis, et al., 2004). An example of this was provided by Stayhorn (2008) when he reported, “Black men are often described using disparaging terms such as dangerous, uneducable, and lazy, which generally reinforce negative stereotypes to which some non-Black teachers and faculty subscribe” (p. 502). Faculty members who, either knowingly or unknowingly, operate under such stereotypes can contribute to the self-fulfilling prophecies of these disparaging statements. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that some Black men internalize such beliefs which, in turn, become self-fulfilling, self-defeating, and self-threatening (Steele, 2000).

This has been evident in many studies, and as a result of this, administrators, educators, and counselors have developed various ways to lessen the effects of hostile campus climates. For example, Hamilton (2006) proposed a four-dimensional framework (as cited in Rodgers & Summers, 2008, p. 176) that evaluates institutional climate by considering (1) the institutions' historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion; (2) the numbers of different groups on campus (e.g. how many students of a particular race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.); (3) perceptions and beliefs that people have about institutions' climates; and (4) the extent to which institutional structures and individual personnel are contributing to a positive climate. Frameworks such as these act as the catalyst for dialogue among counselors and administrators when assisting Black students and their families with making decisions pertaining to choosing and transitioning into an institution of higher education.

Grier-Reed (2010) has argued that universities should work towards providing an environment in which Black students can find support and encouragement for reflecting on and making sense of their experiences. Winkle-Wagner (2015) stated that formal institutional support programs have a significant effect on Black women by fostering an increased sense of belonging. This type of support on PWI campuses could lessen feelings and experiences associated with being a student within a hostile, unsupportive landscape. When Black students feel as though they are a part of an institution, they are able to successfully matriculate through their programs of study (Schwitzer, et al., 1999).

Grier-Reed, Ehlert, & Dade (2011) studied the way that a counter-space group, named African American Student Network (AFAM), helped to address the problems that

Black students could encounter on a PWI campus. Counter-spaces are often characterized as places students can go where there are other Black students who may be having similar experiences on campus. The group was described as “a safe space for students to exercise their voices, critically reflect on their experiences, and find support for improving their lives and the lives of others” (Grier-Reed, Ehlert, & Dade, p. 24). Of the 200 students that had participated in the group since 2005, the participants of the study included 163 students ( $n = 102$  female;  $n = 61$  male), mostly Black (88%), ranging from the ages of 19-30. Comparative data, based on general institutional reports, were gathered on Black students who were Non-AFAM participants.

The data revealed a trend that participants in AFAM were no more and no less academically prepared than the average Black student on campus; however it was found that the students who participated in the group were retained and graduated at higher percentages than their Black student counterparts who did not participate in the group. For example, the “1-year retention rate for AFAM students was 87%, and the 1-year retention rate for the matching group was 80%. Across 4 years, this trend was even greater, where AFAM students’ 4-year retention rate was 53%, and the matching group’s retention rate was 33%” (p. 26). This study was limited by the quasi-experimental design with students self-selecting to be in the treatment group (AFAM) and no random selection. This presents a threat to internal and external validity due to selection bias. Nevertheless, the study renders important findings, and the authors recommended further study that examines the factors that contribute to success for students of AFAM (p. 27).

In addition, the aforementioned study by Solorzano et al. (2002) found that many students responded to racial microaggressions by “creating counter spaces” which is a physical space wherein Black students’ can “challenge the dominant deficit notions of people of color and promote positive racial climate” (p. 44). One student spoke about using a created study group as a way to feel supported. Many of the students spoke about the “counter spaces” they created as a way they could “ease feelings of alienation and discouragement spawned by cumulative racial microaggressions” (Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002, p.47). This finding supports the claims that Black students benefit from having specific opportunities to neutralize and invalidate the effects of being at unreceptive campuses.

### **Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination**

Consistently, there have been research studies conducted to examine the importance of a positive racial climate in the psychosocial adjustment of Black students at PWIs (e.g., Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Before reviewing the research on prejudice and discrimination related to Black students, it is important to discuss race relations in American society. All students, having absorbed years of indoctrination by families, peers, and mass media, come to the university with stereotypes about people different from themselves (Davis et al., 2004). It would be remiss to assume these stereotypes do not influence the thoughts and behaviors of all students on campus. This proposition is supported by the CRT tenet, *the permanence of racism*.

Also supporting this is a study conducted by Bonilla-Silva (2009) as discussed by Harper (2012). The study utilized survey data and interviews from 627 college students who attended three different PWIs, and data from 400 community-based participants. The data were mined from the 1998 Detroit Area Study (DAS) database to examine the frames that people use to interpret information concerning race relations. Harper stated that the study found that, “Whites often view discrimination through a narrow lens of overt, outrageously racist acts. Other instances that fall short of this are often perceived by Whites as minorities being “hypersensitive” or unfairly playing the “race card” (p.12). The results of this research emphasize the ways in which White educators and other community members might find it simple to negate Black students’ negative experiences of discrimination within their academic environments.

Additionally, a great majority of findings suggest that Black students have challenges that are not experienced by White students on campus. This suggests that Black students enrolled in PWIs are faced with differing realities within their campus environments. For example, this was shown by Rankin and Reason (2005) in a study that explored the ways in which students of different racial groups experience campus climates. Ten campuses participated in this study and were geographically diverse as well as different in type (public and private). The participants of the study included undergraduates ( $n = 7,347$ ), staff ( $n = 3,244$ ), faculty ( $n = 2,117$ ), and graduate students ( $n = 1,497$ ) and were sampled either due to the institution inviting all students, faculty, and staff or through “purposeful sampling of underrepresented individuals, snowball sampling of invisible minorities, and random sampling the majority” (pp.47-48). Data

were collected in survey format (either pen-and-pencil or online) by an instrument “containing 55 items with additional space for respondents to provide commentary, and was designed to have respondents provide information regarding their personal campus experiences, perceptions of campus climate, and perception of institutional actions” (p. 48).

The authors found that students of color experienced harassment, defined as offensive, hostile, or intimidating behavior that interferes with learning, at higher rates than White students, and thus are more likely to report that campus climates are “racist, hostile, disrespectful, and less accepting” (p. 57). Furthermore, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that while White students recognized racial harassment at similar rates as students of color, they were less likely to report their environments as unfavorable and believed the racial climate on campus was improving. This study was limited by the inconsistent methods of sampling, such as purposeful sampling, snowball sampling, and random sampling. The different methods utilized could have resulted in a non-representative sample. Nevertheless, the findings posit, for Black students, their unique experiences on college campuses that include discrimination, feelings of isolation, and racial exclusion. These findings are consistent with other findings which suggest that a significant number of African American college students attending PWIs are exposed to racially insensitive behaviors, comments, and environments on campus.

Differing views regarding the effects of discrimination on Black students should thoroughly be addressed within the literature. Research indicates further that dismissing this topic without a more thorough discussion about issues of race may result in negative

interactions and consequences for Black students. This argument was central to Harper's (2012) study, when he stated, "most higher education researchers have attempted to take account of racial differences in college access and student outcomes, as well as in racially dissimilar experiences of Whites and minoritized persons, without considering how racial institutional practices undermine equity and diversity." The discrimination experienced by Black students is persistent and often times overwhelming for students, yet has not always been directly addressed in the literature. Because of this, it is important to examine this factor and how it affects the performance and the perceptions of Black students.

### **Institutional Satisfaction**

Universities understand that student satisfaction is an important indicator of student well-being, retention, and persistence (Tinto, 1993; Schreiner, 2009), all of which are desired outcomes for institutions. Elliott and Healy (2008) stated that satisfaction is a "short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of the student's educational experience" (p. 2). Discussion of what factors are predictive of student satisfaction is imperative for researchers and student personnel professionals when attempting to create interventions for Black students at PWIs.

A quantitative study by Elliot and Healy (2008) sought to examine the impact of several educational experiences on the student's overall institutional satisfaction. The authors utilized a survey method to gather data by utilizing the instrument referred to as the *Student Satisfaction Inventory*<sup>TM</sup>. The inventory is comprised of 116 Likert-type items, and covers a range of college experiences asking students to rate experiences in

college with regard to importance and satisfaction on eleven dimensions, including 1) academic advising effectiveness, (2) campus climate, (3) campus life, (4) campus support services, (5) concern for the individual, (6) instructional effectiveness, (7) recruitment and financial aid effectiveness, (8) registration effectiveness, (9) campus safety and security, (10) service excellence, and (11) student centeredness (p. 3). The questionnaire results provided an importance score, a satisfaction score, and a performance gap score (meaning the institution was not performing up to the students' expectations) for each dimension. The higher the performance gap score, the more students were saying that their college was not meeting their expectations.

Participants in the study were 1,805 freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students enrolled at an upper Midwestern PWI. The majority of the sample were female (53%), White (84.5%), with an average self-reported GPA ranging from 3.0 to 3.49. Statistics regarding students' programs of study were not provided.

The authors utilized a two-step procedure for analyzing data. First, the authors computed a performance gap score by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score on the eleven dimensions mentioned above. Second, the authors utilized the stepwise multiple regression model to examine how well the performance gap scores predicted overall institutional satisfaction. The performance gap scores were the independent variables and overall satisfaction was the dependent variable.

Results from the stepwise multiple regression indicated that *student centeredness* was a strong and significant predictor of overall institutional satisfaction. In this study, this variable was related to the extent to which students felt welcomed and believed that

they were valued on campus (Elliot & Healy, 2008, p. 7). *Campus climate* was also a significant predictor. In this study, the campus climate variable was related to students' feelings of pride that they were attending their respective universities, and that they felt they belonged because of their attachment to various individuals or groups at their universities. Lastly, *instructional effectiveness*, which, in this study, was representative of the student's academic entire experience, was found to be a significant predictor. It should also be noted that although campus climate and student centeredness were significantly predictive of student satisfaction, these factors were not regarded as important in the educational experience of students. "Out of the eleven dimensions, campus climate was rated 5th most important and student centeredness was rated 8th most important" (p. 7). The results of this study revealed that students' belief that they are vital to their institution is highly predictive of how satisfied they are.

There is one major critique of this study regarding the composition of the sample. The small numbers of students of color gave the analysis a low power to detect difference between racial/ethnic groups. Literature suggests connections between racial composition and satisfaction with the institution (Patitu, 2000); therefore a more diverse sample may have provided more salient information regarding group differences.

For many Black students, feeling like they belong and are wanted on campus significantly influences their satisfaction with their respective institutions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2008). Chen, Ingram, and Davis (2014) conducted a study examining the demographic and institutional characteristics that may be predictive of Black students' overall satisfaction with their institution. The authors used Elliot and

Shin's (2002) definition of institutional satisfaction, which is "the favorability of a student's subjective evaluation of the experiences and outcomes associated with the institution". For this study, the authors utilized archival data from the 2006-2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in order to explore differences between HBCUs and PWIs in students' satisfaction with their institutions. The NSSE was designed "to assess the extent to which students are engaged in empirically derived, good educational practices, and what students gain from their college experiences" (Elliot & Shin, 2002, p. 570).

The data contained responses from 5,925 Black students enrolled at four-year College and Universities from the U.S. and Canada, including both HBCUs and PWIs. Institutional representation in this data included 575 colleges and universities, including 26 HBCUs. The authors chose to use the data from all of the HBCUs. They then used the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education and the K Nearest Neighbor analysis (Shakhnarovich, Darrell, & Indyk, 2005) to choose from which PWIs they also wanted data to include in their study. Matching criteria included undergraduate instructional programs, graduate instructional programs, enrollment profiles, undergraduate profiles, size of student body, and setting (rural/urban). Analysis of PWIs in terms of this matching criteria resulted in 126 PWIs that most resembled the HBCUs (Elliot & Shin, 2002, p. 568). Data from the PWIs were comprised of responses from 2,638 students (28.1% males, 71.9% females). Data from the HBCUs were comprised of responses from 3,287 students (21.5% males, and 78.5% females). The authors did not

interpret the gender imbalance in the data. The mean GPA for HBCU participants was 3.45. For the PWI participants, it was 3.27.

From the NSSE data, the authors utilized the Satisfaction Scale as a measure of the dependent variable student satisfaction. The independent variables in their study included demographics such as student's gender, first generation college student status, along with environmental variables such as institutional characteristics (total enrollment of the institution and admission competitiveness), non-engagement related student characteristics (enrollment status, student reported college GPA, transfer student status), and engagement related student characteristics (level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment as measured by the NSSE) (Elliot & Shin, 2002, p. 570). Data were analyzed using hierarchical ordinary least squares regression (OLS).

The results of the study indicated findings that were consistent with prior research on institutional satisfaction for Black students. Additionally, the results revealed that satisfaction is largely dependent on how friendly and supportive the campus environments are. A supportive campus environment was found to have a strong positive correlation with student satisfaction at both HBCUs and PWIs. From their results, the authors suggest that universities work to create positive and supportive campus climates for Black students including promoting authentic interactions and providing enhanced academic support (Elliot and Shin, 2002).

There are several aspects of the study that warrant critique. The data used from the NSSE were not from randomly selected institutions and relied on institutions'

voluntary participation, thus the possibility of self-selection bias is increased and may exist in the institutional and student sample. Although the bias may be small due to the large sample size, generalizations should reflect this possibility.

Taken together, these studies indicate that a supportive campus climate and feelings of belonging are important to student satisfaction. Looking at student institutional satisfaction continues to be beneficial for both students and the institutions in which they are enrolled. “Focusing on student satisfaction not only enables universities to re-engineer their organizations to adapt to student needs, but also allows them to develop a system for continuously monitoring how effectively they meet or exceed student needs” (Elliott & Shin, 2002, p. 197).

### **Gender as a Factor**

Over the years, little research on within-group gender differences among Black students has been conducted, especially with respect to their sense of belonging, experiences and witnessed accounts of discrimination, and perceptions of campus climate at PWIs. Much of the research in which gender has been a factor has tended to focus either on one race only or on assumed similarities among races while ignoring racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences between women and men of any race (Pollard, 1993). However, it is a mistake to believe that findings from single-race studies can be generalized across races. Moreover, examining gender as a factor in studies regarding the Black student population acknowledges the fact that these students hold multiple statuses, and that true differences could exist across genders that would ultimately affect students’ perceptions and reactions within the experienced reality of being a Black student on the

campus of a PWI. Exploring this further sheds light on the fact that Black students are not just Black students; they have other identity groups as well that may influence their experiences and the perceptions they have of their institutions.

It should be noted that there is very little literature that explicitly focuses on within group differences between Black males and Black females on the aforementioned variables (sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, experiences with discrimination, and institutional satisfaction). If studies do address these differences, they often do not solely focus on Black samples and differences in gender between Black students are usually found as a spinoff of a larger study. Often Black men and women are referred to as one homogeneous static group which raises the danger that Black students will fail to receive the specific help needed (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). This study seeks to add to the literature regarding the differences in experiences and perceptions specific to the Black student group enrolled at PWIs.

A significant amount of research illuminates various disparities between Black men and women who are college. Research has primarily focused on Black male and Black female differences in college matriculation and college graduation (Cohen & Nee, 2000) (which could also be influenced by students' sense of belonging and perceptions and experiences of discrimination). For instance, Black men represent less than 5% of all undergraduates in the nation, with Black women outnumbering Black men on campus by slightly more than 2 to 1 (Strayhorn, 2010). More research evidence regarding the underpinnings of these differential outcome rates is a much needed addition to the literature.

For Black students, gender group membership also has a great influence on the way they experience and function within the college environment. For example, Fleming (1984) found gender differences in social and academic adjustment of Black students at PWIs. Their findings showed that females demonstrate greater adjustment when attending PWIs than males. Fleming stated this may be because women tend to become more self-reliant, depending more on themselves, to find satisfaction; however men tend to believe authority figures should be providing closer guidance to students – something that is more often unavailable on PWI campuses than on HBCU campuses. Fleming implied that this is due to adverse experiences that Black students face on PWI campuses, which are more likely to encourage independence and assertiveness in females; however, males do not tend to respond in this way.

More recently, research has focused on the specific experiences of Black men in PWIs. Strayhorn (2008) found that Black male students' sense of social belonging at PWIs is influenced by interacting with peers from different racial/ethnic groups. However, this interaction does not always occur and is often belabored as a result of many unjustified racial stereotypes. Black male belongingness is constantly threatened by the reinforcement of stigmatizing stereotypes that label them as unqualified admits who benefited through the affirmative action admittance process, or that they are only qualified to be in college because they play on intercollegiate sports teams (Harper et. al., 2011). These judgments regarding the qualification of Black students on PWI campuses can result in findings such as that of Flowers (2004) who utilized the College Students Experiences Questionnaire to analyze data from 7,923 Black respondents from 192 PWIs,

and found that male students were generally uninvolved in out-of-class activities that were sponsored by the university. This was consistent with the findings of other scholars (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, 2009; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006) who stated Black male engagement in structured activities, student organizations, and campus leadership positions remains considerably lower than their same-race female counterparts. This lack of engagement may reinforce Black men's lower sense of belonging on PWI campuses. Research that could help us better understand their sense of belonging could assist counseling psychologists in providing interventions that could make a positive impact on young Black men's ability to adjust and become successful on the campuses of PWIs.

Harper and Davis (2012) conducted a content analysis utilizing essay response counter-narratives (indicative of the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling) from 304 Black men attending 209 different PWIs. The authors utilized NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, to analyze the data and search for themes from the responses from the essays. The researchers were seeking to find "viewpoints of pressing problems in American education and to better understand how particular students' philosophies on education were shaped, specifically investment in educational systems" (p. 108). From analysis of the essay responses three themes were found, 1) the familiarity of educational inequality, 2) beliefs in education as the great equalizer, and 3) purposeful pursuits of the Ph.D. (p.108). The first theme is important to note. The respondents expressed their awareness of many systems and conditions that maintain inequality in education. They also felt that many of these conditions pertained specifically to Black male students. Furthermore, although the respondents were aware of the inequality within institutional

structure, they still carried the belief that education could free them from their current condition so much so that they considered obtaining a Ph.D. Harper and Davis (2012) posited that Black men do care about college and discussed this in contrast to several research studies (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) that state that Black males do not pursue an education because they do not want to appear White.

There were several limitations of this study. For instance, there was no opportunity for follow-up questions, clarifications, or elaborations on the data due to the method of collecting the data. If the researchers had been able to probe for additional information, the data might have produced richer narratives with more background information. Also, many of the participants were already enrolled in rigorous programs of study, and they could arguably be described as a sample of convenience and thus the data received from them could be concluded skewed or biased due to their current academic trajectory. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

Black women make up the majority of Black students in post-secondary education, when compared to Black men, showing their enrollment has continued on a steady incline; however they are still underrepresented within universities and colleges when compared to majority counterparts. The challenges that impede the participation and success of Black women in college are not new; they are old issues that have not yet been fully acknowledged, explored, or resolved (Henry, Butler, & West, 2011-2012). Literature discusses the experiences of Black women attending PWIs and the discriminatory experiences they may endure due to being a *double minority* and

experiencing double-discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. Crenshaw (1989) further explains this by stating, “Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by White women and Black men. Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to White women’s experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men” (p. 149). This assertion may give some insight into the unique needs to Black women attending PWIs and failing to take this literature into account, when creating interventions, can perpetuate unmet needs due to the insistence that Black women’s demands be filtered into general categories.

Winkle-Wagner (2015) conducted an extensive literature review of 119 studies focused on Black women’s college success, the study of Black women in educational research, and the implications of Black women’s success in education. The author found much of the literature that reported on Black women’s success, was indicative in what type of institution in which they were enrolled (p. 187) (Park, 2009). Winkle-Wagner posited that the formation of support services could substantially increase Black students’ sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, as well as satisfaction (p. 188).

As stated earlier, there is a shortage of current research examining gender differences in the experiences and perceptions of Black students at PWIs. There is even less research on the interaction of gender and institutional factors and how these could influence students’ perceptions and experiences within the college context. These studies

together suggest that there are specific factors that may significantly influence differing outcomes for Black students.

### **Conclusion**

From the literature it can be concluded that Black students enrolled at PWIs live a different experience than their non-Black peers during their college years. Although there has been considerable discussion concerning where those differences originate, there is general agreement among theorists and researchers that these differences can have a lasting impact on Black students and how they perceive their post-secondary experiences. Investigating the academic patterns of Black students through the lens of current and past literature lays the foundations for discussing how to improve the experiences of Black students. Prior research supports a multidimensional approach to investigating associations among students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed and experienced discrimination, and satisfaction with institutional choice among Black students attending PWIs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

One thing that is apparent from the literature is that concern over students not sensing they belong at PWIs, concern over potential results of a negative campus climate, experiences of discrimination, and gender differences are not to be ignored. The data suggest that, although Black college students at PWIs are resilient in the face of significantly different experiences, taking a one dimensional approach to each of these factors does not appear to lead to a solution that is beneficial for Black students. By incorporating research that takes into account the unique circumstances that are a part of

Black institutional satisfaction, we can further our understanding of how to address the experienced differences of Black students at PWIs. Essential to efforts to create a multidimensional approach to this issue include further research investigating the effects of unique experiences of Black students, efforts to create interventions for students and educational institutions, and dealing directly with educational policy.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is expected that:

1. Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate for diversity and diverse perceptions, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender would be predictive of their institutional satisfaction.
2. There would be significant differences in Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction as a function of gender.

Chapter One provided an overview of the need for more research that examines the different experiences and perceptions of Black student while enrolled at PWIs, in order to highlight the importance of looking at psychosocial and personal factors of Black students. Chapter Two highlighted the research that exists regarding sense of belonging, campus climate, experiences of discrimination, institutional satisfaction, and gender of Black students enrolled at PWIs. In addition, Chapter Two explored research on Critical Race Theory in order to discuss the importance race has played in Black students' social integration into college life. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the participants

and procedures of this study. Chapters Four will review results of this study, and Chapter Five will discuss the implications of the findings.

## **Chapter Three**

### **METHOD**

This chapter is be divided into four sections and provides information on the research methods that were utilized within this study. The research methods were selected to investigate the relationships among sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed and experienced discrimination, and satisfaction with institutional choice among Black college students. First, the characteristics of the participants will be described, and tables will be included in which demographic characteristics will be reported. Second, procedures will be described regarding how data were collected. Third, descriptions of measures and variables will be provided. Finally, the descriptions of the statistical analyses used to analyze the data for this research project will be provided.

#### **Participants**

For the purpose of this study, participants will be referred to as Black. Black is often used to refer to the broader group of African Americans and persons of African Black or mixed African Black heritage who self-identified as Black or as African American. The response rate for the study was 21%. Participants in this study consisted of 228 Black undergraduate students (including partial responders) from a large public research university. This university had 16 colleges and schools (e.g., Education, Management, Liberal Arts) and was located within a large metropolitan area. The participants of the study reported majors in a number of colleges, with the majority indicating CLA ( $n = 111$ ) and EHD ( $n = 48$ ) (see Table 1).

Of the participants, 43.8% ( $n = 74$ ) were males, and 56.2% ( $n = 95$ ) were females. It should be noted the counts for Black undergraduate degree-seeking students, during the

Spring 2015 semester, for the University was 56% ( $n = 759$ ) for females and 44% ( $n = 611$ ) for males which shows the sample as reflective of the Black students in the population concerning gender. The ages of the participants ranged from 18-54; with a mean age of 21.22. Participants were representative of students at various stages of their undergraduate careers ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> semester (incoming) first year to 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (graduating) senior and can be broken down as follows: 1.8% 1<sup>st</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term ( $n = 4$ ); 11.4% 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term ( $n = 26$ ); 10.1% 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term ( $n = 23$ ); 10.5% 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term ( $n = 24$ ); 11.8% 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term ( $n = 27$ ), 17.1% 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term ( $n = 39$ ); 10.5% 4<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> term ( $n = 24$ ); and 26.8% 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> term ( $n = 61$ ). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to completing the electronic survey (See Appendix A).

All Black undergraduate students at a large Primarily White University in a Midwestern state (with the exception of those with suppressed data) were invited to participate ( $N = 1,132$ ) via an electronic email correspondence invitation from that institution's Office of Measurement Services. Students meeting these criteria were invited to participate: 1) active enrollment at the university, and 2) categorized, through educational records, as Black U.S. residents (more specifically based on university racial categories as having their primary ethnic identity in any of the black racial groups of Africa [excluding persons of Hispanic origin and international students]). As in many Primarily White Institutions, the population of Black undergraduate students at this university is less than 5%. The sample for this study is comprised of an approximately equal distribution of undergraduate students. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics sex, age, and academic year of the participants.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

	<u>Respondents (n)</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	74	43.8
Female	95	56.2
<u>Age</u>		
18	15	6.5
19	28	12.3
20	36	15.8
21	36	15.8
22	16	7.0
23	12	5.3
24	6	2.6
25-30	11	4.7
31 and older	9	3.8
<u>Academic Year</u>		
1 <sup>st</sup> year	4	1.8
1 <sup>st</sup> year; 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	26	11.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	23	10.1
2 <sup>nd</sup> year; 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	24	10.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	27	11.8
3 <sup>rd</sup> year, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	39	17.1
4 <sup>th</sup> year	24	10.5
4 <sup>th</sup> year, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	61	26.8
<u>Academic Program</u>		
CAH	4	1.8
CBS	13	5.7
CCE	2	.9
CDES	8	3.5
CFANS	15	6.6
CLA	111	48.7
CSE	21	9.2
CSOM	2	.9
EHD	48	21.1
Nursing	4	1.8

## **Procedures**

This research consisted of a secondary analysis of an archival dataset. Procedures used to collect the data that were analyzed are described in this section. All procedures to obtain the data were approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Minnesota. All participants consented to completing the online survey prior to accessing the survey. The informed consent included information on the background information, procedures of the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality, voluntary nature of the study, and researchers who could be contacted for questions. The participants were also notified that the first 500 students to complete the survey would receive a \$10.00 Amazon gift card. Data was not anonymous to the original researchers due to tracking of students by their university id numbers for follow up research.

Survey data were gathered via the University of Minnesota approved Qualtrics Survey System over a two-month period during the spring 2014 semester. All collected data were exported via text and Excel formats to a fileservers system (Netfiles) which is password protected and meets the university data security requirements. All subjects were given a unique research identification number, and names and student ID numbers were removed from the dataset. The research subject codes were kept in a separate secure location that only the original researchers had access to. Electronic records of survey data have also remained available in Qualtrics Survey System which meets the University of Minnesota data security requirements, and only the researchers have access to the data.

## Measures

Data regarding social belonging, perceptions of campus climate, students' witnessed discrimination, students' experience of discrimination, and students' institutional satisfaction were measured by scales from the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Core Survey created by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI; <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/dleoverview.php>) at the University of California, Los Angeles (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). The DLE survey was developed from studies on diverse student bodies thus is sensitive to diverse student populations, and stems from research indicating that optimizing diversity in learning environments can facilitate achievement of key outcomes (Hurtado, Arellano, Cuellar, & Guillermo-Wann, 2011). The survey has been widely used at a number of diverse universities including; California State University, Channel Islands Cambridge College, Cosumnes River College Humboldt State University, Johnson Community College, Lourdes College, Northern Arizona University, San Jose State University, Santa Ana College, Texas A&M University, University of Denver, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University of San Diego, and Westminster College (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). A full listing of the items used from the survey is located in Appendix B. Below are brief descriptions of each measure, including respective internal consistency reliabilities. For the purposes of the current study, respondents were asked to consider their experiences, during their academic career, with each of the items listed.

*Sense of Belonging.* This 16-item scale was used to evaluate the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging on campus. This scale reflects students' academic and

social integration. Sample items include: “I feel a sense of belonging on my campus”, “I feel that I am a member of this college”, and “I see myself as a part of the campus community”. Items were scored on a four-point Likert Scale with 1 = Strongly Agree to 4 = Strongly Disagree. For these items, lower scores indicated greater agreement that students sensed they belonged at their campus. Two items were reverse scored. On the DLE these items are associated with the General Interpersonal Validation factor, and Hurtado et al. (2011) have reported internal consistency reliability for this factor at .862. The current dataset yielded an internal consistency reliability estimate of .840.

*Perceptions of Campus Climate.* This is eight-item scale was used to evaluate the extent to which students are satisfied with the commitment to diversity on their campuses. Sample items included: “This campus has long-standing commitment to diversity”, “This campus has a lot of racial tension” (reversed scored), and “This campus promotes the appreciation of cultural differences”. Items were scored on a four-point Likert Scale with 1 = Strongly Agree to 4 = Strongly Disagree. For these items, lower scores indicated greater agreement that students found a commitment to diversity on their campuses. One item was reverse scored. Hurtado et al. (2011) have reported internal consistency reliability at .857 for this scale. The current dataset yielded an internal consistency reliability of .809.

*Witnessed Discrimination.* This seven-item scale was used to evaluate the frequency of students’ experiences with witnessed discrimination. Sample items included, “How often have you witnessed discrimination”, “How often have you heard insensitive or disparaging racial remarks from faculty aimed at someone else?”, and

“How often have you heard insensitive or disparaging racial remarks from staff aimed at someone else?”. Items were scored on a five-point Likert Scale with 1 = Very Often to 5 = Never, with lower scores indicating more witnessed incidents of discrimination.

Hurtado et al. (2011) have reported internal consistency reliability at .857 for the two scales to measure discrimination as; Discrimination & Bias at .889 and Harassment at .917. The current dataset yielded an internal consistency reliability of .863 for Witnessed Discrimination.

*Experiences of Discrimination.* This eight-item scale was used to evaluate the frequency of students’ experiences of discrimination. Sample items include, “How often have you heard disparaging verbal comments directed at you?”, “How often have you been excluded from gatherings or events?”, “How often have you experienced threats of physical violence?” The 8 items were scored on a five-point Likert-Scale with 1 = Very Often to 5 = Never, with lower scores indicating more experiences of discrimination. Hurtado et al. (2011) have reported internal consistency reliability at .857 for the two scales to measure discrimination as; Discrimination & Bias at .889 and Harassment at .917. The current dataset yielded an internal consistency reliability of .878 for Experienced Discrimination

*Institution Satisfaction.* This ten-item scale was used to measure students’ satisfaction with their institution. Sample items include, “How satisfied are you with the overall sense of community among students at this institution”, “How satisfied are you with the racial-ethnic diversity of the faculty at this institution,” and “How satisfied are you with the respect for expressions of diverse beliefs at this institution?” Items were

scored on a five-point Likert Scale with 1 = Very Satisfied to 5 = Very Dissatisfied, with lower scores indicating greater satisfaction. Hurtado et al. (2011) have reported internal consistency reliability at .873 for this scale. The current dataset yielded an internal consistency reliability of .866.

*Demographic Information.* General demographic information was collected by the use of demographic questions. These questions were designed to obtain information about the participants' educational and personal characteristics. The demographic questions included age, gender, race, ethnicity, year in school, and area of study.

### **Data Analysis**

The statistical package SPSS Statistics 22.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) for Windows was used by the author for data analyses. The investigator for this current study obtained permission to analyze the archival dataset (gathered and scored as described above) through the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota.

Two major analyses were performed in order to test the two research hypotheses. First, to test Hypothesis 1 (Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, and witnessed discrimination, and experienced discrimination will be predictive of their institutional satisfaction), the author conducted a standard multiple regression analysis wherein all independent variables were allowed to enter the equation at the same time. The standard multiple regression was conducted in order to examine (a) the size of the overall relationship between institutional satisfaction (the criterion variable) and the independent (predictor) variables of perceptions of campus climate, witnessed

discrimination, experienced discrimination, and sense of belonging; and (b) how much did each independent (predictor) variable uniquely contribute to that relationship.

Multiple regression is a statistical method used to test quantitative measurements. It is utilized to account for (predict) the variance in interval and continuous dependent variables, based on linear combinations. Garson (2007) described multiple regression analysis as a method that “can establish that a set of predictor variables explains a proportion of the variance in a criterion variable at a significant level (through a significance test of  $R^2$ ), and can establish the relative predictive importance of independent variables by comparing beta weights”. The multiple regression equation uses the multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ), which is the percentage of the variance in the criterion variable explained collectively by all of the predictor variables. Furthermore, multiple regression attempts to model the relationship between two or more explanatory variables and a response variable by fitting a linear equation to observed data (Garson, 2007).

Second, to test Hypothesis 2, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized. The MANOVA is an extension of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) in which main effects and interactions are assessed on a linear combination of the dependent variables. The MANOVA is used to give one overall test of the quality of the mean levels for several groups. The MANOVA cannot, however, tell where the differences in the groups lie; nor will the MANOVA tell you which variables are responsible for the differences in the mean levels (Carey, 1998). For the purposes of this study, the author would need to conduct a statistical test to differentiate among mean levels of the dependent variables across gender in order to ascertain significant differences on the

mean levels of sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction across gender.

### **Summary of Chapter Three**

In Chapter Three, a summary of the participant demographic characteristics in this study was provided, procedures for data collection were reviewed, information on the measures selected for data collection (including psychometric properties and sample questions) were provided, and also a justification for the data analyses that were utilized were provided. Chapter Four will provide an explanation of the results of this study, including the descriptive statistics obtained, as well as the results of the multiple regression analysis and the MANOVA.

## **Chapter Four**

### **RESULTS**

This chapter presents the findings generated by the data analysis process. In Chapter Four, the data analysis yielded results from the tests of the hypothesis that were performed.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

In Chapter Three – Methodology, descriptive statistics were provided on the data collected from participants including gender, age, academic college, and academic year. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Cronbach's alphas that were calculated for each scale in the study. For the current study, the internal consistency reliability criterion of .70 was chosen. In the social sciences, the widely accepted alpha level is .70 or higher for a set of items to be considered an internally consistent scale (Garson, 2002). Please note that the internal consistency reliabilities of each of the scales have met this accepted alpha level.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Alpha Reliabilities for All Scale Score Variables for the Entire Sample Separated by Gender*

Scale	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	Sk	Ku
Sense of Belonging					
Male	.861	2.17	.49	.703	2.54
Females	.819	2.13	.40	-.220	.279
Both	.840	2.15	.44	.322	1.82
Perceptions of Campus Climate					
Male	.799	2.15	.52	.289	.445
Female	.821	2.20	.54	.296	.175
Both	.809	2.18	.53	.289	.257
Witnessed Discrimination					
Male	.869	4.29	.66	-1.29	1.59
Female	.860	4.36	.69	-2.33	7.97
Both	.863	4.33	.67	-1.89	5.17
Experienced Discrimination					
Male	.883	4.45	.62	-1.33	1.25
Female	.869	4.61	.57	-3.04	12.04
Both	.878	4.55	.60	-2.16	5.86
Institutional Satisfaction					
Male	.870	2.73	.67	.012	1.16
Female	.897	2.71	.73	-.543	-.048
Both	.866	2.72	.70	-.347	.370

*Note:*  $N = 228$ ;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Sk = Skewness; Ku = Kurtosis.

### Tests that Data Met Assumptions of Normality

Normal variable distributions yield zero values of Skewness and Kurtosis, whereas Skewness values  $\geq |2|$  and Kurtosis values  $\geq |7|$  suggest problematic levels of nonnormality (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). The analyses of Skewness and Kurtosis, when considering both genders together, of sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction revealed a normal distribution (sense of belonging: Skewness = .322, Kurtosis = 1.82; perceptions of campus climate: Skewness = .289, Kurtosis = .257; witnessed discrimination: Skewness = -1.89, Kurtosis = 5.17; experienced discrimination: Skewness = -2.16, Kurtosis = 5.86; institutional satisfaction: Skewness = -.347, Kurtosis = .370). In sum, these findings suggest the data meets this assumption of normality.

Table 2 also highlights the Skewness and Kurtosis of each variable separated by gender. The analyses of Skewness and Kurtosis for males is as follows: sense of belonging: Skewness = .703, Kurtosis = 2.54; perceptions of campus climate: Skewness = .289, Kurtosis = .445; witnessed discrimination: Skewness = -1.29, Kurtosis = 1.59; experienced discrimination: Skewness = -1.33, Kurtosis = 1.25; institutional satisfaction: Skewness = .012, Kurtosis = 1.16. For females: sense of belonging: Skewness = -.220, Kurtosis = .279; perceptions of campus climate: Skewness = .296, Kurtosis = .175; witnessed discrimination: Skewness = -2.33, Kurtosis = 7.97; experienced discrimination: Skewness = -3.04, Kurtosis = 12.04; institutional satisfaction: Skewness = -.543, Kurtosis = -.048. The Skewness of witnessed and experienced discrimination for females is problematic because the values exceed the ranges given by Curran et al. (1996).

Likewise, the Kurtosis of experienced discrimination for females is problematic because the values exceed the ranges noted above.

### **Correlations of Dependent Variables and Independent Variables**

Prior to conducting the MANOVA, a series of Pearson correlations were performed between all of the dependent variables in order to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated with each other in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .60; Meyers, Gamst, & Gurarino, 2006). As shown in Table 3, a meaningful pattern of correlations was observed among most of the dependent variables. This suggests the appropriateness of a MANOVA. Additionally, the Box's M value of 13.23 was associated with a *p* value of .618, which was interpreted as non-significant based on Huberty and Petoskey's (2000) guideline ( $p < .005$ ). Thus, the covariance matrices between the groups were assumed to be equal for the purposes of the MANOVA.

Table 3

*Correlations of Dependent Variables and Independent Variables*


---

	Belonging	Campus Climate	Wit. Discrim.	Exp. Discrim.	Gender	Instit. Satis.
Belonging	--	.37**	.01	.000	-.04	.40**
Campus Climate		--	-.30**	-.16*	.43	.71**
Wit. Discrim.			--	.79**	.05	-.06
Exp. Discrim.				--	.14	.02
Gender					--	-.01
Instit. Satis.						--

---

*Note:* \*\* = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); \* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); Belonging = Sense of Belonging; Campus Climate = Perceptions of Campus Climate for diversity and diverse perspectives; Wit. Discrim. = Witnessed Discrimination; Exp. Discrim. = Experienced Discrimination; Instit. Satis. = Institutional Satisfaction.

### Standard Multiple Regression

A standard multiple regression was performed with institutional satisfaction as the dependent variable, and sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender as the independent variables. The analysis was found to be statistically significant  $F(5, 162) = 39.54, p < .001, R^2 = .55$ , indicating that 55% of the variance in institutional satisfaction was predicted by the independent variables. The regression equation for predicting institutional satisfaction from sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender was found to be  $y = -.434 + .192_{\text{belonging}} + .946_{\text{campusclimate}} + .128_{\text{witdis}} + .050_{\text{expdis}} - .046_{\text{gender}}$ . The variable of campus climate, as indexed by its statistically significant  $\beta$  value of .71, was shown to have the strongest relationship to institutional satisfaction. The variable sense of belonging, as indexed by its statistically significant  $\beta$  value of .40, was shown to have the next strongest relationship to institutional satisfaction.

Table 4

*Summary of Regression Analyses Showing the Amount of Unique Variance in Institutional Satisfaction across Sense of Belonging, Perceptions of Campus Climate, Witnessed and Experienced Discrimination, and Gender*

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	F	t	p
Institutional Satisfaction	.741	.550		39.54		
Sense of Belonging			.121		2.10	0.000
Campus Climate			.713		11.74	0.000
Witnessed Discrimination			.121		1.35	.180
Experienced Discrimination			.042		.49	.628
Gender			-.045		-.85	.398

*Note:* Belonging = Sense of Belonging; Campus Climate = Perceptions of Campus Climate for diversity and diverse perspectives; Wit. Discrimination = Witnessed Discrimination; Exp. Discrimination = Experienced Discrimination; Instit. Satisfaction = Institutional Satisfaction.

## **Multiple Analysis of Variance**

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the hypothesis that there would be one or more mean differences between the dependent variables sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, institutional satisfaction by gender (male, female). As shown in Table 5, findings revealed no significant omnibus difference by gender (Wilk's  $\lambda = .960$ ,  $F(5, 162) = 1.36$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Due to no significant differences found, no post hoc tests were conducted.

Table 5

*Significant Multivariate Effects (at  $p < .05$  level)*

Effects	Wilk's $\lambda$	<i>F</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>
Gender	.960	1.36	.24		162
Gender x Belonging		.203	.65	1	166
Gender x Campus Climate		.375	.54	1	166
Gender x Instit. Satisfaction		.006	.94	1	166
Gender x Wit. Discrimination		.193	.66	1	166
Gender x Exp. Discrimination		3.09	.08	1	166

*Note:* Belonging = Sense of Belonging; Campus Climate = Perceptions of Campus Climate for diversity and diverse perspectives; Wit. Discrimination = Witnessed Discrimination; Exp. Discrimination = Experienced Discrimination; Instit. Satisfaction = Institutional Satisfaction.

## Chapter Five DISCUSSION

Within the literature, the results of many studies highlight those complex factors that can result in the differing experiences of Black students enrolled in PWIs, and that have a measurable impact on African American students' academic lives (e.g., Brower & Ketterhagen (2004); Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007; Littleton, 2003; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010; Nelson-Laird, 2007; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Allen (1992) posits, "More must be known about what enables Black students to experience personal and academic success" (p. 41). More recently, Cokley (2003) has argued that there is a pervasive belief that many African American students possess negative attitudes toward school and achievement that are not conducive to their advancement. However he raises the question; *if this were the case, why would they continue to enroll in college?* These two authors pose questions surrounding what specific factors matter for Black students in high education, specifically those enrolled in predominately White institutions of study. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between psychosocial factors, environmental factors, and institutional satisfaction among Black students enrolled at PWIs. In this chapter, I will discuss the results from statistical analyses and share the implications of these results. I will then discuss recommendations for future research and practice and, lastly, conclude with limitations of the present study.

## Summary of Major Findings

### Descriptive Statistics

There were several important findings in this research study. First, the descriptive statistics give significant insight into the nature of the data collected. It is vital to look into what these values are representing regarding the data and the sample under study.

**Witnessed and Experienced Discrimination.** Regarding Skewness for witnessed and experienced discrimination, scores for both males and females were skewed in the negative direction, indicating asymmetrical data that clusters toward the positive end of the distribution. These results are indicative of students reporting they rarely witnessed or experienced discrimination. This finding is not consistent with the major findings across most of the research on this topic (e.g., Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Studies utilizing various methods (surveys, interview, and focus groups) have found that Black students consistently report experiencing and witnessing peers experiencing insensitive and discriminatory behaviors on PWI campuses (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Cabrera et al., 1999; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Henry, Butler, & West, 2010; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Additionally, both Witnessed Discrimination, and Experienced Discrimination were highly kurtotic for females (Kurtosis = 7.97, and 12.04, respectively). This indicates the data distribution is leptokurtic (i.e., more peaked than in a normal distribution), which signifies little variability in the responses of females regarding

witnessed or experienced discrimination. It should be noted there was not utilization of a control group, thus these reports cannot be compared to other majority groups.

Differences between the results of this study and the results of previous studies may have several explanations, which will need to be tested in future research. First, students in this study may not have experienced the need to meet social desirability constraints and choose to not fully disclose their experiences and witnessed accounts of discrimination on campus. This explanation could be attributed to the manner in which surveys were distributed and data were collected, which could have biased responses of the participants. Students were recruited via an invitation from the participating institution's Office of Measurement Services, and may have experienced some discomfort with reporting higher levels of discrimination to an office within the University. These reports could also be attributed to an anomaly in the data. Participants in this study could represent an anomaly in Black students attending PWIs with experiences that are not reflective of the students presented in the literature throughout Chapter Two. Finally, the data could represent the incremental changes that are lessening discrimination on a particular college campus.

### **Results from Inferential Statistics**

The first hypothesis was that Black student's sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate for diversity and diverse perceptions, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender would be predictive of their institutional satisfaction. Results indicated that the model was predictive of institutional satisfaction. This finding is consistent with much of the research on the importance of psychosocial

(Allen, 1992; Henry, Butler, & West, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008a, 2008b) and environmental factors (Harper, 2009; Pope, 2000) to the college experience for Black students. The findings of this study are important in establishing and reiterating the importance of exploring factors outside of academic gains when attempting to understand institutional satisfaction for Black students.

When looking at specific factors that were significant predictors of institutional satisfaction, a sense of belonging and perceptions of campus climate were found to account for unique variance. A sense of belonging for Black students has been shown to be highly related to important educational outcomes such as institutional satisfaction, and even further academic achievement, retention, and persistence to graduation (Rhee, 2008). This finding supports findings of prior studies, which highlight the importance of students feeling that they are important to their institutions as well as the importance of helping them not feel alienated (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Campus climate has been an important variable of interest in the research literature, especially when examining the academic and social outcomes of Black students because of the legacy of racism against Black students within educational institutions (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Research has outlined the impacts that negative and positive campus climates have on Black students (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Solorzano et al., 2002). For example, Miller et al. (2010) found statistical evidence that the level of an alienating, isolating, hostile, and less supportive campus negatively affects a student's overall satisfaction with their institutions. Additionally, Winkle-Wagner

(2015) revealed that when students have institutional support programs, an increased sense of belonging and a more positive campus climate is fostered. Whether the campus climate is negative or positive, the results of this study show perceptions of campus climate as a predictor of institutional satisfaction.

Conversely, as noted above, many studies asserted that discrimination was a key factor related to institutional satisfaction. Discriminatory experiences have been linked to lower satisfaction with, or commitment to, the institution of attendance (Cabrera et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996), the findings of this study show Black students indicating high levels of institutional satisfaction, sense of belonging, and campus climate; which could be explain their lower reports of witnessed and experienced discrimination. Students who believe they belong and experience a positive campus climate may feel this way due to low experience of discrimination.

The findings of this study did not indicate witnessed discrimination, nor experienced discrimination as providing significant unique variance to Black students' institutional satisfaction. This is likely because of the highly kurtotic nature of the variables, meaning that there was little variability in students' responses. It could also be that witnessed and experienced discrimination were more collinear, meaning that they were highly correlated with one another (at  $\alpha = .79$ ). In a case of multicollinearity, the predictive power of the model as a whole is not effected, but it is much more difficult to ascertain the unique variance contributed by individual predictors or about which predictors are redundant with other predictors (Hinkle, Wiersma, Jurs, 2002). While results of this study do not indicate witnessed or experienced discrimination as significant

predictors of institutional satisfaction, this does not mean that these variables are not important in empirical studies of satisfaction for Black students attending PWIs. CRT would assert that these variables are so much a part of the institutional fabric that they impact each variable, and thus it is not surprising that their unique variance may go undetected or that they are collinear with one another.

The second hypothesis, that there will be significant differences in Black students' sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction as a function of gender, yielded a non-significant result. Although research notes general disparities between black males and female regarding academic outcome variables like college graduation rates (Cohen & Nee, 2000), the majority of the research does not specifically discuss group differences regarding the variables within the current study.

### **Clinical Implications and Recommendations**

Taken together, the results of the current study have far-reaching implications for understanding the relationships among discrimination, campus climate, gender, and sense of belonging for Black students enrolled at PWIs. Considering the important findings of this current research, it is imperative that faculty members, student personnel professionals, and therapists at predominately White post-secondary academic institutions take into consideration the importance of building interventions that support Black students during their time at PWIs. The results of the current study, combined with theoretical literature, strongly reinforce the importance of an ongoing commitment to including the role of race when examining the experiences of Black students attending

PWIs. Utilizing CRT as a means to evaluate, research, and improve the understanding and effectiveness when creating interventions for Black students is needed in any efforts put forth to lessen effects within educational experiences. It is my belief that often, Black students are faced with the laborious task of creating their own rescue plan regarding ways to improve their satisfaction in their institution. With this assertion in mind, it was my intent to not belabor students with the commission to “save themselves” from the negative feelings and outcomes they experience.

First, consideration should be given toward assisting Black students with increasing their sense of belonging to their institutions and campuses. The creation of counter-spaces, places students can go where there are other Black students who may be experiencing like experiences on campus (e.g. Black Student Unions), should be created in various settings within the institutions. For instance, study groups formed for Black students in particular disciplines may be helpful for academic pursuits; while organizations such as Black Student Unions can aid in social endeavors. Several research investigations confirmed the importance of such spaces. For example, Museuse (2008) found that ethnic student organizations provided outlets for positive expression of students’ cultural identities, yet remained largely unrecognized by university administrators as resources for support and critical educational engagement. Furthermore, Grier-Reed (2008) conducted a qualitative study, and found that counter spaces have provided students at a Midwestern PWI with experiences of safety, connectedness, resilience, validation, empowerment, and a domicile on what was

sometimes described as a hostile environment by some students. Striving to develop and offer counter spaces for students at PWIs will likely prove to be a beneficial intervention.

Additionally, institutions making deliberate and concerted efforts to admit an increased number of Black students into PWIs in order to create a diverse environment where students' various views, perceptions, and differences are accepted will likely foster a sense of belonging that allows for satisfaction in chosen institution. “. . . one important step toward improving the campus climate is to increase the representation of people of color on campus” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998, pp. 286–287).

Further, findings supporting the importance of fostering a positive campus climate (in order to increase students satisfaction) indicate the need for more efforts to create a climate in which Black students perceive they are not at threat of negative risks. Receiving student involvement in the governing practices of the institution, such as prompting student feedback regarding policies and campus services, is a method for fostering a positive campus climate. By adding this to policy development and procedures, PWIs could circumvent the *Critique of Liberalism* tenet of CRT. Hearing the feedback of Black students through providing a medium for them to offer their responses regarding university events, policies, and services can help to alleviate tension (Chen, Ingram, & Davis, 2014).

Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) presented several questions for certain PWIs to explore. They also provided suggestions for helping PWIs diversify, such as consulting with other institutions to understand how they are successfully meeting the specific needs of their Black students. This study highlights the critical importance of understanding

what constitutes the challenges and successes that are experienced by Black students on PWI campuses. More knowledge of this could be used to create and develop interventions that would foster a sense of belonging and a positive campus climate.

Diversity workshops for faculty and staff may be useful in removing or buffering negative stereotypes and discrimination within the classroom and advisory relationships, while increasing a positive campus climate. Furthermore, faculty diversity trainings will likely be transformative, as much of the research indicated faculty and staff are important in aiding Black students' feelings of being supported, understood, and valued. Also, as aforementioned, an increase in Faculty and Staff of Color at predominately White institutions through intentional hiring practices and policies could be supportive in creating an environment where diversity is shown to be valued and important. Strayhorn (2008a) posits that Black students perceptions of negative climates are due to the lack of critical mass or sufficient pool of Black faculty who could be utilized as healthy role models. This action-step may convey the message of valuing diversity and supporting Black students, and that the university is intentional in creating a climate through the very positions that keep the institution operating.

Additionally, campus climate can also be influenced and transformed by the student body present on campus. Outreach through university counseling centers maybe present a helpful resource for the provision of psycho-educational material and workshops regarding racial sensitivity and bias. Education regarding ways to respond to racially discriminatory practices and actions can help foster an environment in which many of the situations Black students may encounter on a PWI campus are not ignored or

discounted. These outreach activities may cultivate dialogues concerning accountability and improved processes for navigating effective intercultural interactions.

Moreover, campus climate can be influenced by implementing courses that include discussions regarding developing the ability to be creative and flexible, authentic and equitable, and ways to communicate effectively across human differences. Likewise, Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) believe, “campuses must also provide stimulating courses covering historical, cultural, and social bases of diversity and community, and must create additional opportunities for students to interact across racial and other social differences” (p. 9).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research designed to better understand the complex interplay among psychosocial factors and environmental variables is necessary to understand how these variables affect Black students’ at PWIs sense of belonging, perceptions of discrimination, perceptions of campus climate, and satisfaction with their institutions. This section will discuss several implications for future research.

Although the current study provides insight regarding Black college students enrolled at a Midwestern PWI, future research employing a larger sample size would give further information regarding whether the results of this study reflected an accurate distribution of scores or if the distribution was based on under-sampling. Although the survey was sent to the full population of Black students ( $N = 1132$ ) at the university, the response rate was 21% leaving 79% of the population unresponsive. Studying the unresponsive 79% of the population may give more insight into the experiences of the

Black students. Perhaps, allowing the Office of Equity and Diversity to send the invitation for the survey students may be more apt to participate. Additionally, sampling across PWIs would illuminate institutional differences and discrepancies.

Furthermore, CRT asserts the importance of counter-storytelling narratives in examining various intersections of race and education for Black students enrolled at PWIs. The current study utilizes quantitative methods of analysis. Future research using qualitative methods and utilizing CRT's counter-storytelling method could contribute greatly to the understanding of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, occurrences of witnessed and experienced discrimination, and institutional satisfaction for Black students enrolled at PWIs. Collecting narrative data could help to illuminate the daily experiences of Black students. This could also give insight to the unexpected nature of the responses. In this way, student personnel professionals could develop interventions, practices, and policies to enhance Black student experiences at PWIs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study are these. Findings may be limited by less than adequate content validity (i.e., the extent to which a measure represents all facets of a given construct, and the extent to which items reflect the knowledge required for a given topic area) of the research instrument. Although witnessed and experienced discrimination have been widely used in the past, the terminology of 'microaggressions' has become a more common term used to describe experiences of black students (Solorzano et al., 2002). Failure to tap this potentially more familiar construct may have resulted in less

than adequate content validity, and thus the results of this study should be interpreted with caution.

There is some evidence to suggest that the assumption of response validity may have been violated, given that the results of this study are contradictory to the results of the accumulated body of research regarding Black students' experiences of discrimination (e.g., Harper, 2012; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Respondents may have not fully disclosed when presented with some items. This may have been prompted by participants' concerns about the anonymity of their responses given the characteristics of the testing situation.

Because the scale anchors for the Witnessed Discrimination and Experienced Discrimination Scales were not balanced (with 1 = Very Often and 5 = Never), there was a ceiling effect that could have biased the study results. Because of this instrument construction, there was a level above which variance in the independent variables of witnessed and experienced discrimination was no longer being measured, which effected the range of data that could have been gathered by responses to these scales. This limitation in the instrument's design could impair the determination of the central tendency in the data, and may have minimized the inferred effects of the independent variables.

Skewness and Kurtosis for witnessed and experienced discrimination, when examining females, was evidence that the statistical assumption of the normal distribution of variables may have been violated. Nevertheless, violations of this statistical

assumption could lead to an underestimation of relationships in the data, and thus the results of this study should be interpreted with cognizance of this consideration.

The sample was drawn from Black students in one predominately white academic institution. Thus, the results of this study may not be generalizable to all Black students attending PWIs.

### **Summary**

The current study sought to examine relationships among sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, gender, and institutional satisfaction. Also, the study sought to determine if there was any variance in the variables based on gender. Chapter One addressed the importance of including psychosocial and environmental variables when discussing the state of Black students enrolled at PWIs. Chapter Two expounded on this significance, as well as delved closer into examining literature focused on how sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, witnessed discrimination, experienced discrimination, and gender influence the experiences and the satisfaction of Black students at PWIs. In addition, Chapter Two highlighted the use of critical race theory (CRT) to examine race as a factor in academic research that explores the relationships of psychosocial, environmental, and outcomes from Black students attending PWIs. Chapter Three provided an overview of the participants in the study as well as the research methods employed to examine the hypotheses presented. Chapter Four discussed the relationships among variables utilizing statistical analyses to investigate the correlations and variance. Finally, Chapter Five discussed the major findings of this study. Results indicated that psychosocial factors

and environmental factors have a multivariate effect on the institutional satisfaction of Black students enrolled in higher education at the predominately White institution. In addition, the results indicated that there were no significant gender differences across psychosocial and environmental factors.

Despite noted limitations, this study represents an important contribution to the field's literature. It extends the understanding about the ways in which nonacademic variables, such as belonging, perceptions of campus climate, experiences with discrimination, and gender facilitate Black students' satisfaction with their institution and may provide clues to effective strategies for improving outcome variables such as satisfaction. Also, one of the important contributions to the field is the focus on the unique contributions of witnessed and experienced discrimination. Additionally, this study supported the utility of Critical Race Theory to illuminate experiences of race and racism in the exploration of Black students attending PWIs. Based on these findings, it is essential to provide analysis of factors important to Black students attending PWIs with a critical lens. Understanding factors that are unique to Black students will allow student personnel professionals, counselors, and academic officials, alike, to approach ways of building adaptive interventions within the context of how Black students perceive their experiences at predominately White institutions.

### **Conclusion**

The current study sought to explore, *what matters for Blacks students attending PWIs*, by examining sense of belonging, perceptions of campus climate, experiences of discrimination, gender, and institutional satisfaction. The findings of this study provide

information that is consistent throughout the noted literature regarding Black student outcomes. Feeling as though they matter and belong to their university, as well as to their campus environment, which they perceive to be positive and supportive, is highly predictive of satisfaction with their institution. Unexpectedly, the participants of this study reported lower experiences of discrimination than what has been discussed within the body of literature concerning Black students attending PWIs. However, when looking at the responses for sense of belonging and campus climate the participants indicated feelings of satisfaction which could be related to lowered witnessed and experienced discrimination. This finding is notable and will contribute to the field, however further exploration, possibly with qualitative data and counter-storytelling, would be beneficial to the literature regarding what Black students are experiencing at the PWI under study. It is my hope that these findings will contribute to the existing body of literature regarding the experiences of Black students at PWIs with the intent of highlighting the much needed interventions will be created to assist, support, and enhance experiences of these students.

## References

- Adams, G. & Salter, P. S. (2011). A critical race psychology is not yet born. *Connecticut Law Review*, 43, 1355-1377.
- Allen, W. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominately White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 26-44.
- Allen, W. R. (1985). Black student, White campus: Structural, interpersonal, and psychological correlates of success. *Journal of Negro Education*, 54, 134-147.
- Allen, W. R. (1988). Black students in U.S. higher education: Toward improved access, adjustment, and achievement. *Urban Review*, 20, 165–188.
- Allen, W. R., Epps, E.G., & Haniff, N.Z. (Eds.). (1991). *College in black and white: African American students in predominately white and in historically black public universities*. Albany: State University New York Press.
- Ancis, J. R., Sedlacek, W. E., and Mohr, J. J. (2000). Student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. *Journal of Counseling Development*, 78, 180-185.
- Anonymous. (1999). The ominous gender gap in African American higher education. *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 23, 6-9.
- Antonovics, K., & Backes, B. (2014). The effect of banning affirmative action on college admissions policies and student quality. *Journal of Human Resources*, 49, 295-322.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Astin, A. W., & Oseguera, L. (2005). *Degree attainment rates at American colleges and universities* (rev. ed.). Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.
- Bauer, L. (Ed.), (1998). *Campus climate: Understanding the critical components of today's colleges and universities* (New directions for institutional research, no. 98). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497–529.
- Bell, D. A. (1987). *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bjerklie, D. (2001, July 30). In brief: Separate and unequal. *Time*, p. 58.
- Bollen, K. A. & Hoyle, R. H. (1990). Perceived cohesion: A conceptual and empirical examination. *Social Forces*, *69*, 479-504.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). *Racism without racists: Colorblind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Braxton, J. M., Milem, J. F., & Sullivan, A. S. (2000). The influence of active learning on the college student departure process: Toward a revision of Tinto's theory. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *71*, 569-590.
- Brower, A. M., & Ketterhagen, A. (2004). Is there an inherent mismatch between how

Black and White students expect to succeed in college and what their colleges expect from them? *Journal of Social Issues*, 60, 95-116. doi:10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00101.x

Brown, T. N. (2003). Critical race theory speaks to the sociology of mental health: Mental health problems linked to racial stratification. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44, 292–301.

Brown, T. N. (2008). Race, racism, and mental health: Elaboration of Critical Race Theory's contribution to the sociology of mental health. *Contemporary Justice Review: Issues in Criminal, Social, and Restorative Justice*, 11, 53-62.

Burkard, A. W., & Knox, S. (2004). Effect of therapist color-blindness on empathy and attributions in cross-cultural counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51, 387–397.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White students and African American students. *Journal of Higher Education*, 70, 134–160.

Calmore, J. (1992). Critical race theory, Archie Shepp, and fire music: Securing an authentic intellectual life in a multicultural world. *Southern California Law Review*, 65, 2129-2231.

Carey, G. (1998). Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA): (Volume 1) Theory. <http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/~carey/p7291dir/handouts/manova1.pdf>. Retrieved March 3, 2015.

- Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans. A biopsychosocial model. *American Psychologist, 54*, 805-816.
- Chavous, T. M., Harris, A., Rivas, D., Helaire, L., & Green, L. (2004). Racial stereotypes and gender in context: African Americans at predominately Black and predominately White colleges. *Sex Roles, 51*, 1-16.
- Chen, D., Ingram, T., & Davis, L. (2014). Bridging student engagement and satisfaction: A comparison between historically Black colleges and universities and predominately White institutions. *Journal of Negro Education, 83*, 565-579.
- Cohen, C. & Nee, C. (2000). Sex differentials in African American communities. *American Behavioral Scientist, 43*, 1159-1206.
- Cokley, K. (2000). An investigation of academic self-concept and its relationship to academic achievement in African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*, 148-164.
- Cokley, K. O. (2003). What do we know about the motivation of African American students? Challenging the “anti-intellectual” myth. *Harvard Educational Review, 73*, 524-558.
- Cross, T., & Slater, R. B. (2004). The persisting racial gap in college student graduation rates. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 45*, 77-85.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 139-167*.

- Crenshaw, K. W. (1993). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*, 1241-1299.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New Press.
- Curran, P. J., West, S. G., & Finch, J. F. (1996). The robustness of test statistics to nonnormality and specification error in confirmatory factor analysis. *Psychological Methods*, *1*, 16–29.
- Cuyjet, M. J. (1997). African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college. New directions for student services* (No. 80, pp. 5-16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- D'Augelli, A. R., & Hershberger, S. L. (1993). African American undergraduates on a predominantly white campus: Academic factors, social networks and campus climate. *Journal of Negro Education*, *62*, 67–81.
- Davis, M., Dias-Bowie, Y., Greenberg, K., Klukken, G., Pollio, H. R., Thomas, S. P., & Thompson, C. L. (2004). “A fly in the buttermilk”: Descriptions of university life by successful Black undergraduate students at a predominately White southeastern university. *The Journal of Higher education*, *75*, 420-445. doi: 10.1353/jhe.2004.0018
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there: Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, *33*, 26-31.
- Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple

University Press.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (1993). Critical Race Theory: An Annotated Bibliography.

*Virginia Law Review*, 79, 461–516.

Ehrlich, H. J. (1990). *Campus ethnoviolence: The policy options* (Institute Report No. 4).

College Park, MD: National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence.

Elliott, K. M., & Healy, M. A. (2001). Key factors influencing student satisfaction related to recruitment and retention. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 10, 1-11.

Elliott, K. M., & Shin, D. (2002). Student satisfaction: An alternative approach to assessing this important concept. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 24, 197-209.

Feagin, J., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges*. Routledge: New York.

Fleming, J. (1981). Stress and satisfaction in college years of Black students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 50, 307-318.

Fleming, J. (1984). *Blacks in college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Flowers, L. A. (2004). Examining the effects of student involvement on African American college student development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, 633-654.

Ford, D. Y. (1996). *Reversing underachievement among gifted Black students: Promising practices and programs*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the

- burden of 'acting White.' *The Urban Review*, 18, 176-206.
- Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 75, 203-220.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2001). Facing stereotypes: A case study of Black students On a White campus. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42, 420-429.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25, 315-330. doi: 10.1353/rhe.2002.0012
- Garson, G. D. (2002). *Guide to writing empirical papers, theses, and dissertations*. New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Greer, T. M., & Chwalisz, K. (2007). Minority-related stressors and coping processes among African American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 388-404. doi:10.1353/csd.2007.0037
- Grier-Reed, T. L. (2010). The African-American Student Network: Creating sanctuaries and counter spaces for coping with racial microaggressions in higher education settings. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling Education and Development*, 49, 181-188.
- Grier-Reed, T. L., Ehlert, J., & Dade, S. (2011). Profiling the African American student network. *The Learning Assistance Review*, 16, 21-30.
- Grier-Reed, T. L., Madyun, N. H., & Buckley, C. G. (2008). Low Black student retention

- on a predominantly White campus: Two faculty respond with the African American Student Network. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49, 476-485.
- Guiffrida, D. A. (2006). Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory. *The Review of Higher Education*, 29, 451-472.
- Guiffrida, D. A., & Douthit, K. Z. (2010). The Black student experience at predominately White colleges: Implications for school and college counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 88, 311-318.
- Guloyan, E. (1986). An examination of White and non-White attitudes of university freshmen as they relate to attrition. *College Student Journal*, 20, 396-402.
- Gunnings, B. B. (1982). Stress and the minority student on a predominantly White campus. *Journal of Non-White Concerns*, 10, 11-16.
- Gurin, P., & Epps, E. G. (1975). *Black consciousness, identity and achievement: A study of students in historically Black colleges*. New York: Wiley Press.
- Hamilton, K. (2006). Toxic campus climates. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 23, 32-35.
- Hagerty, B. M. K., Lynch-Saucer, J., Patusky, K., Bouwsema, M., & Collier, P. (1992). Sense of belonging: A vital mental health concept. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 6, 172-177.
- Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implications for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70, 42-57.

- Harris, C. I. (1993). Critical characteristics of Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, 1709-1791.
- Harper, S. R. (2009). Institutional seriousness concerning Black male student engagement: Necessary conditions and collaborative partnerships. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 137-156). New York: Routledge.
- Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education*, 36, 9-29.  
doi:10.1353/rhe.2012.0047.
- Harper, S. R. & Davis, C. H. (2010). They (don't) care about education: A counternarrative of Black male students' responses to inequitable schooling. *Educational Foundations*, 26, 103-120.
- Harper, S. R., Davis, R. J., Jones, D. E., McGowan, B. L., Ingram, T. N., & Platt, C. S. (2011). Race and racism in the experiences of Black male resident assistants at predominately White universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52, 180-200.
- Hausmann, L. R. M., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and White first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 48, 803-839.
- Henry, W. J., Butler, D. M., West, N. M. (2011-2012). Things are not as rosy as they

- seem: Psychosocial issues of contemporary black college women. *Journal College Student Retention, 13*, 137-153.
- Hinkle, D., Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. (2002). *Applied statistics: For the behavioral sciences*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection, 31*, 53-59.
- Hoggard, L. S., Byrd, C. M., & Sellers, R. M. (2012). Comparison of African American college students' coping with racially and nonracially stressful events. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*, 329-339.
- Huberty, C. J., & Petoskey, M. D. (2000). Multivariate analysis of variance and covariance. In H. Tinsley and S. Brown (Eds.) *Handbook of applied multivariate statistics and mathematical modeling*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*, 324-345.
- Hurtado, S., & Guillermo-Wann, C. (2013). *Diverse learning environments: Assessing and creating conditions for student success - Final report to the Ford Foundation*. University of California, Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pedersen, A. R., & Allen, W. R. (1999). *Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 26. Washington, DC: The George Washington University.

- Jay, G. M., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1991). Social support and adjustment to university life: A comparison of African-American and White freshmen. *Journal of Community Psychology, 19*, 95-108.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T. S., Cervero, R. M., & Bowles, T. A. (2008). Lean on me: The support experiences of Black graduate students. *Journal of Negro Education, 77*, 365-381.
- Kearney, L. K., Draper, M., & Baron, A. (2005). Counseling utilization by ethnic minority college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 11*, 272–285.
- Kimbrough, W. M., & Harper, S. R. (2006). African American men at historically Black colleges and universities: Different environments, similar challenges. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college* (pp. 189-209). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). What matters to student success: A review of the literature (Commissioned report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success). Retrieved from: [nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh\\_Team\\_Report.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh_Team_Report.pdf)
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). The evolving role of critical race theory in educational scholarship. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*, 115-119.
- Ladson- Billings, G. (2010). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice

- field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 7-24. doi:10.1080/095183998236863
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-68.
- Lett, D. F. & Wright, J. V. (2003). Psychological barriers associated with matriculation of African American students in predominately white institutions. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 30, 189-196.
- Littleton, R. A. (2003). Community among African American students on small predominantly white campuses: The unforeseen “minority within a minority” experience. *NASPA Journal*, 40, 83-104
- Matsuda, M. (1991). Voices of America: Accent, anti-discrimination law, and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100, 1329-1407.
- Meyers, L. S., Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. (2006). *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.
- McDowell, T. (2010). Exploring the racial experience of therapists in training: A critical race theory perspective. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 32, 305-324. doi:10.1080/01926180490454791
- Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonio, A. L. (2005). *Making diversity work on campus: A research based perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Miller, B., & Sujitparapitaya, S. (2010). Campus climate in the twenty-first century:

- Estimating perceptions of discrimination at a racially mixed institution, 1994-2006. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 145, 29-52. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ir.321>
- Museus, S. D. (2008). The role of ethnic student organizations in fostering African American and Asian American students' cultural adjustment and membership at predominantly white institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49, 568-586. doi:10.1353/csd.0.0039
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Fast facts: Degrees conferred by sex and race*. Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>
- Nelson-Laird, T. F., Bridges, B. K., Morelon-Quainoo, C. L., Williams, J. M., & Holmes, M. S. (2007). African American and Hispanic student engagement at minority serving and predominantly white institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 39-56. doi:10.1353/csd.2007.0005
- Nettles, M. (Ed.). (1988). *Toward black undergraduate student equality in American higher education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1996). The role of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on the adjustment of minority students to college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67, 119-148.
- Park, J. J. (2009). Are we satisfied? A look at student satisfaction with the diversity at traditionally White institutions. *Review of Higher Education*, 32, 291-320. doi:10.1353/rhe.0.0071
- Patitu, C. L. (2000). College choice and satisfaction level of African American male

- college students. *Journal of African American Men*, 5, 71-92.
- Pascarella, E. T. (1980). Student-faculty informal contact and college outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 50, 545-595.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pollard, D. S. (1993). Gender, achievement, and African-American students' perceptions of their school experience. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 341-356.
- Pope, R. L. (2000). The relationship between psychosocial development and racial identity of college students of color. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 302-312.
- Rankin, S. R. & Reason, R. D. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of color and white students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46, 43-61.
- Rhee, B. (2008). Institutional climate and student departure: A multinomial multilevel modeling approach. *The Review of Higher Education*, 31, 161-183.
- Rodgers, K. A. & Summers, J. J. (2008). African American students at predominantly White institutions: A motivational and self-systems approach to understanding retention. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 171-190.
- Scott, L. (2004). Correlates of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences among African American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27, 123-137.
- Schwitzer, A. M., Griffin, O. T., Ancis, J. R., & Thomas, C. R. (1999). Social adjustment

- experiences of African American college students. *Journal of College & Development*, 77, 189-204.
- Sellers, R. M., Morgan, L., & Brown, T. N. (2001). A multidimensional approach to racial identity: Implications for African American children. In A. Neal-Barnett (Ed.), *Forging links: Clinical-developmental perspectives on African American children* (pp. 23–56). West Port, CT: Praeger.
- Shakhnarovich, G., Darrell, T., & Indyk, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Nearest-neighbor methods in learning and vision: Theory and practice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Smith, D. H. (1981). Social and academic environments of Black students on White campuses. *Journal of Negro Education*, 50, 299-306.
- Solorzano, D. G., Allen, W. R., & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: Racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California Berkeley. *Chicano Latino Law Review*, 23, 15–112.
- Solorzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 60-73.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 23-44.
- Somekh, B. & Lewin, C. (2011). *Theory and methods in social research (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. London: Sage Publications.
- Steele, C. M. (2000, February). “Stereotype threat” and Black college students. *AAHEA Bulletin*, 52, 3-6.

- Strayhorn, T.L. (2008a). The role of supportive relationships in facilitating African American males' success in college. *NASPA Journal*, 45, 26-48.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2008b). Fittin' in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging for Black men at predominately white institutions? *NASPA Journal*, 45, 501-527.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33, 307-322.
- Swail, W. S., Redd, K. E., & Perna, L. W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education report No. 2. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd Ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago.
- Trahan, D. P. & Lemberger, M. E. (2014). Critical race theory as a decisional framework for ethical counseling of African American clients. *Counseling and Values*, 59, 112-124.
- UCLA School of Public Affairs. (2012). *What is Critical Race Theory?* Retrieved from: <https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/>
- Walton, G. M. & Carr, P. B. (2011). Do I belong? How negative intellectual stereotypes

- undermine people's sense of social belonging in school and how to fix it. In M. Inzlicht and T. Schmader (Eds.), *Stereotype threat: Theory, processes, and application* (pp. 89-106). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Walton, G. M. & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A questions of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 82-96.
- Wang, Y. (2008, October 31). The effects of cumulative social capital on job outcomes of college graduates. (Doctoral dissertation). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA.
- Willie, S. S. (2003). *Acting black: College, identity, and the performance of race*. London: Routledge.
- Winkle-Wagner, R. (2015). Having their lives narrowed down? The state of Black women's college success. *Review of Educational Research*, 85, 171-204.

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**ELECTRONIC INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Appendix A**  
**Electronic Informed Consent Form**

**Consent Form**  
**Social Network Foundations of Academic Success**

You are invited to be in a research study of social networks and academic success. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student at the University of Minnesota. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This research is being conducted by: Tabitha Grier-Reed, Associate Professor in the Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning at the University of Minnesota.

***Background Information***

The purpose of this study is to explore how students' social networks connect to perceptions of institutional climate and educational outcomes. We all know that relationships matter. The aim of this research is to better understand how relationships or students' social networks make a difference to their educational outcomes.

***Procedures***

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do two things:

1. Complete an online survey focused on your future plans, social networks, college experience, and personal background. This should take about 15-20 minutes.
2. Allow us to track your education at your University over the next 4 years or until you graduate. This includes your:
  - GPA, High School Rank/ACT score, & College Major Credits Completed & Academic Standing (e.g., sophomore, junior, senior) And, whether you have reenrolled or graduated

***Risks and Benefits of being in the Study***

The study has minimal risks: To conduct this research we will access your private student records, but all data we use will be stripped of personal identifiers so there will be no way to identify an individual student in any of the papers we present or publish. In addition, some survey questions will ask about sensitive topics such as whether you have experienced discrimination. This may be uncomfortable.

***Compensation***

The first 500 students to complete this survey will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

***Confidentiality***

A de-identified report will be made public at the end of our study, but we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject in any sort of report we

might publish or make public. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

***Voluntary Nature of the Study***

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

***Contacts and Questions***

The researchers conducting this study are: Tabitha Grier-Reed, Ph.D., L. P., Associate Professor and Amy Barton, MA student in the Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Grier-Reed at 258 Burton Hall, 612-624-2089, grier001@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

What questions do you have about this project? Please email any questions you have about this research to grier001@umn.edu or fjel0032@umn.edu before consenting to participate in this research.

**Statement of Consent:** By agreeing to participate below you are indicating that: you are at least 18 years of age; you are a University student; you have read and comprehend the informed consent; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

- I consent to participate in this project

**APPENDIX B**

**LIST OF VARIABLES AND CONSTRUCTS**

## Appendix B

### List of Variables and Constructs

#### Variable 1: Sense of Belonging

**Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*Response Categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*

It will take me longer to graduate than I had planned  
Faculty empower me to learn here  
I see myself as a part of the campus community  
At least one staff member has taken an interest in my development  
Faculty believe in my potential to succeed academically  
I feel that I am a member of this college  
Staff encourage me to get involved in campus activities  
I may have to choose between financially supporting my family and going to college  
If asked, I would recommend this college to others  
Staff recognize my achievements  
At least one faculty member has taken an interest in my development  
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus  
I am interested in seeking information about current social and political issues  
Faculty encourage me to meet with them after or outside of class  
Faculty show concern about my progress  
People in my community are counting on me to do well in college

#### Variable 2: Perceptions of Campus Climate

**Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. This college:**

*Response Categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*

Encourages students to have a public voice and share their ideas openly  
Has a long-standing commitment to diversity  
Accurately reflects the diversity of its student body in publications (e.g., brochures, website)  
Appreciates differences in sexual orientation  
Promotes the appreciation of cultural differences  
Has campus administrators who regularly speak about the value of diversity  
Has a lot of racial tension  
Provides the financial support I need to stay enrolled

### **Variable 3: Experience of Witnessed Discrimination**

**Please indicate how often at this college you have:**

*Response Categories: Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never*

Witnessed discrimination  
Reported an incident of discrimination to a campus authority  
Witnessed sexual harassment  
Reported an incident of sexual harassment to a campus authority  
Heard insensitive or disparaging racial remarks from students  
Heard insensitive or disparaging racial remarks from faculty  
Heard insensitive or disparaging racial remarks from staff

### **Variable 4: Experienced Discrimination**

**Please indicate how often you have personally experienced the following forms of bias/harassment/discrimination while at this college:**

*Response Categories: Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Never*

Verbal comments  
Written comments (e.g., emails, texts, writing on walls)  
Exclusion (e.g., from gatherings, events)  
Offensive visual images or items  
Threats of physical violence  
Physical assaults or injuries  
Anonymous phone calls  
Damage to personal property

### **Variable 5: Institutional Satisfaction**

**Please rate your satisfaction with this college in each area:**

*Response Categories: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied*

Overall sense of community among students  
Racial/ethnic diversity of the faculty  
Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body  
Racial/ethnic diversity of the staff  
Interactions among different racial/ethnic groups  
Atmosphere for political differences  
Atmosphere for religious differences  
Atmosphere for difference in sexual orientation  
Administrative response to incidents of discrimination  
Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs