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Mentoring African American Students at a Predominantly White Institution: Its Relationship to Academic Performance, Persistence, and Retention

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

MENTORING AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE

INSTITUTION: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, PERSISTENCE,

AND RETENTION

BY:

SUNDRA D. KINCEY

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ABSTRACT

This research study explored the experiences of African American seniors attending a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States to determine if a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance. The primary focus of the research was on whether mentoring enhanced or impacted the success of African American students on a predominantly White campus. Tinto's Model of Retention was used as a framework to provide further understanding of the role of mentoring and persistence for African American college students.

The following questions guided the inquiry: (1) What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, (2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, and (3) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

Six major categories emerged from the data on factors related to persistence: (1) isolation, (2) faculty-student interaction, (3) family relationships, (4) student involvement, (5) peer interaction, and (6) degree attainment. The research revealed that students perceived mentoring to be beneficial in their growth and that race of the mentor was a contributing factor in the development of the relationship. It was determined that students who received mentoring had a higher grade point average compared to students who did not. Implications of this research can be used in future studies to explore how students choose to utilize available services and seek mentors for support as well as for practitioners in designing programs to ensure success of minority students.

CHAPTER ONE

Increasing the effectiveness of postsecondary education by understanding and improving the factors that predict academic success and retention of African American students remains an important issue in our society. Mentoring has been identified by several researchers as a positive factor in the retention and completion rates for students attending postsecondary institutions (Blackwell, 1989; Faison, 1996; Lee, 1999). Faison (1996) says that successful mentoring experiences are based on participants sharing common goals, perceptions and worldviews. However, Davis (1994) believes that many African American students at predominantly White institutions (PWI) of higher education see their relationships with faculty members and peers as negative. He states that these students tend to avoid interaction with faculty outside of the classroom. They also rarely attend campus events sponsored by African American organizations and are generally not socially active on campus. In their isolation, they perceive the university to be less supportive of their interests (Davis, 1994).

On the other hand, Davis (1994) reports that those students that seem to be doing well academically appear to have more interaction with the faculty; and they also have more positive experiences on campus. Therefore, these students find their institutions to be generally supportive of their educational endeavors. Consequently, they seem to make a greater effort to interact with their professors. In turn, the professors seem to respond more openly and actively to students with whom they have had informal contact outside of class (Davis, 1994); thus creating a more positive relationship for the faculty member and student which could possibly lead to greater retention of the students.

According to Faison (1996), many African American students report the need to develop a strong tie with an African American faculty member. The students perceive that African American faculty understand their unique needs and are often culturally and socially different from their White faculty counterparts. The similarities found between the African American student and African American mentor may serve as a foundation for developing effective communication and trust so that the relationship can be sustained over time (Faison, 1996).

Lee (1999) states that race helps to facilitate this bond between the mentor and mentee. However, same-race matches for mentors and mentees may pose a problem at predominantly White institutions where there is a paucity of African American faculty to mentor African American students. Therefore, finding a mentor may be difficult for African American students

when they are looking for role models who possess the skills and qualities they desire, as well as someone they can interact with on a personal level when seeking guidance. It may be difficult for African American students because they may subconsciously or consciously seek and choose relationships with individuals who have characteristics similar to them.

This study explored the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students attending a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States to determine if a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance. Factors that contributed to persistence for African American undergraduate seniors were examined. The focus of the research was on whether participation in a mentoring relationship enhanced the success of African American students on a predominantly White campus.

Statement of the Problem

Although colleges and universities have been racially integrated for decades, there continues to be a disparity between the graduation rates of African American students and White students. African American students who attend predominantly White institutions are faced with a challenging task. They are expected to enter many colleges and universities that were once closed to African Americans fifty years ago and expected to matriculate and be prepared to enter graduate schools or embark upon careers in the world of work. These expectations create unique challenges for African American students (Ellis, 1997; Williams, 1999; Furr, 2002).

In the past, the examination of the success of African American students in higher education has relied on two types of comparisons – comparison of African American students in predominantly White institutions with African American students in historically Black institutions, or a comparison of African American students with White students at a predominantly White institution (Furr, 2002). Fleming (1984) found that each of these approaches provided valuable information concerning factors related to retention. African American students have reported that the environment of predominantly White institutions can be more alienating than the environment at historically Black institutions (Loo & Rolinson, 1986; Steward, Jackson, & Jackson, 1990; Suen, 1983). Patterns of intellectual development were also consistently more positive for African American students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) than for African American students at PWIs (Fleming, 1984).

Therefore, while student retention is an important issue in general, retention of underrepresented populations is a concern needing further examination. Because retention

patterns and factors differ among subpopulations of students, it is important to examine the factors associated with the retention of each group in order to develop effective intervention strategies. For example in Furr's 2002 study, she examined the factors associated with the retention of African American students at a predominantly White university.

Results from the study showed that 97% of African American students were retained after one semester compared with 92% of White students. By the end of four semesters, those numbers changed to 68% African American students being retained compared with 72% of White students. Some of the factors that led to the lower attrition rates for African American students included family income, need for financial aid, intention to work for more than 20 hours, extent of work once classes began, and the inaccurate perception that the extent of work does not interfere with academic performance. Furr (2002) also found that involvement in multicultural experiences had a positive relationship with retention; whereas experiencing situations in which a student did not feel valued had a negative relationship.

Furr's (2002) findings demonstrate there are a number of factors related to the persistence of African American students and these factors can be identified at several points prior to and early in the university experience. Taken collectively, they represent measurable warning signs for universities to become cognizant of when working with African American students (Furr, 2002). This study examined one potential approach, mentoring, as a means to reduce high attrition and low completion rates for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution.

Purpose of the Study

The current study explored in further detail the topic of mentoring as it relates to retention and academic success for African American undergraduates on a predominantly White college campus. Specifically, the study examined the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate seniors attending a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States to determine if a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance. Factors that contributed to persistence for this select group of students were examined. The focus of the research was on whether participation in a mentoring relationship enhanced or impacted the success of African American students on a predominantly White campus.

Particular attention was given to the experiences and outcomes of mentoring relationships and how these experiences may have resulted in increased academic performance and the students' decision to stay in school. The Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale (RMES) designed to assess mentoring experiences and its impact on academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution was used. The RMES assessed both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the mentoring relationship. Accordingly, the following questions guided the inquiry:

(1) What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution,

(2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, and

(3) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

Operational Definitions

The literature on mentoring has repeatedly called attention to the fact that there is no single definition of mentoring widely accepted by those who practice mentoring, or by those who study it. According to Faison (1996), mentoring is an intentional, structured relationship that can be long-term in nature and often uses the student's graduation as a transition, or even, an ending point. Today, the term mentor can be used to describe a person who leads through guidance. A mentor can be an adviser, a supporter, a tutor, a supervisor, a sponsor, and/or a role model (Faison, 1996). For an undergraduate student, the persons who most often take on this role would likely be faculty members who teach the classes in which the undergraduate enrolls, higher-level administrators within the institution, and academic advisors.

For this particular study two definitions of mentoring, one by Blackwell (1989) and the other by Lee (1999) were used. Blackwell (1989) conducted an examination of the interactions between students of color and both minority and non-minority faculty from a mentoring perspective. In this study, mentoring was defined as "a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige, instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as program participants" (p. 9).

Making clear distinctions between the terms "role-model" and "mentor", Blackwell (1989) also identified a series of functions that mentors perform in their interactions with

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protégés; training, stimulating the acquisition of knowledge, providing educational information, providing emotional support and encouragement, socializing protégés to their intended profession, facilitating an understanding of the educational bureaucracy, inculcating work values and ethics, providing informal instruction on interpersonal relations, building self-esteem and motivation, and monitoring protégé performance.

In Lee's (1999) study on *Striving toward effective retention: The effect of race on mentoring African American students*, she defined mentoring as "a relationship between a senior person (mentor) who knows and understands the culture that a junior person (mentee) wishes to enter and participate in successfully" (p.29). The mentor guides the development of the junior person, thereby enhancing the chances that the junior person will succeed. The senior person in the relationship is determined by age, experience, position, or education, and takes on a teaching and nurturing role to the junior person.

Taking from Blackwell (1989) and Lee (1999), the followings terms will be used and are defined below:

1. Mentoring - a relationship between a senior person (mentor) who knows and understands the culture that a junior person (mentee) wishes to enter and participate in successfully

2. Mentor – a senior person or person of superior rank who knows and understands the culture (faculty, administrators, or staff) and chooses to instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of a junior person

3. Mentee – recipient of instruction, guidance, and counseling from a senior person for professional development towards one's educational or career attainment

4. Mentoring Experience – students' subjective experience of a relationship between themselves and a senior person and their perception of the value and impact of the relationship on academic achievement and retention

5. Academic Performance – measured by student's cumulative grade point average

6. Retention – matriculation through the senior year at a four-year institution based on events and activities that contributed to persistence for African American students at a predominantly White institution

Significance of the Study

The results of the study were presented in an effort to better understand and identify various aspects of the mentoring process in the context of African American undergraduate students' experiences at a predominantly White institution. Its implications contributed to the knowledge of mentoring for special populations of college students, expand the research base in this area of study, and assist college administrators and faculty to design effective retention programs using mentoring that may contribute to academic success.

Theoretical Framework

The mentoring experiences of African American students enrolled at PWIs and the impact of race on the relationship were examined through the theoretical lens of academic and social integration, a model that has had significant impact on retention research in higher education. The concept of academic and social integration was first introduced by Vincent Tinto (1987, 1993) in his quantitative research study on college student attrition. Tinto developed a theoretical model of student retention (Figure 1) that is still a popular conceptualization of the attrition phenomena in higher education. Tinto's (1993) research helped to identify critical factors underlying student persistence in college and academic success. In his analysis, Tinto moves beyond past research that emphasized individual student attributes; and examined factors relating to what might be called "institutional culture" — i.e., the academic and social environment of each college, such as faculty-student interactions, student-student interactions, academic interactions in the classroom, the intellectual and social ethos outside the classroom, student support services, etc. Many of these factors may be linked to both formal and informal mentoring relationships.

Tinto viewed colleges and universities as organizations composed of two interacting systems: an academic system and a social system. He said that student retention results from a combination of students' entering characteristics, their commitment to the institution, their commitment to goals and their academic and social experiences in college. The core of the model is the process of students' academic and social integration into the campus environment. Primarily utilizing White college students as his study population, Tinto (1993) found that sufficient levels of academic and social integration must occur if undergraduate students were to matriculate successfully through graduation.

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Tinto (1993) defined academic integration as the degree to which students identified with the institution's academic requirements and effectively utilized tutorial and other programs that provided academic assistance. He defined social integration as the degree to which students identified with the social characteristics of the institution. Peer interaction, social adjustment and interaction within the university were the primary tests associated with social integration. To the extent that undergraduate students met the criteria associated with academic and social integration, Tinto (1993) argued that students would likely persist through graduation.

In Tinto's (1993) analysis of why students either leave college or persist to graduation, he identified the key role of faculty and peer interactions and their impact on students. According to Tinto, faculty, more than any other group, represented the primary intellectual orientation of the institution. Faculty actions, both in and outside of the classroom, provided the standards in which individuals judged the intellectual ethos of the institution. The classrooms, the hallways, and the offices of the institution become testing grounds for student judgment as to the intellectual character and worth of the college experience.

Tinto (1993) emphasized that frequent contact with the faculty appeared to be a particularly important element for high student persistence rates in colleges. Persistence was even greater when that contact extended beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom to the various informal settings which characterize social life. Those encounters that went beyond just the formalities of academic work to broader intellectual and social issues and which were seen by students as warm and rewarding appeared to be strongly associated with continued persistence. Moreover, faculty behavior within the classroom often served as important precursors to subsequent contact with students.

Classroom behaviors also influenced student perceptions as to the receptivity of faculty to further student contacts outside the classroom. Thus, according to Tinto, "it is of little surprise to discover that institutions with low rates of student retention are those in which students generally report low rates of student-faculty contact" (p. 58). Overall, Tinto concluded that student academic success and their intellectual and social development were greatest in those universities where students interacted with both faculty and student peers. This included formal and informal mentoring relationships.

Tinto's summary of educational research also highlighted the importance of having a community of mentors. In his research, Tinto (1993) emphasized the role that supportive

relationships played in preventing and reducing the harmful effects of stress and enhancing individuals' ability to cope effectively with stress in specific social settings. He stated that the establishment of relationships with faculty, peers, and other significant persons enabled students to better cope with the demands of the college environment, and this, in turn, had positive impacts upon students' academic success. These research findings point to the importance of collaborative effect among faculty, administrators, and staff across the campus.

As seen in Tinto's model, successful adjustment is in part a function of whether students feel they belong ---socially and academically--- and their ability to establish connections between themselves and others within the institution. As part of this process, academic adjustment is strongly influenced by academic performance as well as by interactions with faculty and staff. Whatever the reason for staying or leaving, Tinto (1993) says that it is important to intervene in students' lives if we want to increase retention. The intervention used within this study was the concept of mentoring as it related to retention and factors that contributed to persistence and degree completion for African American seniors enrolled at a PWI and whether the mentoring experiences had a significant impact on academic performance and attrition rates for this particular group of students.

When considering the impact of social and academic integration on retention, it may be essential for institutions of higher education to understand the impact of mentoring on academic performance and those factors which contribute to persistence, particularly for African American students in predominantly White institutions. Having such a knowledge base may be utilized in the effort to increase retention among this group of students.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted at a large traditional research institution in the southeastern United States whose undergraduate population accounts for 77.2 percent of its enrollment, graduate students 19.2 percent, and 3.6 percent as unclassified. Within this current population of students, minority students make up 24.2 percent of the total enrollment. Of this number, 47.8 percent are African Americans, 38.6 percent are Hispanic, 12 percent are Asian, and 1.6 percent are classified as American Indian. While the results of this research may benefit institutions in their retention efforts for historically underrepresented groups, the results may not be generalizeable as the study occurred only at one institution.

Organization of the Study

The present study was organized in five chapters. A statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, operational definitions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and its limitations were described in Chapter One. Chapter Two provided a review of research related to the present study. Chapter Three offered a description of the methodology used in the study including sampling procedures, data collection techniques and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four detailed the overall results of the study and highlighted responses from participants relevant to key themes. In the final chapter, those results and their implications for future practice and research were discussed.

Summary

Many African American students may have a strong desire to further their education only to find themselves lost in the college environment. Mentoring may be one mechanism that will support these students, enabling them to persist and complete a degree. The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students attending a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States to determine if a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance. Factors that contributed to persistence for African American undergraduate seniors were examined. Data was collected to identify the perceptions and mentoring experiences of the African American undergraduate seniors to determine if a relationship existed between mentoring, academic performance and persistence.

CHAPTER TWO

African Americans in Higher Education

Research has examined a variety of factors in relation to the retention of African American students. Some studies focus on the nature of the environment while other studies address individual student characteristics. The following literature was reviewed in terms of the social and academic environments experienced by African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions and its effect on academic performance and retention for this particular group of students.

The literature focused on the history of African Americans in higher education and conceptual models of student interaction. It included research on student involvement with faculty and other institutional employees such as counselors, advisors, and administrators as these types of relationships contributed to the mentoring process. Research on mentoring in general was further reviewed in an effort to understand the development of these relationships and how they may have affected attrition of African American students enrolled at PWIs.

In these relationships, the role of mentoring as it related to academic performance and retention for African American students was examined. Particular focus was given to the factors that contributed to persistence for African American students at a predominantly White campus. In addition, the concept of mentoring was explored to determine its relationship to academic performance and whether it became a significant factor contributing to academic achievement and retention for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White campus.

Most of the early research on African American students in higher education focused on historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). During the period 1900 – 1954, a few major surveys explored the type and caliber of education provided for African Americans in colleges and universities. DuBois (1900, 1910) surveyed HBCUs and found that reorganization was necessary. He felt that Black colleges would serve their constituents by raising entrance requirements and by expanding curricula. Jones (1920) further believed the institutions should focus primarily on industrial education.

The Phelps-Stokes Fund (1932) surveyed HBCUs and provided a list of recommendations for increasing financial support for the institutions; improving teacher training; and eliminating inefficient private schools. By the 1940s, research on African American higher education had entered a new phase. The Civil Rights Movement had begun. During the war

years, African Americans were able to win a few concessions from the government regarding civil rights. By the 1950s, the civil rights activism of African Americans had increased. At the same time, more African Americans were reaping the educational benefits of the GI Bill and consequently attending both HBCUs and PWIs. The research of the 1940s and 1950s on African American participation in higher education began to reflect the changes in race relations in America today (Willie & Cunnigen, 1981).

In 1940, only 1.3 percent of the adult African American population had college degrees compared to nearly five percent of White adults. A vast majority of these degrees were received from HBCUs. After World War II, the GI Bill enabled thousands of African Americans to attend college. Again, most African Americans attended HBCUs. Prior to *Brown v Board of Education (1954),* HBCUs were the predominant option available to African American students who attended college, with the percentages attending HBCUs vs. PWIs changing dramatically after 1954. Since *Brown*, predominantly White colleges and universities have opened their doors to African American students.

Fifty plus years have passed since the court declared unconstitutional state imposed segregation of public schools. As a result of *Brown,* thousands of African American students have been able to receive improved educational experiences. The *Brown* decision eventually opened opportunities for African Americans to advance both academically and socially, even though the effects may not have been immediate. By 1964 nearly four percent of African American adults had a college degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) provided for federal regulations that prohibited the distribution of federal funds to colleges and universities that discriminated on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Initiatives such as the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) and the National Defense Student Loan (NDSL) program also made it possible for more African American students to enroll in college by providing financial support necessary to attend. Other programs such as the Basic Equal Education Opportunity Grants program (BEOG) and the Equal Education Opportunity program (EEOP) increased access for this group of students in that they provided direct loans or grants to low-income students and African American students who qualified for college admission and enrollment (Green, 2001). In addition, Executive Order 11375 (1967) reinforced efforts to recruit, admit, retain, and graduate underrepresented groups in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Terrell & Wright, 1988).

Since these mandates, African American students have begun to enroll at PWIs in larger numbers. By 1984, more than nearly four out of every five African American students attended predominantly White colleges according to the Department of Education's Center for Statistics. Even with the mandates, the post-*Brown* and Civil Rights era still presented a new and different set of challenges for African American students enrolled at PWIs (Terrell & Wright, 1988). It was not enough for African American students to simply enroll in the institutions because enrollment did not necessarily result in degree attainment (Robinson, 1990). Like other students, African American students were expected to adjust to the college environment. But in doing so, they faced numerous concerns different from those of White students. Those additional obstacles and barriers including discrimination and isolation encountered by African American students at most PWIs exacerbated African American student attrition (Christoffel, 1986; Fleming, 1984).

Allen (1987) provided insight on the differences between students enrolled in PWIs and HBCUs. In his research on *Black colleges vs. White colleges*, Allen examined the differences in the experiences and outcomes of African Americans who attended White colleges compared to African Americans who attended historically Black institutions. Throughout his study, he collected data on the experiences, characteristics, and achievements of 1,583 African American students enrolled in fourteen public universities. The sample included 506 students at six public PWIs and eight public HBCUs. In terms of academic differences between HBCUs and PWIs, Allen found that African American students' grades were higher at HBCUs than PWIs. Academic performance was significantly correlated with college satisfaction and level of involvement in campus life. Moreover, grades were found to be higher for students who had positive relationships with faculty.

African American students at PWIs reported feeling more socially alienated, yet African American students at HBCUs reported higher rates of having considered dropping out. Those students who reported low grades in high school or college, who felt less connected to campus life, and who reported less positive relations with White faculty were significantly more likely to leave college prior to graduation. Another key finding was that African American students at HBCUs were nearly twice as likely to claim excellent relations with White faculty compared to students at PWIs. The quality of relations with White faculty was significantly better for those students who reported better college grades, who had not considered leaving college prior to graduation, and who stated that they were involved in campus life.

Similar to Allen (1987), Wells-Lawson (1994) reported that African American students on predominantly White campuses reported higher ratings on feelings of discrimination while African American students at HBCUs experienced better relationships with faculty than did African American students enrolled at PWIs. In Wells-Lawson's study (1994), she examined the college experiences of students in the racial majority and racial minority groups on both predominantly Black and predominantly White colleges and universities simultaneously. More specifically, she sought to find whether White students at predominantly Black colleges were as likely as Black students at PWIs to report lower grades, experience poorer relationships with faculty, report less accommodation of diversity, and report higher feelings of discrimination than their counterparts at each type of university (p. 5).

Data collected for this study was from previous data used in a study conducted by Michael T. Nettles in 1982. Wells-Lawson (1994) chose this particular dataset for re-analysis because it allowed for comparisons between the college experiences of Black and White students at predominantly White colleges and Black and White students at predominantly Black colleges. In the original study, data were collected from 4,094 students enrolled in 30 U.S. colleges and universities. The goal of the study was to identify predictors of academic performance as measured by student self-reports of college grade point average and the average number of credits earned per semester. The data consisted of student responses to a 109 item "Student Opinion" questionnaire that was presented at six institutions with similar characteristics as the sample institutions that had not been included in the original study (Wells-Lawson, 1994, p.6).

When controlling for student background characteristics, results showed the effect of student race on academic performance differed by type of institution attended. No difference in academic performance was found between African American and White students at predominantly Black institutions. However, a very different pattern resulted between African American and White students enrolled at PWIs. Wells-Lawson (1994) found that on average, African American students enrolled at PWIs received lower grades than their White counterparts. Specifically, while African American students on these campuses received an average grade of C+, White students received an average grade of B-. On predominantly Black campuses, however, the race differences were not as evident. Both racial groups reported an average grade of B. When student background characteristics were not controlled for, academic performance was higher among White students at both types of institutions (Wells-Lawson, 1994).

Even though such studies suggest differences among African American and White students enrolled at both HBCUs and PWIs, this particular study was limited by the lack of validity of self-reported grade point averages as the measure of academic performance. Standards may not only differ across types of institutions, but also differ across courses and departments within a given institution. Additionally, HBCUs and PWIs may differ in terms of selectivity, institutional type, size of enrollment, and the distribution of African American and White faculty members. Furthermore, findings related to the small numbers of White students enrolled at predominantly Black colleges may be subjected to replication (Wells-Lawson, 1994).

Each of Allen (1987) and Wells-Lawson (1994) studies' indicates the majority or minority status of African American students on college campuses can affect their learning, motivation, and satisfaction levels. They provide valuable information concerning the quality and variety of experiences for African American students at HBCUs and PWIs. Previous research has also shown that positive mentoring relationships can be influential on students' development and achievement in college, particularly for African American students.

In 1997, Himelhoch, Nichols, Ball, & Black examined the predictive factors of persistence for African American students at historically Black colleges and universities and at predominantly White institutions. John P. Bean's (1982) synthetic model of student attrition (Figure 2) was used to determine these predictive factors. Bean's model focused on students' background and the environment in and outside of the institution. Students' background, their relationship with the institution and external relations were important in Bean's model because they helped to establish if a significant relationship existed between these factors and student attrition. Although Bean's model was not designed specifically for the African American student population, Himelhoch et al. (1997) used it as a guiding framework to examine the factors that predict persistence for this student group. Their study attempted to determine the differences between African American students enrolled at HBCUs and PWIs utilizing the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) database.

For the purposes of their study, a stratified sample of a cohort of freshmen entering American colleges and universities in 1986, and their subsequent input in a follow-up survey in 1990 was utilized. The sample included 295 African American students enrolled at both types of institutions. Of the 295 sampled, 78 were enrolled at predominantly White 4-year institutions, while 217 were enrolled at 4-year HBCUs. The researchers hypothesized that while Bean's

model was reflective of student attrition in general, it may not have been reflective of subgroups of students, specifically African Americans. Additionally, they postulated that differences might have existed in factors predicting African American students' persistence at HBCUs and PWIs.

The study revealed that for African American students, faculty mentoring was a significant factor at both HBCUs and PWIs. Additionally, for students enrolled at HBCUs, intention to marry and changes in the major or career were also significant predictors of persistence. For African American students enrolled at PWIs, the mentoring from faculty was the sole predictor for African American persistence. These findings suggest that increased faculty mentoring opportunities for African American students have the potential for significant impact on the institution, although this increase carries with it potential financial concerns, usually in additional expenses related to reduced teaching loads of faculty to provide more time for mentoring opportunities.

The potential benefits of increasing retention among African American students as well as additional tuition that continuing students provide can possibly outweigh the costs associated with reduced teaching loads. One important note worth mention in Himeloch et al.'s study (1997) is that only 19 percent of the variance in persistence was accounted for at predominantly White institutions, and 10 percent at HBCUs. This indicates that there are other significant variables regarding African American student persistence, which were not uncovered in the study. Although, one variable that seemed to be salient for both types of institutions was faculty mentoring.

Faison (1996) provided a greater understanding of the effects of mentoring African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions. While Faison's (1996) study focused on the graduate school population, the concept of mentoring was the same. Within her study, mentoring was defined as a "dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a university environment between a more experienced adult (mentor) and a less experienced adult (mentee)" (p.6). It was noted that these reciprocal relationships could be influential for African Americans to persist in college. However, African American students faced tremendous barriers in finding adequate mentor relationships because the number of available mentors for these students was limited.

She noted that students were able to find advisors, but seldom were they able to find someone to help them effectively mediate the culture of their predominantly White setting (Faison, 1996). Furthermore, the cultural and interactional differences that occurred between the

students and university faculty were also major impediments in the development of relationships between African American students and university mentors. The result of not finding adequate mentors was reflected in the attrition rates for these students and the declining graduation rates among African American graduate students.

Faison's (1996) study looked beyond the problems associated with these types of relationships; instead, she worked from a framework on which to build solutions. The focus of her study was to identify those significant characteristics and behaviors exhibited by mentors of African American students at PWIs and also what contributed to the success of these relationships. Four primary research questions guided her study, which could also be applied to mentoring relationships involving undergraduate students: (1) how African American students described their mentoring experiences with university faculty on a predominantly White campus, (2) how the students understand mentoring in their academic and professional lives, (3) how do the mentors understand the role of mentoring in their lives, and (4) how do university faculty perceive their role in mentoring on a predominantly White campus (p. 25-26).

To understand the dynamics of the mentoring relationships, Faison (1996) used qualitative methods that allowed for an in-depth analysis of the participants' perceptions of their mentoring relationships. A constructivist paradigm also guided her methodology in the creation of data that stemmed from the interactions and interviews with the participants. Most of her data were compiled from eleven in-depth recorded telephone interviews that included open-ended responses. During the interviews, she found the students had many diverse experiences in their mentoring relationships. Several adjectives were used to describe their interactions; however the relationships were still distinct from other types of student-faculty interactions.

Some of the students noted they sought mentors for support and guidance. Others sought mentors for the purpose of connecting with power sources to help them with personal and interpersonal needs, as well as logistical processes that affected their academic lives. Consistently, the participants reported that the mentoring experience was crucial to their successful academic development. Certainly, some students can make it through college without the support of mentors. However, the quality of the experience can possibly be enhanced with the assistance of a mentor.

Faison (1996) indicated there was no question that African American students understood mentoring to be critical to their personal, professional, and academic well being on

predominantly White campuses. However, the range of importance given to these relationships varied. Most participants reported that it was essential for university faculty to appreciate African American students and respect what they bring to the mentoring relationship. African American students have had several mentoring experiences over the course of their lifetime; however, the mentoring experiences from faculty are seen quite different. These students recognize that successful academic and career development may not take place without the guidance of a mentor. Even though undergraduate students may not be at this level in their academic life, they might still reap the benefits of positive mentoring relationships by understanding what is involved in the relationship and actively contributing to it.

Faison (1996) concluded that mentoring African American students at PWIs attributed great value to students' success and persistence; however, finding adequate mentors was sometimes difficult. The findings from this study imply that there may be a great need for African American students to be mentored to help them achieve academic success and prepare for their chosen careers. Additionally, it is not only important to look at the factors involved in the relationship that contribute to the students' success, but also essential to understand the types of mentoring relationships that exist.

Ellis (1997) further expands the knowledge base on the concept of mentoring and its relationship to academic success and retention for African American students at predominantly White institutions. In her study on *Race, Gender and the Graduate Student Experience: Recent Research,* Ellis (1997) examined the experiences of 67 graduate students enrolled at a large, predominantly White research institution. The 67 participants included: 16 African American men, 17 African American women, 16 White men, and 17 White women of which forty-two of them had completed their degrees at the time of the study and twenty-five were in the process. Interviews were held individually with each one of the students who had already completed the program. For currently enrolled students, interviews were conducted either individually or in small groups of 2-5 participants.

In conducting interviews with this select group of students, Ellis (1997) found four major areas of concern expressed by the students in regards to their graduate school experience: (1) mentoring and advising, (2) departmental environments, (3) peer interaction, and (4) research and teaching experiences. Even though the students enrolled in this program were graduate students at PWIs, some of the implications of this research may apply to undergraduate African

American students at PWIs as well. Based on the results from this study, Ellis (1997) stated that a student's gender and racial background clearly influenced their experiences in graduate school. Furthermore, race appeared to be more salient than gender in influencing whether students had positive or negative experiences.

Of the concerns expressed by the students, mentoring, advising, and departmental environments were ranked the highest of all the participants. The relationships that participants had with their primary advisers or mentors within their academic units appeared to have a significant impact on students' satisfaction levels. Students who reported good relationships with advisers generally felt the environments of their departments were good. However, those who had poor relationships with their advisers reported negative feelings about their departments. It seemed that advisers and mentors were key links to departmental resources, both human and financial. When such links did not exist, Ellis (1997) said students did not make academic and social transitions into their departments as well as did those students who had good relationships with their advisers.

Race and gender also appeared to be significant factors in determining successful mentoring and advising experiences for this select group of students. White students were more likely than were African American students to report having good working relationships with their advisers or having faculty members they considered mentors in their academic units. Men were more likely than women to report having mentors or strong advisers in their academic units. White men were more likely than were African American men and women and White women to report having mentors or advisers with whom they worked closely. In addition, African American women were less likely than were White women, African American or White men to have mentors or advisers with whom they reported working closely during their doctoral study (Ellis, 1997).

Even amongst the reported concerns with departmental mentoring and environments, African American students in Ellis' study (1997) were able to find alternative support systems to help ensure their progress toward degree completion. Based on participants feedback, the African American students found outsiders to help them form dissertation committees, find research articles related to their topics, work on their writing skills, and find presentation opportunities and funding. For the African American students, it seemed that outsiders filled the gaps that are traditionally filled by faculty members within the students' academic units. White students, on

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the other hand, tended to find someone within their academic units to help resolve problems relating to doctoral study (Ellis, 1997).It may be anticipated that these outsiders were also considered to be mentors for this select group of students.

Similar to Faison (1996), this study suggests that African American students continue to face challenges in higher education that their White counterparts do not, particularly at predominantly White institutions. Caution must be taken in generalizing these results for all African American students enrolled at PWIs because the responses from the participants in Ellis' (1997) study suggest that different groups of African American students might have different experiences, making it ineffective to group all African American students into one category when discussing graduate school experiences. Ellis (1997) says given the complexities of race and gender in American higher education, the complexity of doctoral study at any institution, and the sacrifices students make to obtain doctoral degrees, those administering graduate programs should make themselves aware of studies such as this one and attempt to collect information about the experiences of students in their own programs.

Carroll (1997) further stated that within the general domain of faculty-student relationships, certain elements of the mentor/mentee relationship become dynamic to make this experience unique for both faculty and student. Mentors make a personal commitment to work one-on-one with their mentee in the cultivation of new knowledge, understandings, and skills. As a result, mentees learn both by word and by example from their mentor. Therefore, it is the belief that developing a supportive, trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee may become as valuable an outcome as any specific skills learned as a result of the relationship (Carroll, 1997).

This type of relationship might be extremely important for African American students enrolled in undergraduate programs at PWIs. However, it may be difficult to develop due to the lack of minority representation among administrators and faculty. Even though undergraduate enrollment for African Americans has increased, some universities are still lacking significant numbers of African American administrators and faculty in some departments, which makes the process of finding a mentor more difficult for the African American student (Williams, 1999).

Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks (2003) revealed that a higher proportion of African Americans attend college than 20 years ago. In 2000, 31 percent of 18 to 24-year-old African Americans were enrolled in colleges and universities, up from 19 percent in 1980. As a

greater percentage of African Americans enrolled in colleges and universities, their proportion within these institutions also increased slightly. In 1980, African Americans represented 9 percent of all students enrolled in colleges and universities.

Two decades later in 2000, African American students comprised 11 percent of the total enrollment. African Americans accounted for 12 percent of the students enrolled in 2-year institutions and 11 percent of those in 4-year institutions. At the same time, only 5 percent of African Americans were full-time instructional faculty in degree granting institutions. The proportion of African American full-time faculty was less than one half the proportion of African American students (11 percent) enrolled in colleges and universities in 1999 (*Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks*, 2003).

Brown (2004) noted that over the years African American students have been making great strides in college enrollment and degree attainment. He says that such progress is largely a function of increased access to educational settings. Evenso, he believes that these academic achievements have not lessened the continued gap between African Americans and Whites in college enrollment and completion; a gap in which he believes is determined by the pathways through which students get to college and their ability to navigate those academic pathways.

Faculty-Student Relationships

Student Development

The constructs of academic achievement and student success is directly related to student development and involvement theories as posed by Chickering (1969) and Astin (1984). According to Chickering (1969), student development occurs sequentially along seven stages or vectors in college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering's (1969) theory suggests that if the right mix of institutional support exists on campus and if students are influenced or impacted by these services, students will be more likely to complete the following tasks in college: 1) develop competence, 2) manage emotions, 3) move through autonomy toward interdependence, 4) develop mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establish identity, 6) develop purpose, and 7) develop integrity.

The first vector is developing competence. Developing competence can take three forms: intellectual, physical, and interpersonal. The second vector is managing emotions. At this vector, college students begin to become aware of their emotions and seek to regulate their emotions to produce maximum behavioral outcomes. The third vector is moving through autonomy toward

interdependence. At this level, students are seeking to become more self-directed, and self-sufficient, thereby, ultimately reaching a moderate level of interdependence with family, friends, and other acquaintances.

The fourth vector is developing mature interpersonal relationships. The emphasis at this vector is on establishing and maintaining healthy interactions with other individuals in a way that is emotionally beneficial to all parties involved. The fifth vector is establishing identity. In this vector, students begin to become aware of and learn to develop their own identity. As a result of this complex position, movement through the first four vectors is necessary. The sixth vector is developing purpose. This vector, which also incorporates aspects of the preceding vectors, constitutes initiating and working toward occupation-related objectives.

The seventh vector is developing integrity. In this vector, the focus is on developing an ethical and moral framework that serves as a blueprint for living. During this stage of development, students determine the values they wish to live by. Chickering's seven vectors enable student development professionals to understand how students are adjusting to deal with the uncertainty of adulthood. In addition, the seven vectors also enable student personnel in higher education to better understand their roles as student development professionals by specifying a series of interrelated stages college students are seeking to resolve. Specific to this study, the fourth and fifth vectors would have a greater impact on African American students developing mentoring relationships at PWIs. Students' confidence with their own identity may also impact the development of the relationship as well as the type of college experience received.

Student Involvement

Astin (1984) further stated that student participation in the mainstream of campus life can be essential to their development and to the outcomes of college. He contends that active involvement aids the student's bonding with the institution. Involvement is considered as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Accordingly, a highly involved student spends considerable time on campus, interacts frequently with faculty members and other students, and devotes a significant amount of time to studying. Thereby, when students bond with and to the university and develop a close relationship with peers, faculty, and staff, they are more likely to matriculate and graduate (Astin, 1984).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) in their comprehensive review of the literature, *How College Affects Students*, indicate that the research literature supports the claim that student involvement has a significant and positive influence on various dimensions of general cognitive development. It also showed student's social and academic self-images are positively related to involvement in the formal and informal academic and social systems of their institutions. Furthermore, academic integration (as measured by such variables as grades, intellectual development, and contact with faculty) had its strongest positive influence on persistence or degree attainment for students at the lowest levels of social integration (as measured by such variables as extracurricular involvement and informal interaction with peers). In addition, students' interaction with faculty was essential to student retention, especially in the freshman year. This interaction not only includes formal, structured experiences in academic settings (e.g. classrooms, labs, work groups), but also informal contact with faculty outside of these settings. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) reported that "freshman-to-sophomore persistence was positively and significantly related to total amount of student-faculty nonclassroom contact with faculty and particularly to frequency of interactions with faculty to discuss intellectual matters" (p. 394). Further, they concluded that the nonclassroom interactions with faculty, which combined the student's classroom and nonclassroom experiences, were very important for retaining students.

The Seven Principles of Good Practice, developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987), also support the notion of faculty-student interaction. The first principle addresses this point by stating that quality undergraduate education, "Encourages contacts between students and faculty" (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, p. 1). In this principle, the authors note that frequent faculty-student contact inside and outside the classroom is an important factor in student motivation and involvement; this, in turn, enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Furthermore, Stith and Russell's (1994) longitudinal study regarding the impact of faculty-student interaction on retention also revealed that faculty-student interaction has a significant impact on African American students' decision to persist. In their exploratory study on faculty/student interaction, Stith and Russell (1994) sought to answer the following questions: (1) When are students more prone to leave and do leaving times differ for different groups of

students; (2) When does faculty involvement impact retention; and (3) What factors make a difference in faculty/student contact outside of class?(p.8)

The design of the study was longitudinal with initial data collected during the summer of 1990 by mail survey and additional data collected each semester on student progress and enrollment. The survey instrument included 67 questions about college experiences thought to impact retention based on Tinto's model of academic and social integration (Stith & Russell, 1994, p. 9). Within their sample, 310 students from a class of 2576 freshmen who entered a public university of 28,000 students in Fall 1989 were surveyed. The sample included 128 African Americans, 131 White students, 49 Hispanics, and 2 Asians (Stith & Russell, 1994, p.9).

Results showed significant differences in retention over a four-year period between African Americans, Whites, and Hispanics. It was found that Hispanic and White students were better retained after the four years than African American students. Within the four years, attrition rates seemed to be greatest after year three for African American students, which suggests there is a greater need to pay closer attention to student retention for this particular group of students (Stith & Russell, 1994).

When looking at variables related to retention, Stith and Russell (1994) found faculty-student contact outside of class to have a positive impact, even moreso for high-achieving African American students (those who had a 3.0 cumulative GPA or better at the end of the freshman year). For those students who were retained after the first year, 62.5% were impressed with the caliber of their instructors, while for those not retained, the percentage was 35.7%. Furthermore, 58.6% of the retained students had advisors to help them plan their course schedules, while 35.7% of those not retained did not have an advisor to help plan their class schedule.

Other findings showed there was no difference between those retained and those students who were not retained based on race. However, African American students were less likely to be retained than others. Partying and socializing with friends also had a positive effect on retention (Stith & Russell, 1994, p. 17). Therefore, it seems that faculty involvement, along with advisors and peers, seemed to have a significant impact on student retention for African American students to a much greater extent than for Whites and Hispanics.

An important finding mentioned earlier was that African American students who achieved a 3.0 cumulative GPA at the end of the first year were better retained if they had

contact with faculty outside of class during their freshman year. Those students who also met with faculty or advisors to plan their schedules and who were also impressed with the caliber of their instructors were better retained. Therefore, based on the results of this study, the expectation may be that increased retention for African American students results with increases in involvement with faculty and classroom peers (Stith & Russell, 1994). However, these results cannot be generalized across institutions due to the limitation that this particular study was conducted at a single institution and there were only two times during the five years of follow-up that information was collected from students.

Race and Faculty-Student Interaction

In the twenty-first century, African American students will continue to enroll in predominantly White institutions at greater rates than African American students enrolling at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs); yet, if this current trend continues, Allen (1992) says that over half of African American students at PWIs will fail to persist and graduate. Additionally, Pope (2002) states that these populations of students may be confronted with many issues that are detrimental to their retention and success, such as lower levels of academic preparation in high school, lower socioeconomic status, and greater alienation in PWIs. He notes that all of these factors contribute significantly to their high dropout rates and poor academic achievement. The success of these students in many cases depends on their integration into the college environment.

Jacobi (1991) tells us that mentoring has been perceived traditionally as a model for apprenticeships in graduate education, but it is now increasingly identified as a retention strategy for undergraduate education. But for many African American students, the time, energy, and ability necessary to participate in such well-designed programs are limited due to responsibilities and barriers that put them at risk, such as family, work, lack of support, and lack of transportation (Pope, 2002). Furthermore, the low numbers of faculty and higher-level administrators present in PWIs may pose a problem in the development of mentoring relationships (Williams, 1999); thus possibly adding to the high attrition rates for this group of students.

Considering the low attrition rates and alienation that African American students may feel on predominantly White campuses, it is important to access the effectiveness of these mentoring experiences for historically underrepresented populations. It would also help to

understand the effect of race on the development of the mentoring relationship. Recognizing the impact of academic and social integration on African American student retention, many colleges and universities have established formal mentoring programs to aid in the academic and social integration of African American students and counter alienating experiences of African American students on predominantly White campuses. Drawing upon historical and contemporary theories of race may further develop understanding of the impact race has on mentoring relationships, particularly cross-race mentoring for African American students at PWIs.

According to Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998), African Americans' experiences in the United States differ significantly from those of members of other ethnic groups. It is their belief that although many ethnic groups have experienced discrimination and oppression in the U.S., the form of oppression that African Americans have faced is unique. As a result of these experiences with oppression in this society, the concept of race has historically played a major role in the lives of African Americans. Seemingly, it has had varied impact on the life experiences and opportunities of African Americans in the United States, especially African American students enrolled at predominantly White colleges and universities (Sellers et. al, 1998).

Further, these heterogeneous experiences have resulted in variability in the significance and meaning that African Americans contribute to being a member of the African American racial group. For instance, some individuals place little significance on race in defining who they are, while others may see their racial membership as the defining characteristic of their self-concept. Even when individuals place similarly high levels of significance on race in defining themselves, they may differ a great deal in what they believe it means to be African American. One individual may believe that being African American means congregating among other African Americans, while another may believe being African American means that one should integrate with Whites (Sellers et. al, 1998).

The instinctive need to interact with others who are of the same race may be a natural element for some students. African Americans seem to share common experiences related to ethnicity as a result of varied experiences encountered throughout history (Sellers et. al, 1998). For colleges and universities, understanding these factors may be extremely important when trying to comprehend the experiences of African American students on campus. This select

group of students may need greater support from their environment to succeed in the predominantly White setting. Even though enrolled at a predominantly White institution, each African American student may have a different experience depending on the situation. In developing a mentoring relationship with a mentor of a different race, it may be determined that race is an important component for the mentee, thereby having a significant effect on the development of the mentoring relationship.

Even in the 21st century, race continues to be a significant issue in the education of African Americans and other minority students. Vann Lynch (2002) states that race may directly affect the achievement and psychosocial development of African American students in general and African American students in predominantly White campus environments in particular. Moreover, due to feelings of isolation in PWIs, a disproportionate number of African American students lag behind their White counterparts in areas such as academic achievement, persistence, and post-graduate study (Vann Lynch, 2002). Blackwell (1987) cites economic barriers that plague African American families seeking educational opportunities for their children. Some of those barriers include high rates of unemployment, low levels of income enabling support for higher education, low occupational status, limited access to scholarships and fellowships, and fear of indebtedness resulting from student loan programs.

Feagin (1992) further states that racial climate is a barrier that often affects the retention of African American students at PWIs. Feagin (1992) studied 180 African American students across the United States utilizing qualitative case studies. He found that African American students often feel stereotyped and are perceived as unintelligent, unmotivated, and incapable of succeeding in the university environment. These perceptions may lead to social isolation for many African American students keeping them on the periphery of their educational experience. This alienation creates not only social difficulties for African American students, but academic difficulties as well. Feagin (1992) attributes this hostile racial climate to a White college subculture that is ingrained with elements of discrimination and racism, thus creating an uncomfortable and nonconducive living and learning environment for African American students on predominantly White campuses.

Williams (1999) further elaborates on the effect of race in relation to African American students' achievement. He believes the unseen presence of a large number of African American faculty and administrators employed at PWIs as even a greater problem for African American

students. According to Williams (1999), the odds that a student will see an African American face at the front of the classroom at the thousands of predominantly White institutions are about 50 to 1 since about half of all African American faculty teach at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).   Since the overall representation of African American faculty members is only 2.3 percent of faculty at predominantly White institutions, there remains a severe shortage of potential African American role models for the number of African American students in higher education (Williams, 1999). According to Williams (1999), there are not enough African American professionals, especially in four-year institutions, to go around.

Too often African American faculty and administrators are faced with trying to carry out their basic job responsibilities while simultaneously providing the necessary mentoring relationships for African American students to succeed. The question of inadequate numbers of African American faculty and administrators presents one of the most serious problems on any predominantly White college campus for a number of key reasons. This problem can severely reduce the opportunities for African American students to see role models and to interact with some of them as mentors (Williams, 1999). As a result, African American students may not receive the maximum benefits available to them that can result from strong mentoring relationships.

The quality of mentoring and academic advising in particular programs or majors within an institution may be extremely important to African American students, since a college degree alone no longer guarantees employment opportunity and economic mobility. However, it may be impossible for African American faculty members at PWIs to serve as mentors to all African American students. Therefore, in academic departments in which African Americans have been historically underrepresented, White faculty members are called upon to recruit African American students and learn how to facilitate scholarship among these students (Williams, 1999).

Frequent contact with faculty, administrators, and staff could be an important element in the experiences of African American students on college campuses. Encounters, which go beyond the formalities of academic work to broader intellectual and social issues may be seen by students as warm and rewarding which may eventually be associated with positive mentoring experiences and continued persistence. The frequent contact with faculty and administrators could possibly lead to mentoring relationships where a member higher up in the system and

knowledgeable of the students' career field could help enhance the students' career development and guide them through the process of preparing for jobs upon graduation.

Kuh and Hu, in their 2001 study on the *Effects of Student-Faculty Interaction in the 1990s,* provided more insight on student-faculty interactions on and off campus. They noted that frequent, meaningful interactions between students and faculty were important to learning and personal development for the students. In general, the more contact between students and faculty, the greater the student development and satisfaction. In their study, Kuh and Hu (2001) examined the character and impact of student-faculty interaction on student learning and personal development in the 1990s. Specifically, they focused on the (1) nature of undergraduate student-faculty interaction from the first year of college through the senior year, (2) contribution of student-faculty interaction to student satisfaction during college, and (3) how different forms of contact between students and faculty contribute to learning and satisfaction (Kuh & Hu, 2001).

The source of data for their study was student responses to the third edition of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), which collected data on students' experiences in three primary areas: (1) the amount of time and energy students devoted to various activities, (2) perceptions of important dimensions of their institutions' environment, and (3) estimates of how much progress they have made toward a variety of desirable outcomes of college. The analysis of these areas followed Pascarella's general causal model of environmental influences on student learning and personal development. The model was based on the concept that students' perceptions of their environment presumably affected the quality of effort students expended in educationally effective activities, which in turn affected their learning. In addition, interaction with faculty was also expected to affect their learning.

The 5, 409 students on which this study was based were randomly selected from 126 colleges and universities to approximate a 10% sample of the 54,488 full-time enrolled undergraduates who completed all items on the CSEQ between 1990 and 1997. Included in the study were 20 research universities, 14 doctoral universities, 44 comprehensive colleges and universities, 15 selective liberal arts colleges, and 33 general liberal arts colleges as classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1994). Results from the study indicated that students' contact with faculty was more general in nature.

Much of the interaction was based on course contact or visiting with the professor after class. Very little interaction occurred socially or personally with faculty outside of class. One important note is that African American students had more interaction with faculty across the board than any other students. African American students reported expending more effort in the student-faculty relationships compared to White students; however, they were less satisfied with college. Furthermore, the relationship between student and faculty varied with each year in college, thus changing students' perceptions of the relationship over time. As student-faculty interaction increased, students perceived that the quality of the relationship changed for the better (Kuh & Hu, 2001).

As institutions would expect, contact between students and faculty increases during the four years of college. As students progress toward their major, their class size becomes smaller, which allows for more interaction and collaboration with peers and faculty. Some students may also participate in independent research projects with their faculty. Faculty may also become increasingly available to juniors and seniors and find it more rewarding to work with students on an individual basis (Kuh & Hu, 2001).

As students enter into positive relationships on campus, satisfaction with the institution could increase and students might engage in more educational purposeful activities. These interactions may enhance personal and academic growth, and increased opportunities for mentoring relationships may develop. To gain a greater understanding of the methods used in retaining African American students, further exploration has been given to the aspects of mentoring as it relates to students in general and also to historically underrepresented populations, specifically African American students.

Mentoring on Student Retention

According to Lee (1999), African American students not only enter predominantly White public institutions with a strong heritage that has evolved for centuries and that does not perfectly match those environments, but some of these students enter college being academically underprepared for college-level work. Many of these students are also first-generation college students. Accordingly, the low retention rate in public universities, the complexities of the cultural heritage that students bring to college, and academic underpreparation, may be deterrents to students' degree attainment. These deterrents, in addition to the importance of faculty-student

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relationships to retaining students, all point to the importance of effective strategies to foster retention to degree completion (Lee, 1999).

Hilgenberg and Luxner (2004) further state there is a clear need for institutional commitment when considering retention rates of students. Within this commitment, there must be a foundation to establish a campus climate of cooperation rather than competition to enhance learning for all students. More importantly, support services are essential to the retention of students, particularly minority students. According to Hilgenberg and Luxner (2004), minority students benefit from a strong community of caring support and collaboration.

Within this community of support and collaboration, Green (1989) noted that African American students who experience the absence of mentors are impeded in their acquisition of academic competence. Logically and intuitively, mentoring as a service can be particularly important to individuals who are in an environment that is culturally different. Research on mentoring as it specifically relates to African Americans suggests that African American students who are academically successful have been able to use role modeling of adults to their advantage. As a result, mentoring has been linked to helping African American students in their initial adjustment to their institution, in their stay there, in their transition from their undergraduate institution to graduate school or to the work environment, and in their overall academic performance (Green, 1989).

The conflict of African American students' culture with the institutional culture at predominantly White universities illuminates the potential benefits of mentoring. Lee (1999) suggests that mentoring African American students at predominantly White public institutions holds promise for relationships that reflect a unique strength and trust. It has been suggested that bonds between the mentor and mentee develop because of the amount of time spent together, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal benefits gained from the relationship (Green, 1989). The bond also seems to intensify when the mentor and mentee have a greater number of similarities and interests. Such a relationship seems to be beneficial for both the student and the mentor. However, some researchers have suggested that underrepresented populations, such as African Americans attending predominantly White higher education institutions, have been largely left out of the mentoring cycle (Faison, 1996).

In higher education, there are two basic types of mentoring relationships – formal and informal. Formal mentoring relationships are those relationships that are the result of

organizationally arranged, structured relationships, in which the mentee is matched with a mentor based on pre-arranged criteria (Chaoe & Walz, 1992). The main purpose of formalized mentoring programs is to orient outsiders to the particulars of the inside culture of an organization over a designated period of time. Through these programs, mentors provide accessibility and frequent interaction, allow mentees to work with high-level leaders, insist that mentees receive feedback from mentors, acknowledge successful mentors in the program, and encourage a strong commitment to the mentoring process. All of these factors help to insure that mentees have the opportunity to receive psychosocial benefits that are often associated with formalized mentoring, as well as benefit from career development functions of the mentor (Faison, 1996).

Formal mentoring programs developed in the interest of undergraduate student academic and social integration represent one way that higher education is attempting to institutionalize the implicit and explicit benefits gained from classical mentoring relationships. Jacobi (1991) observed that formal mentoring programs have begun to permeate universities and colleges as large-scale university-wide programs or smaller-scale discipline-specific programs and have become common practice in higher education. She argues that formal mentoring programs have been utilized in higher education to address an array of issues related to student development, retention, persistence, and completion of degree among students at risk.

Formal mentoring programs in formal settings have focused traditionally on work-based learning as opposed to career development and fulfillment of the psychosocial needs of the students. Formal mentoring affords students opportunities to create a bond with the institution through programs that facilitate academic and social integration. However, for many African-American students, the time, energy, and ability necessary to participate in formal programs might be limited due to the many responsibilities and barriers that put them at risk, such as family, work, lack of support, and lack of transportation (Pope, 2002). Thus, these students may turn to informal mentoring as an alternative to meet their needs.

Informal mentoring usually originates from informal relationships (Chaoe & Walz, 1992). Heinrich (1990) says some of the best mentoring relationships begin informally and develop as individuals realize they have similar goals and interests. These informal relationships may evolve through a series of stages in which the mentee receives the benefit of both the psychosocial and the career functions that mentors provide (Chaoe, 1992). Informal mentoring is

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accidental; it occurs by happenstance. The relationship is voluntary and can be initiated by either the mentor or the mentee. The relationship evolves without the influence of those external to the relationship (Chaoe, 1992).

Regardless of the nature, positive experiences in either form can help students adjust to their new environment as well as assist in their personal and professional growth. Scholars agree that the process of mentoring assists individuals during their early adult lives in making life transitions and developing positive identities (Osyerman & Harrison, n.d.; Vann Lynch, 2002). The institutionalization of formal mentoring programs is one means higher education, particularly predominantly White institutions, has sought to positively influence the undergraduate experiences of African-American students. Higher education institutions have adapted the corporate model of mentoring as a means by which to enhance the academic and personal success of African American students, particularly those enrolled in predominantly White institutions (Vann Lynch, 2002). These students might often be the target of various outreach initiatives such as mentoring, since their experiences may be contextualized by the significance of race in American society.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study examined the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate seniors enrolled at a predominantly White institution. It explored the factors that contributed to persistence for this group of students. Data from the mentoring experiences was used to exam the relationship between mentoring and academic performance for African American students. The following questions guided the inquiry:

(1) What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution,

(2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, and

(3) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

This study was designed to address these questions by (a) exploring the perceptions of African American undergraduate seniors attending a predominantly White university in the southeastern United States who reported having been mentored during the course of their matriculation, and by (b) comparing the results of the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale. The study sought to answer these questions: (1) What events or activities contributed to academic persistence, (2) What led to the development of the mentoring relationship, (3) What are the characteristics of an effective mentoring relationship, (4) What benefits were gained from the mentoring relationship, (5) What is the relationship between race of the mentor and the mentoring experience as perceived by the mentee, and (6) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance? The Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale designed to assess mentoring experiences and its impact on academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution was used. This one instrument assessed both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the mentoring relationship.

In successful mentoring relationships, the protégés or mentees allow the mentors to influence their development through modeling, counseling, providing exposure and visibility, assigning challenging work assignments, and protection (Noe, 1988). The extent to which African American students enrolled at a PWI interact with and effectively utilize a mentor may be influenced by their academic and social integration to the campus environment. Exposure and

visibility, coaching, and challenging assignments provided by the mentors may be more appealing to African American students who feel more connected to the campus because these types of mentor activities may facilitate higher levels of academic performance and degree obtainment. Additionally, more positive interactions and guidance resulting from the relationship may motivate the student to achieve higher levels of performance in his or her academic studies. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship between mentoring and academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution.

Sample Population

The student sample consisted of all African American seniors (n=1520) as of spring 2005 enrolled at a large traditional research institution in the southeastern United States. Both male and female students were included in the survey for all majors. The undergraduate population at this particular institution accounts for 77.2 percent of its enrollment, graduate students 19.2 percent, and 3.6 percent as unclassified. This institution was chosen based on convenience to the researcher and because it's undergraduate student population seems to be representative of the total U.S. population of undergraduate students in 1999-2000.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that women comprised 56 percent of undergraduates in 1999-2000. Minority students represented about one-third of the total undergraduate population, which was 12 percent African American, 11 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Asian. Roughly 2 percent of undergraduates were American Indian/Alaska Natives (0.9 percent) or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (0.8 percent). About 2 percent indicated they were of more than one race (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

At the selected institution, White students account for 70.9 percent of the student population and minority students are 24.2 percent of the total enrollment. An additional 4.9 percent are classified as not resident Alien or as not reported. Of the minority students, 11.6 percent are African Americans, 9.3 percent are Hispanic, 2.9 percent are Asian, and 0.4 percent are classified as Native American. Women also make up 56.7 percent of the student population. Of the African American students, females comprise 66 percent of the population and males are 34 percent, which provides a ratio of nearly 2:1. Of the participants surveyed, 35 percent male (n=528) and 65 percent female (n=992) traditional aged college students from 18-24 years of age were asked to respond to an online questionnaire on their mentoring experiences.

Sampling Procedures

This particular mixed-methods study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Descriptive research fits this purpose because it is concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, preferences, demographics, practices, and procedures (Gay & Airasian, 2000). To understand mentoring relationships between student and faculty, the research solicited opinions, perceptions, and attitudes. Survey research is appropriate because much can be gained in a short time by administering surveys to randomly selected participants. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from selected individuals in a single time period.

In collecting data for the study, participants were asked to complete a modified version of the Mentoring Functions scale - *termed Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale in this study* (Table 1) - designed by Raymond A. Noe (1988). The Mentoring Functions scale was developed for Noe's study "*An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships*" to determine the extent to which mentors provided career and psychosocial outcomes to protégés. The original survey by Noe (1988) contained 29 items designed to measure career-related functions of a mentor, and the extent to which a mentor provided exposure and visibility, sponsorship, protection, and challenging assignments.

Items included in the survey also assessed the degree to which the mentor served as a role model, provided counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and coaching. Noe's study (1998) focused on the mentoring functions of mentors and how these experiences influenced job and career attitudes, gender composition of the mentoring dyad, the amount of time spent with the mentor, and the quality of the interaction with the mentor on the psychosocial and career benefits protégés gained from participation in assigned mentoring relationships. The development of a mentoring relationship in Noe's study (1988) was in conjunction with a formal mentoring program designed to promote personal and career development of educators who aspired to attain administrative positions (e.g. principal, superintendent of schools).

The Mentoring Functions Scale was adapted and modified for this study to determine whether these same types of functions for mentors and mentoring relationships had an influence on academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution. In Noe's study (1988), the functions measured were classified into two categories: career and psychosocial. Functions measured in the modified scale were categorized as career/academic and psychosocial functions. Career/academic included those aspects of the

mentoring relationship that prepared or contributed to career enhancement or academic performance of the African American student (mentee). These functions were identified as: allowing or nominating the student to participate in research projects (sponsorship); providing the student with challenging assignments that increased visibility to higher level administrators and exposure for future opportunities (exposure and visibility); sharing ideas, providing feedback, and suggesting strategies for accomplishing tasks (coaching); reducing unnecessary risks (protection); and providing challenging work assignments (challenging assignments).

Psychosocial functions enhanced the mentee's sense of competence and identity. These functions included: serving as a role model of appropriate attitudes, values, and behaviors for the mentee (role model); conveying unconditional positive regard (acceptance and confirmation); providing a forum in which the mentee is encouraged to talk openly about anxieties and fears (counseling); and interacting informally with the mentee in various settings (friendship). The greater the number of functions provided by the mentor, the more beneficial will be the relationship to the mentee, which may have a direct or indirect impact on academic performance of the student. The assumption made in the study was there is a relationship between mentoring and academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution.

To assess the extent of mentoring experiences on academic performance, the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale was used. As stated earlier, these items were taken from Noe's Mentoring Functions Scale (1988) and modified to fit the academic environment of colleges and universities. In the original study, factor analysis was used to identify the constructs underlying the mentoring functions items. An exploratory factor analysis was used because Noe's study (1988) was one of the first attempts to develop a measure of mentoring functions. In the analysis, two decision rules were used to determine which items defined the rotated factors.

First, an item had to have a factor loading equal to or greater than .30. Second, items had to clearly load on one of the factors. Results from the analysis showed that one set of factors represented psychosocial mentoring functions because the items defining the factors assessed the extent to which the mentor provided coaching, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and served as a role model. Examination of the item loadings on the other set of items showed that this factor represented mentoring functions related to the mentees career progress (i.e., protection, exposure and visibility, sponsorship, and challenging assignments). All mentor

functions are represented by the two set of factors, with the exception of the items assessing friendship, which did not clearly load on either factor.

The internal consistency estimate for Noe's 1998 career-related functions scale, which included the items assessing the extent to which the mentor provided exposure and visibility, sponsorship, protection, and challenging assignments was .89. Similarly, a high internal consistently reliability estimate was found to be .92 for the psychosocial functions items assessing the degree to which the mentor served as a role model and provided counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and coaching. The intercorrelation between the two types of functions assessing career-related and psychosocial functions was .49.

In the present study, the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale measured the same type of mentoring functions indicated in Noe's (1988) study. However, many of the items on this questionnaire were tailored to the academic environment on college and university campuses for college students in general. In addition, two factors were added to the survey. One factor assessed the importance of race in the mentoring relationship. The other factor assessed satisfaction and integration into the academic environment based on mentoring experiences. These factors were termed "racial attribute" and "satisfaction and assimilation". Since the original Mentoring Functions Scale was modified, a pilot study was conducted to determine reliability and consistency for the RMES. It was anticipated that racial attribute and satisfaction and assimilation would represent aspects of the psychosocial functions. Actual results from the pilot study were analyzed to determine the correlation between these attributes and mentoring functions and experiences.

Factor analysis of the additional eleven variables was conducted to determine the relationship to mentoring experiences, if any. Following, consistency and reliability estimates were reported accordingly. For the qualitative aspect of the study, participants were asked to respond to 14 open-ended questions included at the end of the Racial and Mentoring Experiences survey so that students' could elaborate and provide greater detail on their perception of the mentoring relationship and outcomes. These questions solicited input from participants on aspects specific to the mentoring relationship and also on events and activities which led to persistence for the African American student enrolled at a PWI.

The pilot survey was distributed online at www.surveymonkey.com to a small group of volunteer seniors enrolled at the selected institution in the same way that it was administered in

the actual study. Students were sent an e-mail to their campus address asking for voluntary participation in an online survey regarding their mentoring experiences. Prior to the administration of the pilot and main study, approval was granted from the institution's human subject committee to survey the selected population.

Each student was asked to provide demographic information including race, gender, self-reported grade point average, major, confirm participation in a mentoring relationship, and race of the mentor. For participants involved in a mentoring relationship, they were asked to complete both the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale and respond to all of the open-ended questions. Participants who had been mentored provided demographic information and responded to the open-ended questions related to academic and social involvement on campus only.

Once completed, the results of the pilot study were checked to see that all questions had been answered, and the average time taken to complete the survey had been recorded. An assessment of each question was also done to ensure that an adequate range of responses had been provided. Based on responses, all unnecessary, ambiguous, or difficult questions were modified for clarity or discarded.

In soliciting responses for the main study, all African American seniors as of spring 2005, including students from the pilot study, were asked to participate in a voluntary web-based survey concerning personal mentoring experiences and academic preparation. Duplicate surveys from students who participated in the pilot survey were eliminated from the final analysis of the data for the principal study since the pilot responses were found to be congruent and valid. Students accessed the questionnaires from a link submitted to them by e-mail. Before beginning the survey, all participants were required to submit a consent form indicating their willingness to freely participate in the survey and agreement to allow the researcher to verify their institutional GPA as recorded by the Registrars Office. Students were also asked to provide self-reported GPA information and provide consent in the event that participants are less willing to allow review of their institutional records. By allowing for both, the researcher maximized the opportunity to receive a greater number of responses.

The consent stated that students' identity would remain confidential and that responses from the questionnaires would only be used to collect data for this particular study. Students who did not complete the electronic survey when first asked were sent a follow-up e-mail to their campus address within two weeks. Following, students who still had not responded continued to

receive a follow-up e-mail biweekly until the researcher received a satisfactory response rate. Students responding were given the opportunity to be selected at random to receive an entry for a $50 cash prize giveaway. This incentive was used to increase the response rate of participants.

Once the questionnaires for the main study had been accessed, the participants provided demographic information on age, sex, marital status, type of residence during college, self-reported grades, major, classification, and the number of credit hours enrolled. Following, participants began the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Survey and ended it after completing a set of open-ended questions that addressed specific mentoring experiences and events and activities leading to persistence at the selected institution. Within the surveys, participants checked responses rating each item, strongly disagree *1*, agree *2*, neutral *3*, agree *4*, and strongly agree *5*.

Analysis

Since certain elements of this study sought to determine whether a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance, the dependent variable used in this study was African American students' grade point averages. When determining the relationship between mentoring and academic performance, the primary independent variable was students' perceptions of the mentoring experience measured by the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale. Before analysis, demographic information was screened for missing values and outliers. Following, data from the surveys was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

The senior population was divided into two groups, Group 1, comprised of African American students who indicated participation in a mentoring relationship; and Group 2, comprised of students who did not. Frequency analysis was used to identify numbers, percentages, and mean scores of responses to each individual question or statement, and *t-tests* were conducted to compare and calculate mean differences between the two groups. Particular focus was given to the mentoring experiences as perceived by the student. Mentoring experiences were detailed according to what students experienced in the relationship, how the relationship began and evolved over time, and whether the relationship affected their academic performance and matriculation.

Academic performance was measured by students' cumulative grade point average, which could have varied significantly depending on the type of major. Evenso, an analysis was

conducted to determine if a higher number of students who had been mentored also had higher GPAs. This type of data could lead to further research on the relationship between academic performance and mentoring for historically underrepresented groups. Retention in this study was defined as students having matriculated at the current institution through their senior year and their decision to persist in lieu of hindrances that may have occurred while enrolled. However, since all students in this survey met this definition, this study addressed the component of retention through qualitative measures and responses from the open-ended questions included in the survey instrument. The emphasis was on the students' reporting of factors that contributed to persistence.

Specifically, for answers sought to research questions one and two – (1) What are the factors that contributed to persistence, and (2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, a qualitative research design was employed to analyze the open-ended questions that appeared at the end of the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale. The open-ended questions were derived from the literature on mentoring, student retention, academic and social integration, and factors associated with the successful completion of the undergraduate degree for African American or minority students. The questions focused on the inclusive nature of the campus environment, key aspects of the mentoring experience, and factors impacting success and retention at the current institution. Five of these questions were used in Lewis, Ginsberg, and Davies (2004) study on "*The experiences of African American Ph.D. students at a predominantly White Carnegie I research institution*". These questions were modified to fit the undergraduate African American population.

Responses to research questions one and two were examined to find categories related to factors that contributed to student persistence; and for detailed information on the mentoring experience itself. In the initial analysis, the data was analyzed using responses to the open-ended questions. Responses were compared between those who received mentoring and those who did not. Categories were developed using a synthesis of words and phrases common to each participant's responses. Each category was reported separately detailing participants' responses to the open-ended questions collectively. The discussion within each category provided results on how the mentoring experience may or may not have had an impact on the students' decision to

stay in school and whether the relationship contributed to persistence. It also provided a description of mentoring experiences in general as reported by the African American student.

Responses to research question 3 - What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA – lended itself to more quantifiable data through the use of descriptive statistics and analysis of variance between the two groups. In the initial analysis, frequencies, mean scores, and correlations were used. Following, *t-tests* and ANOVA were used to test the hypothesis that there is a relationship between mentoring and academic performance, as measured by cumulative grade point average. These measurements helped to determine whether the variation in mean GPA among the two groups was significant. ANOVA was also used to determine if a significant relationship existed between GPA and other variables such as work. Examination of the data using these measurements provided insight on whether higher levels of academic performance were seen as a benefit of participation in a mentoring relationship and if a relationship existed among various components of the mentoring itself. Even though grade point average has been used in numerous studies as the measure of academic performance, it is noted in this study that variability in participants' programs of study could have a positive or negative impact on grade point average. Although, use of standard deviation scores provided knowledge on whether there was a significant variance between mentoring experiences and academic GPA.

In the analysis of question three, the *p*-value was set at .05, allowing for 95 percent confidence level associated with testing the null hypothesis. Pearson's *r* was used to measure the strength of the relationship between mentoring and academic performance. To determine the statistical significance of *r*, two-tailed *t-tests* were used to show significance in either positive or negative direction. Care was taken to resist inference of cause and effect when observing the correlations.

Tables were generated to show statistical features of the survey with emphasis on the *p*-values and *t-test* numbers as they showed whether or not to reject the null hypothesis. If the *p*-value associated with the *t-test* was small (p<0.05), there was evidence to reject the null hypothesis for research question three. Therefore, the conclusion would be there is a significant relationship between mentoring and academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution. The actual coefficient numbers were included in a table showing *p*-values, *t-test* values (two-tailed), and the number of cases (*n*).

For question three, there was one independent variable (mentoring) and one dependent variable (GPA). Therefore, the findings presented data on the existence of a significant relationship between mentored and nonmentored students using mean GPA as the sole predictor. After comparing the data, the researcher was also able to identify other variables that may have influenced academic performance for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution.

CHAPTER FOUR

The purpose of this research was to study the relationships between mentoring, academic performance, and persistence for African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution. Three research questions were central to the study: (1) What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, (2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, and (3) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

A mixed method research design utilizing the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale, a forty item questionnaire with seventeen open ended questions on mentoring experiences, was submitted to African American seniors at a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States. A population of 1237 African American seniors enrolled as of spring 2005 were included in the survey. Of the population surveyed, a total of 366 useable surveys were generated, constituting a response rate of 30 percent. This chapter presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the study's results.

The RMES was developed to assess the extent to which mentees believed mentors provided guidance related to academic, social and career aspirations as part of their college experience. These items were developed based on previous items found in Raymond A. Noe's (1998) scale used to investigate the influence of protégés' job and career aspirations gained from participation in a mentoring relationship and from the research literature on student persistence, mentoring, and retention. Participants were asked to read each item and report on the extent to which it described their mentoring relationship.

For selected items on the survey, a 5-point Likert type scale was used with 1 equal to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 equal to "Strongly Agree". The survey was submitted to students online at www.surveymonkey.com and posted for four weeks. After receiving the initial responses, the time was extended for an additional two weeks to increase the response rate. E-mails were personalized for each recipient and a statement was included indicating the value of their participation. A $50 cash prize was used as an incentive for participation and completion of the survey.

Pilot Study

To evaluate the efficacy of the proposed survey instrument, a pilot survey of the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Survey was administered to twenty percent (N=1520) of the undergraduate population of African American seniors enrolled as of spring 2005 at a PWI in the southeastern United States. The purpose of the pilot study was to address any ambiguous or unnecessary questions that should be modified for clarity or eliminated prior to administration of the principal study. The pilot survey used a combination of questions to assess both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of a mentoring relationship.

The quantitative questions were drawn from Raymond A. Noe's Mentoring Functions Scale (1988) used in his research on determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships. Many of the items on the modified scale were tailored to the academic environment on college and university campuses for college students in general. In addition, two factors were added to the survey. One factor assessed the importance of race in the mentoring relationship. The other factor assessed satisfaction and integration into the academic environment based on mentoring experiences. These factors were termed "racial attribute" and "satisfaction and assimilation". The qualitative questions were drawn from the literature on mentoring, retention, persistence and Lewis, Ginsberg, and Davies (2004) study on the mentoring experiences of African American doctoral students. In the modified survey, both psychosocial and career related functions were combined into one scale. Two additional variables were added to include the aspect of race and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, which resulted in a total of forty questions.

To collect data from the population of students in this study, the decision was made to administer the pilot RMES online at www.surveymonkey.com to twenty percent (*n*=304) of the African American seniors enrolled at a predominantly White institution as of spring 2005. According to Gay and Airasian (2000), it is common to sample 10 to 20 percent of the population for descriptive research. Choosing the higher percentage, the decision was made to sample twenty percent of the total population (N=1520) for the pilot study, which resulted in 304 students. In addition, Schillewaert, Langerak, and Duhamel (1998) said web surveys are an extremely promising method of data collection. Some of the advantages include a short time frame for the collection of responses and time and cost savings. Therefore, due to financial constraints and costs of conducting mail surveys along with the time it takes for processing, an online survey seemed most appropriate for this particular study.

In the pilot study, a simple random sample was selected from the population using a random number generator at www.random.org. Numbers were selected between 1 and 304 from the total population and then inserted into a student data file using Microsoft Excel. Each student was assigned a random number and then the data was sorted using those numbers, providing each participant an equal chance of being selected. After sorting the data by random number, the first 304 students were selected to participate in the pilot study. At the close of the pilot survey, a total of 46 participants had responded providing a15 percent response rate. Of the sampled population for the pilot survey, 21.1 percent (N=8) of the participants indicated participation in a mentoring relationship and 78.9 percent (N=38) did not.

In the analysis of the pilot survey, 36 usable surveys were assessed using SPSS for modifications and clarity to the principal survey. A usable survey was defined as a survey with completed data on demographics; each question answered on the quantitative RMES for participants who reported having a mentoring relationship and the qualitative questions regarding the aspects and characteristics of that relationship; and completion of the qualitative questions on academic persistence for the group of students who were not mentored. In the analysis, all mentor functions were represented including the two additions for race attribute and satisfaction and assimilation. The fourteen open-ended questions also had responses that provided elaboration on the nature of the mentoring relationship and events and activities that may have contributed to a student's persistence at the predominantly White institution.

After conducting the analysis on the pilot survey, each of the categories was found to have reliability measurements consistent with the nature of the question asked. There was concern regarding question 38, which was designed as one of the questions to measure the function race attribute. Students were asked to provide a rating on whether similar values were more important than race in choosing their mentor. When the results from this question were examined in relationship with the two others in the same category, results showed a negative covariance for this one question that generally violates reliability model assumptions. However, in relationship to the entire scale itself, this one particular question did not significantly reduce the Cronbach alpha score for the scale as whole.

If question 38 had been deleted from the principal survey, Cronbach alpha for the RMES would have been reported as 0.934. Keeping this item resulted in a Cronbach alpha of 0.933. Since the reliability estimate for the entire scale was not significantly altered, the decision was

made to keep question 38 and reliability for the Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale was reported to have a Cronbach alpha score of .933. For the open-ended questions, student responses also reflected congruence with the intended purpose of the question. As a result, these responses were reported in the principal survey.

Even though the original responses were congruent, additional open-ended questions were added to the survey to provide a richer description of the students' experiences. These questions were added based on recommendations received from the participants in the pilot survey on how the study could be improved. A number of students wanted to see more specific questions related to the race of the instructor and the cultural differences experienced on campus. Therefore, three additional questions were added to the open-ended responses for a total of seventeen. Those questions were: (1) Did you have any Black/African American instructors? If so, how did this make you feel; (2) Do you feel like this institution welcomed your cultural differences; and (3) Was there any point in your time at this institution that you felt it was hard for you to graduate? Explain. For the principal study, the RMES consisted of a total of 40 items with a reported Cronbach alpha of 0.933.

Main Study

Following receipt of the surveys, data were analyzed initially using descriptive statistics and then *t-tests* and ANOVA for the quantitative aspects of the survey. Regarding the open-ended questions, key words and phrases were identified and developed based on the number of occurrences and relationship to persistence. Five main categories emerged from this analysis. Validity of the results was attained by applying Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notions of trustworthiness to the data collection process and findings.

The population to be surveyed initially consisted of 1520 students – 35 percent male (N=528) and 65 percent female (N=992); however four of those students did not have an e-mail address listed for correspondence. An additional 279 students had invalid or undeliverable e-mail addresses. Therefore, from a population of 1520, the actual survey population consisted of 1237 African American seniors. Of the total surveyed, 339 students responded; however, six students opened the survey, but did not include a response for any item. Since no response was given, these students were deleted from the responses providing a total of 333 respondents. Since the pilot survey had consistent reliability in its measures, those student responses were reported in the principal survey, giving a total of 379 respondents.

According to Gay and Airasian (2000), it is common to sample 10 to 20 percent of the population for descriptive research. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) recommended a sample size of at least 291 for a population of 1,200. Thus, the total number of participants responding in this study exceeded the number recommended for the size of the chosen population. Even though a total of 379 responses were reported, only 366 of the surveys were deemed as usable surveys.

Demographic Data

Race, Gender, and Age

Demographic data is provided for the sample population based on the number of responses from students who actually responded to a particular question. Response rates may vary between questions when reporting percentage of respondents in each category. Within the population of African American seniors surveyed, 35 percent were male and 65 percent were female. Of the student respondents, the ratio of male to female was somewhat similar in that 25 percent (N=90) were male and 75 percent (N=276) were female. In addition, 93 percent (N= 341) of the respondents identified themselves as Black/African American (non-Hispanic). The demographic data on race is reported here even though the survey was distributed to the entire African American senior population only. The results showed that at least seven percent of the students reported were classified as other than African American. These seven percent were grouped as other (N= 25) for data reporting purposes because the number of students in each category was relatively low. Furthermore, the data revealed that 74 percent of participants (N=234) who reported their age were between ages 20 and 23, which is similar to the general undergraduate population at this institution. These

The mean averages reported in 2005 for all freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors at the current institution ranged from 19 to 24 respectively. About 17 percent of the students in this study were ages 24-29; an additional 7 percent were ages 30-39; and about 3 percent ranged in ages between 40 and 55. Less than one percent of the participants reported ages 19 or younger.

Classification and Enrollment Status

The study also showed that the greater number of students was classified as full-time. Seventy-seven percent (N=243) of the students said they were enrolled full-time and twenty-three percent were enrolled part-time. Of these students, about 70 percent were classified as seniors; ten percent were graduate students at the time the survey was taken; just over two percent were juniors; and less than one percent was reported as sophomores. About 19 percent of

the students were reported in an "Other" category. Since the data captured seniors as of spring 2005, it was expected that some would have graduated by the completion of this study; hence those being reported as "other," which were primarily recent graduates.

Survey participants were generated in the spring term 2005 from a list of students who had made it to their senior year by that term. The survey was administered the following fall of 2006 and yielded responses from current and former students who made it to the senior year in the spring of 2005. This group of respondents included students who had graduated, enrolled in graduate school and was seniors at the time they completed the survey. Those respondents who indicated they were sophomores and juniors may have misidentified themselves as the survey was sent to students who had already made it to their senior year. However, the responses were included in the analysis as all of the other data associated with the survey was complete.

Table 1 - Participant Demographics

Age	*Frequency*	*Percent*
19 or younger	1	0.3
20 – 23	234	73.8
24 – 29	53	16.7
30 – 39	21	6.8
40 – 55	8	2.5
Total	317	100.0

Table 2 – Classification Status

Classification	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Freshmen	0	0
Sophomore	1	0.3
Junior	7	2.2
Senior	219	69.1
Graduate Student	30	9.5
Other	60	18.9
Total	317	100.0

Table 3 - Enrollment Status

Enrollment Status	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Full-time	243	76.9
Part-time	73	23.1
Total	316	100.0

Table 4 - Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	90	25.0
Female	276	75.0
Total	366	100.0

Table 5 - Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Not Married	283	90.4
Married	20	6.4
Divorced	8	2.6
Separated	2	0.6
Total	313	100.0

Table 6 - Class Load

Number of Credit Hours Enrolled	Frequency	Percent
6 or fewer	85	26.8
7 – 11	26	8.2
12 – 14	151	47.6
15 – 16	39	12.3
17 or more	16	5.0
Total	317	100.0

Table 7 - Alpha Score of Cumulative GPA

Grades	Frequency	Percent
A	38	12.0
A-,B+	115	38.3
B	78	24.6
B-,C+	70	22.1
C+, C-	12	3.8
Other	4	1.3
Total	317	100.0

Table 8 - Student Housing

Type of Residence	Frequency	Percent
Dormitory or other campus housing	30	9.5
Off-campus housing	287	90.5
Total	317	100.0

Further information revealed that students major choices were varied amongst the participants and the majority of the respondents lived off-campus. In Table 9, the top categories of majors chosen for this particular group of students are listed. In addition, 70 percent of the students began their education career at the current institution as a first time in college student (FTIC) as opposed to transferring from another institution. Eighty-four percent also planned to pursue an advanced degree upon completion of the undergraduate degree as noted in Table 11.

Table 9 - Student Majors

Major	Frequency	Percent
Biological/Life Sciences	24	6.6
Business	49	13.4
Communication	23	6.3
Computer and Information Sciences	11	3.0
Education	24	6.6
Engineering	22	6.0
Ethnic Studies	2	0.5
Foreign Languages and Literature	3	0.8
Health-related fields	21	5.7
History	4	1.1
Humanities	13	3.6
Liberal/General Studies	2	0.5
Mathematics	7	1.9
Multi/Interdisclinipary Studies	3	0.8
Physical Sciences	7	1.9
Pre-professional	24	6.6
Public Administration	6	1.6
Social Sciences	75	20.5
Visual and Performing Arts	16	4.4
Other	42	11.5
Total	366	100.0

Table 10 - Admission Type

Admission Type	Frequency	Percent
FTIC	222	70.0
Transfer Student	95	30.0
Total	317	100.0

Table 11 - Advanced Study

Plans for Graduate School	Frequency	Percent
Yes	265	84.4
No	49	15.6
Total	314	100.0

Interestingly, many of the respondents also came from households where neither parent graduated from high school, which may support the data for the number of students working on a job (Table 13) for pay while enrolled in school. When asked about their parents educational level, 50 percent of the participant's reported their parents had not graduated from college, 23 percent of the students reported that both parents graduated, 8 percent said their father had graduated from college, 17 percent indicated their mother graduated, and 2 percent said they didn't know. Nearly 80 percent of the students were employed while school was in session and about 40 percent of them indicated that their job took some time away from school work.

Table 12 - Parent Education Level

Did Parents Graduate From College	Frequency	Percent
No	158	49.8
Yes, both parents	73	23.0
Yes, father only	24	7.6
Yes, mother only	55	17.4
Don't know	7	2.2
Total	317	100.0

Table 13 - Student Employment

Hours worked while in school	Frequency	Percent
No job	64	20.3
1 – 10	32	10.0
11 – 20	76	24.1
21 – 30	66	20.9
31 – 40	72	1.9
NA	6	1.6
Total	316	100.0

Table 14 - Effect of Employment on Academic Performance

Does work affect school	Frequency	Percent
No Job	67	21.2
Does not interfere	93	29.4
Takes some time away	126	39.9
Takes a lot of time away	30	9.5
Total	316	100.0

In addition to working either on campus or off-campus, students reported on additional means of meeting their college expenses. The following tables show these other means categorized as self (employment or savings); parental financial support; spouse or partner; employer support (tuition reimbursement plans); scholarships and grants; loans; and other sources not included in the above categories.

Table 15 - College Expenses - Self

Meet college expenses: Self	Frequency	Percent
None	42	14.6
Very little	87	30.2
Less than half	70	24.3
About half	25	8.7
More than half	29	10.1
All or nearly all	35	12.2
Total	288	100.0

Table 16 - College Expenses - Parents

Meet college expenses: Parents	Frequency	Percent
None	81	30.0
Very little	80	29.6
Less than half	56	20.7
About half	22	8.1
More than half	16	5.9
All or nearly all	15	5.6
Total	270	100.0

Table 17 - Colleges Expenses - Spouse

Meet college expenses: Spouse or Partner	Frequency	Percent
None	231	92.0
Very little	12	4.8
Less than half	5	2.8
About half	0	0
More than half	2	0.8
All or nearly all	1	0.4
Total	251	100.0

Table 18 - College Expenses - Employer

Meet college expenses: Employer support	Frequency	Percent
None	196	77.8
Very little	21	8.3
Less than half	16	6.3
About half	9	3.6
More than half	6	2.4
All or nearly all	4	1.6
Total	252	100.0

Table 19 - College Expenses - Financial Aid

Meet college expenses: Scholarship and grants	Frequency	Percent
None	35	11.8
Very little	19	6.4
Less than half	45	15.2
About half	44	14.8
More than half	59	19.9
All or nearly all	95	32.0
Total	297	100.0

Findings

Analysis of the data from the survey revealed the following for each research question.

Research Question 1: What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution?

The following questions in Table 20 were asked of each student to determine the factors leading to their decision to remain enrolled at the predominantly White institution. To determine the factors leading to persistence, a synthesis of key words and phrases that appeared frequently

in the open-ended responses of the students was undertaken. For this review, frequency was an important variable in the extrapolation of these key words and phrases. Following the extrapolation, the words and phrases that appeared frequently were synthesized into categories and then reported accordingly.

Table 20 - Persistence

Persistence
Were there any specific events, activities, or persons that had a significant impact on your decision to remain enrolled at your current institution? If so, please explain.
Describe your experiences when you first stepped on the predominantly White university campus? What were your feelings about the campus environment?
Describe your experiences in your academic program in relationship to other students in your classes or your department? Did you have any feelings of being alone?
Describe your experiences with faculty, advisors, and staff in the university as a whole and also in your academic department?
Did you have any Black/African American instructors? If so, how did this make you feel?
Do you feel like this institution welcomed your culture or differences?
Was there any point in your time at this institution that you felt it was hard for you to graduate? Explain.
Based on your experiences, what kind of advice would you give other African-American undergraduate students?
What, if any, recommendations would you give to the university or your academic department to help improve the experiences of African-American undergraduate students enrolled at predominantly White institutions?

In the analysis of the open ended questions related to persistence; six emergent categories characterized the experiences of the African-American students enrolled at this particular PWI. Each of the six categories was developed using a synthesis of phrases actually used by one or more participants. This was done to preserve the student's own language in describing specific meanings. These categories, however, are not to be construed as independent of one another but as interrelated aspects of a single overall pattern.

The six categories, as derived from students' responses, are as follows: Isolation; Faculty-Student Interaction; Family Relationships; Student Involvement; Peer Interaction; and Degree Attainment. In addition, certain factors related to the students' experiences also emerged. These

factors included family expectations, faith in God and spiritual support, factors of motivation, and cultural expectations on race. In Table 21, each category is described. Following the reporting of the findings, a discussion of how these categories fit into academic and social integration to the campus environment based on Tinto's model is included in Chapter Five along with ideas for improving the experiences for African-American students will be presented.

Table 21 – Categories of Persistence for Participants

Categories	*Description of Category*
Isolation	Frequent feelings of isolation within the academic or social environment Feelings of standing out as a minority
Faculty/Staff – Student Interaction	Bonding relationships formed with administrators, advisors, faculty, and staff
Student Involvement	Association and networking with student organizations and campus peer groups; Role of campus support groups
Family Relationships and Parental Involvement	The role played by family and friends Parental Support Sibling Support
Peer Interaction	The role of peers and friendship
Degree Attainment	Efforts required to persist in the academic and social environment as students pursue their undergraduate degree
Family Expectations	Academic success as an identifying role of achievement College success as a requirement Financial support
Faith in God and Spiritual Support	Church affiliations and role models Belief in a Higher Being
Cultural Expectations on Race	Feelings of having to be representative of the race in a positive nature Perceptions of discrimination and racism
Factors of Motivation	Self motivation Wanting to make family and mentors proud Financial and career opportunities

Isolation. The most prevailing category that characterized the experiences of the African American students surveyed in this study was the sense that there were many feelings of being alone or feeling out of place once they arrived on the predominately White campus. Several students indicated they felt isolated or alone in their surroundings, extremely intimidated, and had feelings of fear and anxiety in addition to feeling out of place and unwelcome. For two respondents, the degree of isolation led them to consider transferring to another institution to complete their degree.

Students described their feelings of being invisible on campus. In the classic novel by Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), the metaphoric play of light and shadow describing interactions between the narrator and his social setting was used to capture the complexities of Black identity itself. *Invisible Man* chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless African American, as he moves through sometimes painful levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. Searching for a context in which to know himself, he exists in a very peculiar state. He stated, "I am an invisible man. I am invisible, simply because people refuse to see me. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed, everything and anything except me." p. 7. This is precisely what participants were trying to describe when they noted that sometimes they felt alone and isolated or even invisible.

Other students reported feelings of discrimination from individuals whom they felt did not understand their background or who made objectionable and sometimes racist comments. For instance, one student reported experiencing a complete culture shock, especially after coming from a predominantly African American high school and living in an all African American neighborhood. He said, quite honestly he could not remember the last time he had been around more than one White person. The campus environment made him feel like a fish swimming in a sea of endless possibilities trying to find his direction. To him, everyone seemed to come and go. This experience wasn't at all what he was accustomed to during his high school years where he knew almost everyone. Rather, it seemed a little impersonal and that was something that he would have to adjust.

Another student had an almost identical experience. He also described his experience as a culture shock He reported, "I went to a diverse high school, but this environment really showed me that African Americans only make up about 13% of the population!" Feelings of being

overwhelmed and isolated were expressed by a female student who felt like an ugly duckling in an enormous flock. She thought that being disconnected from her family contributed to these feelings. In addition, she felt that she was sometimes judged by staff and that faculty treated her differently compared to the treatment given to White female students. For her, there was a self-fulfilling prophecy in effect that resulted in added pressure to represent all African Americans, which in her opinion was an extremely heavy burden.

Another female student recounted how she often felt like the "only Black girl". These feelings of isolation often affected her ability to find group support and study groups. Offering a different perspective, a male student said that he knew what it was like before he arrived on campus; but it still was pretty shocking to be in large classes and still be one of the only African American males in attendance. On the other hand, the experience was less daunting for the student who said that she was used to being in a predominantly White school. Her college environment and experience wasn't that much of a shock; although she was concerned by the number of confederate flags displayed in the windows of White fraternity houses and on cars of the residents.

Feelings of isolation upon arrival continued during the early orientation and induction to the university. Many students felt once they got to campus they were left to navigate their environment alone. These and other students were overwhelmed initially, but felt they had to adapt in order to survive. For all of these students, adjusting to a culture very different from their home or high school environment was sometimes a frightening task. This theme of being alone, which students reported as being pervasive in their first two years of study, often continued as students progressed into their major where they might be one of a few.

One student indicated that it was too difficult to find the information needed to get into her program of choice. Therefore, she planned to transfer and pursue her education at on online university which was more suited for working adults. A nontraditional student expressed that she felt alone from the beginning and still does. For her, age made a difference. At 44, she felt that she was definitely in an isolated category because most of the students in her classes were about 20 years old. Another student expressed feelings of fear and felt as if she was being treated as an outcast and concluded that no one was making a conscious effort to change those feelings. In her opinion, she felt that everyone was "sticking to their own" and that she was alone.

Along with this strong sense of feeling isolated and alone, the African American students reported they often felt out of place on campus. Chances to mingle with students of the same race were limited. This was especially evident for those students who came from predominately minority schools or communities. As one student explained,

> I felt out of place and that I didn't belong here because I saw less of my race and a large amount of Whites. While I was here, I even questioned myself at times as to whether I made a right choice by choosing to attend a predominantly White university rather than a predominantly Black one.

Another student commented,

> It was a major culture shock for me. I went to a Black elementary, middle, and high school. I had about 3 White classmates during that time. It took a bit of getting adjusted to because the differences that I perceived and realized were true about the different cultures. The campus environment was a bit different. I felt myself being gravitated towards people that looked like me. I noticed that a lot of the Black students on the campus had grouped themselves together.

Similar comments also came from a student who reported,

> I was amazed at how large it was. Then I was more amazed about how many Black people I did not see. I guess since I came from a predominantly Black school, I was sort of in a culture shock because I was the only Black person in my orientation group. I was one of 15 Black people in my dorm of about 400 and I was the only Black person on my floor. I was happy to be here because I had a couple of friends from high school, one being Puerto Rican who I literally spent all of my time with. We did everything together. I went to _____ to find my other friends.

Again, the African American students in this study were keenly aware of their presence or the lack of it on campus. It was obvious to them they stood out from the campus norm. They stood out in class, in select social settings, in the university as a whole, and in the larger

community. These comments were echoed repeatedly by the survey respondents. An African American female noted that in many of her classes she was either the only African American or African American female. She stated that she never had many African American classmates unless she was taking an AML course, which is the prefix for African American Literature. When she attended courses other than her AML courses, she sometimes felt as though she and the other few African Americans students were invisible; again reflecting the metaphor of alienation experienced in Ellison's novel.

Another student expressed feelings of discomfort by characterizing her situation as one which she was "outnumbered". For her, she felt more secure when other African American students were present. On the other hand, a student who was majoring in marketing said that it was not difficult to excel academically or interact with peers of different races. However; she did note the difference in races and backgrounds apparent in her classes. She said she could remember sitting in class some days thinking, "Am I the only Black person in this field?"

These types of experiences seemed to be recurring for a number of students; however, not all students expressed the same sentiment. Some of the students noticed the lack of minority representation in their classes but were not affected by it or able to adjust in a positive way. For instance, one student said, "Even though I was the only Black person in many of my classes I never really noticed it until race was the topic of discussion in the class. Those were the only times that I might have felt out-numbered."   Another student's positive experience was voiced accordingly.

> Since my world is not defined by race, but by individuals, I did not expect to feel
> alone, despite the fact that I was the only Black person around in many instances
> in many smaller classes. I was respected for talents my classmates believed I
> possessed. I received an invitation to join a band service fraternity (with a mostly
> White membership) three weeks after my freshman year began, and eventually
> pledged a music-centered social fraternity with a mostly White membership the
> next semester.

More interestingly was this student's response to her feeling of being alone initially and being able to see the situation as a learning and growing experience.

When I was focusing on my English concentration, there were several times when I, literally the only Black person in my class, felt self-conscious and, yes, alone. But it was a true process for me. I learned to think myself no less than my peers and faculty, and I considered my experience as one that allowed me to examine the feelings and opinions I value about myself, and I did learn more about me.

More positive experiences were expressed as the student who said that it was a little odd for him initially since his high school experiences were also spent at a predominantly Black school. But he stated that he was able to adjust to his current environment and that the experience has proven to be a great learning experience for him. The experience became a precursor for what is to be expected in the world of work, which he would face very soon.

If one tries to compare the select experiences mentioned above, it may be said that this group of students had taken responsibility for their own success regardless of the few students in their classes of the same race. As noted at the end of Ellison's novel, he himself began to assume responsibility for his own situation when he announced his intention to emerge from his underground refuge. He reported that he might have a socially responsible role to play even as an invisible man. Although ambiguous as to whether he intends to be responsible to Whites, as well as African Americans, it is definite that he is assuming responsibility for himself. In this case, the African-American students who said they were able to overcome the feelings of isolation or see it as a positive experience may have decided to take their academic success into their own hands and seek other areas of support outside of the classroom and use personal motivation as a means to achieve instead.

Feelings of isolation and being out of place varied at different points in respondents' educational career. Some of the students reported feeling very comfortable in their environment and receiving the support needed to be successful in their studies. Others reported feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly when asked what their experiences were when they first stepped on to a predominantly White college campus. Feelings of being alone were heightened by isolated incidents of being misunderstood by peers of a different race. In select incidents, students reported having experiences with discrimination, including derogatory comments about

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their racial identity. As one student noted, her hope was to be treated fairly and allowed to receive the same educational opportunities as her peers. However, for some students, they felt this to be a difficult task as they perceived themselves forced to represent their entire race in courses where they were the only minority.

When asked what advice they would give to other African American students attending a PWI, one student suggested: "You have to work hard…not just prove that you are equal to those in your surroundings…but also to pay heritage(sic) to those who died in the struggle to pave the way for us". Another student suggested, "I would advise them not to procrastinate and to try to study with the White students that are grasping the concepts." Others recommended that students try to maintain their own identity even though they are in the minority; "find a mentor and support group"; "don't expect to have anything handed to you"; "trust in God"; "work hard"; "stay focused"; and "don't feel intimidated".

Faculty/Staff – Student Interaction. Most all students expressed the importance of meaningful interactions between themselves and faculty/staff on campus. To many students, meaningful and frequent interactions were needed to help them find the resources essential to matriculate and graduate. In describing individuals who had a positive impact on their decision to stay in school, students mentioned individual faculty members, counselors, administrators, staff members, and advisors. For some it was a personalized one-on-one relationship. For others it meant having professors who looked out for their well-being. Respondents reported these institutional representatives played a vital role in their retention and persistence.

In their responses, respondents talked about the positive experience of being greeted and contacted warmly by faculty and staff. Some students contrasted their experience with different institutional representatives as a way of conveying their feelings and emphasizing the importance of a welcoming and supportive environment. The determining factor in these contrasting descriptions was the degree to which the faculty and staff personally engaged the student. The students reported they perceived these individuals actually cared about them. This perception of care from faculty and staff gave them confidence that they had (a) a place to go to ask questions about the college or university, and (b) an important personal connection to the institution.

Although advising relationships were particularly important in class scheduling and staying on track for meeting degree requirements; some students reported never meeting with their advisor, such as the student who had graduated already and said he still doesn't know who

his advisor was. Another student says, "As a science major, I have always felt as if the faculty/staff were a little distant from the students. They didn't seem as if they were eager to help, teach, or point students in the right direction."

On the other hand, many other students found advisors, staff, and faculty very helpful. A student majoring in communication reported, "My academic advisor helped me out many times, but the Black secretary made sure my grades were okay, told me when I needed to get something in, told me of opportunities, made sure I was feeling well, and knew how to find the loopholes for me. My advisor is a wonderful person, but she doesn't take the holistic approach." Other students gave similar accounts of their relationships with faculty, staff, and advisors such as the student who said that, "An academic advisor named _____was a big help, because after I received my first degree in Psychology I was unsure about what I wanted to do, and _____ help me decide that school was best for me at this time." In both of these instances, these students were able to build relationships with advisors or staff that turned out to be critical in their lives.

Relationships with faculty were even more important for this group of students when seeking research opportunities and career advice. One student reported, "My academic advisor and one of my professors took me under their wing at a young age (sophomore year). They basically guided me, and set me up with research opportunities."Another female student found a male doctoral student in Education to be especially helpful during her educational career. In her words, she explained, "A young man I met who recently received his Doctoral Degree in Education went through some of the same experiences I've been through (financial burdens, family troubles, etc). He is a very positive person and always talks to me about the importance of continuing my education, especially as a Black woman." Other students found more support once they had declared and been admitted to a major. As one student reported,

> Once I became a junior and began upper division work I began to have more
> personal relationships with faculty and I feel this has been of great benefit to me.
> Professors have given me lots of praise on my performance which in turn,
> motivated me and made me want to work harder. I have grown close to a few
> professors, one offering to be a mentor and a father figure (since I have always
> lacked that).

Another student further noted that overall he had five professors who played an instrumental role in his persistence. For different reasons, each professor served as a mentor and guided his future. A female student reported that her academic advisor and one of her professors took her under their wings in her sophomore year. She said they guided her and provided her with research opportunities, which she deemed important in her field study.

  Student Involvement. Students indicated that affiliation with various student organizations, either formal or informal was important to them for networking and developing relationships. Participants reported that clubs and/or multicultural offices targeted towards African American students were key in reaching out to these students. Association with such groups was regarded as contributing to academic success for select respondents, despite the admission by some that they were initially reluctant to be involved in these groups. Select respondents discussed the impact that being involved with student groups had on their retention and persistence. Though their level of involvement varied and the type of organizations they chose to interact with were quite diverse, they all discussed the benefits of getting involved, both on and off campus.

  Some of the participants were actively involved in various student clubs and organizations, whereas others participated as volunteers both on and off campus. Regardless of their level of involvement, most stated in very clear terms the benefit of this involvement. For instance, one student noted that he joined certain organizations to help make his application for medical school appealing. Participation in these organizations helped him to understand his strengths and build on his skills. He reported that his mentors in these organizations were always giving of their time. They also pushed him to try to be more ambitious and proactive in his pursuit for medical school.

  In some instances, respondents reported that other minority students within these peer groups were particularly important during periods in which they felt isolated. One student in particular said there were religiously affiliated organizations that made him feel welcomed and accepted. Through these organizations he was able to build friendships with other students who were willing to give of their time and resources in order to help him acclimate to the college culture. Another student said she joined the _____ on campus in 2003 and was extremely grateful. She said that with the experiences and contacts gained as a result of being a member, she couldn't think of transferring schools. Another different campus ministry group was also

reported as having a significant impact for a student who said the ministry helped him to realize that God wanted him at _____ and that he had a plan for his life a part from the university. He stated that God was molding him at the institution and that it was important for him to remain there.

One organization was mentioned over and over again by nearly 13 percent of the mentored students as critical to their persistence. This organization provided preparation and academic support for students who are the first in their family to attend college; and for those who face economical, cultural, or educational challenges to obtaining a college. The organization offered a structured academic and personal support system to its students, which included activities such as: free tutorial services, academic advising, cultural and social enrichment, and mentoring. Participants in this organization were usually admitted to the university during the summer. Upon admission, students signed a participation agreement for the organization, which included: attending scheduled classes, study sessions, group meetings, and study hall.

Students noted the positive effect that mentoring and advising received from members of the organization had on their educational career.The students recounted stories of the guidance provided along with the nurturing that enabled them to progress as individuals. One student said that she immediately felt "a lot of love" by being a part of this organization whose specific focus was on retention of minority populations. Another student pointed out this organization assisted with her transitioning from a predominantly African American high school to the university. Through this program, she said she had the opportunity to explore the campus before any other incoming freshmen which led to her feeling less intimidated during the fall and spring semesters of her freshman year. Additional benefits of the program were expressed as having a significant impact on academic performance in the first two years of college as a result of the tutoring provided. According to one student, the tutoring in mathematics, physics, and English was critical to her academic success at the institution. She said without it she may not have performed as well in her courses.

Peer Interaction. At different points in their educational career, respondents reported developing relationships with peers of the same race who recognized the isolation they felt from being one of the few African Americans in different campus environments. This support group offered encouragement and insight on how to navigate through the academic system.

Respondents described these peers as being able to assist with problems by sharing their personal experiences and recommending ways to overcome difficult situations.

Connecting and interacting with peers of the same race who understood them proved to be beneficial to these students as they progressed through the academic program. These relationships with other students of color allowed them to have an outlet to discuss pressures of being a minority. They also served as a support group for each other as one method to progress toward graduation. In essence, the self created cohorts proved even more influential in their decision to persist.

Family Relationships and Parental Involvement. Students talked about the strong encouragement and support they received from one or both of their parents or a first- or second-degree relative, such as a grandparent, aunt, or uncle. Respondents characterized this encouragement as an imperative to be academically successful. Family had a very meaningful role in these students' decision to persist. Respondents described their family as a source of support and encouragement; however, the family also placed pressure on them. For some it was the pressure of knowing their parents would not support dropping out of college.

One student described her experience after her father died. She said, "I was considering leaving school for a semester when my father died at the beginning of my junior year. My mother encouraged me to keep going because that is what my father would have wanted." Another participant reported the sacrifices her parents were willing to make to help her be successful. Her parents encouraged her to finish college because they had never obtained a college degree themselves. However, they understood the value of a college education and wanted that for their daughter.

Even with the pressure from some parents, many students indicated that family was a significant factor in their decision to remain enrolled. One student's statement was illustrative as,

> I have always been encouraged by my parents and my church to stay in school and work hard. No ONE major event or person set me on this path or helped me remain here. It takes a village to raise a child. But I will say that my immediate family (Mother, Father, and Brother) had the largest impact. Second was the pastor at my church.

Others noted similar responses such as:

"My cousin inspired me to remain enrolled at this institution because she graduated with a BSN in nursing. Although, it took hard work she never gave up."

"My father attended _____, so I have always wanted to follow in his footsteps."

"My immediate family has served as a strong, motivating force behind my decision to remain enrolled at my current institution. They are supportive, sympathetic, and understanding to the academic rigor and personal hardships that one can experience while in college. As college graduate themselves, they have instilled in me that dropping out of college is NOT an option."

"My inspiration for remaining at _____ completing my first degree is my family's younger generation. A Bachelor's degree in general will allow me to succeed beyond what my previous generation could achieve. I continue in hopes that it will be an example and guide for my younger sibling, nieces, and nephews."

"My mother and father played a huge role in me staying in school simply by giving me a lot of mental support, and keeping me motivated. My friends were also helpful in keeping me focused and on task."

"My mother definitely gave me the inspiration to stay in school and work diligently towards my degree."

"My mother encouraged me to continue school and receive my degree. My mother never graduated from college and she always wanted her children to at least have a bachelor's degree."

In addition to support from their biological family structure, many African American students created their own "family" through the informal network they established. Informal networks were developed outside of the campus environment with persons whom respondents reported not to be part of their peer group or family, but instead members of various groups who had a direct impact on their decision to remain in school. One student noted that her church

family had a significant impact on her staying focused in school and in her decision to remain enrolled. She commented that her church family has always been there for her by giving words of encouragement and support. Another student reported that her manager at one of the local restaurants influenced her decision to persist. It was important that she continued her studies so that she would not be limited in her career.

Degree Attainment. With the various mechanisms of support and personal motivation, respondents reported definitively their plans for graduation. They had a personal goal to achieve success for them and their family structure, particularly those students who had experienced a loss or were the first in their family to graduate from college. In several cases, student respondents provided a narrative chronology about the importance of making it through to graduation and receiving a college degree. They talked about learning to adapt to the university environment, their major, and class structure, which was much different from high school.

They also talked about the importance of participating in support programs and having a variety of them to support all students, but particularly minority students. Making contact with advisors was particularly important in the early years and with faculty as they moved to upper division in the major and for career advice. Successfully adapting to the environment and classes where they were the only or one of a few minorities present was extremely important to overcome the isolation and loneliness they endured.

Amidst the occasional setbacks and frustrations, this group of students was determined to graduate and succeed. However, for some students matriculation was not an easy task. In addition to factors such as isolation, students reported barriers presented by bureaucratic delays, which are characteristic of large organizations. One student reported that in general he believed it was very difficult for him to continue his studies and graduate. Part of the difficulties came from problems associated with registration when entering his final semester. Because of a death in his family, he tried to drop a course that he was previously enrolled for the summer. However, he was unable to accomplish this task alone. His mother had to assist him by phoning the dean of his college and speaking to several administrators before anyone would agree to help resolve the problem. To the student, these types of barriers would have delayed his graduation by at least one semester.

Other delays may have been caused by students overextending themselves in an effort to succeed. A female athlete reported that it was difficult for her to deal with the pressure of being a

cheerleader because of the isolation she felt as the only African American on the team. She noted that the combined strains of her extracurricular activities and academics caused her to have low self esteem. She said that she often felt like giving up because so many things seemed unfair and the burden seemed so heavy. However, she was determined to succeed; therefore she persisted in her studies and continued to participate on the team, which in the end made her a stronger person for it. Other students were able to motivate themselves and use their own determination to succeed. One student reported just knowing that having a four-year degree was in his best interest kept him personally motivated. Another stated,

> Today's society has impacted my decision to remain in college. Basically, if you don't have a college degree then you can barely make it in life and I want to do more than barely make it…I want to be able to live comfortably and support my family without having any major financial worries.

Research Question 2: What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution?

When exploring the types of mentoring experienced by African American undergraduate students enrolled at the predominantly White institution, the following questions listed in Table 22 were addressed to respondents. Based on responses from sixty students who indicated participation in a mentoring relationship, select experiences were captured. Those experiences were divided into categories relating to the development of the mentoring relationship; characteristics of the mentor, both positive and negative; and impact of the relationship.

Table 22 - Mentoring

What led to the development of the mentoring relationship?

Identify three or more characteristics of your mentor that were significant in developing your relationship.

Identify three or more positive experiences within the mentoring relationship that helped to develop a closer bond between you and the mentor.

Identify three or more negative experiences that hindered the growth of the mentoring relationship.

Did the relationship with your mentor have a significant impact on your decision to stay in school? If so, describe how your mentor affected that decision.

Did the race of the mentor have an impact on the mentoring experiences or the growth of the relationship? If so, describe how race impacted the relationship.

What do you consider the most important characteristics and qualifications a mentor should possess?

What benefits were gained from your mentoring experience?

Development of the Mentoring Relationship. From participants' responses, the experiences reported seemed to be diverse and varied for each student, especially for the events that led to the initial development of the relationship. Organized mentoring programs and the need or desire to learn more about the participant's chosen profession were mentioned a number of times as key reasons for initiating a mentoring relationship.   Having someone in the respondent's chosen field of study seemed to be one of the primary characteristics of a mentor in addition to compassion, race, similar interests, and religious involvement. Events that created a greater bond between the mentor and mentee came from increased academic advising sessions, the mentor interacting with the mentee in a social setting such as lunch or dinner, and encouragement from the mentor to maintain good grades.

Some of the students reported the mentoring relationship began as they were taking courses to fulfill graduation requirements, particularly in directed independent study or research courses where the students had the opportunity to act one on one with the professor. Frequent interaction with advisors was also the beginning of a mentoring relationship for many students. The relationship was characterized as more than selecting a class schedule. The advisors were able to offer personal advice and assist with matters outside of academics for some students. Similar interactions occurred with faculty and staff who were classified as mentors for the African American students. Some students reported developing mentoring relationships with staff who worked in their departments or residence halls. Others developed relationships with faculty as a result of an initial meeting due to unsatisfactory progress in a course or a meeting to discuss career aspirations.

Students also noted that the communication process began with establishing rapport. For instance, the mentor and mentee may discuss their likes and dislikes, places traveled, or career interests. Once a level of comfort or rapport was established, the mentor and mentee began focusing on issues related to the campus environment. This rapport helped some of the students open up to discuss issues related to why they decided to attend this institution, or the types of events that may have impacted their persistence, including positive and negative events.

Of the reported experiences, eight students reported participation in formalized mentoring programs on campus. These formalized mentoring programs typically involved an orientation for first time in college students or programs associated with their major. Another eight reported having faculty members or professors as their mentor. Six additional students had advisors as

mentors. The remaining students (N=38) indicated that relationships with mentors developed from community organizations, staff, or family and friend networks. Some of the relationships developed through interactions at social events and religious functions. Pastors of the local churches and youth groups were considered as mentors and support groups as well. Included in the remaining category were mentoring relationships that developed as a direct result of students seeking someone to guide them in their career choices.

Students were proactive in seeking mentors to help them negotiate the system. Some sought mentors for encouragement, guidance, and support, such as the student who said that "doubt in myself to excel academically" was her primary reason for seeking a mentor. Another student's positive experience with mentoring was based on the connection she felt from her mentor's "willingness to help beyond what her role stated she should." Others sought mentors as a support system to help them in navigating the environment and as a confidant such as the student who said, "My reason for wanting a mentor is because it would allow me to have someone I can talk to about being a small fish in a big pond. Having the mentor was essential because there was someone who may have experienced something different." One student in particular actively sought a mentor. In his words: There were not that many Black faces on campus that were in the leadership position that I was pursuing so I decided to get a mentor to help me get familiar with campus from a leader's perspective.

Participants also reported experiences within the mentoring relationships that helped to develop a closer bond over time. One mentor takes her mentee out to lunch and opens the conversation for the mentee to discuss anything she wants. This gesture for the mentee provided a greater level of comfort and closeness as their relationship grew over time. She stated that her mentor also e-mails her and gives her advice on various topics. By having this deeper connection with her mentor, the student mentee was more willing to adhere to her mentor's advice for fear of letting her down. She noted that every time she followed the mentor's advice, it proved to be something great and of substance.

Another student's relationship with her mentor grew stronger after she was able to express her grief and literally cry on her mentor's shoulder one day. Taking the time away from the university and helping a student search for an apartment was reported by another student as an event that made her feel closer to her mentor. Seeing her mentor in a different setting and having more interpersonal interactions helped to seal the bond between them as did some of the

occasional lunches, invitations to mentors' homes, making themselves available outside of the campus, and listening did for other respondents.

   Characteristics of a Mentor. In this age old practice by which a mature or experienced person, usually older, shares his or her perspectives and experiences with a young aspirant, African American student respondents reported that specific characteristics of the mentor were essential in the development of the relationship. Adjectives used to describe the qualities these mentors possessed included: encouraging, non-threatening, understanding, helpful, loving, intelligent, caring, and brutally honest. One student reported, "the mentor's concern for my well-being, his experience in working with other students of color, and his desire to see me succeed played a valuable part in the relationship with my mentor."

   Another student reported that she was able to find more than one mentor while enrolled. Her mentors challenged her both mentally and physically and showed her the way to be an effective leader. This advice led to a leadership position among her own peers. In addition, she says her mentors were always honest with her, particularly during times when her academic performance was low and when she was not performing at her maximum potential. This student's mentors were there to help her understand how simple things like not always attending or paying attention in class could affect her future. In essence, she felt that she could really trust her mentors because in her opinion, they cared for her as an individual and wanted to see her succeed.

   Many students noted their mentors were easy to talk to after they found common interests. Having made this bond, the mentees began to feel as if their mentors really cared about them personally, which made a welcomed difference in some of their lives. For instance, one student noted there was a point after the death of his father, in which he became discouraged, but his mentor encouraged him not to give up.

   Another said that he gained a sense of his own abilities and appreciation for what would be necessary for those abilities to develop. His mentor encouraged him to try to be as ambitious and proactive as possible. A similar story was told by a student who reported that the caring nature of her mentor and the mentor's status made her want to stay in school. Looking at the accomplishments of her mentor gave her more determination to succeed academically in hopes that she would be equally well respected.

Respondents regularly reported that mentors had high expectations for their mentees. Even though the mentees were pushed to achieve higher standards, the mentees were grateful to their mentors for the encouragement to achieve their maximum potential. One student reported that he no longer wanted to finish school just for himself. He also wanted to finish for his mentor because he didn't want his mentor to think the time he invested in him was wasted. Equally interesting was a statement, in which the student reported, "I've learned people do care about me." For her, the mentoring experience boosted her self-confidence in addition to making her feel that it is acceptable to have high expectations for herself.

One female student expressed, "Sometimes being in a predominately white school can be discouraging- my mentor always pushes me and gives life examples to encourage me to get through." From tutoring, to help with enrollment, to negotiating the financial aid office, the students in this study asserted they had significantly benefited from participation in a mentoring relationship and felt closer to their mentors because the mentor was willing to listen, was understanding, caring, and most important – patient.

Having this type of rapport made the students more open to networking and connecting with others beyond the college campus, especially when mentors may have been limited. They also appreciated the ability of a mentor to relate to their issues and concerns, particularly those mentors who survived similar challenges while enrolled at a predominantly White institution. Rapport was also important in establishing trust. The development of trust enabled the mentor to perform various functions in the mentees academic, personal, and professional interests. Once levels of trust were established, mentees were willing to accept the assistance of the mentor.

Race of the Mentor. The students in this study received both formal and informal mentoring, in which relationships developed based on personal, academic, and professional interests. In the initial development, some respondents reported that race was a factor in their decision to select a particular mentor. For this group of students, race appeared to be an important, if not a critical factor in the development of a mentoring relationship. One student emphasized that race was important in the development of his relationship; both because his mentor (as he referred to him) was an African male and because he attended the same institution as the student. Although this young African American male may be more appropriately categorized as a role model, to the student seeing a younger African American male as a faculty

member made a significant difference in his life because he viewed himself as being able to achieve the same success.

In addition to race, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds were significant as well. To one male student, having a mentor who was African American and also from the Caribbean aided in the initial development of their relationship. He said that this one factor made it very easy to talk to his mentor about certain things; and it made him feel as though he could understand certain things that someone of another background may not have been able to relate to and understand.

Another student commented that he believed sharing the same heritage made it easier to communicate. For this student, race made bonding easier and provided a higher comfort level in the relationship. A female mentee reported that it made various career paths seem more attainable because her mentor was an African American female. She reported, "In describing her path, the mentor gave instances where her minority status came into play and places where it did not. This was good insight for me and it made me more open to share my thoughts and concerns about my barriers to success." A similar viewpoint was provided by another female student who was comfortable working with a female African American mentor. She and her mentor were able to relate more because the mentor was an African-American female. Her mentor was able to identify with some of the barriers and experiences that she encountered as a female in an engineering field.

For others, race was not a determining factor or it played a small part in the development of the relationship. To these students, race was not the guiding factor, rather choosing a mentor was based on how they perceived the mentor's ability to guide them through life and career processes. One student's military experiences helped him to see that understanding and tolerance of others and their cultures were the most important parts in life. He said making race an issue only caused further issues.

Another student reported that he struggled with his racial identity. Having a mentor of the same race helped him talk through some of his personal concerns. His mentor was able to provide advice on things pertaining to race such as interacting with other African Americans on campus through African American student organizations or a fraternity possibly. His mentor gave advice on how he interacted with people of other races in his own work environment. This was particularly important for this young African American male because he said he was often accused of not being 'Black' enough. Even though he was able to have these types of

conversations, he emphasized that most of the topics discussed with his mentor were not race related.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

A significant component of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA. The goal was to determine if mentoring experiences had a significant link to academic performance. Mentors could have been advisors, administrators, and faculty. They could also have been members of the community whom the student had developed a bond with and considered that person a mentor. It was expected that students who had access to a mentor would show higher scores on measures of academic performance than would comparison students who had not been mentored. The specific hypothesis for research question three was:

> African American students who have a mentor while enrolled at a predominantly White institution will achieve a higher level of academic performance as measured by grade point average.

Although all types of students may choose to participant or not participate in a mentoring relationship and therefore could have been used in this study, the target population was African American students enrolled at a PWI in southeastern United States. Therefore, results are presented in this section for 316 students of which sixty students indicated participation in a mentoring relationship and 256 did not. The comparison on academic performance is done between these two groups; those who self-reported participation in a mentoring relationship on the RMES and those students who reported no participation in a mentoring relationship.

Table 23 summarizes the differences between mentored students and nonmentored students according to various demographics, enrollment, performance, and persistence descriptives available for this group of students. As Table 23 shows, the mentored students differ from their nonmentored peers along several critical dimensions. On average mentored students: were higher for female participants; had a greater number of students between the ages of 20 – 23; entered the university in greater numbers as a first-time in college student; had a greater percentage of students enrolled full-time; were employed at a lesser rate; had more students classified as single; and had a greater number of parents to graduate from college.

There also were differences in the mentored group being more likely to have applied for scholarships and grants and have a larger portion of their financial need met. Given these differences, it may be expected that the mentored group would have a higher GPA than the nonmentored group, particularly if obligations outside of school, such as family and work, became a factor for the nonmentored students. As shown below, nonmentored students were more likely to be married and work for more than 20 hours per week.

Table 23 - Background and Enrollment Characteristics

	Mentored		Nonmentored	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	19	32%	56	22%
Female	41	68%	200	78%
Age				
19 or younger	0	0%	1	0.4%
20 – 23	53	88%	180	70%
24 – 29	4	7%	49	19%
30 – 39	2	3%	19	7%
40 - 55	1	2%	7	3%
Marital Status				
Not Married	58	98%	224	90%
Married	1	2%	19	8%
Divorced	1	2%	7	3%
Separated	0	0%	2	0.8%
Classification in College				
Sophomore	0	0%	1	0.4%
Junior	4	7%	3	1%
Senior	37	62%	182	71%
Graduate Student	11	18%	19	7%
Other	8	13%	51	20%
Admission Status				
FTIC	46	77%	175	68%
Transfer Student	14	23%	81	32%
Residency				
Campus Housing	6	10%	24	9%
Off-campus	54	90%	232	91%

Table 23 - continued

Parent's Educational Level				
(Did either parent graduate from college)				
No	31	52%	127	50%
Yes, both parents	10	18%	62	24%
Yes, father only	6	10%	18	7%
Yes, mother only	11	18%	44	17%
Don't know	2	3%	5	2%

Enrollment Status				
Full-time	49	82%	194	76%
Part-time	11	18%	62	24%

Hours Worked Each Week				
None – no job	12	20%	52	20%
1 – 10	9	15%	23	9%
11 - 20	17	28%	59	23%
21 - 30	10	17%	56	22%
31 – 40	9	15%	63	25%
NA	3	5%	3	1%

Meet College Expenses				
(Scholarships/Grants)				
None	4	7%	31	13%
Very little	6	10%	13	5%
Less than half	5	9%	40	17%
About half	13	22%	31	13%
More than half	9	16%	50	21%
All or nearly all	21	36%	74	31%

Mean GPA	3.15		2.99	

Of the responses received, 19 percent (*N*=60) of the students reported having a mentor in the past one to three years at their current institution. In the mentored group, 68 percent were female (N=41) and 32 percent were male (N=19). Just over 88 percent were college students between ages 20 – 23 (N=53) with very few students with reported ages between 24 and 55 (N=6). Of the 60 mentored students, 13 percent (N=8) reported participation in a formalized mentoring program on campus. The formalized mentoring programs were either associated with first-time in college students admitted under a particular category, first-generation college

students, or programs designed for particular majors. An additional 13 percent (N=8) reported having professors or instructors as mentors. Ten percent (N=6) had advisors as mentors and 63 percent (N=38) reported that mentoring relationships developed from interactions with members in the community, staff, or family and friends. It should be noted that at least 72 percent (N=44) of the mentored students spent on average between 0 and 5 hours per week with their mentor and 18 percent (N=11) spent anywhere between 6 and 11 hours with their mentors.

Regarding the mentors for this group of students, 48 percent of the mentors were male and 52 percent were female. In addition, 75 percent (*N*=46) of the mentors were Black/African American (nonHispanic), 18 percent (*N*=11) were White (nonHispanic), 3 percent were Hispanic/Latino (N=2), 2 percent were Native American (N=1), and 2 percent were classified as Other (N=1).

Student grade point averages were self-reported on the RMES and then matched with data from the University Registrar's Office. To have a more accurate representation of grade point average, reported GPA from the university student data file was used for both groups of students, those who were mentored and those who were not. To determine if there was a difference between GPA of mentored and nonmentored students, a series of t-tests were conducted. In each test, mentored student scores were compared with nonmentored students' scores. Table 24 presents the means and standard deviation scores related to GPA for each group. There were consistent differences in GPA favoring the mentored students.

For the students who indicated participation in a mentoring relationship, the mean GPA was 3.15. Of the students who did not have a mentor, the average GPA was 2.99. For this group of African American college students, a significant relationship within a 95 percent confidence level was found between mentoring and academic performance as measured by cumulative grade point average. Additionally, the mean GPA for all female participants was higher than that of the male participants.

Table 24 - Results of GPA Comparisons

	N	*Mean GPA*	*SD*	*t-value (df)*
Mentored Students	60	3.1471	.48222	2.133*
Non-mentored Students	256	2.9878	.52917	(314)

*p < .05

Table 25 – Results of GPA Comparisons based on Gender

Gender	N	Percent	Mean GPA	SD
Male	90	25.0	2.87	.493
Female	276	75.0	3.06	.522
Total	366	100.0		

Table 26 - Age of Mentored Students

Age	N	Percent
20 – 23	53	88.0
24 – 29	4	7.0
30 – 39	2	3.0
40 – 55	1	2.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 27 - Hours Spent with Mentor

Hours Spent with Mentor	N	Percent
0 – 5	44	73.0
6 – 10	11	18.0
11 – 18	3	5.0
21 – 25	1	2.0
Other	1	2.0
Total	60	100.0

Another central hypothesis of this study was that ethnicity of the mentor would be related to academic performance. Table 28 presents the results related to this hypothesis. When viewing the elements of the mentoring relationship to determine if one function had a greater significance in its development, racial attribute was found to have the greatest significance. For this functional area, students were asked to rate the following items on a scale of 1-5 ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively: (1) Having a mentor of the same race creates a greater bond between the mentor and mentee; and (2) Race was a primary factor when considering a mentor.

The Cronbach alpha score for this set of questions was .762. Using the t-test as the measure, data revealed that the importance of having a mentor of the same race in creating a bond had a significant relationship at the $p<.001$ between African American students and others. While the differences in GPA were not substantially greater, the mean scores for students with African American mentors were higher than students with mentors of a differing race. In order to control for a Type I error across the correlations, a p value less than .05 was required for

significance. It was also noted that students with a female mentor had a slightly higher GPA than students who reported having a male mentor.

Table 28 - Race of Mentor and Academic Performance

Race of Mentor	N	Mean GPA	SD	t-value (df)
African American	46	3.1553	.45582	.623
Other	15	3.0640	.59853	(59)

Table 29 - Race Attribute

Race Attribute Measure		N	Mean	SD	t-value (df)
Having a mentor of the same race creates a greater bond between the mentor and mentee.	Black/African American	42	4.36	.932	4.499* (53)
	Other	13	2.85	1.405	
Race was a primary factor when considering a mentor.	Black/African American	42	2.85	1.268	6.510 (49.4)
	Other	13	2.95	.506	

p < .001

Table 30 - Gender of Mentor

Gender of Mentor	N	Mean GPA	SD	t-value (df)
Male	30	3.1100	.53518	.402 (60)
Female	32	3.1602	.44536	

In addition, 'satisfaction and assimilation' was also rated high among the participants within a 99% confidence interval. This functional area attempted to assess students' satisfaction and integration into the academic environment based on their mentoring experiences. Students were asked the following set of questions for this measure:

(1) My mentor had a significant impact on my decision to stay in school and graduate.

(2) It was difficult to find a mentor at my current institution.

(3) I experienced negative outcomes during my mentoring relationship.

(4) The majority of experiences with my mentor were positive.

(5) I am satisfied with the relationship with my mentor.

(6) I felt more connected to campus as a result of encouragement and advice from my mentor.

(7) Mentoring experiences had a significant contribution to my academic performance and integration into the school environment.

For this variable, male participants had a higher mean score on satisfaction and assimilation than female participants. Male students in this study averaged scores of 3.78 versus 3.35 for female students on this variable, which was significantly higher (t=2.635, df=53, p<.05). This may indicate that greater levels of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship and integration in the academic environment may have significant relationships to the student's academic performance. Satisfaction with the mentoring relationship may have influenced academic integration in that the mentor acted as a resource and was willing to help the mentee negotiate within the academic environment. Participants reported on incidences where mentors actively encouraged them to meet other people and join student organizations to expand their network.

Students reported that mentors aided them in working through financial aid and school-related issues. The advice and encouragement of a mentor may have facilitated the student's academic and social transitions in the institutional environment. As Tinto (1993) noted, these types of interactions are critical to the academic success of a student, particularly interactions with faculty. As he stated," the faculty, more than any other group, represents the primary intellectual orientation of the institution" (p.53). Therefore, when these types of interactions do not exist, students may not make the academic and social transitions needed for success as well as those students who reported positive mentoring experiences.

Further data analysis showed that certain aspects of the mentoring relationship were significantly correlated to specific mentoring functions within a 99 percent confidence level. Related to academic performance, exposure and visibility and assimilation and satisfaction were significantly related to overall grade point average. This finding leads us to believe the more a student is exposed to various aspects of the campus environment and hence is satisfied with that visibility and interaction, the more likely he or she is to work harder to increase their performance in academic subject areas. Greater levels of coaching were significantly correlated

to perceived exposure and visibility levels, which indicated that participants believed they were provided with more opportunity for contact with faculty or administrators who may judge their academic performance or potential for future advancement. The same was true in cases where the mentor was perceived as a role model. The mentee believed they were provided with more challenging assignments and greater protection. Additionally, mentees who valued friendship and sponsorship believed their mentors to have provided more counseling, both personally and career related as the qualitative data speaks to how mentors gave personal advice and information related to graduate school. Furthermore, race became important as mentees looked to be accepted by their mentors.

Finally, the data indicated that student employment also had a significant relationship to academic performance. There was a statistically significant difference in mean GPA between groups based on the number of hours worked. Students who were able to enroll in college without having the responsibility of outside employment had higher GPA's than students who were employed. As the students' number of work hours increased, there was a decrease in cumulative grade point average. Also, for students who reported that employment had at least some level of impact on their grades, academic performance dropped as well. Hours worked and the relationship to academic performance was greater for students who worked at least 21 to 30 hours. The difference was even greater for students who worked more than 30 hours per week. The mean GPA for this group of students was 2.78, which equates to a C average at the current institution. That same group of students also reported that outside employment took a lot of time from their school work as opposed to students working lesser hours who indicated that work took only some time away or did not interfere at all with school work.

Table 31 - Employment on Academic Performance

Hours Worked	N	Mean GPA	Standard Deviation
None - no job	64	3.2103	.42034
1-10 hours	32	3.0988	.44583
11-20 hours	76	3.1145	.53407
21-30 hours	66	2.9535	.52122
31-40 hours	72	2.7814	.54727
Total	310	3.0210	.52508

F=7.452, df=4.305, p<.001

Table 32 - Employment on Academic Performance 2

Work Interferes with Academic Performance	N	Mean GPA	Standard Deviation
No job	67	3.2084	.42474
Does not interfere with my school work	93	2.9473	.56678
Takes some time from my school work	126	3.0363	.51636
Takes a lot of time from my school work	30	2.7357	.46393
Total	316	3.0181	.52360

F=6.83, df=3.315, p<.001

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this chapter was to present the general findings of the study regarding factors contributing to persistence and academic success for African American college students and how they may influence a student's ability to remain in school. For research question one, six major categories emerged from the data on factors related to persistence. Those were isolation, faculty-student interaction, family relationships, student involvement, peer interaction, and degree attainment.

For research question two, it was found that students perceived mentoring to be beneficial in their growth and that race of the mentor was a contributing factor in the development of the relationship. For research question three, it was determined that those students who receiving mentoring had a higher grade point average compared to students who did not.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

As we know it today, the beginning of undergraduate education for many students, particularly African American students, may be filled with unfamiliar courses and personal adjustments to college. This may be especially true for first-generation college students and African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions. Confronted with the feeling of alienation and isolation, African American students may seek mentors for encouragement, support, and guidance. These mentors may initially develop from courses taken at the institutions, advising appointments, or interactions occurring on campus with a senior person with whom they feel comfortable Overtime, these types of relationships may be seen as crucial to the personal, professional, and academic well-being of African American students.

Certain individuals, such as mentors and advisors, have been able to assist African American students in matriculating successfully through the higher education system. The presence of these mentors may have been paramount in African American student success in college. Therefore, it seems imperative to examine the experiences of African American students, who are involved in mentoring relationships, and more specifically students who may be mentored by non-African American staff and the issues that may exist in the context of cross-race mentoring.

African American undergraduate students' experiences on predominantly White campuses have already been highlighted in many research studies related to these students' academic difficulties (Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1985; Allen, 1992). Major findings reveal that African American undergraduate students experience higher attrition rates, lower cumulative grade point averages, and less persistence to graduation than do majority students (Nettles, 1998; Allen, 1992). Several retention programs exist for African American undergraduate students that include models based on academic and social integration, peer interaction, and students' background characteristics.

A key finding that researchers have identified is that in addition to students' background characteristics, characteristics of different types of institutional social support are related to academic achievement for minority students. Factors contributing to institutional social support systems include supportive social and academic environments on campus that may lead to the development of on-campus networks, positive relationships with faculty, increased peer

interaction, assistance with adjustment issues, social integration, and low perceived individual or institutional racism. If a supportive environment is described as one in which students experience high academic and social integration into programs and activities, then this integration may also exert direct influence on a student's progress (Allen, 1992; Lewis, Ginsberg, & Davies, 2004).

The development of on-campus networks can be different for African American students. According to Sedlacek (1999), African American students generally have had limited access to African American faculty for support and mentoring due to the small numbers of African American faculty at PWIs. Sedlacek (1999) also noted that African American students experienced difficulty forming relationships with White staff and faculty at these types of institutions. For these reasons, this group of students may value affiliation with a supportive community that offers advice in navigating the systems and process because of difficulties in finding a mentor at a large on-campus community.

Tinto (1993) also reported that strong relationships with families and community members who advocate for a postsecondary education are believed to facilitate adjustment and college retention. But if students are forced to make a choice between family obligations and school or experience feelings of disloyalty as they explore the college culture, family closeness might hinder their adjustment. This may even be more difficult for first-generation college students as their parents may be uncomfortable with the university culture and may not be able to provide guidance regarding the college experience (Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002).

Echols (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 113 studies of research on minority students from 1970 to 1997, which included social, academic, family, and institutional factors believed to be linked to academic success. The study included representation from over 1500 institutions and 46,000 minority students - Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and African American students. Using Aitken's model of retention and Tinto's theory of social and academic integration on retention, Echols' analysis revealed that integrative experiences were a highly significant predictor variable. Negative or nonintegrative experiences, such as loneliness and alienation, were positively correlated with voluntary withdrawal from college; whereas, positive or integrative experiences enhanced minority student persistence. It was noted that having the ability to be bicultural while maintaining a cultural identity was a key factor in promoting educational attainment and success for minority students.

Tinto (1993) conceptualized retention as an interactional process between student and institutional characteristics. He said that when students do not mesh with the institutional characteristics, they often experienced isolation, had difficulty connecting to the institution, and were more likely to withdraw. As one method of retention, faculty-student relationships seemed to be one of the strongest predictors of progress for minority students. Other variables associated with progress and success in college included full-time enrollment of students and developing collegial relationships within the department. Blackwell (1987) noted that the most powerful predictor of enrollment and graduation of African American students at a professional school was the presence of an African American faculty member serving as the student's mentor. The findings that have emerged regarding African American students have identified factors predicting or relating to academic success; however there is still much to learn.

Summary of Findings

For this research study, the theoretical work of Tinto (1993) on students' academic and social integration to academic life provided the basis for exploring the experiences of African American undergraduate students at a PWI in the southeastern United States. According to Tinto (1993), student retention results from a combination of students' entering characteristics, their commitment to the institution, their commitment to goals and their academic and social experiences in college. The core of the model is the process of students' academic and social integration into the campus environment.

Based on Tinto's (1993) model of student departure, college attrition can result from a lack of fit between the student and the institution. In his theory, Tinto argued that college students who believed their norms and values to be similar to that of their institution were more likely to become academically and socially integrated into the college environment. However, students who perceived a difference between themselves and the institution experienced more difficulty becoming integrated and were less likely to persist. Although academic and social integration were interrelated, Tinto defined academic integration as the formal education of students and social integration as students' affiliations with peers, faculty, and staff. The social affiliations generally occurred outside the academic domain of the institution. For academic success, Tinto proposed that some form of both academic and social integration were necessary for retention.

In this study, the focus was on persistence and retention and the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students at one institution. Of interest was how this select group of participants interpreted their mentoring experiences within the context of being enrolled at a predominantly White institution. The researcher wanted to know what factors contributed to persistence, how the mentoring relationships formed between mentors and mentees, and whether participation in a mentoring relationship had a significant relationship to academic performance and retention.

Three main research questions guided this study: (1) What factors contributed to the persistence of African American students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, (2) What are the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly White institution, and (3) What is the relationship between mentoring and academic performance as measured by reported GPA?

Factors Contributing to Persistence

In answer to the first question, the results showed several factors that contributed to persistence for this group of students. Six categories seemed to characterize the experiences of the African-American students enrolled at this particular PWI. These categories included: Isolation, Faculty-Student Interaction, Family and Parental Involvement, Student Involvement, Peer Interaction, and Degree Attainment. Many of the students talked about the types of programs on campus, specifically those targeted for minority students, as one factor that contributed to their persistence. However, they were concerned about the offerings of certain types of activities compared to the frequencies of activities perceived to be targeted for different races. Even though the institution was conducting a variety of programs overall, some respondents in this study seemed to feel that these programs were limited for minority students. Participation in student organizations with more students of the same race and also establishing connections with community organizations were viewed as playing a significant role in students' transition, retention, and success in higher education. Considering the importance of social integration to college student retention, this information is important to student affairs professionals at PWIs interested in supporting and retaining African American students.

Wallace, Abel, and Ropers-Huilman (2001) concluded that a one-on-one mentoring relationship formed between an individual student and a particular staff or faculty member contributed to persistence. In this study, faculty and staff mentors were particularly important as

student participants navigated their environment and pursued their educational career. These mentoring relationships facilitated students' decisions to stay enrolled in college and assisted in their efforts to navigate the academic environment. This finding is particularly important because it emphasizes the need for members of the higher education community to proactively seek connections with students (Wallace et al., 2001). These proactive measures may assist students in adjusting to their new environment, overcoming feelings of isolation, and connecting with individuals for career and personal advice. As one student mentioned, "I have benefited a lot from my mentor. She has taught me to stand up for myself, respect my peers, and also to respect everyone that I come in contact with. She also taught me to listen and be proud of what I am accomplishing."

It was further discovered that peer interaction was regarded as valuable by the respondents as these types of supportive relationships helped to facilitate their initial adjustment to college and their matriculation. Respondents reported that connecting with other peers of the same race who may have also experienced isolation at the onset provided them with another avenue to discuss their personal feelings and experiences. These peer relationships also were a mechanism for providing encouragement and support overall whether it be related to academics and/or social interactions. As one respondent reported, she was able to build friendships with other freshmen and upperclassmen who were willing to give of their time and resources, which were important in helping her acclimate to the college culture. Friends were also reported to be helpful in keeping respondents focused and on task.

Respondents also commented that support from family and community relationships were an important factor in their persistence and to their growth. Respondents consistently reported the impact family had on their educational career and decisions to remain in school. For students whose parent(s) had already obtained a college degree, it was expected that the student also attend college and succeed as noted by this student's response: "My immediate family has served as a strong, motivating force behind my decision to remain enrolled at my current institution. They are supportive, sympathetic, and understanding to the academic rigor and personal hardships that one can experience while in college. As college graduates themselves, they have instilled in me that dropping out of college is NOT an option".

For others who were the first in their family to attend college, obtaining a postsecondary education was even more important because they wanted to set examples for younger siblings as

well gratify their parents. This was evidenced in this student's response: "My inspiration for remaining at _____ and completing my first degree are family's younger generations. Bachelor's degree in general will allow me to succeed beyond what my previous generation could achieve. I continue in hopes that it will be an example and guide for my younger sibling, nieces and nephews".

Local community members were also important to respondents in this study and noted has having an impact in their decision to persist. Many respondents commented on the relationships that were developed in their local churches and how pastors and ministers encouraged them to continue in their studies. One student reported that her mother and father would be rated number one as having the greatest impact on her decisions to graduate and that the pastor of her church would be second. Having this type of support became vital to academic success and their adjustment to the academic environment.

Involvement in specialized student groups—such as fraternities and sororities, religiously affiliated groups or ministries, and student clubs targeted for specific majors, seemed to benefit a number of respondents in this study. Activities associated with direct involvement in student groups and organizations appeared to contribute to increased satisfaction and retention of those students involved in such programs. Students reported that the various types of organizations, both academic and social, were welcoming and essential for networking and interacting with other groups on and off campus. Interactions with members of these groups were reported to facilitate greater interaction between students, faculty, and staff and as a means to develop friendships with individuals who had like interest, such as in music or fashion. Membership in these organizations also helped students to build their own peer groups to aid in their transition or adjustment to their academic environment. Shared activities among the members also served to get more students actively involved in their academics as study groups were formed and encouragement was provided for students to remain focused and on task.

For some students, friendships formed in these organizations, particularly fraternities and sororities would extend beyond their college career. For others, the friendships may have been short lived and only for the duration of the program or their academic career. Still, the experience and value they placed on the organization as a means of developing these relationships contributed to their persistence and provided a sense of belonging; thus possibly increasing satisfaction with the university and academic and social integration.

Many students in this study had developed supportive, nurturing, and insightful relationships. However, this was not the case for all. The majority of participants (N=256) in this study indicated no participation in a mentoring relationship, formal or informal. These student-participants typically indicated that personal motivation and family expectations were the primary factors in their persistence. Family relationships were a key motivation for many of the students as they felt an obligation to graduate, particularly if they were the first in their family to achieve such a goal. Other students expressed a deep emotional desire to succeed due to the death of a parent or grandparent while enrolled. Some students also commented they felt obligated to finish in order to maintain a type of positive status quo for their race and as a minority. Whatever the reason, they noted strong motivation to achieve, either for themselves or for family and friends or both.

Degree attainment was important to all of the students in this study. But for some students this was not an easy task, especially in their initial adjustment to the campus. Obstacles existed regarding family obligations, finances, and academics. Furr's 2002 study demonstrated that financial aid support contributed to lower attrition for African American students. In the current study, respondents reported that one barrier to success was limited financial aid. In addition, the need to work for more than twenty hours and the extent of work once classes began was also a factor. The data showed students who worked more than twenty hours had a lower mean GPA than those who worked fewer than twenty hours or had no job at all. As suggested by Furr (2002), if identified early, these types of factors may be used as measurable warning signs worth noting when working with African American students.

Nature of Mentoring Experience

In addressing the second research question, a qualitative analysis of the nature of the mentoring relationship revealed intricate details that led to the categorization of types of activities associated with the development of mentoring relationships and descriptions of mentor characteristics. Students reported on the impact these types of relationships had in their academic career. From participants' responses, the experiences were diverse and varied for each student, especially for the events that led to the initial development of the relationship. The types of activities occurring within these relationships could be divided into three categories (1) To provide career support, such as graduate school and career advice; (2) Academic support, such as advice on course scheduling and research projects; and (3) Personal support, such as to provide

personal counseling and encouragement. The descriptions of mentors' characteristics could also be divided into the following categories: (1) Knowledgeable and professional in their field; (2) Open and Accessible; (3) Friendly, Warm, and Caring (4) Directive and Honest; and (5) Helpful and Compassionate.

Respondents consistently reported that mentoring relationships were valuable to the mentee. The relationships allowed mentees to develop on personal and professional levels as they learned about themselves and their mentors. In addition to building bonds and sometimes long-term personal and professional relationships, the mentoring opportunities allowed mentees to expand their network of contacts and resources for the future.

Career support was mentioned by a number of students as a primary reason for proactively seeking a mentor or wanting to develop a mentoring relationship with administrators, faculty or staff on campus. Mentees noted that importance of the having a mentor to help establish networks in their chosen career field and to aid them in their internship searches related to their majors. For some of the mentees, faculty mentors were important in providing advice on research opportunities that existed on campus. Other mentors were valued in that they were able to provide advice on graduate school. In their responses, mentees noted that they were more informed about graduate school choices and were more confident in their abilities to succeed. As a result of the networking interactions and social functions attended with the mentor, respondents also indicated that they felt more comfortable meeting new people and interacting in new environments. Mentors were valued in that they introduced their mentors to opportunities and experiences that they would not otherwise have had access.

For students in a mentoring relationship, they felt their mentor was someone they could trust and depend on. They also felt closer to their mentor because of the caring nature exhibited by the mentor to make the students feel as if they mentor really cared about their well-being and whether or not they achieved academic success. It was really important for the students to feel comfortable with the staff, faculty, or mentor. For some, this relationship enhanced their self-esteem and confidence about themselves and their abilities. In addition, the psychological benefits of the relationship came to be just as important as the academic and career aspects for this group of students.

Relationship Between Mentoring and Academic Performance

In answer to the third question, qualitative data showed that many students valued the knowledge received through the mentoring relationships. For several participants, these mentoring interactions began upon enrollment in student support programs, advising, courses, and social interaction in and outside of class. The relationships were deemed in some instances to have influenced their decisions to persist and to have a direct of indirect impact on their academic performance. Part of this influence was attributed to the mentors offering academic advice, encouragement, and their level of honesty on topics such as procrastination and time management.

Respondents reported that mentoring had a significant impact on their decision to remain enrolled in school and assisted with their initial adjustment to the academic environment. For these students, the relationships were beneficial. They believed such relationships were helpful in providing advice when needed as well as keeping them focused and on track. Staying focused and on task for some respondents led to increased study habits and thereby resulted in academic success as measured by grade point average.

Further quantitative data for research question three showed that students who received mentoring during their years of college outperformed students who did not. Mentored students in this study had an average mean GPA of 3.15 compared to a mean GPA of 2.99 for nonmentored students. These differences were found to be statistically significant using a P-value of less than or equal to 0.05. The data for question three also revealed that the race of the mentor had a significant relationship at the 99 percent confidence level and that students with a female mentor had a slightly higher GPA than students who reported having a male mentor. It was further noted that if students were able to attend college without having outside employment or worked fewer than twenty hours per week were more likely to have higher grade point averages. As the number of hours working each week increased, academic performance decreased for this select group of students.

The findings from this study suggest that mentoring was an important issue for African American students enrolled at this institution. The perceptions of these mentoring experiences on academic performance and integration should indicate to professionals the areas and characteristics that are most significant in developing mentoring programs. From the results of the study, it is suggested that formal and informal mentoring programs may be important in providing success mechanisms for minority students, specifically African American students.

These types of programs may provide African American students opportunities to create a bond with the institution through programs that facilitate academic and social integration. Integration to the campus environment may be influenced by one-on-mentoring relationships designed to help students become more self-sufficient and successful learners. Programs such as these may help students overcome some of the challenges associated with college readiness and conflicts that may arise while enrolled in college. Others may be targeted for specific groups such as first-generation college students. In addition, mentors may be valued for this group of students in providing career-related, personal guidance and individualized attention that students may need in dealing with the everyday problems they encounter in the college environment.

By incorporating mechanisms of various support, administrators of college campuses will be able to provide a campus climate conducive to the success of minority students. Success in these efforts includes responding to the diverse needs of the student population and facilitating the integration of minority students into the educational environment; thereby resulting in increased levels of academic performance and persistence for this population of students at predominantly White institutions.

<div align="center">Implications of the Research</div>

Academic Integration

The present study identified academic activities and support mechanisms, including mentoring, perceived by African American students as having a positive impact on their academic performance and associated with academic integration. The results suggested differing factors that had an impact to some extent: (a) individual effort and involvement (referred to as self motivation in participants' responses; (b) peer interaction; (c) faculty and staff contact; (d) mentors, family and community support; and (e) student organizations.

Individual effort, personal motivation, and student involvement have been shown to play critical roles in student retention. Student involvement pertains to students' personal initiative and commitment to their academics. It involves going beyond the requirements of a course and engaging in non-required activities such as reading self-assigned material, attending tutorials, and seeking academically-related contact with peers and faculty (Amenkhienan & Kogan, 2004). According to Astin (1999), student involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to his or her college experience. Recognizing the impact of student involvement on academic performance, universities and colleges have responded in a number of

ways by providing students with a variety of academic support services where peer interaction is increased and the level of involvement in student organizations is enhanced.

Furthermore, providing opportunities for peer interaction can be deemed just as important as individual effort in some cases, particularly as respondents in this study noted the benefits of study groups, career networking, and social interactions with faculty, staff, and peers as positively influencing their academic performance and integration into the campus environment. Peer interaction would be the respondents' relationships with other students and the perceived impact of these contacts on their academic performance. As found in earlier studies, students who spent more time in making contacts and relationships with fellow students reported greater benefits (Astin 1999; Astin 1993). Spending time with peers who share similar study habits has also helped students to stay focused and motivated (Pascarella & Terenzini, (1991).

Similarly, contact with faculty, staff, advisors, and mentors were deemed important as students' matriculated. This type of contact was mostly defined as students' interactions with members inside and outside of the classroom, including mentors and community-based support groups and the perceived impact of these contacts on students' academic performance. Helpful interactions from staff and faculty were described as faculty members being available to assist during office hours or scheduled appointments and staff going beyond what the student deemed to be their required duties to offer them support.

Many staff were described as friendly, helpful, and caring. Sometimes this type of encouragement from faculty and staff helped respondents build their self-confidence in addition to affording them the opportunity to know their professors on a more personal level. The findings of this study suggest that African American students' personal involvement and effort, coupled with positive relationships with mentors, peers and faculty, may have enhanced their academic success. These experiences combined were associated with academic integration and increased academic performance for this group of students.

The application of mentoring according to respondents in this study was a critical factor in their integration to the college environment as well as academic performance. In addition, students who indicated greater contact with faculty and staff appeared to obtain either direct or indirect benefits from their interactions. Perhaps students' perceptions of these relationships had an important effect on their overall academic and social experience at the institution as well as their involvement in activities on and off campus.

Social Integration

Tinto (1993) believed that African American students face somewhat unique challenges to becoming academically and socially integrated into PWIs because their norms and values may be seen as different from those of the White majority. He noted that social integration influences persistence decisions for African American students, but inconsistencies with social norms makes it more difficult for them to find and become a member of a supportive community within the university. He said that social integration for this group of students was influenced more by formal associations, such as involvement in student organizations. The data in this study showed congruence with Tinto's (1993) thoughts on student involvement in that students in this study felt student organizations played a significant role in their decision to persist, especially those students involved in a formal mentoring and retention program at the onset of their educational career.

The African American student organizations noted by the respondents included Greek societies, religious groups, cultural or ethnic-based student clubs, and academic clubs based on major. Although each type of organization differed, they all served similar purposes in facilitating connections and social integration among faculty, staff, and students. Membership in these organizations was important because it helped respondents learn to network, provided sentimental value with opportunities to assist other African American students adjust to college, and provided a comfortable social setting to interact with students of the same race.

One student explained that he was extremely grateful and happy that he joined the Muslim Student Association. With the experiences and contacts that he made as a member, he couldn't think of transferring schools. This statement is a reflection of how his involvement in a cultural organization was significant in his decision to persistence. Several African American students commented that these relationships were especially important to them. This, in part, was due to the emphasis they placed on students of their same race helping one another. Participation in student organizations with members of their same ethnic background or race gave them additional avenues for out-of-class relationships.

Although respondents were able to navigate their educational experience, they sometimes felt isolated. Student involvement provided opportunities for respondents to engage with faculty outside of the classroom and form mentoring relationships, which according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) are important to academic achievement and persistence. Allen (1992) also

stated that a close relationship with faculty has been associated with higher levels of academic performance and retention. Tinto (1993) further noted that close relationships with faculty help facilitate academic and social integration into college. However, establishing these types of relationships may be difficult for African Americans enrolled at PWIs (Williams, 1999). Therefore, involvement in student organizations may become more critical for these students as one method to establish relationships to further their college success.

Another important way in which involvement in student organizations facilitated social integration was the opportunities the groups provided for members to engage in social service, particularly services to the African American community and other African American students. Respondents commented that it was important to help other African Americans in their initial adjustment to college in an effort to decrease isolation that incoming students may feel at the onset of their educational career. They also felt the need to participate in community service, particularly community service targeted at the African American community. Feeling fortunate for their opportunity to further their education, many students spoke about the need to help others and provide support to the African American community on campus.

One of the more strongly emphasized reasons given by students for valuing participation in student organizations, especially culturally based student organizations, was what they described as the reassurance the groups provided by allowing them to interact with other students of like interests and race. This was exacerbated by the fact that at the PWI, they were often the only African American or one of a few African Americans in their classes. Students described their experiences when they first arrived on campus as feeling alone or alienated in their environment. Involvement in student organizations provided them with an organized outlet in which to work with other African Americans to serve their community. This involvement also aided in establishing meaningful connections with other African Americans, therefore facilitating respondents' social integration into the PWI.

Race was not the only factor. Because many of these groups were related to students' interests or their academic majors, in addition to simply connecting with other people who looked like them, membership also provided the opportunity to connect with others who shared similar interests. For example, some of the responses noted the impact that religiously affiliated organizations had on their persistence. In these organizations, students were able to connect with other students who not only shared their academic interest, but who also shared religious beliefs.

The same was true for academic student organizations. One student responded that the outstanding quality of the College of Music and its student organizations definitely contributed to her retention.

Although a dominant theme, not all African American students in the study experienced isolation or felt disconnected to the campus because of race. An interesting comparison in the qualitative data revealed in some instances that students who described themselves as coming from predominantly African American high schools may have felt more isolated and sought a greater involvement in organizations or activities with students of the same race as an important component to their social integration into the university. On the other hand, for some students who described their high schools as predominantly White noted that isolation was not a factor for them. Although some respondents were most comfortable with other African Americans, these students had learned to navigate a predominantly White educational environment and achieve academic success.

Those students who came from diverse backgrounds described their experiences as: (1) normal and making a transition without much difficulty because prior school experiences included being in an environment or school with few African Americans or minorities; (2) open to new adventures and hoping to explore new cultures; (3) comfortable because the environment was very welcoming, cordial, and friendly; and (4) an experience equivalent to what they would experience in their career.

These results are consistent with Tinto's (1993) theory regarding the important role that student involvement can play in academic and social integration. As an extension of these findings, the following are suggested university policies and practices that may positively impact African American students' academic success on predominantly White campuses.

Limitations of the Study

While this study offers insights into the values of mentoring programs and its relationship to academic performance and persistence, it has limitations. First, the population of participants was selected from one institution, which means that generalizations can not be made for all African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions. Second, the study sought to examine one factor, drawn from the literature, that was thought to influence retention and academic performance, mentoring. As a consequence, other factors that may contribute to retention and academic success were not examined to the same degree. Third, when reviewing

the open-ended questions that specifically addressed mentoring, juxtaposition of two of the questions could possibly have influenced participants' responses in regards to race.

Participants were first asked whether race of the mentor had an impact on the mentoring experience or the growth of the relationship. They were then asked to identify the most important characteristics and qualifications a mentor should address. Having the race question as a precursor may have unintentionally given the perception that race should be considered one of the most important factors and therefore responses should be provided accordingly. In addition, the responses were included from eight participants who may have misclassified themselves as a sophomore or junior. However, the responses were included in the analysis as all of the other data associated with the survey was complete and noted as a limitation of the study. Finally, the study did not control for individual student characteristics. An analysis of various background characteristics may have been significant as well as other contributing factors within the campus environment such as employment and participation in formalized programs supported by federal grants for minorities.

Recommendations to Practitioners

This study suggests that students benefit from combined efforts related to individual effort, peer interaction, involvement in student organizations, advising, staff and faculty interaction, and mentoring. Mentoring was a significant component as academic performance for students who were mentored was significantly different from students who did not receive mentoring. The creation of mentoring programs or extension of student support programs to include a mentoring component may prove advantageous.

Participants discussed their isolation in classes and the need to see more faces like theirs in various settings on campus. Although a number of students were involved in student organizations, participants noted that many activities were not targeted for minority students, specifically African American students. If the activities were targeted for this specialized group, they usually occurred within the realms of Greek organizations for African Americans and the one prominent event that seemed to occur midweek on campus. Participants suggested that it might be possible for the university to help them establish a larger network by tailoring more activities and events to their specific needs. If provided, this sense of feeling alone and out of place may not be as prevalent. As a result, student attrition could possibly be decreased if the number of programs targeted towards minority populations were increased so that students feel a

greater sense of inclusion. Additionally, colleges may choose to explore the types of barriers that may be limiting access to minority populations in certain majors.

Due to the importance of faculty and staff interaction, it might also be beneficial to offer or increase programs that provide faculty, staff, and students an opportunity to engage academically and socially on campus. This may help alleviate some of the isolation students feel when they first arrive on campus as well as in their progression to graduation. In fact, one student reported that "the campus environment does nothing to promote ethnic mingling." She said that "everyone is at the same school but divided in their races." Another student expressed concerns that the activities and programs on campus were mostly for White students. As a result, she found herself not participating in on-campus activities as much because there was not much that she wanted to do. One suggestion that may be helpful as noted by a participant's response would be to let students know of research opportunities in their department, student organizations, and to have on-going study groups with the teaching assistant or faculty.

Recommendations for Future Research

The projections of the potential increase in the number of minority students expected to enroll in predominantly White institutions provides an impetus for administrators to develop programs and services that will enhance the opportunities for African American college students to succeed. Success ultimately depends upon these students successfully becoming a part of the academic and social fabric of the institution. National demographic projections indicate that approximately 65 percent of the growth in population through the year 2020 will be in ethnic minority groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). However, this population change will not be evenly distributed across the U.S. These special populations may require more from the institution, particularly for those who find themselves on a predominantly White campus. Because of faculty and administrators distinctive position on campus, some minority students may be reluctant to ask for help. This hesitancy may contribute to academic difficulty and cause students to leave college.

Nettles (1990) said that once in college, underrepresented students often have difficulty forming relationships with faculty and staff. African American students also seem to face greater difficulties than White students in adjusting to the dominant campus culture, resulting in further academic and social isolation (Allen, 1992). Additionally, the lack of role models, mentors, and

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an inadequate support system make it very difficult for these students to develop short- and long-term goals and to understand the relationship between current efforts and future outcomes. Despite these obstacles, students with affirming mentor/mentee relationships are found to persist and graduate (Fries-Britt, 2000). The mentors' personal and academic support have found to be a significant correlate of high grades, retention, and graduation for African Americans, women and students in special support programs, including Asian Americans, African Americans, and European Americans (Bridgall, 2004).

Meaningful contact with mentors, faculty members and advisors might make the difference. Advisors who view students as individuals can encourage them to see their distinction on campus as a positive force. Research suggests that for first-year minority students, academic advising can be especially important. Advisors can meet critical needs by encouraging a positive self-concept, helping them get involved in the community, and by introducing them to student support services and other resources. Studies have shown that minority students with low expectations and vague or unfocused plans are likely to leave school. As with many new students who are far from home, finding a support system is critical to college survival (Spanier, 2004).

Strong family ties are a phenomenon often found in many ethnic groups. Because of the close family relationships, minority students may find leaving home and adjusting to college more difficult than do majority students. Evenso, minority students are often able to persist in college because of their positive expectations and interactions with advisors, faculty, staff, and peers within the campus community. These types of relationships also result in higher levels of academic performance and campus participation. In essence, these types of relationships afford students opportunities to create a bond with the institution through programs that facilitate academic and social integration (Spanier, 2004).

Although limited to one university, this study illuminates many factors that can help African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions succeed academically. This study provides numerous avenues for additional research including the exploration of personality characteristics that may help determine which students choose to utilize available services and seek mentors for support. It may also be helpful to study the types of personality factors or traits that may predispose a person to seek out a mentor. In this study, several students reported on how the bond had developed between themselves and the mentor and how the mentor engaged them in certain activities. It was reported that certain aspects of the relationship

made them feel closer to the mentor and aided them in their academic integration. Using this as a basis, additional research may try to examine what key functions of the mentoring relationship, such as coaching, exposure, and visibility would be most significant for encouraging persistence and academic achievement for minority populations. Furthermore, a comparative study of the attributes of mentoring relationships for students enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominantly White institutions may be beneficial and add to the knowledge base of mentoring for specialized populations. The results of the current study provide valuable information, however, in identifying programs and strategies that can be implemented to help African American students reach their academic goals. Although it is acknowledged that not every student who initially enrolls at a PWI will be successful, this study suggests that there are measures that can be taken by students, faculty, and administration to enhance students' overall success rate. Further studies could focus on a broader range of experiences and perspectives that may also contribute to low attrition for African American college students.

APPENDIX A

Table 1 – Racial and Mentoring Experiences Scale

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	N/A
1. Mentor has shared history of his/her career with you. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
2. Mentor has encouraged you to prepare for advancement. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
3. Mentor has encouraged me to try new ways of behaving(Acceptance and Confirmation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
4. I try to imitate the work behavior of my mentor. (Role Model)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
5. I agree with my mentor's attitudes and values regarding education. (Role Model)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
6. I respect and admire my mentor. (Role Model)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
7. I will try to be like my mentor when I reach a similar position in my career. (Role Model)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
8. Mentor has demonstrated good listening skills in our conversations. (Counseling)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**9. Mentor has discussed my questions or concerns regarding feelings of competence, commitment, isolation, relationships with peers and faculty, and academic achievement. (Counseling)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
10. Mentor has shared personal experiences as an alternative perspective to my problems. (Counseling)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
11. Mentor has encouraged me to talk openly about anxiety and fears that detract from my work. (Counseling)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
12. Mentor has conveyed empathy for the concerns and feelings I have discussed with him/her. (Counseling)						
13. Mentor has kept feelings and doubts I shared with him/her in strict confidence. (Counseling)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
14. Mentor has conveyed feelings of respect for me as an individual. (Acceptance & Confirmation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**15. Mentor has reduced unnecessary risks that could threaten my academic progress and performance. (Protection)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
16. Mentor helped you finished assignments/tasks or meet deadlines that otherwise would have been difficult to complete. (Protection)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**17. Mentor helped you meet new faculty, peers, or administrators that could be useful in your career. (Exposure and Visibility)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**18. Mentor gave you assignments that increased written and personal contact with staff, higher-level administrators, and faculty. (Exposure and Visibility)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**19. Mentor assigned responsibilities to you that have increased your contact with people who may judge your academic performance or potential for future advancement. (Exposure and Visibility)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**20. Mentor gave you assignments or tasks in your academic work that prepare you for an administrative position in your field of study.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

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21. Mentor gave you assignments that present opportunities to learn new skills. (Challenging Assignments)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**22. Mentor provided you with support and feedback regarding your academic performance. (Challenging Assignments)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**23. Mentor suggested specific strategies for achieving your career goals, becoming involved in campus activities and organizations, and getting to know faculty and administrators on campus. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
24. Mentor shared ideas with you. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**25. Mentor suggested specific strategies for accomplishing academic tasks that could be used to improve academic performance. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**26. Mentor gave you feedback on academic progress and methods for achieving at your present institution. (Coaching)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**27. My mentor has invited me to lunch or social functions outside of the academic setting. (Friendship)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**28. My mentor has asked me for suggestions concerning problems he/she has encountered in their own work environment. (Acceptance & Confirmation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
29. My mentor has interacted with me socially outside of the work or the academic setting. (Friendship)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
30. My mentor has displayed attitudes and values similar to my own. (Role Model)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*31. Having a mentor of the same race creates a greater bond between the mentor and mentee. (Race Attribute)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*32. Race was a primary factor when considering a mentor. (Race Attribute)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*33. My mentor had a significant impact on my decision to stay in school and graduate. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*34. It was difficult to find a mentor at my current institution. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*35. I experienced negative outcomes during my mentoring relationship. (Satisfaction and Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*36. The majority of experiences with my mentor were positive. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*37. I am satisfied with the relationship with my mentor. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*38. Similar values were more important than race in choosing my mentor. (Race Attribute)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
*39. I felt more connected to campus as a result of encouragement and advice from my mentor. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
**40. Mentoring experiences had a significant contribution to my academic performance and integration into the school environment. (Satisfaction & Assimilation)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Think of the experiences that you have had with you mentor. Please respond to the following questions based on those experiences.

1. What led to the development of the mentoring relationship?

2. Identify three or more characteristics of your mentor that were significant in developing your relationship.

3. Identify three or more positive experiences within the mentoring relationship that helped to develop a closer bond between you and the mentor.

4. Identify three or more negative experiences that hindered the growth of the mentoring relationship.

5. Did the relationship with your mentor have a significant impact on your decision to stay in school? If so, describe how your mentor affected that decision.

6. Did the race of the mentor have an impact on the mentoring experiences or the growth of the relationship? If so, describe how race impacted the relationship.

7. What do you consider the most important characteristics and qualifications a mentor should possess?

8. What benefits were gained from your mentoring experience?

Think of the experiences that you have had on campus as a whole. Please respond to the following questions based on those experiences.

9. What events or activities contributed to your persistence at the current institution?

10. Describe your experiences when you first stepped on the predominantly White university campus? What were your feelings about the campus environment?

11. Describe your experiences in your academic program in relationship to other students in your classes or your department? Did you have any feelings of being alone in the academic environment?

12. Describe your experiences with faculty and staff in the university as a whole and also in your academic department? Describe your experiences with your advisor also.

13. Based on your experiences, what kind of advice would you give other African-American undergraduate students?

14. What, if any, recommendations would you give to the university or your academic department to help improve the experiences of African-American undergraduate students enrolled at predominantly White institutions?

15. Did you have any Black/African American instructors? If so, how did this make you feel?

16. Do you feel like this institution welcomed your cultural differences?

17. Was there any point in your time at this institution that you felt it was hard for you to graduate? Explain.

APPENDIX B

Figure Captions

*Figure 1*. Tinto's Model of Retention.

Figure 2. John P. Bean's Model of Student Retention.

APPENDIX C

Tinto's Model of Student Retention

Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure (Student Integration Model)

Pre-Entry Attributes	Goals/Commitments	Institutional Experiences	Integration	Goals/Commitments	Outcome
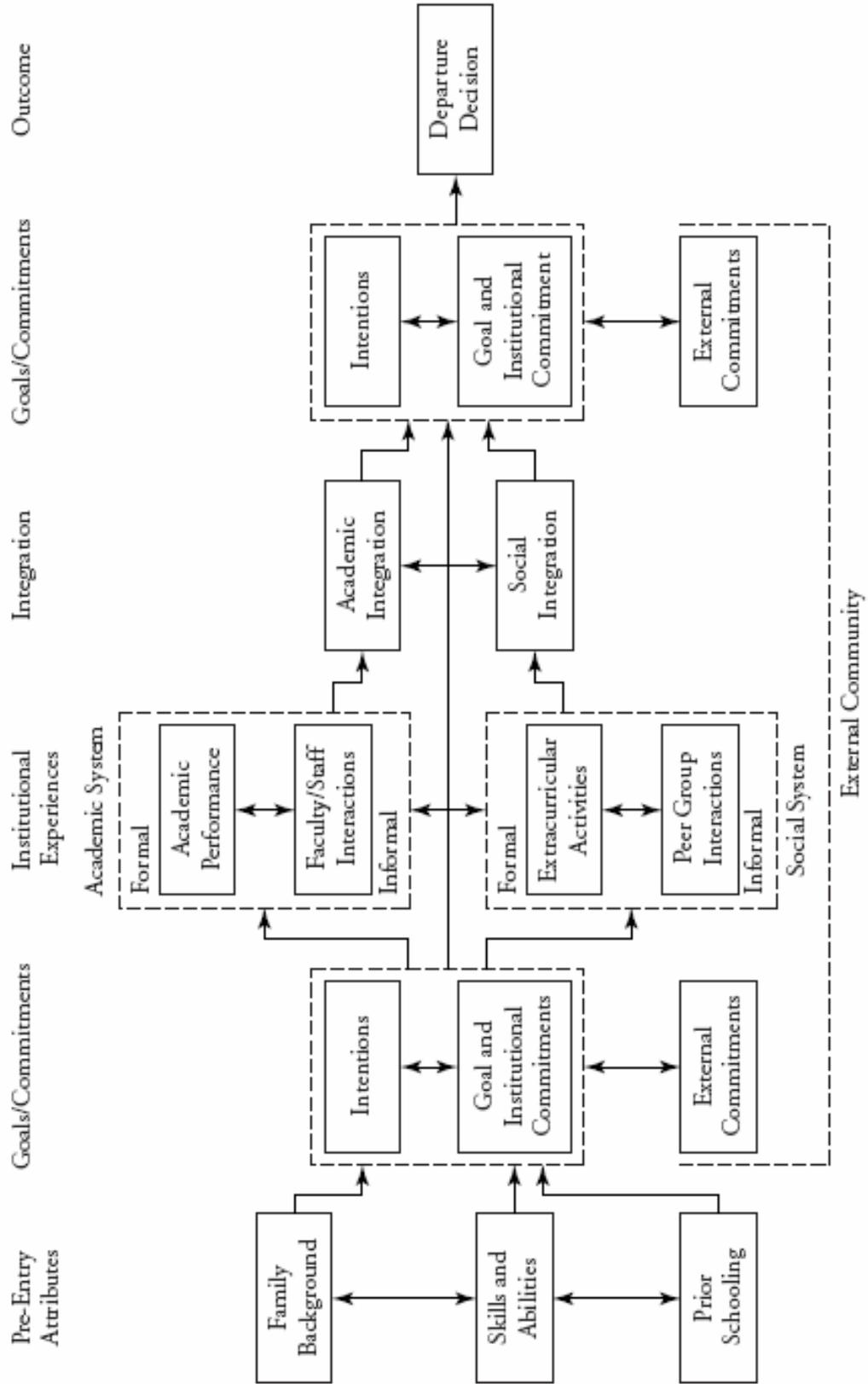
SOURCE: Tinto, 1993, p. 114.

APPENDIX D

Bean and Eaton's Model of Student Retention

Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of College Student Retention
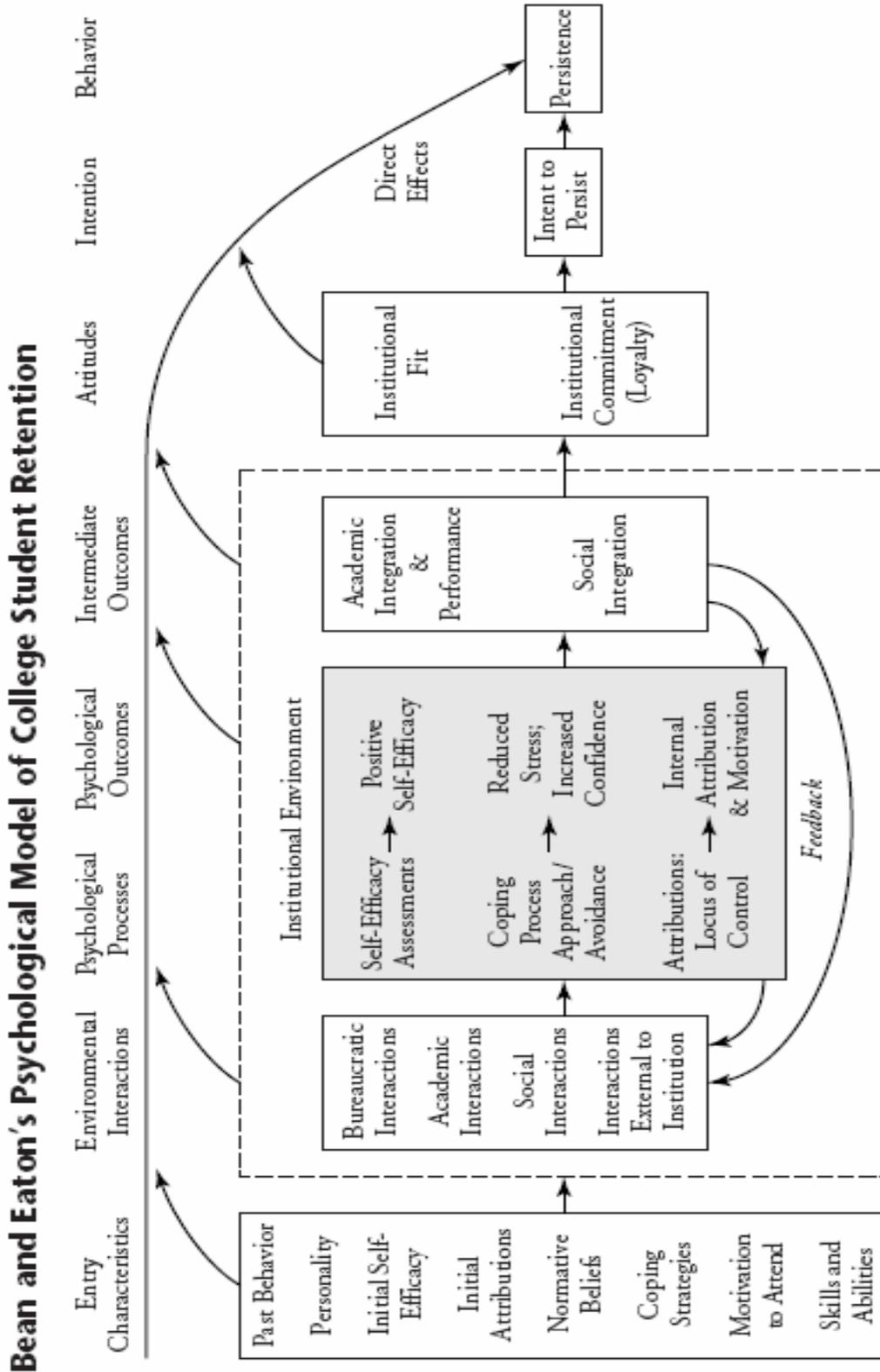
SOURCE: Bean and Eaton, 2000, p. 57.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Participants

Title of Study: Mentoring African American Students at a Predominantly White Institution: Its Effect on Academic Performance, Persistence, and Retention

Researcher: Sundra D. Kincey, Doctoral Candidate, Florida State University

I. Purpose

You have been invited to participate in a study concerning the relationship between mentoring and academic performance of African American undergraduates enrolled at a predominantly White institution (PWI). The purpose of this study will be to explore the mentoring experiences of African American undergraduate students attending a predominantly White institution in the southeastern United States to determine if a relationship exists between mentoring and academic performance. It will also examine the factors that contribute to persistence for this select group of students. The focus of this research is on whether mentoring might enhance or impact the success of African American students on a predominantly White campus.

II. Procedure

To accomplish the goals of this study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire and answer open-ended questions that will not take you more than 30-45 minutes to complete. A link to the survey will be sent electronically to your campus e-mail address. The questionnaire will include items about the role of mentoring in your academic career and the relationship between these factors and your decision to continue enrollment at your present institution.

III. Risks

It is not expected that you will experience any discomfort while filling out the questionnaires; however, if at any time during the study you wish to stop, you may choose to do so without penalty.

IV. Benefits of this Project

The information you provide will be used to extend the knowledge base in this area of study and also as information for institutions and administrators in their role to develop effective retention strategies for African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions.

Information contained within this study may also be considered for publication and replications in professional journals and/or books. This may include a

presentation of the results at a scientific meeting and/or being published and reproduced. You will not be identified in any way other than as part of the African American student population enrolled at a PWI in southeastern United States.

V. Anonymity

Your identity related to the results of this study will be kept confidential. The information you provide will be used for the sole purposes of collecting data related to this particular study.

VI. Compensation

Participants will be entered into a prize drawing for a $50 cash prize.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

If at anytime you wish to decline participation, you are free to withdraw without penalty.

This research has been approved, as required, by the Human Subjects Committee and College of Education at Florida State University.

IX. Participant's Responsibilities

Information provided is by voluntary participation. You agree that the information provided represents your personal experiences and may or may not have had an impact on your matriculation at the institution in which you are currently enrolled.

X. Participant Permission:

I have read and understand the above description of the study. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Sundra D. Kincey, Doctoral Candidate

Florida State University

skincey@fsu.edu

_____   _____

Signature   Date

APPENDIX F

Letter of Permission to Use Survey Instrument

July 25, 2005

Dr. Raymond A. Noe

271 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Dr. Noe:

My name is Sundra Kincey. I am a doctoral student at Florida State University currently pursuing a degree in Higher Education. The reason I am writing is because I am seeking your permission to use the *Mentoring Function Scale* as part of my dissertation. As part of my research, I am looking at the mentoring experiences of African American students enrolled at predominantly White institutions to determine if mentoring has an impact on student achievement and retention for this select group of students. In addition, my research will consider the impact of racial identity in developing the mentoring relationship.

After reviewing the items included in your scale from your study of *An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships*, it seems that this questionnaire could provide greater insight into the mentoring relationships for African American students sampled in my study to determine the quality and extent of mentoring received at their institution. Therefore, I am asking for your permission to reproduce and modify this scale for the selected population in my research.

If permission is granted, please advise whether additional permissions will be needed and also scoring criteria for the requested instrument as well as information on where additional copies may be obtained beyond the study indicated above. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sundra Kincey, Doctoral Candidate

Florida State University

Response from Author to Use Survey Instrument

RE: request to use Mentoring Function Scale for dissertation research

Noe, Raymond [noe_22@cob.osu.edu]

To: **Kincey, Sundra**

Cc:

Sundra:

You have my permission to use the Mentoring Function Scale in your research project.

Ray

_____

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sundra Kincey was born into a loving family that realized the importance of education and a college degree. Although her parents did not attend college, they instilled in each of their children the value of a postsecondary education and worked tirelessly to make sure that each child would be able to attend college. Understanding the value of a college education and limitless opportunities that could follow, Sundra enrolled at the University of South Alabama and completed majors in Communication and Criminal Justice.

She then took a position at Tuskegee University, a Historically Black College and University, as an Admissions Counselor. This position offered her the opportunity to help other young African Americans enter college and receive the same types of educational benefits afforded her. While working at Tuskegee, her interest in higher education blossomed and from there she decided to enroll at Troy State University and advance her educational career by completing the Master's program in Human Resource Management. Following, she moved to Tallahassee Florida to complete her doctoral studies in Higher Education while working full-time as an academic advisor.

Sundra is now an Educational Policy Analyst for the Board of Governors, which oversees the State University System of Florida. In her position at the Board office, her primary roles are to: act as liaison with various units engaged in teacher preparation, program approval, and certification; provide leadership on issues associated with national and regional accreditation and faculty development; respond to constituent inquiries regarding student affairs, distance learning, and teacher education; and prepare reports and analyses for the legislature during session. Sundra's background qualifications and experiences also include: policy and program review; career planning; online instruction; public speaking; supervision; and undergraduate teaching.

In her spare time, Sundra works to raise money for the W.E.K. Scholarship for Minorities established in honor of her father, volunteers in the local public schools, and serves as a mentor for college students. In addition, she enjoys spending time with her family, reading, and watching movies. She spends countless hours with her son and nephews taking them to local

attractions and to the library as well as to their favorite theme park in Orlando. Sundra has been recognized for her academic achievements as the recipient of the James and Anne Barger Scholarship at Florida State University and also a member of the Pi Lambda Theta International Honor Society.