5-2011

Understanding Black Student Perceptions of Targeted Student Support Services on a Predominantly White College Campus

Kendra Stewart
Clemson University, kstewart03@alumni.wfu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations

Recommended Citation
Stewart, Kendra, "Understanding Black Student Perceptions of Targeted Student Support Services on a Predominantly White College Campus" (2011). All Dissertations. 701.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/701

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
UNDERSTANDING BLACK STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TARGETED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES ON A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE COLLEGE CAMPUS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Kendra Danika Stewart
March 2011

Accepted by:
Dr. Pamela Havice, Committee Chair
Dr. Curtis Brewer
Dr. James Satterfield
Dr. Earl Smith
ABSTRACT

Black students’ perceptions of their experiences on predominantly White campuses have been marred by a sense of isolation and alienation from the overall campus community. Black students do not feel they have sufficient access to important resources to satisfactorily navigate an unfamiliar campus environment. Support services for Black students, such as ethnically-themed student organizations or mentoring programs, have been implemented to react to and address such perceptions. A review of literature focused on Black student challenges on predominantly White campuses implicated the need for such support services, but there is a need in higher education to have a more detailed understanding of Black students’ perceptions of these services and social networks.

The purpose of this study was to lay a foundation to detail Black students’ perceptions on targeted support services on a predominantly White campus. This research study forms a basis for the description and understanding of Black students’ experiences and perceptions of such support services. Knowledge of these perceptions will inform and encourage further research and practice in supporting Black students as they integrate into and navigate an unfamiliar institutional culture as part of a minority group.

For this study, phenomenology research methodology allowed Black students to describe their perceptions of targeted support services. Data collection methods included semi-structured, face-to-face, individual interviews conducted in the participants’ natural setting, observations in related settings, and examination of relevant artifacts.
The results of the study revealed five emergent themes: a) Continuum of Involvement, b) Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda, c) Racial/Cultural Identity Expression and Development, d) We are Family, and e) Centralized Hub of Information. The researcher discovered that a larger number of Black students perceived themselves as involved with targeted student support services than can be easily quantified. Additionally, Black students ranging from loosely associated to actively engaged with these services reaped benefits from their presence on campus. Participants described finding comfort from interacting with faculty, staff, and peers of the same race. Participants cited these services as providing a place to display their culture and belong to a close-knit community on campus. Also, participants explained how they saw Black student support services as a resource to help them with myriad issues that befall Black college students on a predominantly White campus.
DEDICATION

To my parents, Jimi and Dianne Stewart, you are unsung trailblazers in your own right. A daughter could not ask for better mental, physical, intellectual, emotional, financial, and spiritual support than what you provide. I am blessed beyond measure that God chose both of you to be my earthly shepherds.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Without Your Word, I am nothing and none of this could have been accomplished. You are my source of guidance, comfort, and most of all, salvation. All the glory, honor, and praise are given to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thank you to my parents, Jimi and Dianne Stewart, who have supported me and encouraged me to pursue the unthinkable. You both made it your mission to expose your children to the world and new opportunities, completely altering the course of my life.

Thanks to my sibling Keisha Stewart for tackling the tough role of accepting a baby sister. From our days of dressing just alike to becoming completely unique women from one another, we will always be connected by our desire to continue our family legacy and make those that came before proud.

I cannot properly express my gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Pam Havice. You were more than a committee chair, showing as much concern for my overall well-being as you did for my academic productivity and achievement.

Thank you to my other committee members: Dr. Curtis Brewer, Dr. James Satterfield, and Dr. Earl Smith. Each of you offered your own brand of guidance and challenges.

I would be remiss if I did not call the names of a few colleagues-turned-friends that helped me along the way. Dr. Barbee Oakes, thank you for pushing me to achieve at higher levels than I ever think are possible. Eli Ker, thank you for being the kind of supportive boss and advocate that a doctoral student needs. Darlene “Dahilig” Starnes,
there is honestly too much to thank you for in a few lines, but for providing a listening ear and so much more, I am grateful. Tiffany Waddell, your friendship as well as your conceptual offerings, were invaluable.

I must also thank my husband-to-be, Joshua Tillman. You have made me the happiest woman on earth by asking me to be your wife. You motivated me and remained calm and confident when I became overwhelmed. You always remind me of the call on my life, and I look forward to spending forever with you.

Finally, there are too many colleagues, students, friends, and family to name that have greatly impacted my life and supported me through this entire doctoral process. God has placed so many great people in my life and I am extremely thankful.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................. 1
   - Statement of the Problem .................................. 5
   - Purpose and Significance of the Study .................... 6
   - Conceptual Premise of the Study .......................... 8
   - Overview of the Research Site ............................ 13
   - Limitations .................................................. 14
   - Definition of Terms ........................................ 14
   - Chapter Summary ........................................... 17

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ......................................... 18
   - Introduction ................................................. 18
   - Black Student Acculturation and Identity Development .... 19
   - Campus Conditions for Black Students ....................... 27
   - Targeted Black Student Support Services .................... 41
   - Conceptual Premise of the Study ............................ 55
   - Chapter Summary ............................................. 57

III. METHODOLOGY .................................................. 58
   - Introduction .................................................. 58
   - Research Design ................................................ 58
   - Site Selection ................................................ 60
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection Process</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness and Assurance</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Researcher</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Epoche</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant One: Dionne</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Two: Keenon</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Three: Derek</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Four: Marlena</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Five: Jamelle</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Six: Darryl</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Seven: Natasha</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Eight: Alecia</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Nine: Arthur</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Ten: Josh</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Eleven: Tiffany</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Twelve: Ryan</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Thirteen: Shannon</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Fourteen: Lamont</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations and Artifacts</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. FINDINGS</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum of Involvement</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/Cultural Identity Expression and Development</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are Family</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralized Hub of Information</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS</th>
<th>220</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Practice and Policy</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDICES ......................................................................................... 242

| A: Researcher’s Collegiate IRB Approval | 243 |
| B: Research Site IRB Approval          | 244 |
| C: Consent Form                        | 245 |
| D: Participant Profile Sheet           | 247 |
| E: Permission to use Cross Racial Identity Scale | 248 |
| F: Interview Questions                 | 249 |
| G: Sample Horizontalization of Data    | 250 |
| H: Sample of Information Reduction and Clusters of Meaning | 253 |
| I: Textural Description                | 256 |
| J: Structural Description              | 260 |
| K: Office of Multicultural Affairs Listserv Announcements | 262 |
| L: NPHC Garden Articles                | 263 |

REFERENCES .......................................................................................... 268
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of sample</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Sources of data triangulation</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Levels of research questions and conceptual premise</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics of overall sample CRIS results</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Plot of overall sample mean scores for CRIS subscales</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Plot of participant mean scores for CRIS subscales</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Emergence of key themes from data</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Dionne’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Keenon’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Derek’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Marlena’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Jamelle’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Darryl’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Natasha’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Alecia’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Arthur’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Josh’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Tiffany’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Ryan’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Shannon’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>Lamont’s CRIS profile</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Continuum of involvement</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One presents an overview and introduction to the research study. The chapter details the background of the study and states the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. The conceptual premise of the study is explained and the research site information is introduced. Lastly, a listing of key definitions is provided to convey the meaning and usage of major terms used in the study.

Recognizing the imbalance existent in a segregated system of education, the highest Court in the United States instituted a paradigm shift in 1954 through its ruling in Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (Kluger, 2004). This landmark Supreme Court case recognized the unfair racial practices resultant of the almost 60 year old “separate but equal” doctrine (Cottrol, Ware, & Diamond, 2003, p. 225) and became the springboard for the Civil Rights movement. The Civil Rights movement sparked a polarizing dispute focused on the social and educational integration of White people, referencing persons of European ancestry, and Black people, referencing persons of African ancestry. The same principles and expectations of racial equality in education from the Brown case were extended to colleges and universities in 1964 through Title VI of the Civil Rights movement. The crux of the Brown case was to not only equally fund education, but also provided access to the social networks necessary for upward mobility and social advancement for all people (Harper, 2008).

Although the right for all students to enroll in and attain an equitable college experience at formerly all-White institutions of higher education was officially
recognized in theory; practice did not immediately follow suit. To this day, schools that were predominantly White before Title VI remain predominantly White (Harper, 2008). Black students have traveled a tumultuous path seeking access to academic and social mobility in the face of explicit and implicit racism; a harsh reality present even after Black students gain admission and step onto predominantly White student campuses across the nation.

Research has presented many challenges Black students face on college campuses (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Watson, Terrell, Wright, Bonner, Cuyjet, Gold, Rudy, & Person, 2002). Black students at predominantly White student colleges “are reminded daily, overtly and covertly, that they are in the minority and consequently feel alienated from campus life” (Fisher & Hartmann, 1995, p. 130-131). Black students must overcome in their day-to-day lives incidences that call upon them to act as a spokesperson for their entire race by faculty, administrators, or peers. These incidences include feelings of being negatively stereotyped based solely upon their racial classification, and/or facing direct, overt discrimination on campus (Watson et al., 2002). In addition to such isolating and debilitating experiences, Black students on predominantly White campuses are forced to process and cope with unpleasant conditions in the absence of a substantial pool of faculty and administrators of color (Watson et al., 2002). Faculty and administrators of color could serve as experienced mentors on campus that personally identify with Black students’ challenges.

Past research studies have pointed to how such adverse social conditions have led to the existence of lower rates of social satisfaction and identification with campus for
Black college students at predominantly White student colleges. Additionally, these studies have revealed trends of academic underperformance (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Steele, 1997; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998). Negative campus conditions pull from a student’s available psychological energy that Astin (1999) proposed as an important component of student involvement. Psychological energy is significant due to the fact that “since students have only a limited amount of time and emotional energy, those able to concentrate on their academic tasks, without constant concern about their place on campus and their relationship to others, are most likely to do well academically” (Bowen & Bok, 2000, p. 82). Black students that must devote emotional energy to negative feelings of isolation and alienation are at a disadvantage to compete academically on campus (Bowen & Bok, 2000). The largest disparities for Black students at predominantly White institutions, as compared to their White student counterparts, have been identified as relating to persistence rates, academic achievement, pursuing postgraduate study, and adjusting psychosocially to the campus environment (Allen, Epp, & Haniff, 1991; Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1988).

Following court-mandated integration, campus cultures and climates did not change with the admission of Black students. Instead faculty and administrators expected Black students to assimilate to the dominant culture, “‘relinquishing one’s own cultural identity’ and developing a new identity that coincides with the new or dominant culture” (Shuford & Palmer, 2008, p. 225). As a result, Black students on predominantly White student campuses were often excluded from the mainstream campus social realm. Utilizing their own collective norms and agendas, Black students created their own social
networks in reaction to their perceived exclusion (Allen, 1992). Previous research has revealed that feelings of isolation, alienation, and lack of support comprised the most serious problems facing this population (Allen, 1992; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995; Trippi & Cheatham, 1991).

With the advent of student affairs support services aimed at Black students’ feelings of isolation, many institutions displayed a commitment to addressing and alleviating such negative experiences. The foundational premise for these services rested on research findings that Black students needed “safe havens in an alien environment” (Young, 1986, p. 18). Such services exist in the form of staff dedicated to supporting Black students, racially-themed student organizations, and culturally-based educational and social programming (Shuford & Palmer, 2008).

The idea behind Black student support services evolved into a two-fold mission. On one hand, Black students had access to an environment that allowed them to process their struggles on campus. In this environment, Black students could increase both their cultural identity development and ability to express their culture on campus (Gossett et al., 1998; Shuford & Palmer, 2008). As a second function, these services encouraged greater cross-cultural social interaction and integration with majority students, faculty, and staff (Shuford & Palmer, 2008). Programs supporting these intended missions have been in practice in higher education for many years. Despite research supporting Black student support services, there is little understanding if practices have successfully achieved the missions. Moreover, there has been little investigation into how the
relationship of the support services has worked for Black students on predominantly White campuses.

**Statement of the Problem**

The creation of Black student support services in higher education has recognized limitations placed on the overall experiences of Black students on predominantly White campuses. These limitations restricted Black students from full participation as vital members of the campus community at predominantly White student institutions. Following the implementation of support services targeting Black college students, little to no attention has been given to the nature of and students’ perceptions of these services. Specific attention should be given to the role of targeted student support services for Black students in their campus environment.

Considering the gaps in student satisfaction and identification with campus that exist for Black students, there is a deficit in the literature outlining how and if these support services work. If there was documentation and awareness that these services are beneficial for these students once on campus, such services could be enhanced and increased to reach a greater number of Black students for larger gains. This study sought to identify Black student perceptions of these targeted support services. Greater understanding of this relationship will better inform future student affairs decisions regarding proper support of Black student populations at predominantly White institutions.
Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to lay a foundation for research detailing Black students’ perceptions of the role of targeted support services in their overall campus experience on a predominantly White campus. To understand the nature and provide a description of Black student experiences with targeted student support services, qualitative research methods were used. This study will help inform student affairs practitioners and higher educational researchers as they implement policies to provide support services for Black students. Such information will address and assuage Black student difficulties associated with navigating an unfamiliar institutional culture as part of a minority group.

This study was important because it allowed Black students to relay their lived experiences as well as perceptions and meanings they ascribe to them. An essence description served to give voice to participants, thereby validating the reality of their experiences. Additionally, Black students on predominantly White campuses that have not previously seen their realities conveyed in the research literature may also find validation of their own campus realities.

In addition to validating Black students, the results of this study will inform research, policies, and practices associated with Black student support services. The study provided a more thorough understanding of Black student needs when it comes to financing and implementing targeted support services. As for the scholarly community, this study uncovered findings on the topic that direct future research into the topic of
Black student experiences on predominantly White campuses and the topic of Black student support services.

A central research question and multiple guiding subquestions were formulated to understand the perceptions of Black students on a predominantly White student campus.

Central Research Question:

- What are Black student perceptions of targeted support services on a predominantly White campus?

Guiding Subquestions:

- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to peers with similar experiences?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to faculty/staff mentors?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to pursuing a social justice agenda?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their Black identity and expression?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their campus involvement?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their campus satisfaction?
**Conceptual Premise of the Study**

The conceptual premise of this study includes a basis on Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001); Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement; and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) as examined through a critical race theory lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These theories provided a theoretical basis for the creation of the guiding subquestions to address the central research question. The use of these theories did not intend to hypothesize about or explain the findings of this study. However, current research was utilized to more appropriately direct the formulation of targeted guiding subquestions.

**Nigrescence Theory**

Nigrescence theory is a model of Black identity attitudes (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Cross (1971, 1991) originally created the model of Nigrescence as comprised of developmental stages in Black identity development. These stages reflected a Black individual’s outlooks on self, others of the same race, and others of the White race (Cross, 1991). After undergoing a number of revisions, the updated and expanded model of Nigresence takes on an attitudinal slant, as opposed to a developmental slant (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, 2008).

From this revised perspective, Black individuals may harbor attitudes across the multiple stages contained in the model. Additionally, each stage also includes multiple identities to further flesh out the perspectives represented in particular pieces. The expanded model of Nigrescence includes these stages and identities: a) Pre-encounter Assimilation, b) Pre-encounter Miseducation, c) Pre-encounter Self-hatred, d)
Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and e) Internalization Multiculturalist (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). These stages and identities represent a scale of perspectives for Black identity. On one end, in the Pre-encounter Assimilation identity stage, a Black individual believes in the value of Whiteness and its systems. On the other end, in the Internalization Multiculturalist, a Black individual is comfortable in one’s identity as a Black person, is able to see good and bad in both the Black and White race, and owns multiple identities outside of race (i.e., female, American, and Christian) (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Nigrescence theory is relevant in guiding a study into Black students’ perceptions of targeted student support services on predominantly White campuses because the process of gaining greater understanding of their perceptions includes gaining an understanding of their attitudes of their self and environment.

**Theory of Student Involvement**

Astin’s theory of student involvement has implications for how institutions of higher education should engage students inside and outside of the classroom. The theory of student involvement revealed that the more involved students were in their campus community, the more satisfied they were with their college experience (Astin, 1999). By having involvements to participate in, students were more apt to identify as having a place on campus.

This proposition that students need to become more involved in the college experience also has specific implications for minority populations, such as Black students on predominantly White college campuses. Astin (1999) purported that more encouragement to become involved should be given to minority populations. Since Black
students at predominantly White institutions are entering unfamiliar environments, their inclination and available time to become involved in the campus activities may be compromised by this additional set of transitional issues (Astin, 1999). Therefore, since Black student support services on predominantly White campuses inherently offer an opportunity to become involved on campus, the theory of student involvement directs greater attention to this concept of campus involvement and satisfaction with the college experience. Considering Black students’ perceptions of their involvements and satisfaction helps paint a better-rounded picture of Black students’ perceptions of these targeted student support services. An inclusion of this theory aids in understanding how they view Black student support services as a potential way to become more involved in the campus community. Subsequently, the theory prompts more consideration into how these involvements might heighten their on-campus satisfaction.

**Social capital theory and critical race theory**

Field (2003) explained that the central thesis of social capital theory is straightforward: “relationships matter” (p. 1). Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the network of resources that provide material or symbolic profits in the long term or short term. Applying a framework of social capital theory to the educational experience of racial minority students, Stanton-Salazar (1995) cited how social relationships can provide profits such as emotional support, legitimized institutional roles and identities, and access to privileged information and opportunities. Because of economic hegemony and hierarchical power systems existent in societal structures, traditionally, the dominant class had the ability to determine what relationships, resources, and profits were most
valued for inclusion and upward mobility in mainstream society (Bourdieu, 1986). However, this power to define what forms of social capital are valued by mainstream society does not limit the influence social capital has for minority groups. Bourdieu (1986) argued that there is power in a collective body. Social capital and its connections of individuals to other individuals with similar goals allows for the achievement of objectives not otherwise achieved alone, or at the least achieved with much difficulty (Field, 2003). In its most simplistic form, social capital refers to connections people make with others to achieve a collectively and/or individually desired end (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital theory has major implications for the educational community, specifically in regards to racial minorities at predominantly White student institutions. College students who are able to accumulate more social capital have an advantage over their peers that have access to less social capital (Harper, 2008). In order to attain acceptance and access to mainstream social networks and resources, Black students have been asked to conform to the dominant institutional norms and agendas (Stanton-Salazar, 1995; Harper 2008). An emphasis on Black student access to mainstream social capital, however, neglects to identify the individually perceived needs of Black students from their social networks (Stanton-Salazar, 1995).

This neglect of what Black students need from their networks on campus also neglects to examine the relationships they utilize to access these desired profits. In response, Yosso (2005) developed a critical race theory view of social capital theory. Critical race theory was founded by Bell (1987) to expose both blatant and subtle forms of racism that saturate social structures. Critical race theory argues that scholarship and
research literature largely ignored the presence and effects of institutionalized racist systems (Bell, 1987; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2005). The goal of critical race theory is to call attention to oppressive systems and to empower minority communities to find their collective voice to advance a social justice agenda. The theory intends not merely to understand how race and racism affects society, but to rectify social ills present in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race theory holds that an eradication of oppression can be achieved through knowledge of the experiences and voices among minority populations that have often been silenced or ignored (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Due to her critical race theory perspective, Yosso (2005) outlined how people of color collectively use social capital as a social justice tool. Within communities of color, support of one another’s fight against oppressive structure takes the shape of emotional support and assurance that one is not alone in the struggle, as well as information sharing regarding how those individuals that went before navigated discriminatory environments. Yosso (2005) cited that these forms of social capital have often been overlooked by mainstream society because they do not fit into the dominant, capitalistic cultural value system. In spite of this lack of recognition, in order to advance their own agenda of social justice, people of color have social networks, resources, and skills that they access, accumulate, and leverage (Yosso, 2005). Hitherto, studies of minority student access to social capital have applied dominant, capitalistic ideals regarding what is considered profitable outcomes (Coleman, 1994; Harper, 2008; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lin, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). These studies have emphasized elusive social networks that
either students of color cannot access, or how they access these dominant networks to further success through dominant value system. Social capital theory through a critical race theory lens is applicable to this study since it provides a basis of understanding how Black students view their relationships with those associated with Black student support services.

Theories as conceptual premise

The guiding subquestions formulated for this study derived from the knowledge gained from Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), theory of student involvement (Astin, 1999), social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Drawing from Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), this study included a subquestion related to participants Black identity and expression. From Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement, subquestions focused on participants’ on-campus involvement and satisfaction. Based upon social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), subquestions contained a spotlight on participant’s relationships with peers and faculty/staff. Out of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), a subquestion was incorporated that gave attention to participants’ views on pursuing a social justice agenda. An inclusion of these subquestions from differential theoretical premises directs the study questions more precisely since it is grounded in current research.

Overview of the Research Site

The research site was a predominantly White, private, non-profit university in the southeast. This institution was described in the Carnegie Classification of the Institutions
of Higher Education (n.d.) as a medium size, four-year, research university. The research site was chosen partly because of the researcher’s prior relationships with key on-site administrators that agreed to serve as gatekeepers. The site was also chosen because of its history and implemented programs targeting the support of Black students.

**Limitations**

This study was limited by transferability and generalizability of the findings due to the characteristics of qualitative research. The purpose of this study was to initiate the process of understanding the nature of the proposed topic in order to inform future research. This study was conducted at one institution. The size, location, and culture of the research institution may not be representative of comparable populations at other types of higher education institutions. The researcher’s personal experiences as a Black student on a predominantly White student campus, previous work with Black student support services, and participants’ perception of the researcher’s objectives may have influenced responses. The study assumed and relied on a level of participant honesty in responses as well as an overall participant willingness to be open to responding to interview questions. Additionally, researcher’s novice status in the field of research may have attributed to procedural mistakes that could have also limited the study.

**Definition of Terms**

The definitions below are presented to provide an understanding of key terms and the intended use in this study. Where needed, a more in depth explanation of the terms will be included in the review of literature and methodology chapters.

- **Acculturation** – minority group interactions with the dominant culture and the subsequent affects on its members and cultural practices (Cokley & Helm, 2007)
- Black people – socially constructed racial term to refer to people of African
descent (Sue & Sue, 2008)

- Black/targeted student support services – racially-themed student organizations,
offices and staff, and cultural programming aimed to support the needs and
advancing the social justice agenda of Black students (Shuford & Palmer, 2008)

- Black/White binary – paradigm that considers the Black-White relation to be
central to racial analysis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

- Critical race theory – theoretical lens used in qualitative research that focuses
attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of
society (Creswell, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

- Counter spaces – academic and social places where people of color can challenge
negative on-campus racial climates and react by creating and maintaining a
positive racial climate within the confines of this environment (Solórzano, Ceja,
& Yosso, 2000)

- Enculturation – minority group members’ identification and socialization into
their minority group’s cultural practices, norms, beliefs, and experiences
(Herskovits, 1948)

- Epoche/bracketing – process of data analysis in which the researcher sets aside, as
much as possible, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences
of participants in the study (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994)

- First generation college student – student whose parents did not attend a four-year
college or university (Fischer, 2007)

- Involved Black student – Black student who serves in a leadership capacity or
participates in two or more programs associated with Black student support
services

- Lived experiences – term used in phenomenological studies to emphasize the
importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings
(Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994)

- Microaggression – small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of
the majority race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)
• Multiculturalism – view that social institutions should reflect many cultures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

• Nigrescence – the process of becoming Black (Cross, 1991)

• Phenomenology – type of study that describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon for several individuals reducing the experiences to an essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994)

• Predominantly White student institution/campus/college – institution of higher education that historically and currently is comprised of a majority White student population, as well as majority White faculty, staff, and administration (Grieger & Toliver, 2001)

• Qualitative research – inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007)

• Race – notion of distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

• Racism – any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

• Social capital – social networks or relationships that provide access to material or symbolic profits (Bourdieu, 1986)

• Stereotype – fixed, usually negative, image of members of a group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)

• Student Involvement – the amount of physical and psychological energy students give to their college experiences (Astin, 1999)

• Uninvolved Black student – Black student that participates in one or less programs associated with Black student support services

• Universal essence/Essence description – goal of phenomenological research to produce a brief description of the experiences of all participants in relation to a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994)

• Voice – ability of a group to articulate experience in ways unique to it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)
• White people – socially constructed racial term to refer to people of European
descent (Sue & Sue, 2008)

Chapter Summary

Chapter One provided an introduction of the study to the reader. A background
account of Black student experiences and the implementation of targeted support services
at predominantly White student institutions were provided. The lack of attention to Black
student perceptions of targeted support services was presented as the problem and
impetus for this study. The intention of this study was to build a foundation in
understanding Black student perceptions of targeted support services. This intention was
presented as significant for informing future practice and research in higher education.
Nigrescence theory, the theory of student involvement, and social capital theory as
viewed through a critical race theory lens were introduced as the conceptual premise of
the study. Lastly, the research site, study limitations, and key term definitions were
presented.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Research studies continue to detail the unique challenges and obstacles that Black students face on predominantly White student college campuses. In addition to navigating unfamiliar and oppressive environments, Black students grappled with acculturation and identity development issues. Black student support services were developed, either by the students themselves or the institutions, to ameliorate and assist in Black student struggles with these conditions.

The following review presents the existing research studies detailing Black student issues with acculturation, Black identity, and the advent of targeted support services. Following a recount of that literature, research studies that examined Black student outcomes and views of participation in Black student organizations are presented. The current literature on Black student support services has been limited to involvement in student organizations.

An overview of Black student acculturation and identity development is the first section of this chapter. The second section discusses targeted student support services and current studies of Black student participation in racially-themed student organizations. The final section explains the conceptual premise of the study. The chapter concludes with an overall chapter summary.
Black Student Acculturation and Identity Development

For some time, the discourse surrounding acculturation and affected populations often excluded Black people (Grieger & Toliver, 2001). However, Landrine and Klonoff (1994) laid the foundational research supporting the notion that Black people do have an ethnic and cultural identity along with a racial identity. The contrast between an ethnic and cultural identity versus a racial identity are discussed in the work of Sue and Sue (2008). Sue and Sue (2008) described how race is a socially constructed concept based upon genetic ancestry mainly for the purposes of oppression; racial identity both psychologically and subjectively influences one’s sense of group membership. The distinction for ethnicity and culture is the focus on a shared social heritage, and like race, it has subjective implications for one’s idea of group membership. Helms (1996) stated that racial identity relates largely to one’s reaction to oppression, and an ethnic and cultural identity relates largely to one’s notions towards cultural maintenance.

Cross (1991) discussed how it is difficult to extrapolate race from cultural and ethnic identity for Black Americans given the historical context of the United States. He asserted that focusing on culture through such ethnic terms as African American or Afro-American does not remove the influence of race and racism for this particular population from the equation (Cross, 1991). In essence, race largely affects the ethnic and cultural development of Black people. As will be included in the forthcoming examination of differential stages of acculturation and identity development for Black individuals, the cross-section of race and culture has implications for what racial/ethnic moniker they choose to describe themselves (Cross, 1991). For example, depending upon a particular
people’s stage of development, they may not identify with the term African, representing a land they have never known personally. They also may not identify with US American, representing the United States in which Black people have faced oppressive and discriminatory practices at the hands of governmental and societal institutions (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Therefore, the commonality of this particular population is the racial component, and shared ancestral lineage to Africa. Due to this basic commonality, for purposes of this study, the term Black is used in this study.

These psychological outlooks and adjustments are factors in the concepts of acculturation and enculturation in regards to Black student integration into a predominantly White environment. Acculturation refers to changes that occur as a result of direct contact of different cultures (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Enculturation refers to minority group members’ identification and socialization into their minority group’s cultural practices, norms, beliefs, and experiences (Herskovits, 1948).

Most often, acculturation is examined with attention to a minority group and how its interactions with the dominant culture affect its members and cultural practices (Cokley & Helm, 2007). Berry (1980) identified four acculturation approaches for minority populations: “assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation” (p. 13). These approaches form a continuum of a minority group member’s identification with the dominant culture, minority culture, or neither. The concept of enculturation is inherently included in this continuum. Each level involves either an identification or rejection of one’s minority culture in conjunction with identification with the dominant culture (Cokley & Helm, 2007). The healthiest stage along the continuum is integration. In this
stage, minority group members maintain identification with their own culture while simultaneously adopting, “or becoming proficient in” (Cokley & Helm, 2007, p. 143), the practices of the dominant culture (Berry, 1980).

A focus on the two concepts of acculturation and enculturation is important when exploring issues of Black identity and experiences in a setting where Blacks are the minority. A discussion surrounding issues of social capital and access to necessary relationships and network should be framed within discourse of how Black students approach their environment. Their levels of acculturation and enculturation directly affect their propensity to form relationships with people both from the dominant culture and the minority culture, as well as perceptions of their environments.

Like any population, Black students on predominantly White campuses do not comprise a monolithic group. Many research studies revealed that such within-group variations are evident through the different perceptions Black students have of the campus environment and personal experiences (Cuyjet, 2006; Fries-Britt, 1998, 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). Black students on any given campus, come from disparate socioeconomic statuses: from below the poverty line to the upper class. They have different home situations; some were raised in one-parent homes, while others were raised in two-parent homes, and even more possibilities of the in-house family nexus consisting of grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Black students also vary in relation to their status as first generation college students, with some students representing the first of their family to
enroll in any type of college while others’ parents hold professional and doctorate level degrees (Fries-Britt, 2002).

In addition to these factors, differential perceptions and reactions to campus environments may be in part due to differing stages of identity development. For Black students navigating a campus setting where they are part of the racial minority, their own race may become more salient. When faced with an uncomfortable environment that challenges them as a member of their race, dissonance may be created wherein Black students are reconciling their racial identity.

Cross’s Model of Nigrescence, originally introduced in 1971, detailed various stages in Black identity development, or the “psychology of becoming Black” (Cross, 1991, p. 41). Over the years, informed by research, the Cross’s model was revised and updated into an expanded version that focused on stages of racial attitude instead of development (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, 2008). This expansion and revision of the model focused the attention of Nigrescence Theory “on the outcomes of differing socialization experiences” (Cross & Vandiver, 2001, p. 377). Worrell (2008) explained that this particular revision of the Cross’s model permitted Black identity to go beyond the parameters of ‘a unitary construct that changes qualitatively as people move through the stages’ (p.160). A focus of socialization recognized more multifaceted, multidimensional aspects of racial attitudes (Worrell, 2008).

The eight Nigrescence exemplars in the model included: three pre-encounter identity statuses, a) assimilation and b) anti-Black and c) self-hatred; two immersion-emersion statuses, a) anti-White and b) intense Black involvement; and three
internalization identities, a) Afrocentrism, b) biculturalism, and c) multiculturalism. This continuum of attitudinal types outlined in Nigrescence theory show how Black students on a predominantly White campus may react by: a) assimilating into the dominant White culture, including a negative perception of their own race; b) owning a negative perception of the White race or wholly excluding themselves socially from non-Blacks; or c) finding comfort and ownership of one’s Black identity—plus the potential for other non-racial identities—and taking on a socially conscious agenda against White oppression of Black people, possibly including a willingness to partner with people of all oppressed groups that are willing allies (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Regarding a Black person’s movement through and between each attitudinal stage, Cross and Vandiver (2001) accepted Parham’s (1989) concept of recycling that built upon his Model of Nigrescence. Initially, Cross (1991) viewed progression through the stages as a one-time occurrence. However, research by Parham (1989) displayed how Black individuals may recycle back into previous attitudes as new stimuli are introduced and they experience cognitive dissonance. Parham (1989) posited that recycling should not be interpreted as confusion or lack of stability, but instead reflecting continual processing that leads people to greater understandings of their surroundings and self. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) purported that recycling does not necessarily change the current Black identity type of an individual, but may act to solidify and enhance the present identity following a process of reflection.
Pre-encounter

At the pre-encounter attitude status of Black identity, Cross and Vandiver (2001) characterized a person in this stage as existing in a “preexisting identity” (p. 190) where their racial identity is thought of as largely insignificant. In this stage, there exist three distinct types of outlooks: one of assimilation, another of miseducation, and the other of self-hatred (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). From an assimilation standpoint, race is of low salience and people with this attitude place values on identities outside of their Blackness. They do not deny that they are Black, but they place more emphasis on dominant ideological stances of rugged individualism and autonomy (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). People with the miseducation attitude type maintain a self-image separate from other Black people. They accept negative historical stereotypes and images of Black people, but consider themselves to be a positive exception (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

However, for people in the self-hatred outlook of the pre-encounter exemplar, being Black is salient, but in a negative way. Cross (1991) described that “Blackness and Black people define their internal model of what they dislike” (p. 191). Anti-Black people view other Black people and Black culture through the eyes of negative stereotypes, largely in a way that White racists would; this negative perception is powerful enough to the extent where they engage in self-loathing. In contrast, Black people with anti-Black perspectives view White people and White culture through a lens of positive stereotypes. Black people with this outlook do not accept notions of institutional structures of racism and oppression from the dominant White system, but
instead blame Black people for their own plight in the United States (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001).

**Immersion-Emersion**

Cross (1991) declared the immersion-emersion status as “the most sensational aspect of Black identity, for it represents the vortex of psychological nigrescence” (p. 201-202). As people move away from pre-encounter thinking, they have not necessarily reached a change when they enter the immersion status, but have made a conscious decision to seek change. In essence, they want to destroy their old identity, an identity with which they are familiar. The newly desired identity is unfamiliar. Therefore, it is marked by intense Black involvement and Afrocentrism. Everything concerning Blackness is viewed as good. Inversely with an Anti-White attitude type, everything concerning Whiteness is viewed as evil (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001). Additionally, there is a great disrespect for other Black people that appear to be in the pre-encounter status of Black identity. People in the immersion status are searching for a sense of pride in their Blackness and will manifest this exploration in their language, dress, and even preferred racial terminology. In this stage, people show a preference for terms such as Black or African, and a rejection of the term Negro as expressive of oppression (Vandiver et al., 2001).

At the emersion component of this status, emotionally-charged responses to Black and White systems are abandoned. This progress is signaled by an abandonment of the either/or, black/white, and good/evil mentalities present in the immersion component (Cross, 1991). A person at this point begins to seek out a new serious, sophisticated
understanding of Blackness and finds role models that are higher states of identity attitudes. Once a person in the emersion stage begins to accept the idea that there is more identity growth to occur within and he or she has not reached the end of that journey, they begin to move beyond this sensationalized state of being (Cross, 1991).

**Internalization**

The internalization identities are the most functionally productive and psychologically healthiest types as far as Black self-concept (Cross, 1991). Distinct markers of internalization identities are a capacity to positively engage in cross-racial interactions, habitual participation in multicultural organizations, engagement and sense of pride in one’s Blackness and culture, and pursuit of a social justice agenda (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Under this exemplar, there is a more sober outlook of both Blackness and Whiteness. Blackness is no longer romanticized as right, and Whiteness is no longer simplified to wickedness (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

There are three attitude types to the internalization exemplar: Afrocentrism, biculturalism, and multiculturalism (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001). In internalization, Afrocentrism is distinguished through an emphasis on the empowerment and economic self-sustainability of Black people. Additionally, the expression and celebration of Black history and culture are of great importance (Vandiver et al., 2001). On the surface, the focus on Black empowerment present in Afrocentrism may resemble the immersion-emersion exemplar, but at this point, an oversimplified view of Whiteness has been discarded. The biculturalism part of internalization is denoted by a focus on dual identities, accepting self-concepts of being both Black and American, acknowledging
what is good and bad about each. Multiculturalism takes this focus on multiple identities a step further. As in Afrocentrism and biculturalism, Blackness is still salient, but there is also an equitable focus on at least two other identities, such as sex, religion, sexuality, nationality, etc. With these foci, there is openness to working on causes that advance the social situation of cultural groups other than the Black population (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver et al., 2001).

**Campus Conditions for Black Students**

Critical race theory provides a useful theoretical lens for framing campus experiences and encountered conditions for Black students on predominantly White campuses. Critical race theory evolved out of the notion that scholarly discussions ignored the systematic effects of race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that five basic tenets of critical race theory are accepted by most scholars that purport to be critical race scholars, spanning the continuum of radical to moderate. These basic tenets are: a) racism is an ordinary experience for people of color; b) race is socially constructed; c) oppression of people of color has a purposeful function for the dominant White system; d) differential racialization of varying populations of color, and e) the idea that people of color have a unique voice largely competent of speaking about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Racism**

Racism is not an uncommon phenomenon in the daily lives of people of color in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This reality may easily go unnoticed
since racism is not limited to the most blatant, egregious acts of discrimination. Racism can take on many forms, including covert and subtle as well as unintentional and unconscious acts. Racism was created along racial categories that served to order people within society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Race is a social construct with no fixed biological evidence to support the categorization. The creation of race opened the door for and supported the oppressive structures that accompany racism; oppressors pointed to inferiority in particular races as justification of subjugation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Racism and its inherent beliefs were constructed for a specific function. It is “more than having an unfavorable impression of members of other groups…racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and status” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). Evidence of using race to allocate privilege and status is displayed in the United States’ systems of slavery, segregation in education and social spaces, housing and loan discrimination practices, etc. The Civil Rights movement served to eradicate such injustices that flowed out of overt racism. However, critical race theorists examined the motivations and incentives of the dominant group that were once well-served by a national legal system of apartheid (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Father of critical race theory, Derrick Bell (1987) expressed the need to examine dominant group motivations through the concept of interest convergence. This concept suggested that eradication of unjust practices often occurs when it benefits the dominant group, and is less concerned with removing the injustices from the group that suffered from them (Bell, 1987; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Political, economic, institutional, and societal change is often enacted after the majority has recognized the
profits and advantages that serve its self-interests. Although the pursuit of fair practices for humanity may contribute to policies and practices, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) posited that “Little happens out of altruism alone” (p. 18).

**Differential racialization, intersectionality, and essentialism**

Critical race theory holds that all people of color share the common experience of oppression. Politically, the concept of essentialism involves the unification of large groups of people of color to advance social justice agendas since a greater mass of oppressed voices carry greater political power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). However, effective it may sound in theory, a conglomerate of all people of color is hampered by intersectionality of identities and differential racialization in this country. Even as people of color may have salient racial identities, race is only one part of people’s identity. People are composed of multiple identities that intersect and may include multiple minority statuses (i.e., Black female lesbian). Mainstream society racializes groups of color differently at different times due to labor market needs that serve the dominant group’s interests. The difficulties in essentialism experienced from these two factors exist on both the intra-race and inter-race levels (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Voice and counterstorytelling**

Symptomatic of White privilege in the United States, there are significant hurdles for White people to overcome in fully understanding the systems of oppression that people of color encounter. It is not impossible for Whites to gain awareness and even relinquish their own privilege in an effort to advance social justice agendas, but the attempt is exacerbated by the invisibility through which privilege operates (McIntosh,
In the absence of blatant, racist acts, even the most well-intentioned White individuals are predisposed to viewing society through the ideals of colorblindness, equal access, and merit structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In the face of such hegemonic societal stances, critical race theorists suggested the use of counterstorytelling in order to deconstruct mainstream impressions of reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 42). Bell (2003) asserted the power of stories as “a bridge between individual experience and systemic social patterns…their analysis can be a potential tool for developing a more critical consciousness about social relations in our society” (p.4). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that because of their lived experiences with oppression, people of color have a unique voice that may allow them to articulate experiences with racial issues that White people have not likely encountered and may not have much knowledge.

Beyond these tenets, critical race theory also has a dimension of social activism. The goal of examination through a critical race theory lens is to not simply “understand our social situations, but change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). Work by critical race theorists Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) specifically applied critical race theory to education. Solórzano et al. (2000) paid particular attention to characteristics of educational institutions and systems that perpetrate dominant racial hierarchies. An examination of issues drawn from the tenets of critical race theory sought to challenge systems of social inequities and promoted social justice (Solórzano et al., 2000).
Criticisms of critical race theory

Early in its creation, Kennedy (1989) criticized critical race theory for its supposition that scholars of color had within them a unique voice to add to the discourse on racism. Kennedy (1989) stated that many people of color had no interest in overhauling the racial status quo, and did not carry with them any particularly, profound insights by virtue of their race. Additionally, Kennedy (1989) reprimanded critical race theorists for claiming that mainstream society had largely ignored academic literature produced by scholars of color. He believed that any work of quality received attention in the scholarly community, and critical race theorists were donning a victim role through their reference to racism for their lack of success in the academic marketplace.

Treviño, Harris and Wallace (2008) discussed another critique of critical race theory: the idea of colorism. Colorism refers to the issues of actual skin color and multi-racial individuals beyond the aggregate of racial categorization. Regarding colorism, Treviño et al. (2008) applauded critical race theory for evolving from its former Black-White binary and including social agendas for other groups of color and minority groups based off of sexual orientation. However, they stated that critical race theory missed important issues related to skin color; it does not pay attention to injustices experienced within a racial group. Treviño et al. (2008) called attention to the intra-race hierarchies created as a result of tensions over multiracial people and skin color. Depending on multiracial status or skin pigmentation, individuals may face oppression from members of their own race. Treviño et al. (2008) purported that critical race theory would be stronger with an inclusion of such examinations. As with any theory, each of these criticisms
exposed nuances in critical race theory that prevented it from fitting the criteria for a one-size-fits-all mentality. Therefore, all pieces of critical race theory should not be applied in a blanketed manner.

**Black student experiences with racism**

As previously presented in the discussion of critical race theory, racism can take on many forms: “intentional racism; unintentional racism; unconscious racism; institutional racism; racism tinged with homophobia and sexism; racism that takes the form of indifference or coldness; and white privilege” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 25). People of color recurrently have lived racist experiences that are real for them, but are consistently invalidated by others that do not experience similar incidences. Such experiences can be described as microaggressions, which are small, daily interactions that communicate negative, prejudicial meanings to a specific group of people (Sue and Sue, 2008).

Sue and Sue (2008) explained that microaggressions are often subtle, sometimes even unintentional; they still have a negative effect, however, on those that are the target of such incidences. Microaggressions are not limited to person-to-person interactions or verbal exchanges. They may also exist in the form of environmental factors present in the physical structures of organizations. Physical surroundings can function to send unwelcoming, unsafe, isolating, and/or alienating messages to specific groups. Such an instance occurs when portraits of people on a college campus are not reflective of the entire campus population. Sue and Sue (2008) illuminated four main elements of microaggressions.
They 1) tend to be subtle, unintentional, and indirect, 2) often occur in situations where they are alternative explanations, 3) represent unconscious and ingrained biased beliefs and attitudes, and 4) are more likely to occur when people pretend not to notice differences, thereby denying that race...had anything to do with their actions (Sue and Sue, 2008, p. 110).

The complex nature of microaggressions renders them difficult to detect, and also complicated to confront. Given the penchant for ambiguity and lack of intentionality, people that commit microaggressions are often unaware of the messages such acts carry. In fact, among the pool of persons that perpetuate racist messages are people who think of themselves as unbiased, applying just practices and beliefs, and emphasizing equality of all people (Sue and Sue, 2008). Both the acts and the meanings of such racial discrimination are invisible to the perpetrators themselves (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Ridley, 2005), presenting a dichotomy wherein what people purport to believe is not consistent with their actual behaviors. For example, a White woman may say that she does not see Black men as criminal offenders simply because of their race. If she clutches her purse tightly while approaching a Black male on the sidewalk, however, she is sending a different message through her actions distinct from her words.

Because of perpetrators’ lack of awareness and ownership associated with microaggressions, victims of these acts are placed in a precarious position. Since microaggressions are regularly performed in a covert manner, victims themselves may pause before they label an incident a racist one (Sue & Sue, 2008). In this case, the
receiver of the message may feel offended and disrespected, but wrestle in the attempt to articulate what happened and the meaning attached to the experience. Individuals placed in this position doubt their own abilities to interpret the event, especially in the face of well-meaning perpetrators that honestly believe they have perpetrated no wrong-doing.

However, people of color experience patterns of microaggressions that inform their reality and are better able to attain a more acute understanding of the reality of the situation. As disempowered groups, even though their perception of reality may be more accurate, they lack the power to define reality that is bestowed to the White majority. This conundrum makes oppressive acts and structures difficult to expose, confront, and combat (Sue & Sue, 2008). For the victims of such oppression, they are left to deal with the emotions of being “frustrated, feeling powerless, and even questioning their own sanity” (Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 118).

Such microaggressions are present for Black students on predominantly White campuses. Racism is prevalent for Black students to the extent that they perceive it as causing a noteworthy amount of stress in their daily lives (Reynolds, Sneva & Beehler, 2010). The levels of racism-related stress are higher for Black students at predominantly White campuses than it is for their Black counterparts at historically Black colleges and universities (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). Encountering racism from faculty and students is a regular occurrence (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). Stress develops in reaction to racist acts that foster a negative campus environment at predominantly White institutions (Gonzales, George, Fernandez, & Huerta, 2005). Incongruent perceptions of campus climate also exist for Black students and White
students on the same campuses. Rankin and Reason’s (2005) multi-campus study revealed that as compared to their White counterparts, Black students view their respective institutions of higher education as less accepting and more racist. Fisher and Hartmann (1995) found that overall, race for Black students is a more prominent concern than it is for White students. White students were three times less likely than Black students to view interracial interactions as important for well-being.

The racism that people of color encounter is not simply happenstance; it is a by-product of race that was socially constructed by humans. Race is a social construction because it has no real objective or biological implications. Instead, racial categories were socially invented and are altered by society when deemed necessary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Born out of the social constructions of race are accompanying stereotypes. Herrnstein and Murray (1994) outlined historical research studies in *The Bell Curve* that attempted to paint a picture of Blacks as sub-human to Whites: intellectually inferior and primitive and savage in function, minimized to their physical capabilities. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that such social construction attempted to prove intellectual inadequacy occurred since “conquered nations generally demonize their subjects to feel better about exploiting them” (p. 17). Given the history of slavery and refusal to grant basic civil rights to Black people in the United States, the notion that Blacks were second class citizens supported such legalized, systematic, oppressive measures.

Although traditionally White college campuses opened their doors to Black students following the *Brown* ruling in 1954, stereotypes associated with race did not
dissipate. A study by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) revealed that Black students on predominantly White campuses reported facing assumptions by White students, faculty, and staff that they were accepted by the institution through affirmative action and not by their personal achievements. Additionally, Black students faced situations within classrooms where White professors believed they were academically inferior and consequently lowered scholastic expectations. In fact, for Black students that performed well academically, some were accused of cheating. Additionally, sentiments of intellectual inferiority from White peers manifested in the formation of study groups. Black students reported being rejected by White peers when inquiring about joining their study groups because they were not perceived as smart enough to contribute to the group’s learning (Solórzano et al., 2000).

Also flowing out of The Bell Curve assertions, Black students on predominantly White campuses contended with assumptions of their physical dexterity. Beyond the belief that Black students gained entry into college via affirmative action programs existed the notion that Black students gained access to postsecondary institutions to participate in sports (Solórzano et al., 2000). Being minimized to such stereotypical images and assumptions shows the power and effects of the social construction of race for Black students on predominantly White campuses.

Steele (1997) offered a plausible explanation for how such stereotypes can lead to a phenomenon of underperformance for Black students. Steele’s theory of stereotype threat described the ways in which stereotypes could hinder the scholastic performance of Black students. Stereotype threat theory contended that for groups where negative
stereotypes apply, members of the groups fear being reduced to that stereotype. Steele (1997) stated that through the long exposure of negative stereotypes placed on Blacks, these sentiments are often internalized, and the resulting feelings of inadequacy permeate their behaviors. This situational pressure is especially true in the condition of Black students on a predominantly White campus as Steele (1997) pointed out that, “When such a setting integrates stereotyped and nonstereotyped people, it may make the stereotype, as a dimension of difference, more salient and thus more strongly felt” (p. 617-618).

When Black students internalize these feelings of inadequacy, they place limits on themselves and what they can accomplish. This internalization puts into practice a self-fulfilling prophecy where they will not perform as well as their White classmates. Also, with these self-doubts, Black students may become more concerned with these emotions rather than placing more attention towards their academic studies. Furthermore, as a coping mechanism to ward off the emotional pressure, Black students may become inclined to dis-identify from the settings where they feel most threatened (Steele, 1997).

Combating the cumulative, negative effects of stereotypes and other forms of microaggressions can prove to be emotionally draining for Black students on predominantly White campuses. This situation has implications for Black students in both in the academic and social spaces that comprise the campus climate (Solórzano et al., 2000). The struggle to establish their overall place on campus and deal with the emotional pressures that greet them on predominantly White campuses led to Black student feelings of lack of support, isolation, alienation, and dis-identification with the institutions (Allen, 1992; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995; Trippi & Cheatham, 1991).
**First Generation Status**

Adding perceived issues of isolation, alienation, dis-identification, and lack of support for Black students at predominantly White student institutions makes the process of college acclimation complicated. Beyond these struggles are the effects related to first generation college student status: a category many Black college students fit into (Fischer, 2007). Research has revealed that for first generation college students whose parents did not attend a four-year college or university, the transitional issues and obstacles are heightened (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2003; London, 1989; Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994).

First generation college students are at a disadvantage in regards to their access to information about the college experience (Willett, 1989). There are lower levels of both academic and social integration for first generation college students when compared to college students with parents that attended college (Nunez, Cuccaro-Alamin, & Carroll, 1998; Ishitani, 2003). Billson and Terry (1982) found that first generation students tended to have lower academic performance than their non-first generation status peers. In contrast, however, a study by Strage (1999) found that there were no significant academic performance differences in grade point averages between first generation college students and non-first generation college students. In spite of these conflicting results, studies showed that first generation college students were at a greater risk of dropping out of college than their counterparts whose parents attended college (Horn, 1998; Nunez, Cuccaro-Alamin, & Carroll, 1998; Riehl, 1994; Ishitani, 2003).
In a study by Terenzini et al. (1994), the results showed that college attendance tended to be a divisive experience for racial minority first generation college students in relation to their friends and family they left at home. Their families could not relate to their new experiences at college, and additionally could not offer directed advice, support, and understanding in regards to navigating campus life. This study also revealed that racial minority students perceived that their parents had difficulty letting go of their children as they transitioned into college life.

Because of such situations, families of first generation college students of color have been identified as potential hindrances providing less perceived support for successful transition into college (Billson & Terry, 1982; Guiffrida, 2005; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). However, studies have also revealed ways in which families of first generation students of color behaved as significant support systems to promote success (Guiffrida, 2005). Guiffrida (2005) compared a sample of high achieving and low achieving Black students on a predominantly White campus to identify their perceptions of the role of their families in their academic success. Black low achievers reported they were unable to break away from home. They either felt an obligation to return home often to help the family, or they sought to fill a social void they had on campus (Guiffrida, 2005). These visits home interfered with their allotted time to complete school assignments and hampered their social integration into campus.

Black, high academic achievers reported a different scenario of their families’ roles. They considered their families as significant sources of support and encouragement, in spite of not being able to provide specific guidance about the college
experience (Guiffrida, 2005). These results supported other studies that cited the possible important roles that Black students’ families fulfill for their children attending predominantly White student institutions (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Hendricks, Smith, Caplow, & Donaldson, 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

**Psychological Energy and Student Involvement**

A great deal of consideration has been given to the position that student engagement with peers, faculty, and staff on college campuses increases student campus integration, specifically in the form of Astin’s theory of student involvement (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) defined student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy” (p. 518) students give to their college experiences. A highly involved student is one who balances time between academic studies, membership in student organizations, and interactions with other campus community members (Astin, 1999). The charge for institutions under the theory of student involvement is to provide opportunities for students to become actively engaged with many facets of the undergraduate experience (Astin, 1999). The greater the inclination for a student to identify as a piece of the campus fabric, the more the student is likely to be involved with on campus academic and social activities. Longitudinal studies performed by Astin (1999) have revealed that higher levels of student involvement led to higher levels of satisfaction with the student experience.

Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement can be applied to Black student populations on predominantly White campuses. For a minority population, Astin (1999)
“suggests the need to give greater attention to the passive, reticent, or underprepared student” (p. 526). He stated that these characteristics are often apt descriptors of minority students entering an unknown environment. It is important for Black students to achieve high levels of student involvement. Astin (1999) presented that student time is composed of mental, emotional, and physical components. Student time is not infinite that a student can devote to student involvement (Astin, 1999). This issue of limited time may be exacerbated for Black students dealing with the psychological issues of being in the racial minority on a predominantly White campus and becoming the first in their family to attend college.

**Targeted Black Student Support Services**

**Social Capital Theory**

Social capital theory and its emphasis on social relationships and networks offer a useful conceptual basis for understanding the function and utility of Black student support services. In essence, the presence of services provided to address the needs of a specific population represents an interconnected social network in and among the targeted student support services. Therefore, an in-depth discussion of the nature and principles of social capital are included at this juncture in order to set the stage for the discussion of the implementation of Black student services that follows.

Since its advent as an idea by Bourdieu (1986), social capital theory has undergone multiple iterations and interpretations in the scholarly community. In addition to Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1994), Putnam (2000), and Stanton-Salazar (1997) were key theoreticians to the theory of social capital that have contributed to its development.
and differing perspectives. Regardless of this multiplicity, the central thesis of social
theory is the idea that relationships matter. Social relationships and networks serve the
purpose of achieving goals that would not otherwise be achieved alone, or achieved with
difficulty (Field, 2003).

Bourdieu’s (1986) arrival at social capital theory emerged out of his critical
examination of class struggle and dominant class influence on multiple forms of capital:
ecoconomic, human, cultural, and social.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which
are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less
institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or
in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its
members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential”
which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu,

Bourdieu (1986) included multiple key elements in the examination of social capital:

- Relationships are created or maintained through social institution and both
  material and symbolic exchange. Social institution could include association with
  a family, school, tribe, class, etc. Material and symbolic exchanges could be trade,
  knowledge, mutual recognition, and respect, etc.
- Profits derived from group membership are based on the solidarity of a group, or
  quality, and volume of the network, or quantity. A negative by-product inherent in
this element is the potential for a dominant group to replicate collective solidarity and limit outsider participation.

- The larger the network, the larger the profits associated with in-group status.
- Social capital is cumulative and outsiders can gain access to the social capital of groups through relationships with already incorporated individuals.
- Social capital is reproductive and as new members gain in-group status, it is exposed to revisions and modifications.

Following much of Marxist philosophy, Bourdieu (1986) saw potential operations of these tenets of social capital as an exclusionary device of the elite class. He described how social capital contributed to the reproduction of inequality given existent class systems. Bourdieu’s (1986) components of social capital included a tenet that the larger the network, the larger the profits derived from the network and the greater ability to determine what resources and relationships translated into profitable capital. Given this premise, the dominant class has the ability to determine what social networks and resources are of value in society. To Bourdieu (1986) social capital was a product of investment strategies pursued for collective gain.

In transition from the lens used by Bourdieu (1986) to an alternate lens used by Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000), social capital theory shifted from a class-based perspective to an actor-based perspective (Field, 2003). Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000) largely removed the focus on inequality inherent in class structures that Bourdieu (1986) highlighted. Instead, these two theoreticians considered social capital to constitute a benign concept that ultimately was used for good. Additionally, Coleman (1994) and
Putnam (2000) investigated and presented the idea of individual activation of social capital over a collective activation. The third key theoretician, Yosso (2005), swung the pendulum back in the direction of Bourdieu’s (1986) original concept and included a consideration of inequitable recognition of networks and a communal effort to use social capital to support an activist agenda.

In a complete modification of Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of social capital, Coleman (1994) rendered social capital an individual pursuit. He believed in the premise that individual actors seek out and secure relationships and networks in order to further their own self-interests. Nothing is done for overall societal or collective gain. Coleman (1994) focused the majority of his attention and application of social capital theory to the role of family members. He inspected how familial involvement, background, and quantity all can affect an individual’s access to social capital that best serves self-interests.

Following Coleman’s (1994) actor-based foundation, Putnam (2000) also examined social capital theory from the perspective of the individual. However, instead of focusing on self-interests, Putnam (2000) emphasized how civic good could be attained through accessing and leveraging social capital. This emphasis on civic good came with a caveat. Putnam (2000) differentiated between two forms of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital referred to homogenous networks whereas bridging social capital referred to heterogeneous, diverse networks. He also included the importance of forming horizontal ties over vertical ties. Putnam (2000) asserted that bridging social capital that contained horizontal ties would
achieve the most civic good because a diverse range of perspectives would be presented, whereas lateral positions would lend themselves to greater collective action.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) applied social capital theory to education and the racial minority student experience. This framework emphasized how social capital is important in educational institutions because it has the ability to be transformed into valuable resources, including legitimacy in institutional roles and identities, emotional support, and access to privileged information and opportunities (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Stanton-Salazar’s (1995) analysis of social capital for racial minority students revealed that social ties and networks to institutional agents that supported students had beneficial implications for academic success. Institutional agents included, but were not limited to, school faculty, administrators, parents, social workers, clergy, or any other individual that could provide access to institutional resources and opportunities. Moreover, students’ peers could also be considered institutional agents; Stanton-Salazar (2001, 2004) claimed that social networks of peers were important for college student success. These peer connections mediated student access to networks of pertinent information. Peer connections also provided student access to supportive and profitable social relationships with campus administrators and other significant campus and community constituents.

Stanton-Salazar (1995) warned that accessing social capital through institutional agents may be hindered for Black students because of the potential for cultural mistrust. He stated that students of color, particularly Black students, “often distrust those they perceive of as representing the dominant group’s interests and question whether conformity to norms for academic behavior will lead to sponsorship and promotion
within the educational system” (Stanton-Salazar, 1995, p. 119). Mainstream institutional officials have the propensity to exacerbate this level of distrust. Black students who are more apt to conform to institutional norms are viewed by mainstream institutional agents as more worthy of their institutional support and are granted wider access to social networks and resources. Those students that did not understand or adhere to the social norms of the institution were not allowed the same access to these social networks. Stanton-Salazar (1995) discovered that mainstream institutional officials were less apt to offer support to students that did not fit mainstream institutional norms.

Due to these conditions, Stanton-Salazar (1995) created a conceptual framework of social capital wherein three criteria for successful leverage were necessary for racial minority student success. First, social relationships and networks should be examined for their capacity to provide institutional support. Second, the resources accessed through these networks should be of good quality, such as access to key officials. Lastly, institutional support and resources should be tailored to the specific needs of the individual students. Through this modification of social capital theory, Stanton-Salazar (1995) brought attention to the need to refrain from applying mainstream values and interpretations of profitable resources to the social networks and resources that Black students may access for their benefit.

**Critical race theory lens of social capital**

Viewing social capital through a critical race theory lens prompts scrutiny and challenges of the infiltration of race and racism of societal infrastructures, practices, and discourse (Yosso, 2005). Critical race theory evolved out of the notion that scholarly
discussions ignored the systematic effects of race and racism (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso, 2005). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that five basic tenets of critical race theory are accepted by most scholars that purport to be critical race scholars, spanning the continuum of radical to moderate. These basic tenets are: a) racism is an ordinary experience for people of color; b) race is socially constructed; c) oppression of people of color has a purposeful function for the dominant White system; d) differential racialization of varying populations of color; and e) the idea that people of color have a unique voice largely competent of speaking about race and racism.

Yosso (2005) described how such oppression has obscured the viewpoints and experiences of marginalized racial populations not only from other populations but from themselves. There exists an “array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69) due to the effects of race and racism. When marginalized people hear similar accounts of human phenomenon to their own, they find empowerment in the unity of shared experiences (Solórzano et al., 2000). Therefore, in critical race theory, the goal is for a minority group to find their own voice and skills collectively through its social networks and relationships. Subsequently, through this empowerment, a minority group may be in a position to access dominant social capital, and moreover influence the dominant group to recognize the minority groups’ importance and necessary inclusion in the social structure.

Utilizing critical race theory, Yosso (2005) approached social capital theory from a completely different angle than Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000), and accentuated
an element in Bourdieu’s (1986) conception that is often overlooked. Yosso (2005) asserted a collective, group effort utilized social capital for the group’s self-interest. Due to this critical race theory perspective, Yosso (2005) outlined how people of color specifically use social capital collective to overcome and address obstacles associated with oppression and discrimination. Moreover, Yosso (2005) returned to Bourdieu’s component that the dominant class not only has the ability to restrict access to networks, but also place value judgments on networks, relationships, and their subsequent profits. Yosso (2005) argued that people of color have an array of beneficial profits associated with their networks that are often overlooked by mainstream society.

Harper (2008) and Lareau and Horvat (1999) stated that a status of deficiency in social capital has been assigned to Black people as a whole. However, Yosso (2005) used critical race theory in her charge to return to the roots of Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of social capital. At the core, this perspective included an examination of social networks and the accumulation of profits derived from these networks. The dominant, capitalistic value-system has previously predetermined what should be considered profitable relationships and outcomes of social capital. However, from this dominant viewpoint, it may be possible to overlook specifically what social networks Black students use to advance their particular agendas and what outcomes they consider profitable to this end, either in the short-term or long-term. Since Black student support services on predominantly White campuses function to serve the interests of a minority group, Yosso’s (2005) critical race theory angle of social capital is helpful moving forward in a discussion of such services.
Implementation and research of Black student support services

In response to the social challenges associated with being a Black student on a predominantly White campus, either Black students themselves or the college institutions implemented targeted student support services. These support services were developed in accordance with the theory of multicultural organizational development (Jackson & Hardiman, 1981; Pope, 1993, 1995). The premise of this theory was that a multicultural organization is a healthy organization. Embracing multiculturalism and diversity has positive implications for all campus constituents. Bringing these results to fruition requires the involvement of all campus community members to be effective (Jackson & Hardiman, 1981). Pope (1993, 1995) applied this theory to college campuses and suggested that institutions of higher education need to recognize the value of multiculturalism. Valuing multiculturalism includes an examination of every day practices and underlying beliefs (Pope, 1993, 1995). This agenda may be achieved by including a diverse set of interests in mission and operation; removing oppressive structures in the organization; including a diverse community of voices, especially in regards to decision making; and educating all community members on multicultural perspectives (Jackson & Hardiman, 1981; Pope, 1993, 1995).

Carroll (1998); Guinier, Fine, and Balin (1997); Hurtado (1992); and Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1999) stated for positive racial campus climate to exist, it must include four elements inherent to theory of multicultural organizational development. These elements are: a) the campus constituency should include faculty,
administrators, and students of color; b) the curriculum should be reflective of both the historical and modern experiences of people of color; c) support programs should be enacted to attend to the needs of students of color; and d) the institutional mission of the college should include a commitment to multiculturalism.

The same researchers that advocated for these four elements also stated they are least likely to exist on college campuses (Carroll, 1998; Guinier et al., 1997; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1999). Solórzano et al. (2000) explained that in the reaction to negative racial campus climates, counter spaces are created. Counter spaces “serve as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained” (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 69). Counter spaces can be formed on or off campus, with academic or social purposes, and led by students or university staff and faculty. Included under this umbrella are Black student organizations, peer mentoring programs, and offices intended to support Black students (Solórzano et al., 2000).

The formation of academic and social counter spaces have been in practice in higher education for many years to offer Black students targeted student support services. There is very little literature dedicated to the topic of how Black students on predominantly White campuses perceive targeted student support services. The research literature pertaining to understanding the relationship of targeted support services and the advantages and disadvantages of these social networks on Black student campus experiences has been confined to an examination of racially-themed student organizations on predominantly White campuses.
Researchers have diverged in their attitudes towards the benefits and drawbacks of implementing racially/ethnically-themed student organizations for students of color on predominantly White campuses. D’Souza (1991) and Pettigrew (1998) argued that racially/ethnically-themed organizations divided the campus community along such group lines and encouraged segregation. Opposing this perspective, researchers that fall under the “multicultural” (Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears, 2008, p. 228) camp argued that participation in such organizations does not create negative tension based upon racial/ethnic group membership and could prove to be beneficial. Members of the multicultural perspective purported that participation in these organizations can provide students of color with networks that provide resources to overcome negative campus environments at predominantly White institutions (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Loo & Rollison, 1986).

There have been research studies to support the multicultural perspective. Gardner, Keller, and Piotrowski (1996) discovered that Black students at predominantly White student institutions regarded the existence of targeted support programs as an important factor in their campus experience. Through these programs, Black students valued interaction with faculty and staff and opportunities to assist with campus-wide programming. Solórzano et al. (2000) found in their investigation of counter spaces that Black students felt supported and validated in these environments. The one down-side, however, was over-involvement of Black students with these activities. Solórzano et al. (2000) explained that some Black students became overly occupied with having their
voices heard on campus through participation in these counter spaces to the detriment of their academic studies.

Hurtado et al. (1999) and Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, and Treviño (1997) found that joining a racially/ethnically-themed student organization was positively related to a strong racial/ethnic attitude for students of color. Gilliard (1996) specifically investigated Black student participation in racially-themed student organizations on predominantly White campuses and reported positive findings. This study found that Black students with membership in such organizations were more involved with campus activities, interacted more with faculty members, and were more apt to utilize available student support services (Gilliard, 1996).

Supporting Gilliard’s (1996) findings, Guiffrida (2003) examined the role of Black student organizations in promoting campus integration for Black students on predominantly White campuses. He found that membership in these organizations should be valued because it assisted Black students in forming ties to faculty outside of the classroom. Participation also allowed them to feel comfortable in a place where they perceived other participants to understand them and their campus situation. Lastly, he found that Black student organizations assisted in the identity development of Black students that came from predominantly White environments at home. The organizations exposed these students to Black culture and helped them find a connection to the Black community (Guiffrida, 2003).

Harper and Quaye’s (2007) study of Black student organizations’ effect on Black male student leaders’ identity expression also supported the multicultural perspective.
This study revealed that Black male student leaders, specifically in the internalization stage of Cross’s (1991) Model of Nigrescence, primarily focused their out of class involvement in Black student organizations, but “were also involved to varying degrees in mainstream and predominantly White groups” (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 139). Harper & Quaye (2007) reported that participation in Black student organizations positively aided in students’ attitudes of Black identity. In addition, Black male student leaders took on a social justice agenda through their campus involvements.

Building upon his study of Black male leader involvement in racially-themed student organizations, Harper (2008) added a social capital component to his investigation of Black male leaders’ navigation of predominantly White campuses. This study revealed that Black male leaders on predominantly White campuses had the ability to access social relationships and networks for their own benefit. These benefits included relationships with key people and information about resources and opportunities for social mobility, such as knowledge about scholarship opportunities, positions on campus-wide committees, or information about study abroad programs. They were able to access these networks through out-of-classroom involvement in student organizations, including predominantly Black organizations. Harper’s (2008) research revealed that Black male student leaders were able to accumulate and leverage profitable social networks that were often not accessible to other Black students or even some White students.

Unlike these previous studies, a recent study by Sidanius et al. (2008) did not support the multicultural viewpoint. The results of this study refuted much of the positive outcomes multiculturalists attributed to participation in racially-themed organizations for
students of color. For Black students, they found that membership in racially-themed organizations was related to and increased their Black identification and promotion of an activist agenda. The study also revealed that membership in such organizations promoted Black students’ perceptions of themselves as oppressed by racial discrimination and engaged in “a zero-sum competition” (Sidanius et al, 2008, p. 247) with other racial groups on campus. Sidanius et al. (2008) contended that these findings held a negative value since such perceptions of discrimination and competition would not encourage positive cross-racial interactions.

These aforementioned research studies detailed the different stances and research outcomes regarding target student support services, specifically in the form of Black student organizations. Harper (2008) added a new dimension to this research field by including a social capital element, but there are still some significant components to this topic that have yet to be examined. These components consisted of: a) an examination of the totality of Black student support services beyond student organizations, including target support staff and racial programming; b) an understanding of what Black students feel they need to derive from their social networks instead of an imposition of dominant social capital theory; and c) a consideration of differences in perception of students in varying stages of identity development and subsequent involvement with such support services. By adding these components to future studies, there will emerge a more in-depth, rounded understanding of Black student perceptions of their campus environment.
Conceptual Premise of the Study

Given the methodological approach of this study discussed in detail in Chapter Three, phenomenological research does not entail using theory to hypothesize or explain potential findings of the study (Creswell, 2009). Instead, existent key theories in the literature were used to guide the development of the guiding subquestions. The key theories included here in the discussion of the review of literature provided a useful lens for conducting an investigation of the phenomena of Black student experiences with targeted student support services: a) Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001); b) critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001); c) theory of student involvement (Astin, 1999); and d) social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986).

Nigrescence theory details the differing attitudes of Black identity that affect how a Black person views themselves racially, and subsequently how they view their environment (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Theory of student involvement points to the element of campus involvement as a significant piece of campus satisfaction. Considering a Black student’s level of involvement and campus satisfaction aid in an understanding of how they view potential involvements. Critical race theory assumes that there are racial obstacles existent with being a person of color in the United States and a need for activism to rectify such inequalities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Such inequalities are related to a Black student’s experience at a predominantly White institution of higher education. Lastly, social capital theory is included because it relates to how people acquire and leverage social networks and relationships for their individual or collective benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). Figure 2.1 presents a conceptual picture of the formulation of
the central research question and guiding subquestions and the respective theories that prompted the researcher to ask the specific questions.

**Figure 2.1.** Levels of research questions and conceptual premise.

Level one of the diagram is the central research question. The central research sought to attain an understanding of Black students’ perceptions of targeted student support services offered to them on predominantly White campuses. Level two of the diagram shows the theories included in the conceptual premise. Based upon previous research, each of these theories directed the researcher’s attention to multiple possible elements of Black students’ perceptions. Lastly, level three of the diagram represents the guiding subquestions. The guiding subquestions flowed out of the theories in the
conceptual premise. Each guiding subquestion was formulated to achieve a well-rounded pursuit of participant’s experiences in order to answer the central research question.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two detailed the acculturation and identity development issues for Black students. It also outlined the campus racial condition for Black students on predominantly White student campuses in relation to campus climate, microaggressions, first generation status, and student involvement.

The chapter examined the theory behind and implementation of targeted student support services for Black students. Three types of Black student support services were presented in the form of Black student organizations, staff and offices dedicated to supporting Black students, and Black cultural programming. Past research studies and their findings related to Black student support services were detailed. These studies show that Black student organizations: a) provided supportive and validating environments; b) encouraged greater interaction with faculty and staff; c) promoted positive Black identity attitudes; d) heightened student involvement and use of student support services on campus; e) advanced a social justice agenda; f) provided access to greater social networks; g) distracted Black students from academic responsibilities; and h) created cross-racial tensions. Lastly, this chapter included a discussion of the key theories presented in the review of literature and their usefulness as part of the conceptual premise for this study.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study sought to understand the perceptions of Black students on targeted support services on a predominantly White campus. The purpose of this study was to reach an understanding of Black student perceptions on targeted student support services. This chapter presents the reasoning behind the chosen research design. It includes an account of the research questions, participant and site selection, process of data collection and analysis, and the study limitations.

Research Design

Transcendental science and philosophy emerged to fill a void in the scientific field that did not focus on the people that experience reality and the connection between their consciousness and objects (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1975) described transcendental science as a precursor foundation to science because it does not take any truth for granted as purely objective reality. Due to its emphasis on identifying meanings, qualitative research is an appropriate means to study complex phenomena for which the field has little previous knowledge (Creswell, 2009). Research conducted using qualitative methodologies are specifically useful in examining issues of race, class, and gender because of the emphasis on the effects of culture on consciousness (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). This type of study lends itself to critical inquiry paradigm of social research. Critical inquiry is a research paradigm that seeks to understand people’s personal constructions of reality within their contexts, but also desires to promote change
(Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) explained that meanings people ascribe to experiences are shaped and influenced through the process of enculturation, without the bias of acculturation. A focus on enculturation highlights meanings created within one’s own culture, as opposed to acculturation which emphasizes the effect of different cultures on one another (Cokley & Helm, 2007).

Transcendental phenomenology seeks to access data available through human consciousness (Husserl, 1975). The qualitative strategy of phenomenology is an entry into understanding a particular phenomenon and should not be viewed as a final investigation into certain experiences (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenological research seeks to understand the subjective understandings people attribute to their life occurrences. Perception is the primary source of knowledge, including the alteration of people’s perceptions as they experience new information and stimuli (Husserl, 1977).

Phenomenology involves describing the commonality of all participants as each experience a particular phenomenon with the goal to understand the universal essence (Creswell, 2007). This particular methodology does not intend to explain people’s lived experiences, but to describe their conscious formation of what reality is for them (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). These ascribed meanings are the focus of phenomenology through an emphasis on subjective reality as the only reality for participants (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). The data derived from phenomenological research provides directionality, indicating what is significant or insignificant about experiencing a phenomenon for participants (Moustakas, 1994). Since phenomenological research allows for participants to share their subjective observations and perceptions,
this method would allow Black students to describe the perceived nature of targeted support services and the meaning they ascribe to them.

This study aimed to build on previous research studies. This study sought to understand the common experience of multiple, comparative groups of Black students on a predominantly White campus (i.e., male and female, across varying academic classifications, with parents of differing educational backgrounds, involved and uninvolved, and in differing attitudinal statuses of Black identity). Moustakas (1994) asserted that phenomenological research involves investigating phenomena from multiple angles and perspectives in order to garner a greater understanding of the essence of the situation. The inclusion of comparative groups of Black students to this study allowed multiple perceptions and viewpoints to be explored.

Creswell (2007) stated that research questions best suited for phenomenological research include situations where understanding shared experiences is important to inform both the policymaking process and practice. This study directs further research inquiry into the subject matter regarding Black students’ experiences on a predominantly White campus. In addition, the study also informs practice regarding the implementation and execution of targeted support services.

Site Selection

The research site was a predominantly White student, private, non-profit university in the Southeast. This institution was classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a medium size (approximately 6,500 total enrollment), four-year, research university (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.). This research site was
chosen because of professional connections the researcher had to key on-site administrators that agreed to function as gatekeepers. Additionally, the site was chosen because of the researcher’s familiarity with the history and operation of Black student support services at this particular institution. The research site was founded as an all-White, all-male student institution that opened its doors to women in the 1940s and its first Black students in the 1960s. Beginning in the 1980s the institution implemented an office directly concerned with the support of Black students on campus. Over time the mission and role of this office has evolved and expanded beyond focusing on the support of Black students. The current mission included a purpose of fostering multicultural awareness and education for all students, but its founding principle of offering support to racial/ethnic minorities was still a major component. In addition to the office, Black students have created a number of student organizations and programs aimed at supporting each other and advancing their agenda on campus. To maintain site and participant anonymity, all specific information was masked.

Request for approval to conduct this study was submitted to and approved by the researcher’s collegiate Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A for researcher’s collegiate IRB approval). Following approval from the home institution, request for approval from the research site’s IRB was also submitted and approved (see Appendix B for research site IRB approval).
Research Questions

A central research question and numerous guiding subquestions were shaped to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black students on a predominantly White college campus.

Central Research Question:

- What are Black student perceptions of targeted support services on a predominantly White campus?

Guiding Subquestions:

- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to peers with similar experiences?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to faculty/staff mentors?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to pursuing a social justice agenda?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their Black identity and expression?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their campus involvement?
- How do Black students on a predominantly White campus perceive targeted support services in regards to their campus satisfaction?
Participant Information

The population of interest consisted of Black students on a predominantly White campus that perceivably had access to the same on-campus targeted student support services. The exact size of the entire population existent at the research site was approximately 340 students at the time of this study. Practicing the strategy of “purposeful sampling” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125), participants were required to possess these characteristics: identified as Black and were enrolled at the particular institution of higher education.

Beyond these two characteristics, the researcher identified additional participant characteristics that would aid in the formation of comparative groups. Both groups were comprised of Black students who identified with the phenomena of being a Black student on a predominantly White campus. One group consisted of Black students who were involved (i.e., serving in a leadership capacity or participating in two or more programs) with Black student support services and another group, Black students who were uninvolved (i.e., participating in one or less program) with targeted student support services. The use of comparative groups enabled the researcher to identify themes that are consistent among a cross-section of Black students. These set conditions are appropriate since qualitative research allows the researcher to practice purposeful selection of participants and sites that are most conducive to addressing the research question (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher utilized prior relationships with key on-site administrators who were willing to function as gatekeepers (Farber, 2006). When conducting research at
educational institutions, gatekeepers are helpful in accessing not only the population of interests, but insider insight and direction into how to best examine a particular topic at the research site (Farber, 2006). Research site gatekeepers were asked to identify students matching the desired characteristics and send all identified students invitations to participate in the study. Potential participants received invitations and were solicited for involvement in the study through two primary means: 1) an email from the researcher sent to the research site’s Black student electronic mailing list and 2) flyers posted in the research site student center. Participant incentives in the form of $100.00 book scholarships to the research site’s bookstore were also included in the invitation to potential participants. Incentives in research studies have been shown to increase the response rate (Singer, Groves, & Corning, 1999).

Once respondents agreed to participate, they signed consent forms (see Appendix C for consent form) and submitted a participant profile sheet (see Appendix D for participant profile sheet) to signify their willingness to become involved in the study. Interested participants also completed the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS, CRIS questions are not included due to restrictions on permission of scale use) to determine students’ social attitudes stage of Black identity in accordance with the CRIS Technical Manual (Vandiver, Cross, Fhagen-Smith, Worrell, Swim, & Caldwell, 2000; Worrell, Vandiver, & Cross, 2004). This instrument was used with permission from the CRIS Team (see Appendix E for permission).

From this population of interest, a total of 30 students agreed to be interviewed. Each student was enrolled as an undergraduate student at the research site and self-
identified as Black. This population was comprised of 19 females and 11 males. There were 6 freshman, 11 sophomores, 9 juniors, and 4 seniors. Regarding level of involvement, 18 students were categorized as involved, and 12 were categorized as uninvolved. Four of the participants had parents that attended no college. The remaining 26 participants had parents that attended at least some college, ranging to completion of graduate school.

**Participant Selection Process**

Once the researcher received the profile sheets, consent forms, and Cross Racial Identity Scale results, the materials were analyzed to create comparative groups fitting the most diverse representative characteristics. The arrangement of a representative sample employed the researcher as the primary instrument of investigation, consistent with qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Fifteen participants were chosen and invited to sit for interviews based upon their diverse set of characteristics. Fourteen participants responded and agreed to proceed with interviews.

Table 3.1 depicts the characteristics, except for the CRIS subscales which are discussed in the following section, of the chosen and interviewed sample participants. Evenly balanced, seven males and seven females were interviewed. The participants were split across academic classifications. Twenty-one percent of the sample participants were freshmen, 36% were sophomores, 36% were juniors, and 7% were seniors. The participants were categorized into the two levels of involvement with 43% of the participants considered involved, and 57% of the participants considered uninvolved. Fourteen percent of the participants had parents with no college in their educational
The majority, 86%, of the participants had parents that attended some college at a minimum.

Table 3.1

*Characteristics of sample.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninvolved</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Educational Background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) with Some College</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* (n=14)

Participants that were not chosen were thanked for their willingness to participate, and all of their personal information was destroyed. Chosen participants were assigned a number and pseudonym to protect their anonymity for the duration of the study. Personal information was secured in a locked file cabinet, separate from interview transcripts, to maintain confidentiality. Since the researcher utilized the strategy of member checking, the researcher accessed participant contact information following the process of data analysis in order to email data summaries (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once all member checks were completed, personal information was shredded.
Cross racial identity scale

The Cross Racial Identity Scale is designed to measure attitudes of Black racial identity (Worrell et al., 2004). The scale is based upon the original model of Nigrescence that has experienced a number of updates and revisions over time (Cross, 1971, 1991, Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002; Vandiver et al., 2001). The CRIS measures the stages of Black identity attitudes, plus their accompanying identities from the expanded Nigrescence model (Vandiver et al., 2002; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell et al., 2004). Therefore, the CRIS subscales are: a) Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA), b) Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), c) Pre-encounter self-hatred (PSH), d) Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), e) Internalization Afrocentric (IA), and f) Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI) (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell et al., 2004).

The Pre-encounter Assimilation attitude represented a stage of thought where Black individuals did not emphasize being Black as a part of their identity and assimilated to White cultural norms. The Pre-encounter Miseducation and Pre-encounter Self-hatred attitudes represented outlooks where Black individuals accept negative stereotypes of Black people and/or engage in self-hate since they are a part of this particular race. The Immersion-Emersion Anti-White stage reflected an attitude where Black individuals had an overall negative view of White people and culture. They latch onto everything Black-related as positive. The Internalization Afrocentric attitudinal stage represented Black individuals that emphasized the need to advance the Black community. The Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive stage reflected Black
perspectives that acknowledged other identities outside of being Black, such as U.S.
American and/or male or female (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell et al., 2001; Worrell et al., 2004).

Interpreting the CRIS results included comparing individual participant CRIS profiles to the overall mean scores, as suggested by Cross and Vandiver (2001). Cross and Vandiver (2001) warned against reducing subscales to categorical, dichotomous variables and assigning a high or low value that assumes a participant’s status in a particular Black attitude type. Instead, CRIS scores are not mutually exclusive and should be considered across each subscale, not independent of one another, to create a participant’s CRIS profile that reflects multidimensional attitudes and stages (Worrell et al., 2004). The range of possible scores for each CRIS subscale was 5 to 35, with a higher number representing a greater presence of that particular Black attitudinal type (Worrell et al., 2004). Due to pressures of social desirability, however, Worrell (2008) warned that CRIS respondents may tend to score Internalization subscales more highly.

For the 30 respondents, Figure 3.1 represents the descriptive statistics of the six subscales represented in the CRIS. From the 30 respondents, highest average score was in the IMCI subscale, followed by the PA subscale, the PM subscale, the IA subscale, the PSH subscale, and the IEAW subscale. These averages conveyed that for the 30 respondents’ profiles, the most represented attitude was Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive and the least represented attitude was Immersion-Emersion Anti-White. The standard deviations reflected that there was greater variation among the attitudes for the PA, PM, and IA subscales than for the PSH, IEAW, and IMCI subscales. A larger range
of attitudes was represented for the Pre-encounter Assimilation, Pre-encounter Miseducation, and Internalization Afrocentric subscales among the respondents. More similar, clustered attitudes were reflected for the Pre-encounter Self-hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Multiculturalist subscales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>PSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>15.93333333</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21 Mode</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.252063483</td>
<td>7.17723092</td>
<td>5.42850135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>68.09655172</td>
<td>51.51264368</td>
<td>29.47241379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17 Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IEAW</th>
<th>IA</th>
<th>IMCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.366666667</td>
<td>14.43333333</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6 Mode</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.274597457</td>
<td>7.559799912</td>
<td>3.781989989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>10.72298851</td>
<td>57.15057471</td>
<td>14.30344828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Descriptive statistics of overall sample CRIS results. (n=30)

Figure 3.2 shows the plot of the mean score, extrapolating the mean scores described for Figure 3.1 from the rest of the descriptive statistics. This plot was the basis for comparing individual participant CRIS profiles in order to attain a representative, diverse group of Black identity types and attitudes. Figure 3.2 portrays how the IMCI subscale reflects highest average score, and thus the most prevalent Black identity attitude among the 30 respondents. The second highest point in Figure 3.2 is for PA
attitude, reflecting its rank as the second most prevalent attitude. There is a dip in the center of Figure 3.2 between IMCI and PA that visually illustrates there was less prevalence of the PM, PSH, IEAW, and IA. Specifically, IEAW was the least represented Black identity attitude among the 30 respondents.

![Mean Scores](image)

**Figure 3.2.** Plot of overall sample mean scores for CRIS subscales. (n=30)

Since this study did not set out to explain participants’ responses through the use of theory in accordance with the methodological choice of phenomenology (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) (Creswell, 2009), CRIS profiles were not analyzed statistically in regards to independent variables. The purpose of using the CRIS in this study was to better shape a more diverse group of attitudes among the participants. In comparing individual CRIS profiles to the overall means for each subscale, considering the other demographic data collected, 15 participants were selected that represented the most diverse group of demographic data collected and CRIS profiles; the chosen CRIS profiles reflected dissimilar profiles that produced similar mean values to the overall sample mean. The plot of the CRIS profiles of the 15 chosen participants is presented in Figure
3.3. Similar to the shape of Figure 3.2 that depicts the average CRIS profiles of the 30 respondents, the shape of Figure 3.3 mimics the prevalence of the subscales for the 15 chosen participants. Varying participants’ profiles were chosen so that the highest mean scores represented the IMCI and PA subscales.

![Mean Scores](image)

*Figure 3.3. Plot of participant mean scores for CRIS subscales. (n=15)*

**Data Collection**

The process of data collection must produce full, detailed, and descriptive data of the particular topic of interest that presents participant perceptions, or an essence description of their own lived experiences without researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Fifteen students were invited to participate in interviews. Fourteen responded and arranged meeting times for the interviews to take place. In-depth interviews conducted in the Black students’ natural setting on their campus operated as the primary means of data collection. Semi-structured interviews utilizing broad, open-ended questions (see Appendix F for interview questions) were used to allow the subjective reality of participants to be properly
conveyed (Crotty, 1998). In addition to open-ended questions, interviews had the flexibility to take on a conversational nature, allowing participants room to discuss experiences and observations of significant importance to them. Consistent with phenomenological methods, the participant population was small in size, to attain a deeper understanding of the specific meanings presented by the respondents (Creswell, 2009).

All interviews were conducted in the participants’ natural setting of their college campus. Interviews took place in a location across the campus from the university center where most of the activities for Black student support services are housed. This location choice was a preventative measure to ward off environmental factors associated with proximity to the people and spaces related to targeted student support services. The chosen location provided a sense of seclusion from the rest of the undergraduate campus, since few undergraduate courses or activities occurred in the building. Additionally, the rooms used for the interviews did not provide passers-by any view into the room in order to ascertain who was being interviewed or that an interview was occurring.

Each of the interviews was audio-recorded with the participants’ permission. The researcher and interviewee sat face-to-face from one another across a table. The interviews ranged in time from 30 minutes to one hour. Each participant was asked the same broad questions, and instructed they could take the conversation in any direction of their choice.

Additionally, other qualitative forms of data were collected and analyzed, including artifacts and observations (Creswell, 2009). Artifacts included listserv
announcements and websites associated with Black student support services. These particular artifacts were chosen since they represented the primary source of information dissemination of Black student support services to potential participants. Observations included the researcher’s notes regarding Black student interaction and participation with targeted student support services. The researcher was informed by gatekeepers at the research site that a weekly breakfast event in the Office of Multicultural Affairs was the most attended event associated with Black student support services. Moreover, students with differing levels of involvement would also be represented at this event. Table 3.2 displays the multiple data sources used to engage in the process of data triangulation. Interviews, observations, and artifacts associated with Black students and Black student support services provided information to support Black students’ perceptions of targeted student support services.

Table 3.2  
*Sources of data triangulation.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with participants at research site</td>
<td>Transcript of participant interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations from researcher’s attendance at weekly event associated with Black student support services</td>
<td>Researcher’s reflection of observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black student support services Websites</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about representation of Black culture on campus</td>
<td>Black Student Organizations’ Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment tools and information dissemination about Black student support services</td>
<td>Campus Newspaper Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs listserv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Alumni listserv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

In order to facilitate interview transcription and highlighting, organizing, and clustering significant statements and meanings, the researcher utilized the qualitative software of QSR NVivo. In addition to storing the interview transcripts, NVivo also stored the demographic information of the participants (Bazeley, 2002). Creswell (2007) stated that NVivo is a useful tool for managing qualitative data and provides heightened security by saving all information in a single file.

The steps of phenomenological research analysis outlined by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007) were executed. Consistent with the principles of qualitative research, data analysis was an ongoing process wrought with continual researcher reflection on the collected data (Creswell, 2009). A major phenomenological principle is the idea of epoche, wherein an examination of participant descriptions and realities are not influenced by preconceptions and suppositions from the researcher (Husserl, 1970). In the first step of phenomenological data analysis, the researcher engaged in epoche and sought to set aside all preconceptions and biases regarding the phenomenon under study. Moustakas (1994) referred to the process of achieving epoche as bracketing. Through bracketing the researcher described personal experiences with the phenomenon of interest in the study and attempted to remove these experiences from the equation in order to focus on participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Within the bracket, reality for the researcher is an open space and takes a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Before engaging in the process of identifying participant meanings, the researcher combed through the data and
recognized where personal biases were present. The researcher made notes in the data to be aware of such biases in order to attain a fresh perspective. Although the researcher worked to attain a state free from biases, Moustakas (1994) warned that this process is imperfect and difficult to attain because preconceptions can be present in both rhetoric and internalized behaviors (Moustakas, 1994). Yet, Moustakas (1994) declared that epoche is still an ideal for researchers to strive for because it allows greater room for openness and fresh analysis of the phenomena.

As part of the second step in organizing the data, the researcher transcribed all of the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher entered the second step of phenomenological analysis that involved reading over all transcripts and engaging in horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). In the process of horizontalization, the researcher read through the data to find significant quotes and statements that expressed how participants perceived and experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Once these statements were identified, the researcher listed them and assumed each statement held equal worth to one another (see Appendix G for sample of horizontalization). Next, the researcher read through the list and eliminated any redundant and overlapping statements in order to attain a list of statements with nonrepetitive meanings (Creswell, 2007).

After major meaning statements were identified from these nonredundant statements, the researcher arranged the meaning from these statements along with the artifacts and observations into clusters of meanings (Creswell, 2007). A sample of information reduction and clusters of meaning is presented in Appendix H. These clusters represented larger groupings of the data that led to the emergence of key themes. The
path to the identification of each of the key themes from the three data sources is depicted in Figure 3.4. Five themes were identified by triangulating the interviews, observations, and artifacts. These themes were: a) Continuum of Involvement, b) Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda, c) Shared Racial/Cultural Identity and Expression, d) We are Family, and e) Centralized Hub of Information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Statements</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’m Black, maybe I should go”</td>
<td>Students came in for breakfast event, grabbed food, may have stayed a few minutes, and left</td>
<td>Listserv Emails – detailing ways to get involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It makes me feel like I’m here”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) website detailing ways to get involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m kind of branching out and trying to do things”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There’s so few of us, so we’re stretched”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s nice to be around somebody that looks like you”</td>
<td>Post-doc came into OMA to vent to somebody and take a breath</td>
<td>Career Services Email – requested Black alumni organization representation in programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We understand where you’re coming from”</td>
<td></td>
<td>OMA website about its purpose to work on issues regarding Black students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“More strength and more of a voice”</td>
<td>Student vented about her anger and frustration with White people</td>
<td>National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Garden Articles – Physical representation of Black culture on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m learning about Black people”</td>
<td>Students watching a Black movie in the OMA student lounge</td>
<td>OMA website about its purpose to support development of and activities for Black students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Focus on [Black] things and culture”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Being separatist isn’t necessarily being separatist”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It kind of gives you a piece of home”</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant asking student about change in demeanor</td>
<td>Black Alumni Organization Email – encouraged alumni to engage “our” students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Just keep tabs on me”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I probably wouldn’t be informed”</td>
<td>Freshman came to OMA to ask directions to another staff member</td>
<td>Listserv Emails – Information Sharing of campus events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s a great resource”</td>
<td>Staff member from scholarship program came into OMA and interacted with students – shared scholarship and cultural information with students</td>
<td>OMA website about its purpose as an information clearinghouse for Black students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Themes Identified

**Continuum of Involvement**

- Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda
- Racial/Cultural Identity Expression and Development
- We are Family
- Centralized Hub of Information

*Figure 3.4. Emergence of key themes from data regarding Black student perceptions.*
Once these significant themes were identified, the researcher used the clusters of meanings to write a summary describing what participants have experienced in relation to the phenomenon. This brief summary is called a textural description (see Appendix I for textural description). A textural description includes verbatim quotes and examples of the participants’ experiences. The focus of the textural description is squarely on what happened (Creswell, 2007). Alongside the textural description, the researcher also wrote a structural description (see Appendix J for structural description). The structural description recounted how such experiences occurred. It included a short description of both the context and setting within which experiences occurred (Creswell, 2007). The context and setting was analyzed to see how it influenced or affected the participants’ experiences with the phenomena (Creswell, 2007). The researcher decided to write singular descriptions for each of the participants in order to engage more closely with the data and the particular nuances of each participant’s experiences and perceptions. These descriptions are presented in Chapter Four.

Following this process, the overall textural description and overall structural description were synthesized and formed the basis for the composite description (Creswell, 2007). A composite description describes the universal essence of the participants’ experiences. A description of the essence of the phenomenon pays particular attention the commonalities in experience for all participants (Creswell, 2007). The composite description, the ultimate form of results in phenomenology, should allow readers to attain this particular feeling regarding a phenomenon and a specific population:
“I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46). This study’s composite description is presented in Chapter Five.

**Trustworthiness and Assurance**

In order to accurately realize the final formation and purpose of the phenomenological study, the researcher gave particular attention to the four primary validation criteria outlined by Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001). These criteria are: credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity. Each criterion and the intended strategies utilized individually are discussed below.

Credibility relates to the accurate representation and interpretation of participants’ ascribed meanings (Whittemore et al., 2001). The researcher sought to maintain validity in regards to credibility through the process of member checking. Member checking involves participant review of the study findings and interpretive summaries (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that member checking should be regarded as the “most important technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Member checking ensured that the essence description was truthfully reflective of the participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Authenticity is concerned with the assurance that multiple voices are heard in a research study (Whittemore et al., 2001). The researcher utilized the strategy of triangulation to ensure authenticity (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through triangulation, the researcher included multiple and different sources of data and theory in order to corroborate the results of the study (Creswell,
2007). Triangulation was pursued through the inclusion of multiple voices in the participant sample by using comparative groups. These comparative groups consisted of participants that represented differing characteristics in relation to gender, academic classification, level of involvement, parents’ educational background, and Black identity attitudes. Triangulation was also established through the use of multiple research methods including interviews, observations, and artifacts; and the use of a hybrid model conceptual premise that considered student involvement theory, Black identity theory, social capital theory, and critical race theory.

Criticality relates to critiquing the entire research process for sound research practices (Whittemore et al., 2001). The researcher addressed the criterion of criticality through the strategy of debriefing (Creswell, 2007). Debriefing allows an account of the research study and process external to the researcher (Creswell, 2007, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher’s committee consisted of faculty members that are experienced researchers. The committee acted as a guiding body that “keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about meanings, methods, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).

Finally, the criterion of integrity entails the self-critical reflection of the researcher (Whittemore et al., 2001). As discussed earlier, the researcher continually engaged in the practice of bracketing personal experiences, biases, and conceptions regarding the study as suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007). The critical examination of self furthered the researcher’s ability to provide a rich, accurate description of the participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).
Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in phenomenology is to “identify, understand, describe, and maintain the subjective experiences of the respondents” (Crotty, 1998, p. 83), setting aside the researcher’s own preconceived notions and outlook regarding certain situations. The researcher’s role does not include making an attempt to explain respondent perceptions or experiences (Crotty, 1998). Considering the emphasis in phenomenology on participants’ subjective view of reality, Creswell (2007) emphasized the importance for the researcher to bracket personal experiences. Moustakas (1994) stated that bracketing allows the researcher to perceive a phenomenon from a more open, new perspective. However, both Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) admitted the difficulties associated with achieving a perfect state of setting aside one’s own experiences and biases. Thus, they encouraged researchers to still attempt to overcome this hurdle by recounting experiences with the phenomenon prior to examining participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Given the researcher’s prior work with targeted student support services and the research site, respondents may have factored this knowledge into their responses. Participants may have determined that the researcher desired certain answers because of this professional history and felt pressure to oblige. The researcher did not hide personal experiences, but also assured participants that their experiences and perceptions were valued. The researcher did not attempt to steer respondent answers down a certain path or ignore significant statements they made that might challenge the researcher’s assumptions.
In addition to guarding against the unethical imposition of the researcher’s own experience, it was also important to establish rapport with participants and treat them with the dignity and respect that any person deserves. Student participants were not viewed and should not have perceived their involvement in this study as indicative of their status as inferior or less than capable members of the higher education community based upon their racial group membership. Creswell (2007) urged researchers to practice disclosure regarding the intentions of the study as well as reasons for the selection of people to interview with participants.

**Researcher’s experiences with phenomenon of interest**

My experiences with other peoples’ perception of me as a racial minority began and continued in educational settings. I was often the only Black student in Gifted, Honors, and Advanced Placement classes in middle school through high school. If I were to score better than my White peers on a test, some would even question their own intellectual ability and why the Black girl outperformed them. I went to college with my prior experiences with race undertow, prepared to experience much of the same interactions on a predominantly White college campus; and I did. Yet, something was different this time; there was a core group of Black students that could finish my stories as I told them because they were also their stories. These stories included how we had not been accepted by our White peers in high school, but were also alienated from our Black peers for our academic achievements and connections to White friends.

We formed a strong basis for one another to navigate the sometimes unfriendly terrain that we had to combat when we went to class and became the only one again. We
would share stories with one another about how a White professor may have ignored our raised hand in class or refused to meet with us outside of class. We would relay to one another how we had been grouped with White students that decided to complete the group project without us and inform us of that fact later. We would rally around one another when a yearbook article stated that even though a string of Black kings and queens had triumphed on the homecoming court, we were still not representative of the campus since we were in the minority and went so far as to charge the student body to elect more fitting representatives in the future. No matter how much we displayed our intelligence in class, we would often run into the assumption by our White counterparts, faculty, or staff that we were there for participation on an athletic team or as a result of affirmative action policies that gave unearned opportunities to students of academic inferiority. Potentially worse than all of these specific experiences, when we reacted to or complained about such situations to administrators or classmates, we would often be told that we were overreacting and should not look at these incidences as racist aggressions. Beyond invalidating our place on campus, such snubs of our complaints invalidated our experiences on campus.

As equally important as our support for one another in facing social isolation, stereotypes, and covert and overt racism was the fact that we had a place to do so and professional staff to intervene on our behalf. The Office of Multicultural Affairs connected us to one another from our first day on the campus by pairing us with upper-class mentors. The Office hosted events that allowed us to see our culture represented on campus. The Office advocated for us and voiced our concerns to the administration when
we encountered unfair practices. They also simply provided a location for us to gather with one another and feel comfortable within those walls even if we did not have anywhere else on campus to find this type of comfort. It was a safe environment to talk about our experiences, validate one another, and prepare to go back out to face more.

Due to my value of the work done through such offices, I chose to pursue a career in Multicultural Affairs. When I worked as an administrator in targeted student support services, I experienced a barrage of microaggressions as a professional. I saw the looks on student affairs colleagues’ faces when students I worked with would hug me as part of a greeting or when they would witness me aggressively reprimanding some of the students for negative behavior and the comfort with which the students accepted it. I knew that they were scrutinizing my familial-like ties to the students. In an effort to help me and Black students make our events less threatening to White students, a colleague once suggested that we reframe from identifying who was sponsoring events that we held; in essence, they were suggesting that we hide a part of our identities that made White people on campus uncomfortable.

Some colleagues would ask me if it bothered me that during social times at retreats, the Black students would often gather together and segregate themselves. I replied that it did not since they had made efforts all day to interact with the rest of the students on the retreat and they never said a White student could not join them. My response, however, was based off of my own experiences and understanding of what the students were facing; I felt that they needed to come together to just have a few moments where they could surround themselves with a group of people where they did not have to
think about their racial status and the meaning people had attributed to it. It would bother me, however, that I did not have validated, researched answers to give my colleagues when these questions would arise. My inability to reference research and support both my students’ actions and my actions as a professional prompted me to pursue this study to wrangle with such questions and seek out potential answers.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited by transferability and generalizability of the findings due to the characteristics of qualitative research. The purpose of this study was to initiate the process of understanding the nature of the proposed topic in order to inform future research. This study was conducted at one institution. The size, location, and culture of the research institution may not be representative of comparable populations at other types of higher education institutions.

The researcher’s personal experiences as a Black student on a predominantly White student campus, previous work with Black student support services at the research site, and participants’ perception of the researcher’s objectives may have influenced responses and researcher’s interpretations. The nature of Black student experiences and the sensitivity of the topic may have proven difficult for participants to discuss and articulate their experiences and ascribe meanings; this difficulty may have hindered the ability to access a true, rounded picture of the experiences related to the phenomenon. Additionally, the study relied upon participants’ honest responses to the profile sheets and the interview questions.
Ethical and mental health concerns for this study were ameliorated by working with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to maintain approval before proceeding with the study. IRB evaluation of the study should limit breach of proper practice considering ethical and mental health. A profiling category of inclusion for participants in this study was their racial status. This racial profiling may have broached a sensitive topic for students that do not view race as a significant factor in their campus experience.

Overall, Creswell (2007) encouraged researchers to address such issues by being “sensitive to vulnerable populations; imbalance power relations, and placing participants at risk” (p. 44). Mistakes attributed to the researcher’s limited amount of exposure and experience with qualitative research was guarded against through a thorough understanding of the process and procedures associated with this type of research. Oversight and guidance of the researcher’s doctoral committee aided in guarding against such novice mistakes. Preserving the ethical components of sound research practice and continually reflecting on the researcher’s influence on participants as well as the research site was of utmost importance.

Chapter Summary

The third chapter detailed and explained the chosen qualitative methodological approach of phenomenology. It also explained the selection of the particular research site. A listing of the central research question and the guiding subquestions were presented. The participant recruitment and selection, methods for data collection, and process of data analysis for the study were all described. The researcher illustrated both the role as
researcher as well as personal biases related to the study. Lastly, the limitations of the study were made clear.
CHAPTER FOUR
PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES

Introduction

Chapter Four presents the individual summaries of all 14 study participants. The ultimate endeavor of this study was to produce an essence description detailing the commonalities in participant perceptions of Black student support services on predominantly White college campuses. However, these summaries were included in order to provide more context and to relay a thicker and richer description to support the essence of the phenomenon. First, researcher bias found through the process of bracketing is discussed, followed by the presentation of individual demographic information and a recount of participant experiences.

Researcher Epoche

Before sitting down for interviews, I attempted to achieve epoche by recounting my own experiences with Black student support services. I was heavily involved in many types of Black student support services as an undergraduate student on a predominantly White campus. I also worked as a professional staff member in Black student support services at a predominantly White institution of higher education. Due to my own experiences with the phenomenon, it was important to clearly delineate my perceptions from the participants.

During the process of bracketing, based upon my past experiences, I realized that I defined what it meant to be involved with these services as active, direct participation. This bias was evident in the creation of this study as I included two separate groups of
involved and uninvolved out of my preconceptions. Through attempting to clear my
biases from the analysis and interpretation of the participants’ stories, I offered free space
for the participants to present perceptions different from my own. Since participant
conceptions of involvement differed from my pre-assigned designations to them, I have
removed that particular label from each of the participants from this point forward.
Instead, the nature of their involvement will be described individually through their
summaries.

Each participant’s individual summary is presented in the following sections.
Demographic information about the participants is presented first. Additionally, each
participant’s CRIS profile is also displayed and briefly discussed. The summaries were
submitted to the participants for review to assure that their stories were reflected
accurately.
Participant One: Dionne

Gender: Female
Classification: Junior
Parents’ Educational Background:
   Mother: Some College
   Father: Some College
CRIS Profile:

Figure 4.1. Dionne’s CRIS profile. Dionne’s profile displayed the highest scores at the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) Attitude subscale. She was higher than the average for the sample at this stage. Dionne’s second highest score was for the Pre-encounter Assimilation subscale. She was slightly higher than the sample’s average at this point. Her lowest attitudinal score falls in the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale, but still slightly higher than the sample’s average.

Dionne stated:

“I probably would have left and transferred to a college ten minutes away from my house.” This was Dionne’s response when asked if her college experience would have been different if she did not have student support services targeted to her as a Black student on this particular predominantly White campus. Throughout her interview, she recounted stories of how the influence of Black student support services helped her on many facets. Such experiences led to the opening quote, attributing her continued matriculation in college to this targeted support.
A self-described hermit when she entered college, Dionne stated she did not leave her room often early in her first year of college. She said being away from home, especially since she was a mother away from a small child, made her transition to college different from other students. Dionne was not concerned about being part of the campus community; her concerns centered around going back home as much as possible and staying to herself while on campus. When asked how a person that did not leave her room first got exposed to Black student support services on campus, she recounted how the lure of free breakfast was enough to get her to go into the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). She described with a sheepish laugh how after she initially went for the free breakfast event, she would occasionally go into the Office because it was somewhere to go besides her room. She explained that since other students were present in the office and some staff were young, she found it an interesting place to be and spend her time.

One event in particular changed how Dionne perceived the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Her mother, who normally takes care of her child while she is at school, was sick. Dionne had no other option except to bring her 7-month-old baby to school with her, full of intentions of taking her to class. Since it happened to be the morning of the free breakfast event in the Office, Dionne stopped by, encountering many questions from the staff regarding why she had a baby and what she intended to do with the baby while she went to class. Upon finding out Dionne planned on taking her child with her to class, the administrative assistant followed by the director of the office insisted that she was going to leave the child with them instead. Dionne described she resisted this suggestion because she had only been in the office a few times. She did not feel she knew them well
enough to leave her child there. In describing this situation, Dionne raised her voice to reflect the heightened tones used in the disagreement between her and the office staff. Despite the stern tones, she smiled as she told this story. I interpreted she found the story entertaining in present day. In spite of her resistance, she described how the administrative assistant “took my diaper bag and pushed me out the door.” When she returned from class, Dionne was relieved to see that everything was fine, and her baby was resting peacefully. From there, Dionne said she started developing a relationship with the administrative assistant and her view of the office changed altogether. As she remembered the day, she recalled:

…that's when I really like really realized that they, they're not just an office, and they're not just staff that are supposed to help us, but they really do care about us. And I really can go to them, so, that's when I started, like I guess, really really coming out of my shell and talking to people.

Dionne told other stories of how the Office of Multicultural Affairs continued to support her, support for which she displayed gratitude. She described one situation where she was sick and the office staff worked with the Office of Academic Advising to ensure she was able to maintain her workload to prevent falling behind in classes. She also shared another example where she needed help paying for her books; even though the office had already disseminated all of their allotted book scholarships, they still found a way to help her when she did not have the financial means to purchase her books for class. With these incidences of personal support from the office, I felt as though Dionne
ascribed a greater value beyond the tangible services the office provided. This interpretation was supported when she explained:

…so I think like, offices like that, that are there to help you, like, breathe and realize that you're not the only person in this situation is really deep because some of my fellow peers have never been in that situation, where they're like, they don't know how they are going to pay for something because it's just available for them. And so, I think I do need offices like that or do just need an office to realize that I'm not the only person in my situation. Like, other people are going through it, and they are just like me.

After developing a relationship with her, Dionne described how the administrative assistant took particular interest in her well-being on campus and her tendency to stay to herself. She recalled how the administrative assistant introduced her to two upperclassmen that could help her become more involved on campus. After their initial meeting, Dionne said that these two students made it their mission to ensure she was participating in events and organizations—to the extent of coming by her room each time there was a Gospel Choir practice or a Black Student Alliance (BSA) meeting. She stated appreciation for these seniors’ special attention to her.

Seniors in the Gospel Choir and the BSA really helped me come out of my shell and talk to people, and then I started enjoying their influence and their input about their past experiences on campus and how to deal with certain situations. And just life in general, and what professors to take and like simple information that you never would have thought of, or how to approach a situation when you feel a
certain type of way or you do encounter a racial situation, like how to take care of that, like I'd never learn those things had I not came out of my shell and been involved in organizations. And so, I like, made lifetime friendships with those seniors, like I really do appreciate them because were it not for them, I still might be going home every single weekend, like I was freshman year.

Three years later, Dionne was still involved in Gospel Choir and the Black Student Alliance, stating that, “It's nice to be around somebody that looks like you, and may share some of the same experiences as you do, and just like fellowship with them.” In talking about her participation with these organizations, she described how she found comfort in her skin that allowed her to branch out and do more things on campus. She told me with a smile that she went through an immersion phase where she wore her hair in a natural style as a representation of Black culture and only spent time with other Black people. Now, she explained she had moved out of that phase in life and was more open to people of other races and backgrounds. Even though she wore her hair in our meeting in highly manicured micro-braids, I could tell she still found a way to display her Black culture, along with including involvements and interests that were not Black-centered. This became clear as she spoke these words:

I stepped outside and I was able to go to frat parties that weren't like from or by Black people or students of color. I was able to feel comfortable and hang around other people outside of my race. And that's really what helped me because now I do what I want to do on campus, and I can be a part of anything on campus, and not feel uncomfortable.
Participant Two: Keenon

Gender: Male  
Classification: Junior  
Parents’ Educational Background:  
   Mother: High School Diploma  
   Father: High School Diploma  
CRIS Profile:

Figure 4.2. Keenon’s CRIS profile. Keenon’s highest score was on the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. His score at this stage was slightly higher than the average. His second highest score was at the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale. He was slightly higher than the sample average for this stage. Keenon’s lowest score was on the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale. He is slightly lower than the sample’s average for this stage.

Keenon stated:

I felt like, being a speck in a sea, you know, when I got to campus, even though this campus is not that big, but when you are comparing ratios and numbers of Black students to White students, I felt like, we were so far and few. So, I was looking for some type of support to help me get acclimated to campus when I came in.
This was Keenon’s explanation of why he felt as though he needed student support services targeted to him as a Black student on a predominantly White campus. At the time of the interview, Keenon was starting his junior year and was involved in a multitude of student organizations on campus. Throughout his college time, he volunteered with the elderly and middle school kids, invested time in a pre-medical society for racial and ethnic minority students, sang in the college’s gospel choir, in addition to fulfilling a small stint in ROTC. He laughed as he stated the latter activity was just something he tried for fun; he made it clear he was not looking to sign any papers for a military contract.

Keenon explained that his initial shock and the reason for the opening quote of this summary stemmed from the fact that he expected more racial and ethnic minorities to be present on campus when he arrived. As we moved through our conversation, he oftentimes made sure to distinguish what type of racial and ethnic minorities he meant. I sensed from his comments that even though he was a Black male on campus, he saw himself as separate and somehow different from Black male athletes on campus. Ironically, though he did not stand much over 5-foot-5 and wore a polo shirt and khakis instead of athletic apparel, he said he was often asked on campus if he was on the football or basketball teams. His stiffened body language and rolling eyes, in addition to his statements to that end, demonstrated how frustrating these comments were for him. He described a unique scenario for Black male, non-athletes on campus as he explained:

I feel like we are, very rare, here. I feel, ummm, not a lot of people know how to take us. Umm, I feel like a lot of students in my class, they show some sort of like
hesitation when it comes to speaking with us because they talk to the athletes in a completely different manner than which they talk to us. Ummm, you know they're like the fans of the athletes, you know, this and that. Then they come to us, it's completely different, and it's like, they don't really know whether they should talk to us, or they don't know what to say. And, I don't know if they look at us as equals, or if they don't know where we come from or how we're going to react to them. But it's like it's some hesitation with some of the students, you know, not all, but a good amount, enough to be noticeable.

Due to his culture shock to the campus environment and his perception of how other students reacted to him as a Black male, non-athlete, Keenon sought out the Office of Multicultural Affairs in order to stay abreast of all information concerning racial and ethnic minority students on campus. He had met his assigned mentor from the office early on in his freshman year, and found out about the office and its services that way. He heard that the office sponsored and/or advertised all events targeted to the Black community and those were events he wanted to know more about and participate in. He described his initial reasons for going into the office his freshman year:

I went to them because, umm, I felt like they were the ones that held everything together for minorities here on campus. So, I feel like they would be the source of all the information for all the minorities on campus. So, I immediately just took to them and went there faithfully every day, just to see what was going on.

After going to the office initially, Keenon described how the role of the office took on something more than an information sharing function. He expressed how the
office “was like the hang-out spot for minority students.” As he said this, he flashed a slight smile that broke through his calm demeanor, signaling to me how fondly he thought of this place; he recalled how he saw the environment in the office as one of utmost comfort to him.

I felt like I'm at home, like everybody knows my name, you know. Everyone's going, I can go in there, and know that I'm going to get a guaranteed greeting just from everybody, you know. I can talk about stuff that we were talking about yesterday, and they'll actually remember. You know, it's not like, some surface level conversation with someone in passing, and the next day you don't even recognize that person, or they don't recognize you. So, I feel like, you know, pretty close-knit in there, it's like a little hubble.

Keenon talked about his appreciation of the care and concern the staff showed him. He recounted how the director of the office would take the initiative to ask him to set up an appointment with her just to see how he is doing and check in with him.

Both through spending time in the Office of Multicultural Affairs and participating in Black student organizations, Keenon stated that he formed meaningful relationships on campus, more quickly than he thought he would have been able to without these programs. I noticed that each time he referred to relationships within these Black student support services, he made sure to delineate that relationships he referenced were not superficial in nature, such as what he stated here:

The majority of my friendships come from being involved in the organizations. It allows me to learn about the other minorities on campus, like a more intimate
level than just them passing, and be like 'oh, you're Black let's talk.' Because like, honestly, when you first get here, that's how it is. When you first get here, and like, I'm, I'm pretty sure most everybody would probably say the same thing. You're walking around and you're like 'oh, Black person, let's go meet them,' you know. Like, that's how it is, seriously. But, ummm, when you have these people, you know, congregate in the same area, for whatever, the same organization on a consistent basis, like, that's how, it's the base for friendships and that's how most of mine developed.

He also stated at one point in our conversation, that beyond the importance he placed on genuine relationships in his college experience, he also wanted to be sure to form relationships with people that had similar racial backgrounds to him. In a sense, Keenon explained how his participation with Black student support services provided him with a sense of belonging and helped him find his place on campus.

I feel like, mostly like my freshman year, I would have been still lost, like trying to search for some group to belong…So, I, I felt like it would have taken me longer to adjust if it wasn't for those programs.

Returning full circle to his earlier statements about the difference between Black male athletes and Black male non-athletes on campus, Keenon informed me that there was a bit of a social divide between the two groups. He said since the Black male athletes were somewhat detached in a separate athletic world, so many of the Black male non-athletes are overstretched in their participation with the Black student support services. This sentiment was relayed when he talked about how he wished there were more Black
male non-athletes on campus. The seriousness of his tone at this time imparted to me how significant this on-campus situation was for him and proved to be a burden. He stated:

There's so few of us, we oftentimes, we try to help with this organization, that organization and then there's so many organizations and you know, Black males will come out. And it'll be like, you know, I have too much to do, you know, I can't do it, you know. Because there's so few of us, so we're stretched across everything.

**Participant Three: Derek**

Gender: Male  
Classification: Sophomore  
Parents’ Educational Background:  
  Mother: College Completion  
  Father: High School Diploma  
CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.3](image.png)  
*Figure 4.3. Derek’s CRIS profile. Derek’s highest score was in the Pre-Encounter (PA) subscale. He was higher than the sample average for this subscale. His second highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was higher than the sample average for this stage. His lowest score was for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale. He scored closely to the sample average for this subscale.*
Derek stated:

I kind of wanted to get a little more involved in like the BSA and I've been attending those meetings and trying to like figure out, ummm, what I can do to try to help out and contribute and try to give back to my community as well as other communities as well.

Derek spoke these words to describe the type of involvements he sought out on campus. As we spoke more about what he wanted to achieve through his out-of-classroom involvements during his college tenure, it became clear to me that he was quite concerned with the notion of giving back. Derek spoke about how he was just starting to participate in Black student support services, specifically the Black Student Alliance, as he started off his sophomore year.

Derek talked about how the majority of his out-of-classroom time was devoted to the athletic program during his first year on campus and time was an issue. Simply put, even though some of his friends were involved in Black student support services, he said, “I was like, I don't really have the time to do that right now.” He explained he decided to take his sophomore year off from being an athlete due to some dissatisfaction. Derek stated that being an athlete, especially a freshman athlete, required him to spend a lot of time in supervised study hall. Derek spoke in a soft, matter-of-a-fact tone, and as the conversation continued, I was given more evidence to suspect that he was the type of person that liked to do things his way, in his time.

When Derek was asked what prompted him to start going to the Black Student Alliance meetings, he hesitated, then chuckled a bit and admitted that he only went
because of his girlfriend’s involvement with the organization. He described how he attended the election meeting at the end of his freshman year and what he found once he was there.

Really, to be honest, my girlfriend wanted to be part of it, so, I just went to kind of like help her out with that, you know, because she wanted to go, like be elected or whatever for it…she knew more about it than I did, so, umm, that's how I really kind of, I heard about it being there, but I didn't really know a lot of people who participated in it so I wasn't sure, but, last year I saw the great turnout that was there, and the type of individuals that are there, so I just decided to continue along with it.

Derek continually repeated that the organization’s mission and ability to give back to the campus and local community was what attracted him to it once he attended that first meeting. Since our interview occurred at the beginning of the semester, Derek was still figuring out what his place could and would be in the Black Student Alliance. That process of determining his role was something that seemed comforting to him: he did not feel forced to participate, and he felt he could participate on his terms.

I feel as though, they add value. You know how some groups, they can be, ummm, they ask for a lot of your time. And, you know, they ask for a big commitment. And sometimes, you are not able to give that commitment on a consistent basis. Or you may not want to be committed to 100% of what they do, but certain parts, you know what I mean. And I feel as though, like, they, BSA allows me to kind of contribute in ways that I feel that I can contribute, you know.
Derek proceeded to give me examples of what he meant about contributing in ways fitting for him.

So like, mentoring kids is something that I like to do, so I would be more than happy to mentor kids or like, you know, [a running relay], I'm kind of athletic so I'm more than happy to run around as many times to race, you know, for breast cancer patients. You know. Whereas, you know, whereas somebody else or another, you know, person may want to be willing to speak to other people. I'm not really a good public speaker so, you know. I feel they have a good variety of options for people. So, if you're quiet, you know, you can still participate, contribute behind the scenes, and you know, if you're more of an outspoken individual, you can go out and talk to other individuals and spread the word of, you know, BSA and, you know, those types of things. So I feel it's a pretty large deal, so that way you can contribute in your own special way. And, you can contribute when you're ready to contribute, and when your opportunity comes, you can contribute, you know what I mean, so, I feel it's pretty open.

As Derek described how he liked how people are able to contribute to the Black Student Alliance in their own way, he also talked about another factor of the organization that made him more comfortable in that setting. Derek stated he came from a predominantly Black high school, and though he had not been uncomfortable at a predominantly White college, he found comfort being around others that looked like him.

He explained:
Coming from a Black school, being around Black people, you tend to feel a little more comfortable with, you know, your kind I guess. I mean, I feel comfortable with everybody else and that kind of stuff, but I mean, you just, you're just naturally going to be attracted, you know what I mean, so, ummm, I feel like they open doors to kind of, help me voice my opinion, you know. And just, you know, and just let me say my little piece, which in reality would help me voice my opinion in, a variety, with a variety of people, you know what I mean, not just Black/African Americans, but with White/Caucasians, or Asians, or Hispanics, or everybody at once. So, I feel like, it'll help you learn to have, you know, your own voice.

This concept of having a voice in the organization seemed to be important to Derek. He brought it up another time to illustrate how each member in the Black Student Alliance had a voice that could reach beyond the Black community.

I think, and I feel like everybody in there who's part of BSA has a voice in their own particular way. So, you know, even though I may not be on the elected board or anything like that, I still feel that if I have a concern or need to get a point across, I can still, you know, vocalize myself within the group and say what I have to say, you know. So I feel that that's a good aspect of it as well. And everybody knows everybody so it's very like, it's kind of like, you know, a tight-knit group, so I like that.
Participant Four: Marlen

Gender: Female
Classification: Sophomore
Parents’ Educational Background:
Mother: Some College
Father: Less than High School Diploma

CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.4. Marlena’s CRIS profile. Marlena’s highest scores were tied in the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA), Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), and Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscales. She was much higher than the average score for the PA and PM subscales. She was slightly higher than the average for the IMCI subscale. Her lowest score was for the Pre-Encounter Self-hatred sub-score. She was lower than the average sample score for this stage.](image)

Marlena stated:

“Learning. Yes, about Black people. Yes. Intelligent, Black people and what they think. And, I find it amazing.” Marlena was a Black person. However, when asked what her experience had been with Black student support services, this was how she described her participation. She said it gave her a forum that allowed her to learn. It showed in Marlena’s eyes that she was carrying a heavier burden than the normal struggles of an average college student. From when we first shook
hands before the interview, I could see her eyes looked glassy, as if she could cry at any moment. As I began with my first question, tears in fact emerged from her eyes as she talked about the load she carried outside of the classroom.

Marlena came from an inner city neighborhood in the northern part of the east coast. As she talked about the people back home, she did not talk about them fondly. She described a lifeless place where people did not work, police showed no concern for the community members, and overall, people did not attempt to help one another succeed. Through sniffles, she explained to me that at home she was a rarity. She found it hard to find others like her, a high school valedictorian that wanted more out of life than her surroundings offered. Because of her background, Marlena said it took her a while to trust and open up to people once she got to college. Moreover, she did not have much free time to meet people. Due to her financial situation, she worked two jobs on campus, sometimes sending that money back home to support her family. She took deep breaths and spoke through a shaky voice as she explained she had to navigate much of college on her own; her Mom did what she could and Marlena was responsible for covering the remainder of her college expenses.

Marlena continued in a somber tone as she described her struggle to fit in on this campus. She was a smart student that often wowed professors by her comments; but she admitted she often fell asleep in class because of the long hours she worked. She recalled during her first year on campus, she attended a predominantly Black sorority’s forum. At this forum, she listened to other Black students talk about how to best represent
themselves on campus—since they were in the minority and fighting stereotypes associated with being a Black student on a predominantly White campus. She recounted:

They just talked about, how your professors look at you, like, they sometimes look at you in a different way, [sniffles], depending on how you dress. They said you come to class looking business casual, or more like business-sy. You don’t come to class in sweatpants and stuff like that. So, I slowly started to, alter, how I came to class, altering, altering, like, if I answered questions, altering all those little things. Like, [sniffles], that's another difficult part because I felt like I was losing a part of myself.

Marlena explained that when she came to college, she wore bright colors, large earrings, a lot of make-up, and sported big hair. These stylistic choices were pieces of herself she decided to put aside in order to conform to the environment, taking heed to the advice of students involved in the Black student support services. She pointed to the solid white t-shirt she had on and told me she never owned a plain white shirt before she got there. I also noticed nothing was big about her hair at our meeting; it was pulled back in a long ponytail and there did not seem to be a speck of make-up on her face. Although she described this outward transformation as painful at first, she suddenly turned the tone of the story to one of gratefulness for the advice she received.

Everything just like slowly changed, and that was difficult too. Just losing, me. [sniffles]. But then, it probably, became one of the best parts of my life. Because when I went back [home] over the summertime, I looked at, where everybody was, and where I had, where I am right now, and I looked and I said 'I'm kind of
glad I changed.’ [sniffles]. Because people from where I'm from they don't change. They stay the same, and they never leave, and it's sad, and they're depressed, and they're angry. [sniffles]

As I asked her more about this change she was experiencing in college, and more particularly what her experiences had been with the Black student support services on campus, the sadness on her face seemed to vanish and her voice was tinged with excitement for the first time. She talked about how the leaders in the Black student organizations have been inspiring to her. At the same predominantly Black sorority meeting where on-campus attire was discussed, she said there was one senior who confronted the assertion that Black students had to completely change themselves in order to fit in at this specific institution. She recalled:

A girl said something about changing to look more business-sy for class, she said it. She implied it. And I listened to her, and then Mike, after, after she said it, he said 'I want to see the people that don't change, people that like, they keep themselves.' So I guess that's kind of, he's like kind of my inspiration. For why I just like, let me just go back to me being me. [Laughs].

I gathered that Mike’s comments were a validating force for Marlena from the way she described his words and their impact on her. It seemed to me as though she was finding a balance of changing herself in ways that would help her succeed without losing who she was at the core. Like Mike, who worked in the Office of Multicultural Affairs and had since graduated, Marlena mentioned other Black student organization leaders that inspired her, including leaders of a predominantly Black sorority and the Black
Student Alliance. She also enthusiastically expressed how another student leader in a Black student organization inspired her.

He's brilliant, his whole group of people that he hangs out with, the [middle school mentoring program composed of Black men], that organization is ridiculously amazing. I talk with them, and I like learn from them. They amaze me about their plan after college, how they're planning to, they said they were going to go to a city and just take over, so. [Laughs]. Yea, and I just find it like, I don't even limit them. Back home, I really do limit the people to things that they do. When I come to [college], I don't limit the Black people. If someone tells me they're going to create this, this, and this, like I believe them the majority of the time! Because then I'll find out, like they created it and I'm like, 'well, I knew them.' So I feel kind of good about it.

She continued to talk about meeting Black people on campus unlike any Black people she had met before. Continually, she commented on how this was both a learning process as well as an inspiring one for her. She recently decided to be part of an artistic group—mainly poetry, prose, and photography, that was largely coordinated and supervised by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. She said she enjoyed this experience and credited the assistant director of the office with the work he did. “He's always helping get people here. And, like, people he brings, he brings here are inspirational and they tell us their story, and I always learn a lot from them.” Marlena also made it clear that through the Black student support services, she was learning more than just about Black people.
I love how they're trying to build the Black alliance on this campus, and not even Black alliance only, but they're trying to bring like the Chinese Moon Festival…they're trying to bring all cultures here together…Like, everybody, like they're trying to bring together. And that's great, I'm learning about that, I'm learning different cultures.

As we finished our conversation, Marlena explained to me how thankful she was for the support she found on campus. In addition to promoting her learning, she described she probably would not know much of what was happening on campus without the centralized hub of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. When I asked her what advice she would offer future Black students regarding Black student support services on campus, she calmly, but firmly concluded with this statement:

Be grateful that they're there, when everything else falls apart, you do have support, like you have people that you can go and talk to. You have people that will help you, in pretty much any situation if you actually go and talk to them. The people here are nice, they're sweet, they're open. And, they're reliable. You can actually, probably pick someone and depend on them if all else fails. So, as a young Black student, coming into [this college], just appreciate it.
Participant Five: Jamelle

Gender: Female
Classification: Freshman
Parents’ Educational Background:
  Mother: Some College
  Father: Less than High School Diploma
CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.5. Jamelle’s CRIS profile. Jamelle’s highest scores were tied at the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscale and the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. She was much higher than the sample average score for the PA stage, and close to the sample average score for the IMCI stage. She was higher than the sample average for scores in the Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM) and Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PS) subscales. Her lowest scores were for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale and the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscale. She was lower than the sample average for IEAW and IA stages.]

Jamelle stated:

It kind of gives you piece of home, even, where you're sitting around the table, maybe having breakfast and talking to everybody, like you would at home. And some people are, miles and miles and miles away from home, so it gives you that little piece of, this is my family right here. And so, that's the part that I love the most.
Jamelle was a freshman that had just arrived on a campus a little over a month before our conversation, but she was already comparing the environment she found within the Black student support services to an environment she would find at home. It was evident that the interview with Jamelle would flow pretty well when she first entered the room. She had a big smile, a friendly personality, and informed me that she loved to talk. She leaned back in her chair and started rocking back and forth, demonstrating a comfort and ease with the interview. That was how she described her experience thus far in college. She said that before coming she wondered how life would be at a predominantly White campus. She recited through laughs some of the monikers applied to the school that reflected its lack of diversity concerning race. She stated these impressions were no longer a concern of hers, and she had been pleasantly surprised.

Meeting people, all kinds of people, seemed to be of utmost importance to Jamelle, matching how personable and open she immediately was to me. Conceding that she had not been on campus except a little over a month at that time, I asked Jamelle to tell me about what types of involvements she wanted to participate in on campus. Her response included an emphasis on meeting people: a reason why she made a trip early on to the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

I've visited the, ummm, Office of Multicultural Affairs, ummm, yea, that's something that was important to me even in high school, I did lots of multicultural kind of things. So, definitely coming here I wanted to be involved. Ummm, it would also expose me more to, to some of the minorities that are on campus, so I could get to know other people.
Jamelle said her ability to meet others on campus and exposure to the Black student support services on campus started with a visit to the college her senior year in high school. She recalled that visit as she said:

I came on [a multicultural recruitment night] at [here], and so, umm, of course then you're paired up with a host that's a minority, and ummm, so, my host actually was able to tell me about a few different things that minorities could be involved in, ummm, to meet one another, you know since there are a lot of White people on campus, you know. So you can meet someone that does look like you, and maybe they're like you on the inside too, you know. Just different people.

Although Jamelle stated it was nice to see people that look like her racially on campus, she was not only concerned with meeting people just like her, even if they were of the same race. She was more concerned with meeting people that were different from her and how she could learn from them. She described how she could learn from experiences with others that are different from her, as well as her ability to contribute to others.

I don't feel that you can learn with people that are just like you. Ummm, so, getting to know different people, being involved, and even if it's, you know, Blacks, and I'm Black, still, different things about these different people and anyway that you can help other people, or anybody in general, I mean, I like to volunteer and that is something that I will probably always do for the rest of my life, because it's just something that is really important to me…And, trying to help anyway that I can, because I always consider, you know, I'm not like that person, I don't have as much as they do or that, but then, you have to take that minute and
think of those that don't have as much as you have. And you realize that your position's not that bad, and, what can you do to help other people.

One way Jamelle found to give back on campus was by volunteering with tour guides that gave campus tours to prospective students. She stated she had a conversation with a Black admissions counselor about how her role as a Black tour guide on the corps that gave campus tours could prove to be advantageous in recruiting future students of color. She described how, “sometimes specific groups that come will ask for a minority tour guide. And it's just, you know, sometimes because the group might be more minority-based, or they just want a minority's perspective or something.” If asked for a Black student’s perspective on the University, she explained that, based off of her experiences so far, she would have positive comments to say to potential Black students. She stated that part of her satisfaction with the campus environment stemmed from the presence of Black student support services available on campus. She explained she felt like she needed and wanted those types of services in her college experience. Here, she specifically talked about her perception of the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

I'm happy that they're, definitely are. Ummm, you know, of course, not everybody's going to take advantage of those, umm, different things. But, I do feel that it's a comfort…it's not a division thing where they're like 'only Blacks can come over here and then all the Whites.' It's not, it doesn't feel like segregation, it's just, like, ummm, makes you feel more comfortable knowing that there's people like you, we understand where you're coming from, and let us help you. So, it seems kind of like a big brother/big sister kind of thing. Ummm, it's
not very structured, it's very relaxed when you come to talk to them in the Office
if you need anything, and, ummm, I, I just went up there to talk sometimes, you
know. You don't particularly need anything, or have problems, just go to talk, and
that's something that I enjoy, that you can just, that they're so personable.

As she described the Office of Multicultural Affairs, in addition to finding a home
environment at the breakfast events hosted by the office as mentioned in the opening
quote of this summary, I interpreted that she also found some form of validation and
reassurance when she went to the office. She specifically said she found this type of
comfort in the form of recent alumni that worked in and with the office. Jamelle
described it as:

…something that says 'we understand.' And the majority of them have gone to
[college here], and so that's another thing. They've been [here], lots of them are
recent graduates. And so, they all kind of, understand exactly where you are right
now. So, I think that's something, anybody that can empathize with you and
where you are, I mean that's definitely a help.
Participant Six: Darryl

Gender: Male
Classification: Junior
Parents’ Educational Background:
  Mother: Some College
  Father: High School Diploma
CRIS Profile:

![CRIS Profile Graph]

*Figure 4.6.* Darryl’s CRIS profile. Darryl’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was higher than the sample average for this stage. His next highest score was for the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) and Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH) subscales. He was higher than the sample average for both IA and PSH. His lowest score was for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale. He was close to the sample average score for IEAW. For the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscale, he was lower than the average sample score.

Darryl stated:

"It's not like segregating where like all the Black people just need to convene together, because it's like, they're all aware of, like being Black on the campus, but by them strengthening together as a group, it kind of makes them more prepared to deal with other groups as well. So, I think it's good."
This was Darryl’s perception of Black student support services. He thought the support services targeted to Black students on this predominantly White campus were not a means of segregation, but more a method of preparation for the environments they encountered. Darryl was a student-athlete, and proudly told that even though he was recruited for his athletic abilities, his financial backing all came from an academic scholarship he attained apart from his physical talents. In his time in college, he noticed how others assumed he was an athlete when they first met him. When he moved into his residence hall his first day on campus, he was approached with the question of “What sport do you play?” from a White student.

Darryl laughed as he told the story at our meeting, but divulged he did not like the question. He recalled his mother defended the statement by saying he had on a shirt with an athletic logo on it suggesting that must have sparked the assumption. Darryl said that in spite of his mother’s attempts to squelch the underlying meaning of the question, he knew he was asked the question because he was a Black male, a Black male on a predominantly White campus. As he sat in the beginning of his junior year, he firmly stated that although he or his family still heard that question at times, he did not allow it to bother him. In fact, he owned a sense of pride for his accomplishments both in class and in the athletic arena, a balance that was no small feat.

With so much pulling on his time, Darryl was thankful for the presence of Black student support services on campus. He explained he was not involved in the programs and services as much as he would like to be, but found value in the participation that he had, especially given his status as a student-athlete. He explained:
I think it's good, like because I'm always with a set group of people, like usually all the athletes hang together. At first, only, the only other Black kids that I knew were usually the kids on the football team, basketball, and on my track team. And, so like, going to the OMA and stuff, I got to meet more people and everything.

Although Darryl showed a warm smile and seemed able to articulate his thoughts and opinions in a straight-forward manner, he stated he was actually a shy individual. He expressed that the Black student support services provided a space for him to meet others on campus. He chuckled as he admitted that the initial reason he went to the Office of Multicultural Affairs was to get the free breakfast the office provided. He said a senior informed him of this weekly event, so he decided to go. He described the environment of the office as “laid-back, but still professional at the same time.”

I witnessed Darryl taking advantage of this laid-back atmosphere while I was conducting observations in the office. In between his classes, on a day outside of the free breakfast, Darryl came into the office’s student lounge, plopped down on the couch and propped his feet up on the ottoman, making himself at home. Although he occasionally engaged in conversation with the other students present, he also tended to his academic work during that time.

Evident in the opening quote of this summary, Darryl attributed more to the Black student support services than purely an opportunity for free food. He commended the office and the Black Student Alliance on campus for concerts and poetry events they sponsored on campus. I interpreted that he assigned them a purpose greater than social
significance. I came to that conclusion when he said that the presence of concerts and poetry events representing the culture and interests of Black students:

...kind of shows like, to other people on the outside that, like, ummm, even though there's a small minority, they still have a lot of strength because, because if they can get like different events and different tasks done, that shows that a small group of people will have a lot of power.

Power, he said, came from binding together and showing numbers, even if it was a small group. Darryl described the type of power derived from unity as having an effect in a number of ways. First, he explained that the type of power he received as one student allowed him to step out of his comfort zones, knowing that he had others similar to him to provide him with greater confidence. He stated that:

As an individual Black student, it might be more difficult for me to approach to a different group of people, and try to like, immerse myself in them. But, if I'm, if I already have a support group, then I'm not as afraid to, approach like a different group of people that might be foreign to me.

Appearing to be a film and literature buff, he referenced numerous authors and movies. Darryl cited the movie *Gangs of New York* to make his point more clear. He described how the movie showcased the ability of Italians, Irish, and Jews to overcome hurdles of discrimination by taking on unified voices among their ethnic groups. By unifying under one voice, Darryl stated that each of these groups displayed political power within the broader community as their strength became evident through boycotts and elections. Similarly, Darryl believed that Black student support services enhanced
Black students’ capacity to acquire and utilize the power of a unified voice. This line of thought was illustrated to me more clearly when he said:

I mean I'm not looking at it like, this is, like the Civil Rights movement or anything, but I think, like, if you can identify with a certain group of people, ummm, you have like more strength and more of a voice if you identify yourself with that group of people and then try to interact with others.

Darryl held that this notion of unity did not have to be achieved by attending each and every event, activity, or meeting associated with Black student support services. I inferred from his words of advice to future Black students about these services, that he saw them as a worthy investment while in college. He imparted that, “In the long run…you might need one of those people for something. So I would say like, definitely take advantage of them and don't just take them for granted because, they're here specifically for you and not for anybody else.”
Participant Seven: Natasha

Gender: Female
Classification: Sophomore
Parents’ Educational Background:
  Mother: High School Diploma
  Father: High School Diploma

CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.7. Natasha’s CRIS profile. Natasha’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. Following closely to her score for IMCI, her second highest score was for the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscale. She was tied at each and lower than the average for the other four subscales: Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH), Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), and Internalization Afrocentric (IA).](image)

Natasha stated:

Now that I think about it, if it wasn't for OMA, I feel like there would be no multicultural events, because if I'm thinking about it now, everything that is multicultural is funded by OMA or co-sponsored by OMA, or OMA's always in the background, behind the curtains, doing something….If it wasn't OMA, I do not know, because they do the [on-campus cultural programming], they're behind that, and they're behind of course all the organizations that are multicultural. Lord
Natasha had these words to say when asked what her perception of the role of Black student support services had been so far in her campus experience. Apparent in her opening line of this quote, where she seemed to have come to an epiphany at that moment, Natasha took me on a journey inside of her thought process and outlooks on different aspects of Black student support services. Natasha informed me early on that she had no problem talking, and she lived up to her self-identified description. She had a warm personality and her words were tinged with an island accent. She decided to leave her home island to attend college in the Southeast of the United States largely due to the scholarship package she was offered. At our interview she was starting her second year on campus, and since she was so far away from home I asked her about her transition to the continental U.S. as well as the South. In a very animated, emphatic voice, she exclaimed, “That sweet tea stuff, I don't understand it, who does that? It's nasty! I don't like it.”

Little did I know that this grave dislike for the sugary substance would be relevant to our discussion of Black student support services. Natasha described how she was involved in Black student support services. Now in her sophomore year, she said she often goes to the Office of Multicultural Affairs to interact with the staff, was involved in the multicultural theatre ensemble, and at the time of our interview was currently a mentor in the office’s mentoring program for racial and ethnic minority students. She confessed she was not a good mentor since her mentee seemed too busy for her. In
attending some of the office’s events, she encountered situations where sweet tea was the only beverage of choice. In response, she described her conversation with the office’s administrative assistant about her problem.

I went into OMA and I was like 'Mrs. [P.], like that sweet tea is not kicking it, at the next event we need some lemonade' and Mrs. [P.] called and she was like 'I got you lemonade' and I was like 'yes!' So, you know, just those little things.

I could tell by how she referred to the administrative assistant by a shortened nickname that Natasha regarded her on a level of sincere comfort. Natasha talked about how she appreciated other moments of attention the office staff gave to her. She described how the director listened to her ideas for on-campus programs. She said that she would go in the office to chat and she would tell the director,

Mrs. [Fowler], I have an idea about this' and she'll be like 'you know, [Natasha], that's a really good idea. I'm going to see what we can do about this and we can work this into, you know, into what we're doing.'

Because of this type of attention to her satisfaction and an interest in her initiatives, she explained that her campus experience would be different without Black student support services, since “OMA has become a part of who I am.”

But Natasha was sure to point out that her identity went beyond her racial composition. She wore a Nefertiti necklace, which to me symbolized the acknowledgement of Black royalty in the world’s history, but at the same time challenged the concept of race and what it means. She explained her initial shock at learning the
racial composition of the campus, and then talked about how she viewed the function of race.

I actually did research, after I got in, got the financial aid, like the ratio. I was like, 'whoa, okay, this is predominantly White.' But, I feel like that was, I, I'm, I've really forgotten about race. I feel like race is just a social construct. Like, there's no race, like, biologically I'm not different than anyone else, biologically. So, it's just the way to define someone. I'm Black, so I, I'll be Black, or you know what I mean. It's a way to like, segregate people.

As she talked about how race was used in society to segregate people, she gave examples of how this function was illustrated on campus, specifically in the form of Black student support services. She talked about how she would ask non-Black students if they were going to the Office of Multicultural Affairs’ breakfast and they would often respond by stating how they think the Office’s events are only for Black people. “That's, that, [Laughs], that's the umm, portrayal of OMA, that it's only for Black people.' 'Are you going for breakfast? 'Oh, I thought it was only for Black people. How will it look if I'm going in there, I'm White?’” She relayed that this type of reaction was not only limited to White students. She also noticed that non-Black students of color viewed the office in this way. Therefore, they were also wary of associating with programs and services that were targeted towards or advanced Black students’ place on campus. She said that:

Everyone is turning towards 'let's be more like this dominant White culture.' So. Even like, even if you see [on campus], [Laughs], everyone wants to be anything
but Black. Like, Black is the weakest link. Like, if you're Black, then you, you have a lot of crawling to do, to try to even get to mediocre.

Natasha explained that this focus on and the ubiquitous nature of the dominant culture was what made Black student support services necessary. She talked about her visits to other offices and departments on campus, acknowledging that she was aware that sometimes she may be the only Black person in the entire building. Natasha stated she found ways to cope with that scenario.

I walk in and I'm like, I know I'm going to deal with White people, you know. That's, at the end of the day, ummm, but if you go to the [cafeteria], you know you're going to see Black people. And if you go in OMA, you know you're going to see Black people…But, if you go in, in Career Services, or if you go, umm... like the Writing Center and stuff like that, you know you're going to see White people. So, hmmm, ummm, I, for me, I think OMA is, like a safe zone from it all, from all the craziness.

In this quote, Natasha explained that outside of the staff in the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the cafeteria workers, that other departments and offices on campus were mainly comprised of White people. Since it was a predominantly White campus environment, this statement conveyed to me that Natasha found solace in a place where she saw staff members, not only in service-level positions, that look like her. She went on to say that, “For non-Black students, every place else is the normal, and OMA is the abnormal. For Black students, OMA is the norm.”
As Natasha talked through these concepts, she often stopped and laughed at how she confused herself as she talked. This confusion was indicative to me of the mysterious air that surrounds race and the goal of attempting to bring together different cultures. As the opening quote to this summary shows, I could tell that Natasha placed value on the cultural programming provided through the Black student support services and how they displayed pieces of her culture on campus. She talked about how, on campus, there are “cultures within the culture.” For her, she said she did not see embracing one culture as a rejection of any other culture. She described how she attended both predominantly White fraternity parties as well as predominantly Black sorority forums. As she talked about her attempts to attend one particular White fraternity party, she explained that she realized that sometimes she was not welcome, perceivably because of her race. She described a scenario where she and some of her Black friends were waiting one evening at a pick-up point for a predominantly White fraternity party. As numerous White students were picked up and she and her group were ignored, Natasha stated they came to the conclusion that they had been disregarded because of their race. In spite of such an experience, she seemed to want to take advantage of all opportunities available to her, from the mainstream events to the specialized attention and support that came along with Black student support services. As she wrapped up by talking about the role of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in her campus experience, she said:

…it's like, I feel like if they weren't there, it'd be like, if they take away OMA today, I will be like 'unh uh,' you know, like, that’s rude. Because, I feel, even
though I don't depend on it, you don't realize, you know you never realize how much you need your big toe until it's broken, you know.

**Participant Eight: Alecia**

Gender: Female  
Classification: Sophomore  
Parents’ Educational Background:  
Mother: College Completion  
Father: High School Diploma  
CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.8. Alecia’s CRIS profile. Alecia’s highest score was for the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscale. She was higher than the sample average for this stage. She was lower than the sample average for each of the other subscales. Her lowest score was for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscale.](image)

Alecia stated:

I feel like it's a support system, you can talk to them, because they are multicultural and they know, like, I feel like they can relate more than you going to like…the Counseling services, where the person is White, I don't feel like they can understand the issues you have as much as the people in OMA can.

This was what Alecia had to say about the role Black student support services, specifically in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Over the course of our conversation,
Alecia talked about how she felt excluded and underprepared when she got to campus. She described how she was one of only four Black people that lived in her first-year residence hall. At first she did not feel comfortable completely being herself in that environment. One example she gave regarded traditional Black hair-care practices and concerns of how White students would react to her daily hair maintenance process if they saw it. She also spoke about how she felt the need to excel in her classes and make a good impression in case anyone doubted her abilities because of her race. Alecia said she scanned each of her classes at their initial meeting to see if there were any other Black students present. She cited that part of this ritual involved predicting how easy it would be for her to form work-groups with her peers if the professor called for group formation.

Alecia stated that she had prior negative experiences with group work. Since her classes were majority White, she felt she was often chosen last to join a work-group because she was Black and considered academically inferior. She also recalled a specific professor’s comment in one of her first-year classes that seemed to have left an imprint on her. She recounted that all of her classmates had performed poorly on the first test. When she went to have an individual meeting with the professor, she was astonished when the professor directly stated that Alecia potentially had a learning disability based upon her performance on the exam.

I told her I had a tutor, she was like 'well tutoring isn't enough for you,' and then she like stuck this sticky note on my paper and referred to me like the learning assistance center and said like, I had a disability, she called me dyslexic, it made
me really like, sad. I started crying to my Mom, my Mom was like 'nothing's wrong with you.'

Alecia told this story, and throughout the majority of our interview, she maintained a calm, somewhat reserved demeanor. This was her first reference to her mother, and there would be more to come throughout the interview. From both her disposition and her continual statements about her family, I assumed that Alecia was somebody that emphasized academics first, followed by a focus on spending her time and efforts within her inner circles of on-campus friends and family back home.

I further gathered this to be true when I asked her about her on-campus involvements and she told me about how she thought she had not really utilized some of the Black student support services on campus. Alecia explained this fact was partially due to limited available time, since she worked two jobs in addition to her classroom responsibilities. She told me, “I feel like maybe there are some that I have not taken advantage of, like the OMA staff, they're really nice, and sadly I only go there to get Friday Morning Breakfast. But, I'm working on it. [Laughs]”

She was just becoming involved in the Black Student Alliance at the beginning of her sophomore year. She described how she first was drawn to attend a BSA meeting because of her friend’s influence and a simple sense of self-identification with the organization due to her race. She said, “My friend…she's the President, and I hear her say like 'BSA, BSA,' and I was like, well I'm Black, maybe I should go, so I went this year.” She continued to talk about BSA and her experience volunteering at a recent event.
We had the Multicultural Activities Fair, and I worked the booth, it was like Black history trivia, but it wasn't like Martin Luther King, and people like that. It was people that people don't know about, like the first Black lady to make African hair products, she's like a millionaire and stuff like that, and nobody could get the answer.

As she told me this part of her story, this was one of the few times Alecia seemed to break through her reticent disposition. I believe she appeared to find both humor and pride in the fact they had provided little-known Black history facts to the campus population. She smiled and laughed as she told this story, and her tone was a bit more excited than it had been previously.

In spite of her participation and satisfaction with the Black Student Alliance, Alecia did talk about a possible downside to Black student support services. She described how when she attended events associated with Black student support services, she mainly saw Black people, and she would like to see students of other races also participate. She stated:

I would really like to see more White people come to our events…But the thing about it is, they only broadcast it to BSA, like Black multicultural students. And I'm like if we want everyone to participate, you've got to broadcast it to the whole population. Even if some people still might not attend, but I feel like, it just, we just need to kind of merge together instead of having like the White events and the Black events. Because we had our own like, OMA cookout, like multicultural event and cookout and like all the White people were just passing by that saw us
like all grouped together on the quad. I feel like we are excluding ourselves a little bit.

Alecia went on to describe how this situation of separate events is somewhat exacerbated by cultural differences for Black students. She said she made an effort to attend events on campus not associated with Black student support services. She described how:

…the events that are on campus, I feel like they're geared more to predominantly White, like I don't know. Even though they advertise the stuff like Trivia in Shorty's, they advertise to the whole population and then when you walk in there, and you see that you're the only Black person in there, it's kind of like 'I don't feel like I belong here.'

From these types of statements, I was under the impression that Alecia was not fully satisfied with her on-campus experience. When I asked her if she would recommend this particular college to future Black students, she emphatically responded with a negative reply, adding the caveat that she meant for Black students like her. By Black students like her, she explained she was referencing Black students from predominantly Black high schools that did not prepare them for this type of racial environment or academically rigorous environment. She said that during her first year, her mother, who she referred to as her main system of support and part of the reason why she did not feel the need to utilize the Black student support services on campus more, suggested that potentially she should consider transferring to another institution. She recounted:

My Mom like, she feels like after I told her like about, when I first got here, I was feeling a little excluded and then my teacher called me dyslexic and I bust out
crying, she was like maybe you should just transfer. So she wants me to transfer to like, [the state flagship institution], where it's like more diverse, not really to an HBCU, but to like a different school where she feels like I'll fit in more.

She also talked about how being at this institution was a major sacrifice for her. She said that with the college’s high price tag, she was not considered for the full amount of financial aid she needed. She explained her father, whom she had been estranged from for several years, was disabled and she received social security for his disability in the past. Although she did not currently receive income associated with his disability, that income was still considered in her financial package. Thus, the financial burden in the form of loans was significant to her. With accounts like this in tow and an overall lack of excitability about her future alma mater, I asked her what drew her to this institution in the first place and kept her there, knowing that she felt culturally excluded and academically underprepared. She responded simply, “The prestige. If it wasn't for the prestige, I would not be here.”
Participant Nine: Arthur

Gender: Male
Classification: Freshman
Parents’ Educational Background:
   Mother: Graduate School
   Father: Some College

CRIS Profile:

Figure 4.9. Arthur’s CRIS profile. Arthur’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was slightly lower than the sample average for IMCI. His second highest score was for the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscale where he was higher than the sample average. He was lower than the sample average for the remaining four subscales, with his lowest points at the Immersion-Emersion (IEAW) Anti-White and Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH) subscales.

Arthur stated:

OMA I think, does a really good job of fostering a sense of community. Umm, because you know you see people Fridays at free breakfast, you see them at the [Mentoring Program.] Umm, so like, you, you just get to meet people. It helps you put, it helps put you into contact with people who might share similar experiences with you because of the fact that, otherwise you might not. For example, in my English, there are like three Black people, including me. In my,
umm, let's see, in my International Politics class, there's like one other Black person. So it's like, it puts you into contact with those people. And I think, that plays a crucial role for individuals who aren't used to diverse, who aren't used to, umm, the racial environment [here]. I mean, I do debate so I'm kind of, I'm kind of used to being surrounded by White people or people who don't look like me or like me in terms of experiences. But, umm, for people who aren't, who might feel alienated, the Office of Multicultural Affairs is like a God-send. And even if you wouldn't feel alienated, even if you want to, even if you just want to be around, you know, Black people, it's great because that's where you can meet them all, not all, well the majority of them. It's just a sense of community, you know. So, umm, I, in that, in that area, I guess, because of OMA, umm, it went beyond my expectations, for diversity.

Arthur talked about race issues in society descriptively and verbosely, using anecdotes from his life experiences and observations to make his points. He had only been on campus a little shy of two months when we sat down for our interview, but he described how Black student support services provided something for him on campus that he desired and valued: a sense of community and an expression of his culture. Arthur was very active in the debate team, stating that his involvement with debate and visits to debate camps while in high school influenced his decision to attend this college. I could see his debate skills at work, as he articulated his thoughts, almost in the form of well thought-out monologues. Such lengthy descriptions on his thoughts and observations showed me that he was not only knowledgeable about the topic of race and what it meant
for him, but also how secure Arthur was in himself, especially for a first year student in a new environment. He did not make any attempts to impress me with his appearance, wearing a plain white t-shirt and a pair of black basketball shorts to our meeting. Instead, he let his command of words and concepts do all of the talking for him.

Arthur was exposed to the Black student support services on campus before he arrived as a student. He participated in a racial and ethnic scholarship weekend during his senior year of high school (a scholarship which he was chosen for) and was able to meet many of the staff associated with Black student support services at that time. He said though, that he did not realize the importance of these services until he actually got to campus. Arthur recalled his first week on campus during orientation. He described a situation wherein socially, he was not drawn to the predominantly White fraternity party that some of his debate teammates, none of them Black outside of him, were planning to attend. He stated that although he knew Black students do attend predominantly White fraternity parties, there are some cultural differences that exist when comparing a predominantly White party and a predominantly Black party. The latter environment, he said, was more suited to him since it matched his culture. He described this scenario when he said:

Like I remember, I remember the first week I was here…they have like a tradition during orientation week where it's like a bunch of cars line up and people go to parties or whatever, like random frat parties. I don't know why people do it. But I remember just thinking like man, I don't want to do any of that. And then, they had some, OMA had some function, and [Laughs] I always told this joke, I was
like ‘whoa, it’s a lot of Black people at this things!’ Because on the thing, on the flyer, they put 'deejay' and 'music' and that sort of thing, so I was like those are, those are what they, that's what's going to bring all the Black people, that's like the key words, like ‘OMA’ was nowhere on that sheet of paper. It said…'live music,' 'deejay,' 'dancing.' And I was like, okay I'm going to go to this, you know just check it out. I showed up, a whole bunch of Black people, I mean, there were like some White people, but they ended up, they ended up leaving. But like, I was like, yea I mean, I was like…I was like 'ooooo!,’ I got excited! It was kind of, it was kind of funny because I was like that's what they would put on the paper to get Black people to go there. But, I mean, because that, Black people show up to that sort of thing, not to be separatist, but I mean yea, Black people go to that sort of thing, generally speaking.

Arthur’s voice rang with excitement and he smiled widely as he recounted this first experience with the social side of Black student support services on campus. He described the environment when he arrived at this particular event and how it was the first time he was able to meet more Black students on campus, with specific emphasis on the Black upperclassmen. He described:

Those first few days where they weren't here, I was like there aren't many, and then at the food festival thing, umm, which is the first day the upperclassmen got back, and I saw all of them there, and I was like 'oh my, it's a lot of Black people here.' And then there, it was just like, it seemed like everybody knew each other, because they were upperclassmen, they already knew each other through like
OMA and stuff. So like, I don't know, it was just cool, people were just dancing, like having fun, and everybody was like familiar, and it was just, it was just a nice, nice environment. So I definitely think my college experience would be different without that.

Stating that debate took up the bulk of his out-of-classroom time, he spoke of his intentions to become involved with Black student organizations, namely a Black male mentoring program for middle school students. As his story about his first experience with the social event portrayed, he already started to find cultural outlets of expression through Black student support services. He explained how he had met a Black faculty and staff member on campus during his scholarship visits to the Office of Multicultural Affairs before he arrived on campus who, like Arthur, had dreadlocks. He pointed to his dreadlocks as he started telling this story, laughing at himself for pointing out that he had them since he knew I was looking at him and could see that fact for myself.

Arthur was concerned about where he would get his hair maintained while in college, and asked a Black staff member what steps he took for hair-care when he ran into him one day on campus. The staff member referred Arthur to another student on campus that twisted his hair for him. Arthur stated this was a helpful connection for him since his other option was a 45 minute drive away and fairly expensive. Additionally, while at the upperclassmen’s apartment, he met her roommates and others that he later saw in the cafeteria or at other events and considered a friendly face on campus. He compared the people he has met thus far through Black student support services a “chain, it like, it connects you.”
Arthur stated that not all people’s view of Black student support services, including Black students, was positive. He described a conversation with another student that deemed these programs and services as an instrument to separate Black students from the mainstream campus culture. Drawing from his readings of Critical Race Theory, Nell Irvin Painter, plus others, Arthur explained why his feelings opposed this particular line of thought. His statements and suppositions challenged the idea of Whiteness as an inclusive concept. He stated:

So when you say 'that's separatist,' what that is really code for is…it it makes it seem as though, this is the whole, this is the inclusive whole, and you're trying to break apart. But what, what they think, or what they presuppose is the whole is really just Whiteness. So, it's like you're breaking away from Whiteness. And it's like, yes, you should because you're not White. You know you're, you're not culturally anyway….So, it's like, being separatist isn't necessarily being separatist because this isn't the whole, this is just Whiteness. And you're breaking away from that, I think you, I'm not breaking away from it, not to say you should reject it, but just to say that you should realize yourself as different and that's, because that's the only way you can appreciate each other and actually have, you know, harmony in any sense. So…I would say when people say 'oh, that's separatist, don't go to that,’ don't listen to them. Go to it. If you, if you're not used to being in an environment where it's predominantly White, or it's, or if you just like being around Black people, don't listen to people who say it's separatist, because a) it's not really separatist because you're just separating yourself from Whiteness and b)
even if it is separatist, it's good because you are not a part of that. You know, naturally, anyway.

**Participant Ten: Josh**

*Gender: Male*
*Classification: Freshman*
*Parents’ Educational Background:*
  *Mother: Some College*
  *Father: College Completion*

**CRIS Profile:**

*Figure 4.10.* Josh’s CRIS profile. Josh’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was slightly higher than the sample average score for IMCI. His second highest score was for the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscale where he was higher than the sample average score. On the lower end of his scores were the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH), Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), and Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscales. He was slightly higher than the sample average score for the IEAW subscale and lower for the PSH, PM, and PA subscales.

Josh stated:
I mean really, it gives me something to do. Like it makes me feel like I'm here. Like I'm not just here like, like, when I'm out of class, like I have other things to do. Like you're part of the school, like, you feel like you're doing something.

In this quote, Josh described how his participation with Black student support services made him feel on campus. At the time of our interview, Josh was just a couple of months into his college tenure. In spite of his status as a first-year student, he talked with confidence as if he had figured the whole college routine out—from how and when to study to how to meet people from different circles of the campus. He described his bold attitude towards approaching a pretty girl he saw on campus or randomly taking a seat with all of the football players. He communicated these stories to me with a half smirk on his face, seemingly proud of his courageous moves, admitting that these antics revealed his neophyte standing in college. He explained:

I just go, it's a big like long table of football players and I just go sit down like, 'what's up?' [Laughs] And they were like 'oh, are you a freshman?' Of course they had to know because nobody just goes and sits with the football team…But yea I sat with random people.

Josh was a tall, lean man, stating that he is oftentimes asked if he is a basketball player due to his height and race. He said he just simply responds to such questions by saying “I mean, I'm tall and Black, I don't play basketball, sorry.” He made this comment with a grin. I could tell he liked to see the humorous side of life, including its social ills. Josh, in fact, was an athlete at the school, just not a basketball or football player. He described how he was required to play a sport at his preparatory high school
back home, and was used to athletics being a part of his life. Therefore, he decided to pursue a position as a walk-on athlete in college.

In addition to his athletic involvement, Josh already started participating with a number of Black student support services, including the Black Student Alliance, a Black male mentoring group for middle school students, and a Black male student discussion group. His opening quote described how these participations made him feel as though he was part of the fabric of the campus community. He stated that through participating with the Office of Multicultural Affairs mentoring program, he went to one of the early events, a skating outing, and met many people that have become his closest friends on campus. He explained this type of forum took some of the pressure off of him to meet others, specifically other Black students. He expressed the personal importance to him of meeting other Black students when he said:

…don't get me wrong, I'm not like, like, I don't only want to talk to Black people and all that, but I mean it's definitely nice to get together like with people of your own race, and some of them who've had the same experiences as you've had.”

Josh said he also randomly walked up to tables of non-Black people in the cafeteria, but he conceded that parts of the social scene differ because of racial and ethnic culture. Due to these differences, he found it important to have other Black students comprising at least a part of his friend group. For example, he explained how, at least from a social standpoint, the predominantly White fraternity parties did not match his lifestyle preferences. But, he said he was willing to try it at least once. The one predominantly White fraternity party that he described attending was a party themed
Redneck Night. He said this sort of themed party was a new experience for him, since he was from the North and was still getting used to some aspects of the Southern culture. He explained that he and some friends decided to attend Redneck Night simply for laughs, saying, “One of my friends actually came up with the brilliant idea to get like eight Black people together and then go to 'Redneck Night' because it would be funny. It kind of was funny. [Laughs]” Josh recounted how initially party-goers seemed shocked at the entrance of a group of Black students.

They kind of just like looked at us. I don't, I don't, I don't really know, like I mean, at first, they looked kind of scared at first which was kind of what we were going for. It was, it was, it was just to like, get a laugh. But, after the initial like, we walked in and like no one cared.

Although the party continued, Josh laughed as he recalled that he saw a White student waving a Confederate flag when they first entered the room; he did not recall seeing the flag anymore for the rest of the evening after he and his Black friends arrived. He also stated that outside of his group of friends, there was one Black student at the party. Josh said he was still confused by this student’s presence at the party, questioning “…what Black person goes to a Redneck party by himself?”

Saying that it was more of a fit to his style, Josh also attended a party sponsored by the Black Student Alliance. There was no alcohol at this party, which he said suited him better since he did not drink. I asked Josh if the predominantly Black fraternities on campus had sponsored any such parties, to which he responded, in what seemed to me to be a fairly indifferent manner, that they did not have much presence on campus.
Josh responded with a blunt, matter-of-a-fact answer when I asked him if he felt as though Black student support services were something he needed on campus. His answer initially surprised me as he had already described how he was involved in numerous programs and services. He explained:

I don't think it's absolutely necessary, because I mean back in the day, people like lived without it, I'm sure like years ago, they didn't have an Office of Multicultural Affairs. But, I mean I definitely feel like it's something that I would want.

Even though he believed he would be successful in college without Black student support services, he described why they were something he wanted in his college experience for a certain reason. He articulated that:

You can't go wrong getting involved. Anything that looks remotely interesting, like the [Black male discussion group] thing, it's like two and a half hours on a Thursday night, or something like that. So of course I'm like 'oh, two and a half hours, I don't know, I don't know about all this, [Marcus] (the Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs). I got stuff to do.' But then, I actually thought about it…and I'm like 'what else am I going to do on a Thursday evening than go to this?' So I'm like, 'I mean it sounds interesting, why not go?' And then I went and turned out that I liked it. So I mean, I don't think you should discount anything just because you don't feel like it or you don't know how it's going to be, I mean, try it. Even if you don't like it, I mean, then you don't have to keep doing it.
This statement reiterated to me his sentiments spoken in the opening quote of this summary. Those services gave him a forum to get involved on campus outside of class, specifically with people that shared similar experiences to him.

Josh also described why he wanted Black student support services at his college because of the stories he heard from his Black peers at other institutions that did not have such services in place. He recalled:

I talk to a lot of my other friends from back home who are at various colleges…from what like my friends tell me about their schools...Most of them or a lot of them are going to be predominantly White, so I mean, if you're going to go to a predominantly White school anyway, I mean, you might as well go to one with an Office of Multicultural Affairs and all this stuff to get involved.
Participant Eleven: Tiffany

Gender: Female
Classification: Junior
Parents’ Educational Background:
   - Mother: College Completion
   - Father: High School Diploma

CRIS Profile:

![Figure 4.11. Tiffany’s CRIS profile. Tiffany’s highest score was on the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. She was close to the sample average for IMCI. Her next highest score was for the Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscale. She was close to the sample average for IA. She was lower than the sample average for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH), Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), and Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscales.](image)

Tiffany stated:

They’ve helped a lot. Umm, because, the negative experiences before being introduced to like OMA and, and umm Gospel Choir and stuff…it was, it was terrible, it was a terrible experience. So for, for me going to OMA, going to Gospel Choir is a way of taking those negative experiences that I've had and turning this whole college experience into a positive one.

In this quote, Tiffany talked about the role of Black student support services in her college experience as somewhat of a game-changer. At the time of our conversation,
Tiffany was beginning her junior year on campus, and spoke candidly about her unhappiness with what she encountered when she came to college. I interpreted from her words and a passion for her culture, a passion that seemingly boiled right below her surface as she maintained an even-keel temperament that a large part of her discontentment stemmed from a lack of representation of herself, as a Black person, on campus. She described her view of the campus community as she said:

I think that, it is a community…in a family-oriented kind of way. I just don't feel that, it's just, it's just like it's not that much of [Black] concepts and kind of views for that. You have to search hard for that.

Tiffany gave the example of how she almost forgot it was Black history month when it was February. She said no professors mentioned the occasion, and she saw no signs of celebration or recognition of the history of Black people in the United States on campus. She expounded upon why such negligence of a particular racial heritage was troubling to her. She looked at me intently through her glasses as she stated:

We're, we're supposed to be well-rounded students. We're supposed to, I mean, this is a learning experience for us. How can we learn about [Black] culture and who we are as people if you don't see it? How can, how can you learn…I've learned so much about different people, not as far, not just race, but religion and I've learned so much. But I don't see them learning anything about us. So, that's definitely a problem that I'm having.

Tiffany saw this perceived conundrum of others not learning about her culture manifested in the classroom also, stating that White students rarely chose to work with
Black students in group discussions or on projects unless the professor interceded. Tiffany, who almost appeared exasperated through a sometimes shaky tone at the dearth of Black cultural representation on campus, spoke about how her discontent, plus some tumultuous roommate situations, prompted her to move off campus. I felt as though she was quite disconnected from campus as she described in a soft voice how essentially she only came to campus for class and left. She also explained how class also presented its own issues related to race.

She explained that her ideal campus setting would have some of the components that she admired about historically Black colleges and universities, such as unity and a sense of family. She said those pieces were missing from her college. She explained:

I really would want someone to come to me and, and welcome me, and, and look at the culture, the African American culture that I have, and just, and just, have knowledge of it first off. And then, yea, and then welcome me. And, and help me and let's, let's do more things that fit with my culture.

Tiffany’s thoughts and feelings about the campus environment, however, were not all marred by bad experiences and negative perceptions. She explained there were parts of the college where she felt as though she was considered a part of the community and the family, namely through her relationships with Black professors and her occasional participation with Black student support services. In particular, Tiffany had relationships with two Black professors, one was her academic advisor and another was her former professor/current boss in her position as a research assistant. She acquired the latter position as a result of the professor taking notice of her writing skills in class and fervor.
for the topic when she wrote a paper. Tiffany chuckled as she admitted the paper was only required to be seven pages, but because of her interest in the race-related subject, she turned in fifteen pages. She described why her associations with these Black professors were important for her as she said:

...with the Black professors, they're more, umm, they're more friendly when you, when you approach them, then they're understanding and everything else. But with the, with the White professors, they're more standoffish, or non-Black professors rather. Umm, and even with professors, there's not as many Black professors that I've seen. All, most, the majority of them, I've only had two Black professors, one was Dr. Davis, who's my advisor...and then Dr. Burkett, those are the only ones I see around. And, so, I think that, umm, when I approach them, they, their response is different and more positive than when I approach a non-Black professor.

In addition to Black professors, the other place where Tiffany described finding a sense of a community for her culture on campus was housed within the Black student support services on campus. She said that:

...every now and then I go to the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Umm, very friendly people....I was sitting down and then a girl just jumped up and she was like 'hi!' introducing herself. And I, I wasn't used to that, I was like 'hi, how are you?' it was great.

I noticed that Tiffany’s entire demeanor seemed to shift as she was telling me about these professors and the Black student support services. It was almost as if she sat
up a little straighter in her seat, and spoke more rapidly with excitement. She described through a smile how the director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs sought her out both to see how she was doing and to assist her in getting more involved on campus. To her, that was an extra push she needed. She said:

I'm an anti-social type of person, or at least I was, umm, and going there, they make you get social. [laughs] They will do it in a heartbeat at OMA, so I love it. I think it's a great thing, and umm, [Saundra Fowler]... she told me about information and she gave me a list, she's like '[Tiffany], I want you to talk to these people.' She's like 'I want you to talk to these people, I want you to get involved.' Because I told her, umm, we had a, a meeting one time and I told her, I'm like, ‘...I don't like being here at all.' And so she gave me a list of people, she's like 'contact these people’....And, umm, she's like 'you're going to have fun.' And I did it, and like, now I'm going to get more involved in stuff, and, and now I have a smile on my face, and I actually like staying on campus just a little bit longer than normal.

Tiffany credited these new experiences and involvements with helping develop her communication skills and her willingness to branch out and be more involved on campus. In her words it was, “taking me out of my shell.”

Tiffany confessed it took her a while to go into the Office of Multicultural Affairs, even after a Black alumna that worked at her high school encouraged her to go once she first set foot on campus. Tiffany laughed as she recalled this story. She said if she would have taken heed to this advice earlier, she may have had a more positive
attitude towards her future alma mater. She described how Black student support services and Black professors changed her perception of the campus as she explained:

If they were not there, I would not be happy and I, I wouldn't transfer because it takes too much time. [Laughs] But, umm, yea, but I would not be on this, I would not be on this campus for long. I would go to my classes and leave. Umm, if they weren't there, my views about this campus would be different, umm, and it would be more negative than what it is now. Umm, and if anyone asked me about my experience, it wouldn't be a positive thing in any way. Umm, if I didn't have the OMA and these professors that are helpful, and, and the, and the group of students who have these organizations and they're welcoming me, I wouldn't be able to tell anyone anything positive about [this school].

Although Tiffany said she attained that sense of family in small doses when she was participating with the Black student support services, she stated very plainly and seriously that she did not view these relationships as sufficient for her campus experience. She expressed this dissatisfaction when she said:

OMA is a great place, but OMA should not be the only place. It should be more places. I should be able to go, umm, to every corner of this school and find an organization that is for me, that is helping me. Find something that I can relate to. It should not be all the Black people in OMA because that's the only place they have to go. It should not be all the Black people in Gospel Choir on Wednesday nights from 7-9 because that's the only place that they can go. It should, it should be throughout the campus. To the point that like, I don't even, I'm so excited,
'which one do I go to, which one do I go to?’ That's what I want. But I don't have it.

**Participant Twelve: Ryan**

Gender: Male  
Classification: Junior  
Parents’ Educational Background:  
Mother: Graduate School  
Father: High School Diploma

**CRIS Profile:**

![Ryan's CRIS profile](image)

*Figure 4.12. Ryan’s CRIS profile. Ryan’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was close to the sample average for IMCI. His second highest score was for the Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH) subscale. He was higher than the sample average for PSH. His lowest score was for the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscale. He scored slightly lower than the sample average for PA.*

Ryan stated:

I didn't really start liking it until I started going into OMA a little bit. And that's when I started, and that was because, I think it was because I didn't know as many connections, and as many pathways, and what [this school] was offering.
Ryan spoke these words early on in our conversation. As he told me about his myriad of experiences with Black student support services, I realized how he had maximized his connections to not only his benefit, but also the benefit of others. Ryan came across as an open-book personality, with a lot to say and a desire to say it. He also was quite inquisitive, wanting to know more about me and displaying a thirst for more knowledge about life and other people’s experiences.

As the opening quote to this summary showed, Ryan was concerned with finding new opportunities in his college experience. He described that he came from a middle-class background, exposed to the country club life on the weekends as he accompanied his Dad to a side job, while at the same time seeing another side of life from his inner-city public high school. Ryan stated, though he had been exposed to an upper-class lifestyle at the country club, he sometimes was still amazed at other students’ wealth at the college. However, he displayed a comfort and confidence in himself at our meeting that went beyond his tall stature and big smile. He had a style that drew from different elements as he wore a fitted ball cap, baggy jeans, and a striped polo shirt. He described other people’s reactions to him when he said:

I’ve never tried to be anything that I’m not. Like, we talk about it, they’re like, they’re like ‘you’re not really that preppy acting.’ I was like ‘no,’ but they’re like, ‘but you’re not really that hip hop.’ I said, ‘no.’ I said, ‘you know, I do my own thing. I find things that I like from different styles and I make it work for me.’

Ryan recounted the first time he went into the Office of Multicultural Affairs, a move he seemed grateful for. He chuckled as he admitted he only went into the office at
first during his freshman year to attend the free breakfast event. He described how a
turning point occurred when he went in to get a book from another student who asked
him to meet her there. What he encountered this particular time appeared to be both
shocking and comforting to him. He said that the administrative assistant and the director
of the office cornered him, recounting:

I remember the first time I met, like Dr. [Boyd] and [P] was sitting up there at her
desk. And when I came in they were like ‘I don’t know you, but I should know
you.’ I was like ‘dang.’ I’m like ‘y’all are abrupt.’ They were like ‘well, we need
to know who everybody is, especially, you know, like the Black people. That’s
who we support, like we support the minorities. This is our job.’ I’m like ‘okay.’
And then…I was like ‘okay, I can come back here again just to see what it’s
about.’ And I ended up sticking with it.

Ryan appeared to be the kind of student that thoughtfully considered his actions
and where to invest his time. This type of contemplation was evident in the words he
used to relay why he decided to stick with participating with Black student support
services. He recalled this decision when he stated:

I said ‘well if I stay with OMA, that’s a central office on campus that has contacts
with other people. So if I do have any questions for the most part, they should
either be able to help me or guide me to it.’ And it’s worked out so far, so I
appreciate it.

He talked about multiple ways Black student support services provided contacts
for him on and off campus. The Office of Multicultural Affairs staff introduced him to
Ryan described his role as particularly important for the racial minority community, portraying himself as a liaison and advocate when he said:

“So, basically, what I call it, I say I have the OMA vote in there. Especially this year, because I’m the only male, and I’m the only minority. Everybody else is a White female…. And I’ve tried and like, I tell people when they do their events, just, I say, ‘make a proposal,’ I say, ‘if you want, bring it by before you take it there’… I said, ‘if you think it might stand for your cause better to actually go meet with them and talk to them in person about your cause, then let me know and I can try and set that up for you or I can tell you where to go.’

Ryan also recalled other opportunities he was afforded through participation in Black student support services. He laughingly depicted one instance where he was not
given much choice as to whether or not he would attend a job fair, comparing the Office of Multicultural Affairs to his parents’ house. He recalled:

OMA is kind of like, going to your parents’ house sometimes. Like you go there, you can get something to eat, you can go lay down…Like sometimes you go, you go home, you’re able to chill, you’re able to drink, you’re able to like, I don’t know, reconnect, like and center yourself sometime when you go in there. Umm, other than, some of the other student services, because they’re there to help you intentionally, they, they tend, one, one they tell you about it, and two, they persuade and reprimand and force you to actually go to some of these events that you don’t even think you need to go to at first. But they see the need for it. So like, Mrs. [P.], the little tiny general, will come through and like, I was sleep one day, and she was like, she yanked me by my ear and was like, ‘ain’t you supposed to be at the so and so and so at 2 o’clock?’ I was like ‘no, I don’t want to go!’ ‘You ain’t got no choice, you got to get up out of here.’ And, what was I going to? I was going to something for a, for a job fair or something like that. And it actually worked out, I got that guy’s point of contact, I’m supposed to be talking to him about maybe doing a film internship, hopefully after graduation.

Ryan also explained that he would be studying abroad in the near future, largely in part because of an encounter with a Black graduate. He described the meaning he attached to seeing Black people that came before him take advantage of opportunities on campus. He expressed:
Once I got involved in OMA, and I just saw like, some of the other people just randomly come through there. Like I’ll talk to them when they come, and people from different faculty and different offices. I started to really see like, the potential, like of the, the opportunities and potential that there are to do those things. And it was actually like, comforting knowing like, that there were other Black people that had done it before me. So I, when I talked to, umm, like, [Willie Price]…when I was talking to him, and he was like, ‘well I went to London and I’ve done all these different things.’ I was like okay, so what’s like actually tangible, possible. Because I’m thinking, I don’t know, I didn’t, I never researched it, but I was thinking at the time, like going abroad would be nice, but it probably isn’t actually feasible or affordable. But now I’m actually on a trip to go abroad this summer.
Participant Thirteen: Shannon

Gender: Female
Classification: Senior
Parents’ Educational Background:
  Mother: Some College
  Father: Graduate School

CRIS Profile:

Figure 4.13. Shannon’s CRIS profile. Shannon’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. She scored close to the sample average for IMCI. Her next highest score was for the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscale where she scored slightly higher than the sample average. She was lower than the sample average for the Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM), Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH), Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Internalization Afrocentric (IA) subscales.

Shannon stated:

[The African Caribbean Student Association] was, it was very fun. Especially because, like my parents are divorced, so I didn't really grow up with Nigerian culture. So it was like, it was a learning experience for me too. And then being able to like, talk to my Dad about, you know all this stuff, and ask him about, you know, his, how he grew up and things of his heritage and stuff, I, it was like it was
exciting for me and I could also tell like he was so excited for me to be asking questions and wanting to learn more. So it was like, a double plus for me.

Shannon spoke these words about how Black student support services allowed her to explore a side of her culture that she previously had not. She was a soft-spoken individual that wore a small ever-present smile throughout our interview. Her statements were all concise and straight to the point. Shannon was beginning her senior and final year at the time of our conversation, and I could almost see an underlying look in her eyes that she was starting to focus on what lay ahead of her post-college and was past the stage of figuring out the whole college scene.

Shannon was involved with Black student support services since her first year on campus and maintained that involvement all throughout the duration of her time in college. She recalled her first day on campus. As she moved in, she had yet to see another Black face on campus. She resolved to the idea that she would be the one of few Black people saying that:

When I came here I think I was kind of prepared to be like, maybe like the one and only and like whatever. And on my hall, especially it was like me, and my RA were like the only two Black girls on the hall. And I hadn't met any Black people yet, except her. So I was just like, 'Oh well.' I just texted my friends, 'I think I'm prepared to be the only Black girl here.'

But not too long after, Shannon’s initial thoughts of the campus changed. She described how she met her mentor through the multicultural mentoring program, who was also a
Black female. She described how she ran into more Black students on her way to an orientation event. She laughed as she recalled:

I finally met a group of Black people, and I was like 'yes!' [Laughs] It was like a group of us, it was like, because it was like our groups would be so big and we all like, hung together. I was like, I really didn't feel like I was at a predominantly White school until I, like went to class I guess.

Shannon stated that being involved with Black student support services helped connect the Black students on campus to one another. A lesson she imparted to future Black students was:

Get involved in activities because it's a way to help…if you, if you have like, if you're shy about getting to know other people, that’s definitely a way to get to know other people and get involved in stuff so you don't feel like, you're just like this only, like the only Black person here. It's like, it's a way of reconnecting, it's kind of like, it's kinda like a mini-HBCU at [this school]. That's how I kind of think of it.

When I asked her to talk to me more about how she saw pieces of a historically Black college on campus, she described those components in terms of the cultural programming, including activities sponsored by the predominantly Black fraternities and sororities on campus and/or the Office of Multicultural Affairs. She remembered one event in particular that made her feel as though she was in a predominantly Black setting. She recalled:
The comedy show the last year. I loved that. That was so fun. So I think to me like, [Laughs] I think I was texting my friend actually I was like, 'oh my God, you should have come here, I felt like I was at a Black school.' [laughs] At the comedy show, it was so funny.

From the way she told this story with a smile, I interpreted that these types of events were meaningful to Shannon’s campus experience. I assumed this to be even truer when she said that in the absence of such events, she probably would not spend her social time on campus, but would rather travel to a nearby city to attend parties. Shannon stated that she was not interested in attending the predominantly White fraternity parties. In fact, she displayed her discontent with one predominantly White fraternity’s hip-hop themed party. She recalled how a few of her White hall mates showed up at her door, asking her to borrow *ghetto* clothing. Shannon explained she supposed the White students came to her, assuming she had this type of clothes, since she was Black.

As the opening quote to this summary displayed, in addition to meeting more Black people through her participation with Black student support services, she met more students with ties to Nigeria. She explained that her friend, whose father was also Nigerian, started the African Caribbean Student organization on campus. Shannon helped her friend create this group from the ground up, over a year’s worth of work. She chuckled as she revealed that she found out “There are actually a lot of Nigerian students here. [laughs]” Since Shannon was involved with many facets of Black student support services, including leadership capacities on executive boards, she expressed she had more of an inside view of the institution’s commitment to diversity. She explained:
I feel like being on the exec board of the AFRICASA and having to work with OMA, you kind of know that, that they're trying. That they are, and that they are progressing and making sure that they have stuff. So it's not like I'm on the outside and I'm like 'well, why don't they have this,' and 'why don't they have that?' Like I see that they're doing this, and that they're trying to get this in and stuff like that.

Due to this insider knowledge, Shannon saw progress on campus, and this type of work towards diversifying the campus seemed important to her. She credited the Office of Multicultural Affairs with a lot of this work when she said:

The OMA, everything that they do. It's nice, nice to be able to go in there and see other people and see them working really hard to get more diversity on campus and doing stuff like that. So I really, I really do like that.
Participant Fourteen: Lamont

Gender: Male
Classification: Sophomore
Parents’ Educational Background:
   Mother: Some College
   Father: Some College
CRIS Profile:

Figure 4.14. Lamont’s CRIS profile. Lamont’s highest score was for the Internalization Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscale. He was slightly higher than the sample average score for IMCI. His next highest scores were for the Pre-encounter Miseducation (PM) and the Pre-encounter Assimilation (PA) subscales. He was higher than the sample average scores for PM and PA. His lowest scores were for the Pre-encounter Self-hatred (PSH) and Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW) subscales where he was lower than the sample average scores.

Lamont stated:

I think the, I think those type of, umm, support factors are very important. By being a White, a predominantly White campus, you do, it is good, it's a good feeling every now and then to go to a meeting where you see others, that are, umm, just like you. Or, you know, that might have the same background in common. Or, just, just, you know, being able, I guess looking in the mirror and saying 'oh, you're just like me.' The more comfortability. I think those are, I think
it's very important to have those. Because, I mean, without them, I mean, might not feel as comfortable, you know, being on a campus that, where, where everything is so different from you.

Lamont did not seem to mince words at all during our conversation, just as he did not in this opening quote, where he frankly stated that he found comfort on a predominantly White campus in occasionally surrounding himself with other Black students. At the time of our conversation, Lamont was starting his sophomore year on campus. From the beginning of the interview through the end, he wore a radiating smile and filled the room with contagious laughter. At times, he would switch to a lowered, more serious tone, putting his hands together as he made his point, and then switch back into a humor-filled, fun-loving persona instantly.

Lamont recalled his first day on campus, instantly thankful for the mentor sent his way by the multicultural mentoring program sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. He described what it meant to him when his mentor showed up at his residence hall room during freshman orientation. His mentor was the first other Black student he encountered on campus. He said:

That was just another, it, it made me feel, umm, more welcomed. Umm, in the beginning. Even though I did feel welcome, even, once I actually became a student here. And once I moved in and all that, I felt welcomed. Umm, I met my dorm mate, and all that. But umm, having a mentor come through 'hey, you know, welcome to [this school].' And it was, umm, I will say, to see someone that looks
just like me right away, you know, I think that he was the first person, [Laughs] the first one that I saw that looked like me at the time being here.

Lamont stated he appreciated how a mentor was there to help him become acclimated to the campus during his first year, and he wanted to serve in that capacity to first-year students during his second year on campus. Lamont also talked about other involvements he sought out when he first stepped onto campus, looking for organizations that spoke to him and his interests. He expressed why the Black Student Alliance was an appealing option.

BSA, umm, actually I heard about that, well right away, when you come to campus, you're like 'hmm, what, what organizations are for me?' And I said 'oh' right away, 'Black Student Alliance, of course.' I wanted, I want to be a member of the Alliance. That way, you know, to show our strength in numbers as well. And just to be actively involved in Black Student Alliance, and umm, I mean that was one of my main thoughts like 'hmm, what are our actual organizations that are geared towards me as well?'

Lamont described that he was not able to attend every function or meeting the Black Student Alliance held, not having the time to become actively involved. But he said he was willing to volunteer to help at events whenever he could. He talked about how he appreciated the Black Student Alliance’s presence on campus, since it gave him somewhere to go where he could spend time with other students with similar interests, based upon shared heritage and cultural interests. He explained that:
Being a part of BSA and all that, does give you those moments where you guys could actually socialize and meet others that have the same type of music in common. Umm, for example, one in common, R&B. Umm, Lil Wayne, like the likeability of Lil Wayne. Drake, you know all the good stuff. [Laughs]…You're able, instead of talking about Cold Play or Lady Gaga, instead I can go talk to my friends about someone like, 'oh yea, Drake, you heard that new mix tape?’ Or, or something like that. Whereas, you know, with someone else, they might know about it, but then I might have to just talk to them. My favorite of music has always been R&B, soul music. [Laughs] You know? And, and, it might go back to heritage, you know, of course. It's just, it's always been in me.

Lamont communicated that one piece of Black culture and heritage, predominantly Black fraternities, was not as prominent on campus as he would like. He had attended predominantly White fraternity parties during his college tenure. He cited how the White students would often look at him to have great rhythm since he was Black. Although predominantly White fraternities were present, he still desired the racial and cultural focus associated with the presence of predominantly Black fraternities. He talked about how they were present on campus, but in small numbers and displayed little activity. This was one of the times where his tone became more serious as he explained:

One thing that I would love to have…I want there to be more of a presence of Black Greeks on campus. Umm, of course if I would have went to an HBCU or something, I might see someone stomping the yard every single day. And I'm not
saying they have to stomp the yard every single day, but I would love to be able to have that to enrich my environment, you know that I'm in.

When I asked Lamont to describe to me how the heightened presence of predominantly Black Greek organizations on campus would enrich his environment, his eyes lit up and a smile reappeared on his face. He quickly responded:

Oh as far as culture. Right away….Maybe perhaps I might want to be able to join one of the Black Greeks…if their presence was, you know, known around campus…it's harder for them to actually do that, to make themselves known on a predominantly White campus. But I feel that if I had Black Greeks, then everything would be perfect.

Lamont described his college experience thus far as pleasant and talked about how he found a better campus environment than he expected to find as a Black student on a predominantly White campus. His words about predominantly Black fraternities and sororities let me know that there was one Black student support services opportunity for him on campus that was underdeveloped, something he potentially would want to participate in to express his culture.

As Lamont spoke about his other involvements on campus and how he was exposed to new experiences, this idea of expressing his culture seemed important to him. He talked about how he was fortunate enough not to have any bad racial experiences on campus, but still believed in the utility of Black student support services. He talked about how he perceived the security of these services, even though he was not very involved with them. He explained:
I haven't really needed to, but it's a good feeling knowing that if I needed to, I could actually go to the, umm, you know, actually be welcomed, you know, to talk about whatever might be or take advantage of the resources that that they do have.

In expressing what advice he would offer to future Black students, he included both identity and social components as reasons to become involved in Black student support services. He stated:

I would tell them to definitely get involved. That way they could maintain that aspect of their life. Because here at, being at a predominantly White campus, sometimes you tend to get lost. And what I mean you getting lost is, umm, from, I don't want to say from who you are or whatever, but I will definitely tell them to make sure that they do go and be involved in, you know, the support groups as well. That way they can know who they are still, as well. And also have a great time in a campus such as this.

I asked Lamont to tell me more about what he meant by knowing who they are, and he replied:

As a Black person, in general. As a Black person, umm, because I mean, obviously I'm not a surfer dude or anything like that. And it's great to be able to take a vacation or go with someone, you know. It’s all about the experience. But, also at the end of the day, I am a Black student at a, at a school that predominantly that's White.
Observations and Artifacts

Observations

These interview responses served as the primary form of data collection for this study. Additionally, observations were conducted and artifacts were collected. Over the time that I was on campus for interviews, I also conducted observations. The research site gatekeepers informed me that the Office of Multicultural Affairs would be the best observational setting. They stated that the office received a lot of Black student traffic, and was the office that produced the majority of programs associated with Black student support services. Specifically, the gatekeepers suggested that I attend the weekly breakfast event. This breakfast event was the time when the largest group of students came to the office. I spent four days in the office, ranging in time from two to three hours a day.

While observing students and staff in the office, I gathered information that supported how the participants described the office environment. It was a professional atmosphere, but not to the point of being formal. The professional staff members sat at their desks working, but an informal setting in the office was created by the student presence. Connected to the office was a student lounge. This lounge included a long couch with pillows and blankets strewn across it, a large flat-screen television, and a larger conference style table that accommodated meetings or students at work. Students were taking advantage of the lounge while I was there. Although the office did not only support Black students, the majority of the students present were Black. These students were in the lounge working on schoolwork, taking naps on the couch, and socializing
with one another. At one point, a few students scrolled through the library of DVDs the office had on hand for free student rentals. This library was comprised of a plethora of movie genres, and included multiple Black-centric films. That particular day, the students chose to watch *New Jack City* in the student lounge.

Students did not stay confined to the student lounge in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Many of the students fought for space at the administrative assistant’s large, L-shaped desk. Some students set up their laptop computers to do work or log onto social networks. Other students informally spoke with the administrative assistant and one another. The discussions ranged from what person was dating whom to academic issues to racial issues. Intermittently, students would come in asking for some form of assistance. One group of freshman females came in to find out how to get in touch with a particular staff member in the admissions office. The administrative assistant stopped one student immediately when she came in and commented that her demeanor was different. The administrative assistant wanted to know what was wrong since she had not seen her in a while, and her disposition had changed. The student admitted something was awry and went into another room for a private conversation with the administrative assistant.

Many students used the Office of Multicultural Affairs as a place to vent to one another and to staff. One student sat down, appearing exasperated, and told everyone within earshot that he was struggling in a class and was not sure of what to do. Another student present mentioned that she was in the same class and had weekly tutoring sessions with the professor. She invited him to join her in these sessions and this gesture seemed to lift his spirits a bit. Another student vented her frustrations with White people...
on campus. She made the remark that she did not like White people at that moment due to some negative interactions on campus. Other Black students engaged her in a discussion about how she should not attribute the experiences with a few White people to the entire race.

Students were not the only campus community members that came into the office to vent their frustrations or to socialize with students and staff. While I was there, a Black post-doctoral faculty member came into the office, obviously with an aggravated look on her face. She explained that she just needed to go somewhere that she could breathe and where people would understand her situation. She did not go into the specifics of her situation, but spent a few minutes speaking with the administrative assistant before leaving. A Black staff member also came into the office simply to say hello to everyone. He was a graduate of the university, and gave students advice about how to run their student organizations based upon both his professional experience and prior experience as a student.

The environment at the morning breakfast event was quite similar to the other days except for the amount of people coming in and out of the office. There was the regular group of students in the lounge and at the administrative assistant’s desk, but there was also another stream of students. These students were mainly Black, but included some students of other races, that entered simply to grab a biscuit and juice and leave. The administrative assistant commented to me that this was the only time she saw some of these students. She attempted to stop as many students as possible that she did not recognize to introduce herself and find out their names. A Black staff member from
the Office of Academic Advising also stopped by for the breakfast event. He stayed for a while and interacted with a few students. I was later informed in a conversation with another staff member from the Office of Academic Advising that they work with the Office of Multicultural Affairs in a liaison relationship to reach more students of color. The staff member attended breakfast that morning so that students would be able to access and become familiar with him in a setting outside of Academic Advising.

**Artifacts**

Several artifacts pertaining to Black student support services were also collected from the research site. Specifically, I attained access to numerous email listservs that disseminated information about Black student support services. The Office of Multicultural Affairs coordinated a listserv that included all students of color at the university and sent out email announcements twice a week (see Appendix K for excerpt from Office of Multicultural Affairs listserv announcements). These emails contained information about programming and events and ways to become involved on campus from the office, Black student organizations, and other offices and departments at the university. This mechanism was the first and most consistent point of contact the office had with Black students.

Additionally, I obtained access to an email sent to Black alumni of the university. One email was from the Black alumni association about the year’s homecoming events. As the president of the organization detailed available homecoming opportunities, both campus-wide and targeted to Black alumni, she encouraged Black alumni to stop current
students when they were on campus. She asked alumni to offer these students support and advice in navigating college life.

The remaining artifacts I collected pertained to the representation of Black people and the expression of Black culture on campus. Also in an email specifically to Black alumni, career services requested Black graduates of the university to participate in a career networking program with undergraduate students. Since this email was specifically sent to Black alumni and not the entire alumni database, I assumed that the career services office was intentionally recruiting more Black alumni to be represented in the program.

Two articles in the campus newspaper also related to the representation of Black culture on campus. Following the tradition of many historically Black colleges and universities, the university had recently erected a garden to honor predominantly Black Greek-letter organizations. The presence of this garden represented an artifact in its own right. The garden was positioned in a prominent locale of campus, central to the academic buildings and university center. Two campus newspaper articles detailed the purpose of this garden to acknowledge the contributions of predominantly Black fraternities and sororities on campus (see Appendix L for articles). Black staff members, students, and alumni are quoted in this article, and the article’s comments section, citing the significance of having this part of their culture displayed so notably on university grounds.
Chapter Summary

In Chapter Four, individual participant perceptions and experiences related to Black student support services were presented. The researcher’s bias concerning the phenomenon was discussed. Demographic information and Black student experiences with targeted student support services were detailed for each participant. Lastly, the data from the observations and the artifacts was also presented. This chapter served to provide more context and in-depth understanding to address the central research question.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Introduction

In Chapter Five, the study’s essence description is presented. The overarching themes that emerged from the process of data analysis are introduced and described. Five emergent themes were identified through the continual process of data analysis. Through the discussion of the five themes, Black students' experiences with and perceptions of targeted student support services on a predominantly White campus are described.

In the following sections, each emergent theme is described in detail, largely in the participants’ own words. The themes are organized in a manner where each subsequent theme is more clearly elucidated by the prior theme, building upon one another to create a more complete understanding. The first described theme sets the tone for how participants viewed their involvement with Black student support services, and the succeeding themes relate to the participants’ perceived reasons for and outcomes of becoming involved with these services.

Continuum of Involvement

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the researcher externally ascribed a two-fold definition of involvement with Black student support services to the participants based upon the information provided when they filled out the Participant Profile Sheet (see Appendix D). Participants were either assigned an involved or uninvolved status before sitting down for the interviews. However, once I sat down and spoke to each participant, they had a self-identified definition of their involvement that varied from my
preconceptions. As a whole, the group of participants described their intensity of involvement on a continuum, as opposed to opposite extremes of a spectrum.

Each participant considered himself/herself as involved with Black student support services at this particular campus. The circumstance they described was one in which they made a decision as to how involved they would be based upon available time, personality traits, whether they lived on or off campus, peer and/or staff influence, and/or amount of need for support, etc. The recurring categories that fall along the continuum are discussed below, ranging from loose, indirect participation to active, direct participation. Figure 5.1 portrays two points along the continuum.

![Figure 5.1. Continuum of Involvement](image)

**Figure 5.1. Continuum of Involvement**

**“I’m Black, maybe I should go”**

All of the participants described at least one encounter in their time on campus with Black student support services. From when they first arrived at this campus, all Black students were automatically sent email announcements from the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The Office of Multicultural Affairs had a larger mission than supporting Black students, but this component was a major piece of the day-to-day operations and goals. These emails detailed what events are happening both on campus and in the local community, as well as ways to get involved with multiple student organizations. Additionally, they are assigned an upperclassman mentor of color that greets them when they first move on campus. These mentors were responsible for
providing students direction as they transition from high school to college, specifically as Black students on a predominantly White campus. Participants stated they knew about Black student support services either from the Office emails, first contact from their assigned mentor, visits during high school to multicultural admissions campus events, or from other Black peers they met on campus. Each of the participants said they attended a weekly breakfast event sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Some participants mentioned that at one point attending this breakfast was the extent of their participation with Black student support services. I observed one of these breakfast events and saw the large number of students that came in and out of the doors. Some came simply to grab food and go, while others lingered to do homework or speak to peers or office staff members. There appeared to be multiple levels of involvement represented at the event ranging from the students who only desired free food from the office to those who worked closely with Black student programming or student organizations.

Some participants stated racial status influenced their initial interest in participating with Black student support services. Alecia explained that after her friend became president of the Black Student Alliance, she pondered participating with the student organization at the beginning of her sophomore year simply because she was Black. In addition, Lamont, also in his sophomore year, described how race played a factor in his decision to first attend a Black Student Alliance meeting. He stated the organization’s focus on the Black race showed how it was fitting for him. He said:

…when you come to campus, you're like 'hmm, what, what organizations are for me?' And I said 'oh' right away, 'Black Student Alliance, of course.' I wanted, I
want to be a member of the Alliance. That way, you know, to show our strength in numbers as well. And just to be actively involved in Black Student Alliance, and umm, I mean that was one of my main thoughts like 'hmm, what are our actual organizations that are geared towards me as well?'

Neither Alecia nor Lamont spoke about extensive commitment or pressure to participate with the Black Student Alliance, mentioning how they attended meetings or events whenever they had time. Lamont explained that:

…with BSA, I go to some of the meetings. I'm not able to attend every one, of course not. [Laughs] Umm, and if, whenever we put on any type of program, I, if they need a volunteer or something like that, I will try to see if I can make it, put it on my schedule.

Derek stated that being able to participate on his terms, much like Lamont described above, was an important factor in his decision to become and stay involved with the Black Student Alliance. He compared the pressure to become actively involved in other student organizations to how he perceived the Black Student Alliance.

I feel as though, they add value. You know how some groups, they can be, ummm, they ask for a lot of your time. And, you know, they ask for a big commitment. And sometimes, you are not able to give that commitment on a consistent basis. Or you may not want to be committed to 100% of what they do, but certain parts, you know what I mean. And I feel as though, like, they, BSA allows me to kind of contribute in ways that I feel that I can contribute, you know.
“It makes me feel like I’m here”

Each of the participants spoke about the rigorous academic workload they were responsible for in college. In addition to their academic responsibilities, the participants described how they wanted an active life outside of the classroom. They saw such involvements as opportunities to both supplement their education and find extracurricular activities on campus. Josh revealed this sentiment as he talked about why he chose to become involved with Black student support services.

I mean really, it gives me something to do. Like it makes me feel like I'm here. Like I'm not just here like, like, when I'm out of class, like I have other things to do. Like you're part of the school, like, you feel like you're doing something.

Josh, who also carried the added responsibilities that accompany being a student-athlete, went on to talk about how he viewed his involvement as a no-lose situation.

You can't go wrong getting involved. Anything that looks remotely interesting, like the [Black male discussion group] thing, it's like two and a half hours on a Thursday night, or something like that. So of course I'm like 'oh, two and a half hours, I don't know, I don't know about all this, [Marcus] (the Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs). I got stuff to do.' But then, I actually thought about it and then I'm like, this is even before I started track and I'm like 'what else am I going to do on a Thursday evening than go to this?' So I'm like, 'I mean it sounds interesting, why not go?' And then I went and turned out that I liked it. So I mean, I don't think you should discount anything just because you don't feel like it or
you don't know how it's going to be, I mean, try it. Even if you don't like it, I mean, then you don't have to keep doing it.

Tiffany, self-described as anti-social before participating with Black student support services, underscored Josh’s feelings that participating in Black student support services provided a feeling of and reason for being present on campus. She talked about how she moved off campus after some bad roommate experiences her first couple of years and normally only came to campus for class. After meeting with the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs who provided her with a list of involvements on campus, she said her view towards engaging in campus life has changed.

She's like 'I want you to talk to these people, I want you to get involved.' Because I told her, umm, we had a, a meeting one time and I told her, I'm like, ‘…I don't like being here at all.' And so she gave me a list of people… And, umm, she's like 'you're going to have fun.' And I did it, and like, now I'm going to get more involved in stuff, and, and now I have a smile on my face, and I actually like staying on campus just a little bit longer than normal.

Like Tiffany, Dionne echoed how becoming involved in Black student support services also engaged her in student life, attributing the role of these services as a factor in her matriculation.

...without the Office of Multicultural Affairs, without Gospel Choir, without BSA, I probably wouldn't be here, sitting here junior year. And, I mean, an education is an education, but when you have all the resources that [this university] has, you don't want to just leave that behind, it's the fact that you want
to be a hermit or you can't get acclimated because you choose to cut yourself off, which is what I was doing.

Josh, a first-year student-athlete, talked about his Black friends at other predominantly White institutions that did not have as many Black student support services. He discussed how they were less involved in student life on their respective campuses. By having Black student support services, Josh saw that as an impetus to become more involved. He explained that, “If you're going to go to a predominantly White school anyway, I mean, you might as well go to one with an Office of Multicultural Affairs and all this stuff to get involved.”

“I’m kind of branching out and trying to do things”

None of the students in this study expressed an aspiration to limit their participation to Black student support services or to only surround themselves by other Black students. Some participants described how Black student support services operated as a springboard into other on-campus involvements. As discussed in the previous two points of involvement on the continuum, many of the students became involved with Black student support services either loosely or more actively because of their personal identification of the programs with their race. Some of the students talked about how at some stage in their college career they were only involved with Black student support services, but after finding comfort in themselves and acquiring new social skills, they became involved in more activities on campus that did not specifically target Black students.
Tiffany, who above spoke about how she was anti-social and was prompted to become involved by the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, described this type of scenario for her college experience. When asked how she viewed the role of Black student support services, she talked about a transformation she has made. “It's, it's helping my communication skills. Umm, it's taking me out of my shell and now I'm, I'm kind of branching out and trying to do things.” Similarly, Dionne relayed a similar sentiment about how Black student support services transformed her view of both herself and campus activities.

I went to occasional BSA meetings…but then I didn't really attend them really, and then I started going to BSA and started being more involved. And then…the seniors from both of those organizations really helped me just become a part of the community and were basically like, 'you don't have to stay in your room and stay bottled up, some of us share the same experiences and we know what it feels like to be homesick or not be in that diverse of a situation or setting, and not have anything to do or just sit in your room and be like, 'well I really want to do this, but do I really want to go there and be there with all these other people that don't look like me.” So, like those seniors from those organizations really helped me step out of that. And then, like, after I became comfortable with myself, like, I guess like "Why are all the Black kids sitting together" by Tatum, her book, after I had gone through the immersion phase, then, I stepped outside and I was able to go to frat parties that weren't like from or by Black people or students of color. I was able to feel comfortable and hang around other people outside of my race.
And that's what really what helped me because now I do what I want to do on campus, and I can be a part of anything on campus, and not feel uncomfortable. And I think that's really, like a really good move.

Keenon and Ryan, both juniors, also explained how their involvements aided in their ability to find different opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities on campus. Keenon spoke about how participating in Black student support services provided information about campus events to him soon after he arrived.

…by being in the program, you're exposed to a lot more faster, you know. So, you can make the decisions whether I'm going to go into this, that, the third, you know. And you find out more about campus-wide events and things that are going on, you know. I think it helps get adjusted to college life quicker…

Likewise, Ryan revealed that he did not have a true sense of what was available to him on campus to become involved with until he began participating with Black student support services. He stated:

I didn't really start liking it until I started going into OMA a little bit. And that's when I started, and that was because, I think it was because I didn't know as many connections, and as many pathways, and what [this school] was offering.

“There’s so few of us, so we’re stretched”

Some of the participants were involved in a plethora of activities with Black student support services and beyond, many in a leadership role. Dionne, who recalled how she started off her college experience with hermit-like tendencies, was currently at the other end of the continuum of involvement. In our interview, she reflected on what
effect becoming so actively involved in Black student support services can have on devoting time to academics. She asserted that, “I think I tried to be involved in a lot of stuff, and not so sure if that was the correct decision with all the schoolwork.”

Keenon, who also described the weight of becoming so involved in Black student support services, attributed his burden of over-involvement to the lack of Black men, specifically non-athletes present on campus. When asked what change he would like to see occur on campus, he responded by talking about how a larger Black male, non-athlete enrollment was the biggest campus modification he desired. He described how the dearth of others like himself placed more pressure on him and other non-athlete Black men that participated with Black student support services. He explained:

There's so few of us, we oftentimes, we try to help with this organization, that organization and then there's so many organizations and you know, Black males will come out. And it'll be like, you know, I have too much to do, you know, I can't do it, you know. Because there's so few of us, so we're stretched across everything.

Overall, the participants all viewed themselves as involved with Black student support services on this predominantly White campus. This point should be remembered while moving through the following emergent themes. The themes discussed in the next sections reflect why participants decided to become involved with targeted student support services and what they perceived as products of this involvement.
Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda

This particular emergent theme delves into the main reason participants cited for becoming involved with Black student support services. In one way or another, the participants were all searching for a place at the university where people were like them. The participants described that people like them included race, culture, and pursuits of similar on-campus agendas. These commonalities in racial/cultural experiences and agenda are presented in the following sections.

“ It’s nice to be around somebody that looks like you”

Most of the participants were aware they decided to enroll in a predominantly White institution where they would be in the numerical minority. Some spoke about how they attempted to prepare themselves for that reality before they first stepped on campus. Shannon, a senior, at one point resolved the idea that she was going to be by herself as a Black female on campus. She recalled, with a laugh, the excitement she felt during her freshman orientation when she first met another Black female on campus, a mentor assigned to her through the Office of Multicultural Affairs mentoring program. Each of the participants described how they were the only or one of few Black students in all of their classes. Their presence as a minority in class was something the participants often took account of at the first meeting. Others talked about how they were one of a handful of Black people in their residence halls. Alecia, a sophomore, recounted how she was hesitant to go out of her room once she wrapped her hair (a predominantly Black hair practice) for apprehension of facing questions and scrutiny from her White hall-mates.
Natasha, a sophomore, explained that as a Black student on a predominantly White campus she just naturally assumed that she would encounter and interact with White people. She said she has often been aware that there are times where she might be the only Black person in the entire building. She stated how she had not seen Black faces largely represented on campus outside of two arenas.

I walk in and I'm like, I know I'm going to deal with White people, you know… if you go in OMA, you know you're going to see Black people…if you go in [the cafeteria], you're going to see Black people. But, if you go in, in Career Services, or if you go, umm…like the Writing Center and stuff like that, you know you're going to see White people. So, hmmm, ummm, I, for me, I think OMA is, like a safe zone from it all, from all the craziness.

The situation Natasha described above, wherein Black students only see other Black people primarily in service positions on campus or in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, was part of the reason each of the participants spoke about the importance of merely going somewhere on campus or participating in activities where people simply look just like them, since they are so often surrounded by people who do not. Black student support services provided them with a safe zone, as Natasha called it, where they saw faces that reflected their own.

Keenon relayed this sentiment:

I felt like, being a speck in a sea, you know, when I got to campus, even though this campus is not that big, but when you are comparing ratios and numbers of Black students to White students, I felt like, we were so far and few. So, I was
looking for some type of support to help me get acclimated to campus when I came in.

Lamont, Jamelle, and Darryl described that going to places where people looked like them was important to them. Lamont, a sophomore, explained his perspective of campus when he said:

By being a White, a predominantly White campus…it's a good feeling every now and then to go to a meeting where you see others, that are, umm, just like you. Or, you know, that might have the same background in common. Or, just, just, you know, being able, I guess looking in the mirror and saying 'oh, you're just like me.' The more comfortability. I think those are, I think it's very important to have those. Because, I mean, without them, I mean, might not feel as comfortable, you know, being on a campus that, where, where everything is so different from you.

Jamelle, a first-year student, echoed Lamont’s outlook of Black student support services providing her with an opportunity to interact with others that look like her. She talked about direction she received from a current student on a campus visit as a high school senior.

…my host actually was able to tell me about a few different things that minorities could be involved in, ummm, to meet one another, you know since there are a lot of White people on campus, you know. So you can meet someone that does look like you, and maybe they're like you on the inside too, you know.
For Darryl, a junior student-athlete, having a place to meet Black students outside of the bubble of the athletic world of campus was an added benefit for him. He recalled when he first started visiting the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

I think it's good, like because I'm always with a set group of people, like usually all the athletes hang together. At first, only, the only other Black kids that I knew were usually the kids on the football team, basketball, and on my track team. And, so like, going to the OMA and stuff, I got to meet more people and everything.

Overall, each of the participants expressed comfort that came from seeing other people on campus that they considered to be like them based upon racial status.

“We understand where you’re coming from”

The participants went on to discuss how encountering and interacting with other Black people provided comfort that stemmed from something beyond skin color. This comfort also stemmed from the similar backgrounds they perceived as sharing with other people of their same race. Some of the participants described how knowing that others on campus understood their college situation in multiple ways (i.e., socially, financially, and emotionally, etc.) was comforting to them in their experience. Josh, a sophomore, explained that by identifying with other Black students and wanting to spend time with them was not an indication of a desire to separate himself from other races present on campus.

Like I mean, it makes me feel involved like with, I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm not like, like, I don't only want to talk to Black people and all that, but I mean it's
definitely nice to get together like with people of your own race, and some of them who've had the same experiences as you've had.

Jamelle, a freshman, also felt similarly when she spoke about the importance to her of having people on campus that understood her circumstances as a Black student on a predominantly White campus. Again, like Josh, this emphasis on having other people with similar experiences present did not translate into an attempt to segregate. She explained, “It doesn't feel like segregation, it's just, like, ummm, makes you feel more comfortable knowing that there's people like you, we understand where you're coming from, and let us help you.” Jamelle went on to describe how Black staff members associated with Black student support services, who were alumni, also held a level of value in having someone to identify with. She talked about how she found solace:

…something that says 'we understand.' …lots of them are recent graduates. And so, they all kind of, understand exactly where you are right now. So, I think that's something, anybody that can empathize with you and where you are, I mean that's definitely a help.

Ryan, a junior, reiterated the comfort that came from meeting Black alumni through his participation in Black student support services. He spoke about how meeting a Black graduate from the same institution before he came to college allowed him to see what opportunities would be available to him once he got to campus, including studying abroad. He found comfort knowing about the Black alumni that came before him. He said:
…it was actually like, comforting knowing like, that there were other Black people that had done it before me….when I was talking to him, and he was like, ‘well I went to London and I’ve done all these different things.’ I was like okay, so what’s like actually tangible, possible. Because I’m thinking, I don’t know, I didn’t, I never researched it, but I was thinking at the time, like going abroad would be nice, but it probably isn’t actually feasible or affordable. But now I’m actually on a trip to go abroad this summer.

Arthur and Alecia also described how they perceived having people on campus with similar experiences as comforting. Arthur, a first-year student, stated that he had not felt alienated as a Black student on campus, but he knew other Black students did. He believed that Black student support services played a role of putting students with similar challenges in touch with one another to aid with overcoming such feelings of alienation. He explained, “Maybe it can put that alienated person in contact with you, and they'll realize 'hey, maybe I shouldn't have felt alienated in the first place.’”

Alecia, a sophomore, considered Black student support services to be a more viable form of assistance to Black students and their particular on-campus challenges. She revealed this perception when she spoke about the staff members in the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

I feel like it's a support system, you can talk to them, because they are multicultural and they know, like, I feel like they can relate more than you going to like…the Counseling services, where the person is White, I don't feel like they can understand the issues you have as much as the people in OMA can.
While conducting observations in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, I witnessed that this type of comfort in an environment where they were the majority was comfort to not only Black undergraduate students, but also Black faculty. A post-doctorate faculty member swiftly entered the office, her face wrought with frustration. She explained to the administrative assistant that she simply needed to go somewhere to vent and take a breath where she knew people would understand.

In addition to the college challenges related to social and emotional issues that arise with being in the racial minority, Dionne remembered how the Office of Multicultural Affairs helped her realize that she was not the only student on campus in her financial situation. She recounted how the administrative assistant helped to provide her with some aid and perspective as she started her senior year.

And sometimes, like, I know OMA really didn't have a lot of book scholarships this year, but Mrs. Patricia was like, ‘I'm willing to help you,’ because I didn't really have any of my books, and I was like stressing out for 2 weeks, and I still hadn't gotten my refund check to go buy my books, and I was just like, like, terrible. And Mrs. Patricia was like, ‘we'll just buy your books, and you'll just pay us back when you get your refund check.’ And I was like ‘you can't do that!’ And she was like 'yes we can, calm down.' And I was just like upset, and so I think like, offices like that, that are there to help you, like, breathe and realize that you're not the only person in this situation is really deep because some of my fellow peers have never been in that situation, where they're like, they don't know how they are going to pay for something because it's just available for them. And
so, I think I do need offices like that or do just need an office to realize that I'm not the only person in my situation. Like, other people are going through it, and they are just like me.

“More strength and more of a voice”

Beyond finding comfort in both shared racial status and backgrounds and experiences, participants described another component they had in common that Black student support services allowed them to cultivate. This shared component was an emphasis on social justice. Many of the participants spoke about the importance of having their voices and collective agenda as Black students heard as well as their aspirations to help the Black community advance. The participants described Black student support services as a vehicle to come together to address issues affecting Black students on campus and to use the positions they have earned to advance the Black community.

Darryl, a junior, compared the presentation of Black students as a unified voice to the successful immigration of the Irish, Italians, and Jews into the United States mainstream as depicted in the film *Gangs of New York*. He described how these ethnic groups displayed their political power in a time where they were considered an outcast minority and eventually gained access to the social benefits of being White in the United States. Similar to this trajectory, Darryl said Black students’ unification can be advantageous to their on-campus circumstances. He explained:

I mean I'm not looking at it like, this is, like the Civil Rights movement or anything, but I think, like, if you can identify with a certain group of people,
ummm, you have like more strength and more of a voice if you identify yourself with that group of people and then try to interact with others.

He continued:

And it kind of shows like, to other people on the outside that, like, ummm, even though there's a small minority, they still have a lot of strength because, because if they can get like different events and different tasks done, that shows that a small group of people will have a lot of power.

Ryan, following Darryl’s train of thought, revealed how he used his own position on the university’s student activities funding board to advance the interests of Black students through on-campus programming. He spoke about his willingness to review proposals from Black student support services for funding before they are presented to the board in order to make adjustments to give the proposal a better chance at receiving funding. He also said he behaved as the advocate for such events at the board meetings, given the unique perspective he had based upon his race. The junior explained, “So, basically, what I call it, I say I have the OMA vote in there. Especially this year, because I’m the only male, and I’m the only minority. Everybody else is a White female.”

As she began her senior year, Shannon talked about how her close participation with Black student support services gave her a better vantage point to witness the work that was being done on campus to promote the interests of Black students. She had worked closely with the Office of Multicultural Affairs during her college tenure and was appreciative of the Office’s advocacy for diversity. Shannon explained:
The OMA, everything that they do. It's nice, nice to be able to go in there and see other people and see them working really hard to get more diversity on campus and doing stuff like that. So I really, I really do like that.

Additionally, Natasha, a sophomore, described how her involvement in Black student support services has afforded her opportunities to have her ideas incorporated into the work the Office of Multicultural Affairs has done to promote heightened diversity on campus, marking this work as part of her identity. Natasha stated:

I guess, because OMA has become a part of who I am, you know, in the fact that I'll go in there and I'll talk, and I'll be like, 'Mrs. [Fowler], I have an idea about this' and she'll be like 'you know, [Natasha], that's a really good idea. I'm going to see what we can do about this and we can work this into, you know, into what we're doing.'

In this section, the emergent theme of shared racial/cultural experiences and agenda helped prompt a better understanding of why participants became involved with Black student support services on this predominantly White campus. In a setting where they were often reminded that they were the racial and cultural minority, they valued finding places and events on campus where they were able to come together with other students, faculty, staff, and alumni that reflected their own racial culture and interests. Moreover, the participants found strength in advancing their self-interests as a minority population on campus by banding together as a unified group.
Racial/Cultural Identity Expression and Development

Much like the previous section, this section focuses on participants’ attention to their racial and cultural identities. However, the emergent theme of racial/cultural identity expression and development goes beyond a shared group membership. Instead, in this section, the participants’ perceptions of how Black student support services allowed them to express their racial identity on campus or learn more about their own race are discussed.

“I’m learning about Black people”

All of the participants self-identified as a Black person on the participant profile sheet they completed prior to interviews. Although they shared this common marker, and the perception that this racial category automatically gave them a shared background and experiences discussed in the previous theme, many of the participants referenced existent differences among Black people. The participants did not describe the Black students on campus as comprising a monolithic group. Additionally, many of the participants described a learning process associated with participating in Black student support services through the exposure it provided them to various Black people.

Jamelle explained that due to differences among Black students on campus, she believed she learned from interacting with other Black students because they each brought unique perspectives and experiences to the table. The freshman stated:

I don't feel that you can learn with people that are just like you. Ummm, so, getting to know different people, being involved, and even if it's, you know, Blacks, and I'm Black, still, different things about these different people…
Both Darryl and Natasha also suggested that participating in Black student support services allowed Black students to attain or maintain a piece of their identity related to being Black. Darryl, a junior, thought that Black students that did not participate with Black student support services were neglecting a part of their identity, to their own disadvantage. He stated he felt Black student support services were related to Black students’ identity: “I think they're really necessary, and, I see a lot of like Black students, they kind of just struggle with their identity. Ones that don't really take advantage of things that are presented to them.” Natasha, a sophomore, provided an example of how Black students involved with Black student support services may find support for their racial identity and the challenges Black students face on campus. She stated:

I know people that struggle with being Black and feeling like, everyone is looking at them to fail, you know. I know people like that, who need like support to be like, you're not in this alone, and we're all here for you.

Marlena and Shannon described instances where they learned more about their own identities through participating with Black student support services. A sophomore, Marlena explained she did not know many people like herself back home where she lived in the inner city. She was valedictorian of her high school and did not know many Black people that pursued higher education and excelled academically until she came to college. She spoke with excitement about how she had seen Black people through new eyes by interacting with Black students, faculty/staff, and guest speakers while participating with Black student support services. When asked what role Black student
support services played in her college experience thus far, she responded with the word “learning.” “Learning. Yes, about Black people. Yes. Intelligent, Black people and what they think. And, I find it amazing.”

Marlena continued to talk about two forums where she has learned about Black people in college. These learning opportunities included speakers the Office of Multicultural Affairs brought for a multicultural poetry program, and interactions with the men that run a Black male mentoring program for middle school students. She talked about learning from the poets’ stories that the Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs brought to campus and how they were “inspirational.” Marlena also explained that her encounters with the Black males in the mentoring group plus their future aspirations have changed her perception of Black people. She explained:

I talk with them, and I like learn from them. They amaze me about their plan after college, how they're planning to, they said they were going to go to a city and just take over, so. [Laughs]. Yea, and I just find it like, I don't even limit them. Back home, I really do limit the people to things that they do. When I come to [college], I don't limit the Black people.

A senior, Shannon recounted how participating with Black student support services allowed her to tap into a part of her identity that she had not previously learned much about. She described how she and one of her friends were both Nigerian. Due to this shared identity, Shannon agreed to help her friend create a student organization for African and Caribbean students. She explained how participating with this organization afforded her an opportunity to learn more about this part of her culture for the first time.
It was very fun. Especially because, like my parents are divorced, so I didn't really grow up with Nigerian culture. So it was like, it was a learning experience for me too. And then being able to like, talk to my Dad about, you know all this stuff, and ask him about, you know, his, how he grew up and things of his heritage and stuff, I, it was like it was exciting for me and I could also tell like he was so excited for me to be asking questions and wanting to learn more. So it was like, a double plus for me.

Ryan, a junior, described how he used his role as a mentor in the multicultural mentoring program sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs to aid in first-year students’ identity development. He talked about two Black students he mentored at disparate stages in their identity development. Ryan described:

Each person, I met them, I figured out their personality and I set a goal for myself for them to accomplish that they didn’t know about yet. So my goal for him, would have been to just, interact with Black people. When I’ve seen him around Black people, he looks scared of Black people…., I would have wanted him to be able to find, like, at least, one other Black, and it didn’t have to be me, but like one Black person that you know, you’re cool with on your same level, that you can just talk and have regular like, you know regular conversation like you do with your homeboys. That you don’t wince every time you go past a Black person. And that, just because they look differently from you, and they probably talk differently from you, you know give them a chance. Everybody has a story. It may not be as clean and polished as yours, but everybody’s got a story, everybody
gets to where they get somehow, some way. It’s all a part of, it’s all a part of life’s journey, and source of enlightenment….One of them, was the exact opposite…all he knew was Black people... He grew up in…a predominantly Black high school, all Black family, I think both of his parents worked in some like, position of, they were always under a White boss. And they were either, most of the stories were in situations where like, it always seemed like the White man was keeping him down. So he had a negative view….I wanted him to, you know, find out that there are genuine, there are going to be some assholes in every race, like there are some good people.

While observing the student interactions in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the researcher witnessed a conversation with Ryan and another student that had similar perceptions of White people to his latter mentee. This female student mentioned that at that point in her life, she was angry with White people. After she made this declaration, Ryan and other Black students present in the Office engaged the student in a conversation about how she should not feel that way towards the entire group. From this student’s candid statement a complicated, but peaceful discourse ensued. I ascertained that the office provided a space for Black students to honestly grapple with issues of race and racism, learning from one another’s viewpoints.

“Focus on [Black] things and culture”

In addition to learning about Black culture themselves, the participants also spoke about a desire to share their cultural heritage and see it represented on campus. The participants talked about the demonstration of Black heritage from both a social and
historical standpoint. Many of the participants stated that without the presence of Black student support services and the cultural programming offered through these services, they would most likely venture off campus to find a social scene. Some also stated, due to cultural differences, the social activities that are targeted towards the predominantly White community did not interest them.

Many of the participants discussed social aspects they found by participating with Black student support services. Lamont, a sophomore, explained he was able to find others with similar social interests to him through his involvement in the Black Student Alliance. He stated that, “Being a part of BSA and all that, does give you those moments where you guys could actually socialize and meet others that have the same type of music in common.”

Also through participating with the Black Student Alliance, Josh described how he was able to find parties that were more interesting to him than the predominantly White fraternity parties. Josh described:

I mean, and all they do is like, go out and drink. And I don't drink, so like, I don't really hang with them….the BSA and like Black groups, they have parties…Without the alcohol. No, there was no alcohol. So that was, I mean, they're better.

Similarly, Arthur recalled an orientation event sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs that represented the social culture he was looking for in college as a first-year student. Like Josh, he was uninterested in the predominantly White fraternity parties because of his perception that they focused mainly on the consumption of alcohol,
and he did not drink. The freshman remembered attending this event and how it was the first time he was able to see a large number of Black people on campus. Arthur stated:

OMA had some function, and [Laughs] I always told this joke, I was like 'whoa, it's a lot of Black people at this thing!' Because on the thing, on the flyer, they put 'deejay' and 'music' and that sort of thing, so I was like those are, those are what they, that's what's going to bring all the Black people, that's like the key words…And I was like, ‘okay I'm going to go to this, you know just check it out.’

I showed up, a whole bunch of Black people, I mean, there were like some White people… I was like ‘ooooo!’ I got excited!

Alecia, a sophomore, talked about how she saw the events sponsored by the Student Union on campus and decided to attend a comedy show. She recalled that when she arrived, she thought “I don't feel like I belong here” since she was the only Black person in attendance. Alecia also recalled that the content of the comedy show was not interesting to her, hypothesizing that potentially there were some differences in what is considered humorous based upon racial/ethnic culture. Alecia expressed she generally enjoyed campus events hosted through Black student support services more than the majority of the campus events geared towards the dominant population of White students.

Echoing this sentiment, Shannon described how she attended a comedy show sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and enjoyed both the content of the show and the congregation of a large amount of Black students on campus. The senior recalled:

The comedy show the last year. I loved that. That was so fun. So I think to me like, [Laughs] I think I was texting my friend actually I was like, 'oh my God, you
should have come here, I felt like I was at a Black school.' [Laughs] At the
comedy show, it was so funny.

Reflecting upon these types of events and how they were primarily supported,
coordinated, and sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Natasha reflected on
how events that represented her culture on campus would not be present without Black
student support services. She pondered:

Now that I think about it, if it wasn't for OMA, I feel like there would be no
multicultural events, because if I'm thinking about it now, everything that is
multicultural is funded by OMA or co-sponsored by OMA, or OMA's always in
the background, behind the curtains, doing something. Like, for real, I'm even
surprised [a Black artist is] coming for homecoming, like, all the concerts are like,
like White musicians no one knows but the White students…I never realized this.
If it wasn't OMA, I do not know, because they do the [on-campus cultural
programming], they're behind that, and they're behind of course all the
organizations that are multicultural. Lord have mercy. I don't know. Thank God
for OMA, that's all I have to say about that. [Laughs].

Although the participants expressed gratitude for the representations of Black
culture currently present on campus, some of them talked about how they would like to
see heightened support from the university and more outlets for cultural expression
available to them. Tiffany and Lamont explained a couple of ways they would like to see
this accomplished. Tiffany described her desire for campus changes as she started her
third year of college. She stated:
I would like to see more African American organizations. That's a big one for me. I would like, I mean it doesn't have to be all Black, but if it can be majority so that I can feel comfortable, I would really love to see that. Umm, maybe there's a lot here, but I, they're not doing anything if there are, because I don't see any kind of support from, from faculty or from the, the staff on that. No one mentions, umm, any kind of, like for, for the umm, February, Black History, no one mentioned that in class. I'm used to in, I'm used to at my high school, we did, we mentioned it like all the time, they had fun facts and everything, like if it, if we had an organization that could focus on African American things and culture, if it's there, I don't see it.

From his perspective, as he started his second year on campus, Lamont described how having a more viable Black fraternity and sorority population on campus would make his college experience better. He expressed:

I want there to be more of a presence of Black Greeks on campus….as far as culture. Right away….Maybe perhaps I might want to be able to join one of the Black Greeks…if their presence was, you know, known around campus…it's harder for them to actually do that, to make themselves known on a predominantly White campus. But I feel that if I had Black Greeks, then everything would be perfect.

Ironically, a week after these interviews and observations were conducted, the college held an official presentation ceremony of on-campus markers commemorating predominantly Black fraternities and sororities. Two articles in the school’s newspaper...
(see Appendix L for articles) relayed many Black students’ and faculty/staff’s pride in the university’s commitment to honoring the positive work such organizations achieved internationally, locally, and on campus, in spite of the small numbers within these organizations.

“Being separatist isn’t necessarily being separatist”

The participants expressed the comfort they found from participating with Black student support services, but also displayed a tendency to wrestle with perceptions that these programs and services functioned to allow Black students to segregate themselves from the mainstream campus community and stay amongst other Black students only. Most of the participants talked about how they did not perceive Black student support services as a vehicle for segregation, with one exception.

Even though she had participated in Black student support services during her two years on campus, Alecia wondered if the programs and activities served to separate Black students from the rest of the campus constituents. She talked about how she wished she saw more cross-racial interaction on campus.

I would really like to see more White people come to our events…But the thing about it is, they only broadcast it to BSA, like Black multicultural students. And I'm like if we want everyone to participate, you've got to broadcast it to the whole population. Even if some people still might not attend, but I feel like, it just, we just need to kind of merge together instead of having like the White events and the Black events. Because we had our own like, OMA cookout, like multicultural event and cookout and like all the White people were just passing by that saw us
like all grouped together on the quad. I feel like we are excluding ourselves a little bit.

On the other end of the spectrum, some participants mentioned they knew of other Black students who decided not to participate in these services since they found them to be separatist. Dionne described how she witnessed Black students excluding themselves from other Black students and targeted student support services in her four year college tenure. She explained her opinion on such a choice in behavior:

Like I know some people come to campus with the attitude of excluding themselves from, I guess the Black community, or students of color and just basically immersing in the White community and being a part of the White fraternity, and I'm not bashing that if you want to be a part of a White fraternity, go for it, I would say do whatever you feel comfortable doing, but don't come to the table with the attitude of specifically excluding something. Like, take it all in.

Arthur revealed his feelings that Black student support services’ provision of programs targeting Black students was not negative. He said that these services may provide a space on campus that countered the mainstream culture, but this counter-culture should not be seen as a negative attribute of targeted student support services. He explained he chose to include Black student support services on his list of activities in his first year of college because he saw himself as different from the majority of campus. Arthur found it positive to have venues to express that part of his racial identity. He stated:
So, it's like, being separatist isn't necessarily being separatist because this isn't the whole, this is just Whiteness. And you're breaking away from that, I think you, I'm not breaking away from it, not to say you should reject it, but just to say that you should realize yourself as different and that's, because that's the only way you can appreciate each other and actually have, you know, harmony in any sense. So, that's one of the, so, so, I, I, I would say when people say 'oh, that's separatist, don't go to that,' don't listen to them. Go to it. If you, if you're not used to being in an environment where it's predominantly White, or it's, or if you just like being around Black people, don't listen to people who say it's separatist, because a) it's not really separatist because you're just separating yourself from Whiteness and b) even if it is separatist, it's good because you are not a part of that. You know, naturally, anyway.

In this section, the emergent theme of racial/cultural identity expression and development described participants’ views of targeted student support services as a vehicle to display a part of their identities on campus and learn more about the Black race. Participants described their new experiences with race and culture that allowed them to learn and grow as a Black student. The participants also explained why it was important for them to see their racial and cultural identities present and celebrated at the university.
We are Family

The previous two sections focused on the racial and culture commonalities the participants shared. These commonalities prompted participation and identification with Black student support services that led the participants to find a particular niche on campus. In this niche, participants described how they were able to find a sense of community and support that resembled a familial unit. The following section discusses how participants saw other campus members that were associated with Black student support services as akin to their family.

“It kind of gives you a piece of home”

Participants’ homes ranged from as close in proximity to the university as in-state to as far away as an island in the Caribbean. Regardless of their distance from home or intensity of homesickness in their transition to college, each participant portrayed the environment they found within Black student support services as fostering a tight-knit community and providing a sense of home away from home. They described how they found this piece of home among both peers and Office of Multicultural Affairs staff members. The participants varied in how much time they spent participating with Black student support services, and how intimate their connections were with peers and staff; but they did not vary in their depiction of the comfort they received from finding this type of home environment in college.

Jamelle had only been on campus a couple of months at the time of the interview, and had mainly only visited the Office of Multicultural Affairs for a weekly breakfast
event, but yet she bestowed the home moniker to the atmosphere she encountered each time she attended that event. Jamelle explained:

It kind of gives you piece of home, even, where you're sitting around the table, maybe having breakfast and talking to everybody, like you would at home. And some people are, miles and miles and miles away from home, so it gives you that little piece of, this is my family right here. And so, that's the part that I love the most.

Others explained that the majority of their close friendships on campus came from participating in Black student support services. Keenon, in particular, explained that he desired relationships in his college experience that broke through the surface-level and held more intimate value. He stated his involvement in Black student organizations provided him with such relationships. He said, “The majority of my friendships come from being involved in the organizations. It allows me to learn about the other minorities on campus, like a more intimate level than just them passing, and be like 'oh, you're Black let's talk.’” Keenon also described his feelings when he goes into the Office of Multicultural Affairs, again emphasizing personal bonds with people on campus.

I felt like I'm at home, like everybody knows my name, you know. Everyone's going, I can go in there, and know that I'm going to get a guaranteed greeting just from everybody, you know. I can talk about stuff that we were talking about yesterday, and they'll actually remember. You know, it's not like, some surface level conversation with someone in passing, and the next day you don't even
recognize that person, or they don't recognize you. So, I feel like, you know, pretty close-knit in there, it's like a little hubble.

Similarly, Ryan perceived Black student support services as a medium to forge and maintain family-like relationships on campus. He described how the presence of such an environment functioned as a type of haven in college, a place where he could relax and reflect. The junior, whose biological parents were less than a 30 minute drive away, said:

OMA is kind of like, going to your parents’ house sometimes. Like you go there, you can get something to eat, you can go lay down…Like sometimes you go, you go home, you’re able to chill, you’re able to drink, you’re able to like, I don’t know, reconnect, like and center yourself sometime when you go in there.

Additionally, Ryan recalled an instance where the administrative assistant of the Office of Multicultural Affairs acted in a maternal capacity and forced him to go to a networking event. He also conveyed the comfort with which he received such chastisement. He remembered how this incident turned out in his favor:

…they persuade and reprimand and force you to actually go to some of these events that you don’t even think you need to go to at first. But they see the need for it. So like, Mrs. [P.], the little tiny general, will come through and like, I was sleep one day, and she was like, she yanked me by my ear and was like, ‘ain’t you supposed to be at the so and so and so at 2 o’clock?’ I was like ‘no, I don’t want to go!’ ‘You ain’t got no choice, you got to get up out of here!’…I was going to something for a, for a job fair or something like that. And it actually worked out, I
got that guy’s point of contact, I’m supposed to be talking to him about maybe
doing a film internship, hopefully after graduation.

“Just keep tabs on me”

As well as providing the participants with a piece of home while they are in
college, the participants also described how they appreciated knowing someone was
specifically looking out for their well-being. The participants explained that they obtained
this watchful eye through Black student support services either from their peers in the
Black student organizations or from the staff in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Each
of the participants recalled how they were assigned an upperclassman mentor of color
during their first year on campus from the Office of Multicultural Affairs’ multicultural
mentoring program. Although some of the mentoring relationships were more successful
than others in terms of actual face-to-face encounters and how much guidance the
mentors provided to the mentees, all of the participants discussed the comfort related to
knowing that someone was specifically assigned to watch out for them.

Other participants talked about how Black upperclassmen that were not
particularly assigned to them as mentors still took the initiative to check in on them and
encourage them to become more involved on campus. Dionne described a scenario
wherein the administrative assistant of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, concerned with
Dionne’s habits of staying to herself and in her room, introduced her to two leaders in
Black student support services. She recalled how these leaders of the Black Student
Alliance and the Gospel Choir continued to contact her and invite her to organizations’
meetings and events after this initial meeting. Dionne described:
They just basically like kept doing that and kept coming to get to me and kept looking in on me, or they would text me, or message me on facebook, or just keep tabs on me or checking on me, like they would see me walk, they'd stop and have a conversation with me and see how my day was going.

Dionne credited the actions of these two upperclassmen as prompting her to come out of her shell on campus and getting her more involved. As a junior, Dionne continued to participate with both the Gospel Choir and Black Student Alliance, having held leadership positions in each.

Emanating from the environment created within the Office of Multicultural Affairs, participants expressed their comfort in going into the Office without any particular business agenda in mind. They would simply go into the office in between classes to keep from walking back to their rooms, to settle into a spot to do work, to rest in the student lounge, or to visit with peers and the office staff, who they regarded in a familial manner. Darryl relayed his perception of the setting in the office and the open reception he received from the staff. Darryl stated:

…it seems kind of like a big brother/big sister kind of thing. Ummm, it's not very structured, it's very relaxed when you come to talk to them in the Office if you need anything, and, ummm, I, I just went up there to talk sometimes, you know. You don't particularly need anything, or have problems, just go to talk, and that's something that I enjoy, that you can just, that they're so personable.

During my time observing interactions in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, I saw Black students come and go, using their time in the office to talk to staff or peers,
study, watch television in the lounge, among other things. One particular student was stopped and questioned by the administrative assistant. She noticed a change in this student’s demeanor from her normal disposition. The student seemed to appreciate that someone discerned that something was wrong and began to open up to the office staff member about her current challenges.

Other participants described how the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs also reached out to them simply to see how they were doing academically, socially, and more. These participants explained they appreciated knowing that someone on campus cared. Keenon talked about his appreciation of the director’s willingness to initiate check-in meetings with him. Referencing the director, he stated that, “She's one of those people, like she will see me and be like 'well, we haven't talked in a while, make an appointment to come to my office and talk to me' and I like that they take that initiative.”

Tiffany echoed Keenon’s appreciation of the director’s propensity to contact Black students, randomly from her perspective, to see how they were faring with the day-to-day struggles that accompany college life. Generally unhappy with the majority of her college experience, Tiffany described how significant those seemingly small actions were to her:

She reached out to, umm, me and other students. I don't know if they were just all minorities, but I, but it was just a group of students. I didn't see the list. But she sent it out, and umm, yea, she just reached out to me. And I thought that was really really cool. Because most people don't do that. You have to go search for them, so I got that, that, that, welcome that I didn't get before when I first came in
here. I finally received it by talking to her. It was that welcome, you know. So, that was important to me.

Keeping tabs on Black students went beyond the undergraduate level of Black student support services. As homecoming approached at the college, the president of the school’s Black alumni organization sent an email encouraging alumni returning to campus to stop and engage Black current students. The president asked Black alumni to offer their assistance in helping Black students navigate the environment of that particular institution. She articulated that, “They need to know that we exist and that there is life beyond [college]!”

The participants described how they perceived other students, faculty, staff, and alumni associated with Black student support services similar to their family members. The participants explained how they felt parental support from the Office of Multicultural Affairs staff. They also discussed how they bonded with peers that maintained checks on how they were faring in college. Participants expressed a sense of comfort from knowing that someone on campus cared about their well-being, and also gave them an extra nudge to become more involved on campus.

Centralized Hub of Information

The prior section included a discussion of how participants found comfort and encouragement to become more involved at the university from the campus members associated with Black student support services. This encouragement to become more involved was also manifested in the information participants accessed from these targeted student support services. Participants described how Black student support services
provided them with a centralized place to find out information and direction about a myriad of campus opportunities and events.

“I probably wouldn’t be informed”

Many of the participants shared how they accessed information regarding on and off campus events and opportunities through their involvement in Black student support services. Participants talked about a variety of information they acquired: about activities, advice concerning how to handle racial conditions, positions on campus boards, etc. They referenced the routine bi-weekly emails (see Appendix K for excerpt of Office of Multicultural Affairs listserv announcements) they received from the administrative assistant of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. These emails provided them with information about what events were happening on campus and how to become involved in a myriad of student organizations (including, but not limited to, activities targeting Black students). Marlena, who spent the vast majority of her time either in class or at one of her two jobs, described specifically how emails from the Office of Multicultural Affairs contributed to her knowledge of what occurred on campus. The sophomore expressed:

They help. Like, ummm, if I didn't get those emails from Mrs. [Patricia] or, BSA emails, or Delta whatever emails. Ummm, I probably wouldn't be informed about the bigger things, not just activities, but people are coming to the school, people who are, ummm, at the job fairs, the bigger things that are here happening. So it is, it's very important. Because as a student, the only way I would find out, is if someone else told me or I just happened to be there.
Dionne, who became involved in both the Black Student Alliance and the Gospel Choir after constant contact with upperclassmen leaders in each of the organizations, explained that these leaders provided helpful information to assist her as a Black student on a predominantly White campus and beyond. When she first met these student leaders as a freshman and began to forge a relationship with them, she described the type of advice they provided. She explained:

I started enjoying and then their influence and their input about their past experiences on campus and how to deal with certain situations. And just life in general, and what professors to take and like simple information that you never would have thought of or how to approach a situation when you feel a certain type of way or you do encounter a racial situation.

Other students communicated how they connected with faculty and staff members on campus through their involvement with Black student support services. Particularly, by spending time in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, participants stated that they met faculty and staff members that also dropped by the office to say hello or to tend to some specific business. During my observations of the office, a Black male graduate of the college that worked with a first-generation scholarship program on campus casually came into the Office. He spoke to many students, offering them advice about their respective student organization. This particular staff member was mentioned by some participants for providing them with information about minority scholarships to aid in financing their education.
Ryan described a situation in his campus experience where he became more connected to other faculty and staff members outside of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. He stated:

Once I got involved in OMA, and I just saw like, some of the other people just randomly come through there. Like I’ll talk to them when they come, and people from different faculty and different offices. I started to really see like, the potential, like of the, the opportunities and potential that there are to do those things.

Ryan also spoke about how he was recommended by the director of Office of Multicultural Affairs to serve on the university committee that made decisions regarding the allocation of student activity dollars. Through this recommendation, he met with the dean of student services and the dean of campus life and was invited to serve on the board. After his initial year on the committee, the dean of campus life appointed him to another two terms on the board going into his junior year. He explained that the recommendation from the director eventually allowed him to have a more personal relationship with the dean of student services. Ryan explained:

Through them, I was able to meet, umm, Melissa Brooks and Dean Jones. I was, through OMA, I was able to meet them. I’d always figure you were supposed to avoid Dean Jones since he was, you know, reprimanding people. And then, like, even like I have a meeting with him at 3 o’clock today after this one. They’re like, ‘you going to go see Dean Jones, what do you do?’ I’m like ‘we’re just catching up. Nothing serious, I’m not in trouble.’
“It’s a great resource”

In addition to providing information about events and opportunities, all of the participants portrayed Black student support services as a place to go when they were in need of help. Some of the participants explained they had yet to need this type of assistance, but it was comforting to know it was available. Participants described a sense of security they had from knowing that Black student support services were available. The sophomore, Lamont, shared this sentiment:

I haven't really needed to, but it's a good feeling knowing that if I needed to, I could actually go to the, umm, you know, actually be welcomed, you know, to talk about whatever might be or take advantage of the resources that they do have.

Similarly, Marlena advised other Black students not to take the type of support offered through the Office of Multicultural Affairs for granted when she stated:

Be grateful that they're there, when everything else falls apart, you do have support, like you have people that you can go and talk to. You have people that will help you, in pretty much any situation if you actually go and talk to them. The people here are nice, they're sweet, they're open. And, they're reliable. You can actually, probably pick someone and depend on them if all else fails.

Some of the participants spoke about how the Office of Multicultural Affairs provided academic support to aid them in their continued matriculation. Most of the participants referenced their awareness of the financial assistance many Black students received in the form of scholarships to purchase books or to study abroad. For the
students that did not receive a book scholarship from the office, there was still the potential to access free textbooks from the generosity of other students that took the same courses before them. Dionne expressed her opinion of this pooling of students’ resources to help one another.

I think it's a great resource because then students from the past who were able to buy their books on their own, or buy their books through scholarships through OMA leave their books in there, and then you take the same classes, and then you're able to leave your books in there and so you are able to help someone and I think that is a good thing too.

I observed an instance where one student displayed her desire to help another student with academic troubles. A male student, clearly stressed, was asked by the administrative assistant why she had not seen him much recently. He responded that he was struggling in a particular class, and was not sure of what to do. A female student in the office overheard the students’ plea, and interjected that she was in the same class and scheduled weekly tutorial meetings with the professor. She invited him to attend those sessions with her, stating how these meetings had helped her in the class.

Ryan shared a story about an experience he had as a mentor in the Office of Multicultural Affairs mentoring program. When he checked in on his mentee to see how his classes were going, he discovered that the freshman was not studying enough and resultantly performed poorly on a test. Knowing the academic resources available, Ryan referred the struggling student to the Office. He laughingly recalled this conversation with his mentee:
He had his rude awakening like the 2nd week, when he failed his chem test. And I was like ‘how bad did you do?’ And he said ‘bad.’ I was like ‘like 60’s?’ He was like ‘like 16 bad.’ I was like ‘oh.’ So I was like ‘alright’ [Laughs]…I said ‘come on, we about to go to OMA.’ He was like ‘what’s in OMA?’ ‘We about to go get you a tutor, that’s what we about to do.’ [Laughs]

Dionne remembered a time when the Office of Multicultural Affairs also helped her academically when she became ill. She described how the staff became her line of contact to her professors and assisted her in maintaining the academic course load while she was off campus. Dionne explained:

Multicultural Affairs has really really helped me because the beginning of last semester, I got really really sick, they were like helpful. I was super worried, I just wanted to come back to school, and I was super worried about catching up and they did a lot with the Office of Academic Advising and making sure that my professors knew where I was, that I wasn't just skipping class or not to delete me from the roster.

Overall, participants shared the comfort they received from knowing that Black student support services were present for them on campus. The freshman Jamelle summed up this sentiment when she described how she viewed the Office of Multicultural Affairs as a useful resource. She said:

Just talk to them, and they can help you out any kind of way. If you need help, they can tell you where else you need to go if they can't particularly help you with that problem. So, I would tell them definitely find your niche in there.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Five discussed the findings of this research study. Five emergent themes were revealed: a) Continuum of Involvement; b) Shared Racial/Cultural Experiences and Agenda; c) Racial/Cultural Identity Expression and Development; d) We are Family; and e) Centralized Hub of Information. The commonality of participant perceptions represented through each of these themes was presented through a recount of the participants’ statements, researcher observations, and related artifacts.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction
The purpose of this study was to lay a foundation for studying Black students’ perceptions of the role of targeted support services in their overall campus experience on a predominantly White campus. To understand the nature and provide a description of Black student experiences with targeted student support services, qualitative research methods were used. This study was important because it allowed Black students to relay their lived experiences as well as perceptions and meanings they ascribe to these experiences.

In this chapter, the researcher concludes the dissertation. The findings of this study are situated among the current body of research literature, including relevant theories and previous studies. Study conclusions and limitations are presented. Lastly, implications for practice and policy and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Discussion
Specific theories comprised the conceptual premise that guided the development of this study. These theories and the study’s implications for these theories are discussed in the following sections. After that discussion, the study’s findings are positioned among similar research studies that investigated Black student support services, comparing those findings to those of this study.
Nigrescence Theory

As discussed in Chapter Three, the methodological choice that matched the research question of this study did not seek to explain participant responses through the use of theory (Creswell, 2009). CRIS results were not analyzed for correlation, causation, or explanation of specific statements and/or behaviors. Therefore, any results of this study that supported Nigrescence theory were discovered through qualitative means, with the researcher functioning as the instrument of investigation (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, because of potential respondent proclivity to submit socially desirable answers on the CRIS scale (Worrell, 2008), participants may have scored the Internalization subscales higher than their true attitudes. This limitation may have hampered interpretations made from this study regarding Nigrescence theory.

The predominant Black identity status represented through participants in this study was the Internalization exemplar as determined by the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Vandiver et al., 2000). The proposition of Nigrescence theory is that Black people with higher attitudes of Internalization are more likely to become engaged with facets of Black identity expression and advancement (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). This proposition was supported by study participant responses within this particular status. Participants with higher Internalization identities spoke about the importance of having their Black heritage represented on campus, as well as strengthening with one another to advance a common agenda of achieving greater diversity on campus (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Participants that identified higher levels of Pre-Encounter attitudes in their CRIS results were more apt to describe Black people, as a whole, negatively or separate the
view of themselves from the rest of the Black community (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). For example, one participant with a high score comparative to the average score on the Pre-encounter Assimilation subscale commented that she was not used to Black people pursuing higher education or supporting one another. This represented her adoption of mainstream negative stereotypes of Black people as a race. Therefore, this study supported Nigrescence theory and its stance on Black behaviors and perceptions in relation to respective attitudinal stages.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory purported five main tenets that were supported by the participants in this study: a) racism is ordinary; b) race is a social construct; c) there is a function to race; d) differential racialization exists among people of the same race; and e) people of color have a unique voice regarding race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Participants in this study described the context of their campus environment as involving recurrent incidences of racism. These incidences may not have been overt or insidious, but critical race theory highlights racist acts that are often subtle, unconscious, and/or unintentional (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This study revealed a campus setting antagonistic for the participants. Their presence at the institution on academic merit, not athletic ability, was questioned. The participants would sometimes struggle to find White peers willing to work in class groups with them. One participant described a situation where she was ignored for a ride to a predominantly White fraternity party when White students were picked up. Many participants felt that campus-wide programming largely ignored their culture and heritage.
Participants in this study did not ascribe any biological difference to people of different races, but agreed that race was socially constructed, supporting another tenet of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Participants cited a socially shared relationship with others due to a common heritage of oppression and forming of a new culture within the United States over history. Study participants supported the idea that race functioned mainly to segregate and order people, another tenet of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Citing the racial separation they saw on campus, participants described a situation where the color of one’s skin was related to their social standing and function on campus. One place where this observation seemed to be most prevalent was in the types of job participants saw Black staff members occupying on campus. They described the majority Black staff members as present in diversity-related offices or in service positions at the university.

Another tenet of critical race theory stated that different backgrounds and other non-racial identities among people of color can hamper their ability to identify with facing the same issues or taking on the same social agendas (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Consistent with that tenet, participants described how they saw themselves as different from other Blacks, in spite of their common race. Due to the intersectionality of multiple identities, participants had been socialized differently from one another. Such identities related to financial background, racial environment at home, status as a college student with a child, and standing as a male non-athlete. Therefore, their social agendas varied among the entire group of Black students. Yet, participants supported the notion of
essentialism, pointing to more strength and power that comes from a unified front (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Lastly, study participants identified with the critical race theory concept of voice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Participants spoke about being drawn to other Black students, faculty, and staff members because of an understanding of their life experiences due to a shared race. Participants found greater comfort talking about their challenges with race and racism on a predominantly White campus among other Black students and faculty/staff due to a perception that they better empathized with their stories than White counterparts.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

Astin (1999) posited the importance for students to become actively involved outside of the classroom during their college tenure. He specifically cited the need to give special attention to minority student populations to encourage their involvement, providing them with a plethora of opportunities to participate on campus. The results of this study suggested that Black student support services provided this special attention to Black students on a predominantly White campus. These services promoted engagement in extracurricular activities of different varieties, both within and outside of the targeted student support services.

The results of this study supported Astin’s (1999) assertion that the more students identify with a particular community on campus, the more likely they are to become involved. Participants in this study detailed their comfort with becoming involved in Black student support services because it represented an entity on campus that reflected
them and their culture. The study conducted by Astin (1999) also revealed that increased levels of student involvement led to greater levels of satisfaction with the overall college experience. Similarly, many participants in this study described how their participation with Black student support services played a role in their on-campus satisfaction. This occurrence happened either loosely by providing a sense of security and comfort or more intensely by primarily offering them a niche on campus. Therefore, this study supported Astin’s theory of student involvement and the significant role that out-of-classroom activities play in a student’s sense of satisfaction with the college experience.

**Social Capital Theory**

This study supported the central crux of social capital theory which holds that less is achieved individually than can be accomplished among a network of individuals (Field, 2003). Participants of this study described a situation where they used their social relationships within Black student support services that illuminated the key elements of social capital theory developed by Bourdieu (1981). These key components were: a) relationships are maintained and/or created through social institution as well as material and/or symbolic exchanged; b) group profits are determined by solidarity and quantity; c) a larger network produces more profits than a smaller network; d) social capital is cumulative in nature and can be accessed through relationships with individuals that previously had access; and e) when new members gain access to social capital, it can be altered and updated (Bourdieu, 1986).

Participants explained that Black student support services connected them to other Black campus constituents simply based upon in-group membership due to race, a form
of social institution. Many participants emphasized the necessity of displaying solidarity through a common, unified front to advance their agenda on campus with regards to diversity. This unified voice included the significance of displaying strength in numbers. Study participants recounted how they accessed a larger network of information about different opportunities on and off campus, such as knowledge about scholarships or studying abroad and/or relationships to key members of the campus community, through the network of Black student support services. Supporting the last element, participants expressed opportunities for them to affect institutional change of the dominant cultural environment on campus. They accomplished this end by using the positions they accessed to advocate for funding to produce more diverse events on campus to better represent the Black culture.

This study also supported Yosso’s (2005) critical race theory perspective of social capital theory. Yosso (2005) purported that minority groups have the ability to activate often unrecognized and unacknowledged forms of social capital to advance their collective interests. Study participants described how they used the support they found within the network of Black student support services to find comfort in themselves on campus as well as access to pertinent information regarding navigating a predominantly White environment as a Black student. These benefits associated with social capital found within Black student support services aided in participants’ sense of comfort in themselves and ability to overcome obstacles on campus. These benefits assisted in their successful matriculation and further permeation of dominant social capital.
Multiculturalist versus Segregationist

Prior to this study, Black student organizations were the only form of Black student support services studied in the research literature. This study included a three-fold definition of targeted student support services. The previous research studies that investigated the role of Black student organizations in the campus life of Black students on predominantly White campuses produced two divergent perspectives: a multiculturalist perspective and a segregationist perspective. The findings of this particular study fell in line with the multicultural perspective.

Gardner et al.’s (1996) study revealed that Black students at predominantly White institutions valued targeted student support services in their college experience. None of the participants in this study refuted this statement as each of them expressed either a need or desire for Black student support services. Moreover, Solórzano et al. (2000) discovered in their study that Black students found places of validation through their participation in Black student organizations. The results of this study also supported that perception of Black student support services. Participants described how they found validation and comfort by the simple sight of a group of others that looked like them and shared similar cultural backgrounds and/or by developing significant on-campus relationships through their participation in these services. Additionally, similar to Solórzano et al.’s (2000) study, this study found that some participants became overstretched in their involvement with Black student support services. This occurred either as a result of the small number of Black students to lead organizations, particularly in the case of Black men, or through pure over-commitment to numerous activities.
From an identity perspective, Hurtado et al. (1999) and Padilla et al. (1997) conducted research studies of racially/ethnically themed student organizations and found that participation in such student organizations was positively related to strong racial/ethnic attitudes for students of color. Within this study, the participants expressed their abilities to learn more about Black culture as well as other cultures on campus through involvement in Black student support services. In addition, they desired to allow the rest of the campus population to learn about their culture; they took pride in and ownership of their Black culture. These findings also supported Guiffrida’s (2003) and Harper and Quaye’s (2007) studies that showed that Black student participation in Black student organizations allowed Black students from predominantly White environments at home to strengthen their knowledge, positive perceptions, and identification with Black culture. Guiffrida (2003) also found that Black student participation in Black student organizations fostered a sense of community on a predominantly White campus. This sentiment applied to Black student support services was consistently echoed by the participants in this study.

Studies by both Guiffrida (2003) and Gilliard (1996) found that Black students who participated in Black student organizations were more apt to become involved on campus, establish ties with faculty members, and access available student support services. Participants in this study described how they were able to become involved in organizations that reflected their identity. This involvement parlayed into additional on-campus activities that allowed them to interact with faculty members outside of the classroom. Additionally, study participants also explained how they attained more
knowledge of on-campus support services through their participation in these programs. Similarly, Harper’s (2008) study of Black male leaders in racially-themed student organizations revealed that they were able to access pertinent social networks and relationships that provided them with information about scholarship opportunities, positions on campus-wide committees, and information about study abroad programs. Participants in this study recounted accessing similar information channels that led to a variety of opportunities through their involvement in Black student support services.

The one segregationist perspective represented in the research literature pertaining to Black student involvement in racially/ethnically themed student organizations was largely opposed by participants in this particular study. Similar to many of the findings from studies that supported the multiculturalist perspective, Sidanius et al.’s (2008) study revealed that Black students increased their racial identification with participation in Black student organizations. However, Sidanius et al. (2008) found that this heightened Black identification led to Black students’ victim self-perceptions and competitive stance with other racial groups. Although participants in this study recounted instances of racism in their college experience, none of them portrayed themselves as perpetual victims of oppression, nor did they relay negative attitudes towards non-Black members of the campus community. Overwhelmingly, this research study is situated among the multiculturalist perspective of Black student support services in the research literature.

Conclusions

An overarching conclusion emerged from this research study: Black students perceived targeted support services as vital and relevant to their college experience at a
predominantly White institution of higher education. Participants described a myriad of functions that Black student support services provided in their daily on-campus lives. However, the true impact of these functions is difficult to quantify since the amount of students involved in Black student support services cannot be easily measured or charted. Based upon this study, it is evident that student self-perception of involvement with these programs and services may differ substantially from a researcher’s or administrator’s assumptions. The results of this study illuminated that oftentimes participants esteemed Black student support services through a symbolic lens. The mere presence of these services on campus was significant to them, regardless of their level of participation with its particular programs and activities.

Black students in this study attributed psychological, almost esoteric, importance to Black student support services on a predominantly White campus. Something seemingly minor as a gathering place once a week for a quick breakfast in a space, where people’s faces mirrored their own and greeted them with warmth, proved to be of utmost significance. These services were comforting for Black students that lived their entire on-campus lives aware that they were in the racial minority, both numerically and politically. The participants in this study described a context wherein they are always one of a few Black students in their classes and one of a few Black students in their residence halls. Several participants stated they were considered to be at this particular institution because of athletic ability regardless of their physical stature. They cited times when they have been shunned from their White peers when forming workgroups in class or singled out and assumed to have a learning disability in spite of the entire class’ poor performance on
a test. The participants also mentioned occasions where White students attending hip-hop themed parties asked to borrow their *ghetto* wardrobe. Alone, these instances may seem inconsequential and trivial to a person’s psyche. But, when aggregated as a daily occurrence in the lives of college students, already undergoing the traditional challenges of attending college, these incidences have the potential to become monumental.

Black student support services did not fuel any aspiration for Black students to separate themselves from the mainstream campus population through participating in Black student support services. Instead, the support services afforded them an opportunity to find solace and comfort in an unfamiliar environment. Attending a meeting where everyone looked similar to them, and being able to drop the attention given to how well they provided an intellectual reply like they do in class, is comforting. Going to a party where people share the same interests in music and dance based upon culture and do not expect them to have the best rhythm because of the color of their skin was exciting. Knowing that staff members were advocating for more diversity on campus and changes to be made to the institutional racial/ethnic climate was encouraging. Having someone watch out specifically for their well-being, understanding their particular set of challenges on campus, was reassuring. These were participants’ perceptions of Black student support services conveyed in this study.

In addition to the intangible, psychological benefits garnered from Black student support services, it was possible and realistic for students to access a network and pool of information that assisted them in matriculating and enhancing their overall college experience. By nature of a centralized university-staffed office, Black students accessed
pertinent information and opportunities to develop necessary communication and political skills. Moreover, because of the comfort with which Black students regarded these services, they received the information, advice, and recommendations with ease, knowing that people associated with Black student support services had their best interests in mind.

Overall, because of their ability to provide Black students with a forum to fully express their identity on campus; Black student support services perform a significant function. In a context and climate that is not racially tolerant and/or inclusive, Black student support services behave as a social activist body to influence and positively change the college environment to become more diversely represented and multiculturally competent. People composed of a variety of identities, even those in the minority, should be able to find those identities not only tolerated, but valued in the university culture. The hope is that as college campuses become more diverse in a variety of ways, all campus constituents are able to express their culture and learn from one another without scrutiny and disregard.

**Limitations**

Since this study was conducted at one institution, using qualitative methods, the findings of this research were not generalizable. The interviews and observations occurred in one span in time that may not be replicated at another point in time on another campus or with a different sample of participants. The nature of the Black student support services on this campus, both from a financial and cultural standpoint, was specific to this institution. The size, location, and demographic composition also are
specific to this particular college. In spite of these limitations, as a starting point of investigation, the findings of this study deem consideration for informing practice and policy as well as future research.

**Implications for Practice and Policy**

Phenomenological research is suited for studies that seek to inform policy and practice within a given field (Creswell, 2009). To that end, the emergent findings of this study illuminated implications for future decision-making regarding policy and practice within student affairs and higher education. Primarily, the first implication for student affairs practice on predominantly White campuses is to maintain a commitment to the presence of staff-run offices related to supporting Black students. It is important that such maintain support of Black students as a direct part of their missions, as well as the support of student-led organizations and programming targeted to the Black student population. This suggestion is not merely based upon the findings of what Black students gain from their participation with Black student support services, but moreover by the discovery from this study that more Black students gain from the presence of these services than can likely be numerically counted. The quantitative impact of Black student support services is an elusive undertaking for any college. If practice is solely informed by administrative reports that account solely for numerical data of students in attendance at particular events, number of events held throughout the year by Black student support services, or amount of students that enter the doors of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, many pieces to the puzzle are neglected in the decision-making process.
One method to combat the difficulty of quantifying the impact of services through practice is to have more Black faculty, staff, and student representation on key campus-wide committees with influence on decision-making for the college. Through ensuring a more diverse perspective, the presence of Black faculty, staff, and students in key roles on campus leads to better-rounded, educated decisions regarding the college’s support and attention given to Black student support services. However, the practice of placing Black campus members on such committees cannot be diminished to a role of tokenism. This point about tokenism informs the following implication for practice.

Colleges need to recruit a critical mass of Black faculty, staff, and students for innumerable beneficial reasons to the college environment. The more Black members are present in the college the less likely it will be for campus constituents to form a monolithic view of the Black community. This point also has specific implications for Black student support services. As some participants stated, the only time they saw numerous Black people in professional roles on campus was associated with Black student support services. They did not expect to see Black professionals teaching their classes or holding positions in other administrative offices on campus. This dearth of Black professionals on predominantly White campuses is not merely a disservice to Black students, but to all students. Non-Black students and faculty/staff members are not able to learn from diverse perspectives if these perspectives are not represented across campus. Furthermore, the concentration of Black professionals in Black student support services feeds the impression that there truly is a place on campus that is only for Black students. This situation denotes that it is a place of separation from the rest of campus. If
cross-racial interaction is limited due to this set-up, all campus constituents’ racial/ethnic identity development and growth are hindered.

A critical mass of Black students would alleviate some of the burdens existent for current Black students. Some of the participants in the study spoke about the fate of becoming overstretched in their commitments. This over-commitment occurred because they felt burdened to produce and support programs sponsored by and for Black students on campus in the absence of a large enough pool to share the work. Such stretching of the Black students among events and causes that are important to them ultimately had the potential to affect their academic achievement. This load and pressure of having to overly contribute to programs associated with targeted student support services may be alleviated by having more Black students to represent this particular community on campus.

Without a critical mass of Black faculty and staff, Black students are limited in the role models and mentors of color they can access. This note rings important considering the comfort Black students found in talking to Black alumni, faculty, and staff that faced many of the same obstacles they are currently facing and found ways to overcome such adversity. Also, with the presence of heightened numbers of Black faculty and staff members, there should be more faculty and staff support of Black student organizations and events. Some of the participants relayed how student organizations with larger support from faculty and staff were able to access more funding and overall advising support than other organizations. This heightened support would allow them to hold larger-scale events on campus and reach a broader audience.
In addition to practice, policies also provide another method to contest the complexity involved with assessing the impact of Black student support services. For instance, policies that would prompt more campus community members to become allies to Black students could prove to be beneficial. One such policy would be requiring multicultural competency training for all faculty and staff members. This policy should be approached from a top-down perspective, beginning with the senior level administration. Through this training, collegiate faculty and staff would become more sensitive to the challenges Black students face on predominantly White campuses and the necessity to see their cultural heritage represented and celebrated in college. With greater levels of cultural competency, further policy and practice concerning the implementation, campus buy-in, and funding of Black student support services would come from a better-rounded, educated standpoint.

Additionally, a multiculturally competent faculty and staff base should ameliorate some of the day-to-day incidences that lead to Black student alienation, causing some to consider refuge only to be found within the confines of Black student support services. Instead of expecting Black students to assimilate to the predominant mainstream culture, faculty and staff would be better equipped to remove barriers to Black student participation and satisfaction with the totality of the campus experience. A policy working towards this goal should include the development of a multicultural task force to assess the collegiate racial/cultural climate and oversee the cultural competency training of all faculty/staff. Such measures should increase the production of more welcoming and representative spaces for Black students.
Another policy that would increase representation and promote further understanding of Black culture, race, and racism on campus would be the requirement for all academic disciplines to engage students in multicultural dialogue and awareness. People of disparate backgrounds and related issues are represented in academia beyond Racial/Ethnic Studies departments. This truth should be portrayed on all college campuses. Black students would see themselves represented in the curriculum, and would not be subjected to the racist acts of invisibility and oversight. All students would gain a more broad perspective of the world necessary to operate in a global economy. Academic discourse has the potential to break down barriers of misinformation and fear of the unknown amongst race. Resultant from breaking down these barriers, more cross-racial comfort and interaction in and out of the classroom should be generated.

Some critics may question why such measures in practice and policy are even necessary. Some may question the need for specialized support systems for Black students in a post-racial era where the United States has overcome racial hurdles to elect its first racial minority president. In addition to the assumption that the effects of historic, systemic practices of racism have been conquered, critics may also question why a minority population deserves targeted attention when they are indeed the minority. Given the historical effects of racism in the United States, the nation faces a racial divide wherein racial gaps of all kinds are prevalent. These gaps are present regarding academic achievement, poverty levels, and social integration and mobility. Cose (1993) examined the anger of the Black middle class with issues of racism in the U.S. The Black middle class is a group that has attained some level of privilege in spite of obstacles, much like
the Black students in this study that entered the doors of higher education. He offered that the ability to close these gaps cannot be achieved until truthful dialogue is undertaken. This dialogue should seek to uncover all of the nation’s imperfections regarding race and racism, including the eradication of a color-blind system of thinking (Cose, 1993).

Since Black students still experience instances of racism of all forms, from lack of representation to misrepresentation, higher education is obligated to support these students’ plight. By pursuing a more thorough understanding of Black students’ situations, higher education will produce a more educated nation regarding issues of race and racism. More awareness and dissemination of knowledge about the often controversial and obscure topic of race and racism will lead to forward social advancement for the entire country. This current generation still carries the burden stemming from the effects of oppression and the social construction of race. By ignoring the need to specifically support Black students, colleges and institutions are invalidating their experiences, culture, and challenges. It would be irresponsible to neglect this targeted population and continue negative trends of isolation, alienation, and academic underperformance for Black students on predominantly White campuses. As Cose (1993) stated:

…swearing that differences don’t count or that repeated blows to the soul shouldn’t be taken seriously. For the truth is that the often hurtful and seemingly trivial encounters of daily existence are in the end what most of life is (p. 192).
Recommendations for Future Research

This research study was designed to increase the understanding of the role of Black student support services in the campus experience of Black students on predominantly White campuses. This purpose was pursued through focusing on Black student perceptions of these services, providing a starting point in this vein of research. As a catalyst for future inquiry, the study produced multiple topics for further exploration. These potential research topics discovered by the researcher are discussed below.

Since this study focused on depth of understanding the findings, the study’s small sample size limited the vastness of the results. Future research should seek to include a larger sample size and appropriate methodology to accommodate a larger number of participants in order to compare a larger sample’s perceptions to the perceptions presented by this study’s participants. In particular, a quantitative survey of a larger sample of participants that sought to determine how many Black students considered themselves to be involved with targeted student support services, even loosely like participants in this study relayed, would provide worthy information. This would be especially true given the ability of quantitative studies to produce more generalizable results. Such knowledge would advance the understanding of impact and reach of Black student support services.

Additionally, due to the research site being limited to one institution, samples from other predominantly White campuses would provide a better-rounded picture of Black student perceptions and experiences across the field of higher education and
student affairs. Such a study should consider the difference in sizes, racial/ethnic demographics represented on campus, funding and staffing of Black student support services, college missions, etc. These considerations could be examined for their affect on the perceptions of Black students related to these services.

Beyond the expansion of research sites and number of Black students included in future research; further studies may also choose to incorporate non-Black students to investigate their perception of targeted student support services. The participants in this study did not present Black student support services as a means to segregate from the rest of the campus community, but conveyed an awareness of this perception by non-Black students. This information would aid in addressing the current lack of involvement of non-Black students with these specialized support services through understanding why non-Black students do not participate and what adjustments could be made to promote more cross-cultural interactions in relation to these services.

A longitudinal study that examines changes in involvement and role of support services in their experience over Black students’ entire college tenure would also increase the understanding. Such a study could be strengthened by an inclusion of the CRIS to track changes in students’ Black identity attitudes over time, and how this affects their engagement and participation with Black student support services. Changes in students’ thinking and perceptions occur over their college tenure as they are exposed to new stimuli and experiences; a longitudinal study could more aptly capture these nuances. This type of information would help student affairs practitioners understand and
recognize where Black students may be in their identity attitudes, and what types of services and support are most beneficial for them at particular points.

Lastly, more specific qualitative studies could be used to explore some of the differences in perceptions discovered through this study. For example, how Black male non-athletes view themselves as a separate group from Black male athletes on the same campus. How do males, both athlete and non-athlete, feel more of a burden than females to combat the perceptions that they were at that institution due to assumed athletic ability? How do Black students from different socioeconomic status backgrounds experience differing levels of culture shock coming to a predominantly White campus? All of these recommendations for differing types of studies, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, would expand the current body of research examining Black student support services on predominantly White campuses.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter of this dissertation. Theoretical support, or lack thereof, for Nigrescence theory (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement, and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) and a host of studies examining Black student support services (Gardner et al., 1996; Gilliard, 1996; Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Harper, 2008; Hurtado et al., 1999; Padilla et al, 1997; Sidanius et al., 2008; Solórzano et al., 2000) were discussed. The study limitations were presented, as well as the researcher’s implications and recommendations for practice and policy, and further research.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Researcher’s Collegiate IRB Approval

Clemson University

August 13, 2010

Dr. Pamela Havice
Clemson University
Department of Counselor Education
307 Tillman Hall
Clemson, SC 29634

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol # IRB2010-158 entitled “Understanding Black Student Perceptions of Targeted Student Support Services on a Predominantly White Campus”

Dear Dr. Havice:

Your amendment submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) July 28, 2010, has been approved by expedited review procedures on August 11, 2010. Your approval remains through July 7, 2011, the expiration of your approval period. Your original, stamped consent document for this protocol was/were picked up by your student, Kendra Stewart.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB’s approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent forms. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately. Please contact the office if your study has terminated or been completed before the identified review date.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 656-6460 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Moll, M.A., CIP
IRB Administrator

Enclosure
RE: Non-Affiliated Research Study IRB Submission

Sent: Friday, August 20, 2010 11:45 AM
To: Kendra Stewart
Cc: 

Hi, Kendra.

As I mentioned in our earlier correspondence, I pass along requests to enroll students in “outside” research to the appropriate University officials for their consideration. I just spoke with [redacted] and, as you know, she is very familiar with your project. She endorses the conduct of your research here at [redacted].

Please let me know if I can be of any help. Best of luck with your very interesting research.

From: Kendra Stewart [mailto:STEWARS@clemson.edu]
Sent: Thursday, August 12, 2010 4:23 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Non-Affiliated Research Study IRB Submission

Hello [redacted],

Thanks for assisting me in this process. I have attached the materials detailing the research study. Please let me know if I need to provide any additional information.

Thank you,

Kendra

Kendra D. Stewart, Ed.M.
Fraternity and Sorority Life
Harvey and Lucinda Gannt CENTER FOR STUDENT LIFE
Division of Student Affairs
Clemson University
700 University Union
Clemson, SC 29634

https://xmail.clemson.edu/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAABJr%f2fPLnE4T6e6...

1/11/2011
Appendix C

Consent Form

Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study
Clemson University

Understanding Black Student Perceptions of Targeted Student Support Services on a Predominantly White Campus

Description of the Research and Your Participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Pamela Havice, PhD and Kendra Stewart. The purpose of this research is to understand Black student perceptions of on-campus student support programs targeted to meet their needs.

Your participation will involve completion of a profile sheet, short survey, and an interview session describing your on-campus experiences and perceptions. Lastly, you will be asked engage in a one-time, follow-up contact with the researcher via phone, email, or face to face to confirm that your responses were conveyed properly.

The total amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 90 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

There are certain risks of discomforts associated with this research. These risks of discomfort pertain to the sensitive nature of the topic of race and racial identity.

Potential Benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. However, this research may help higher education professionals understand how to better implement targeted student support programs to meet the needs of Black students.

Incentives

All participants that consent and participate in interviews will receive a $50 gift certificate to the on-campus bookstore.

Protection of Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

In rare cases, a research study will be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the Clemson University Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections, that would require that we share the information we collect from you. If this happens, the information would only be used to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.
**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Pamela Havice, PhD at Clemson University at 864-656-5121. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

**Consent**

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.
Appendix D

Participant Profile Sheet

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________________________

Gender: Male    Female    Transgendered

Race/Ethnicity: White    Black    Hispanic    Native American    Asian/Pacific Islander
Other: _________________________

Date of Birth: _________________    Year first enrolled in college: ______

Parent/Legal Guardian Highest Level of Education:

Mother:    □ Less than High School Diploma    □ High School Diploma
□ Some College    □ College Completion
□ Graduate School
Other: _________________________

Father:    □ Less than High School Diploma    □ High School Diploma
□ Some College    □ College Completion
□ Graduate School
Other: _________________________

List of student involvements (e.g. Chorus, Pre-law society, Fraternity/Sorority, etc.) each year even if repeated:

First year: ____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Second year: ___________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Third year: _____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Fourth year: _____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Fifth year: _____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
Appendix E

Permission to use Cross Racial Identity Scale

Re: FW: Cross Racial Identity Scale

Sent: Thursday, May 20, 2010 4:47 PM
To: Kendra Stewart
Attachments: CRIS TM 2nd Edition.pdf (491 KB); JCP-CRIS-02.cgl.pdf (151 KB)

Dear Ms. Stewart,

Thanks for your interest in the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). I am writing on behalf of the CRIS Team to give you permission to use the instrument in your research. The technical manual is attached to this email and the scale is available in the appendix of the manual. I have also attached one of the validation studies (Vandiver et al., 2002), and there are several other studies in the literature by members of the team: Worrell et al. (2004, Journal of Black Psychology); Gardner-Kitt and Worrell (2007, Journal of Adolescence); Simmons et al. (2008, Assessment); and Worrell & Watson (2008, Educational and Psychological Measurement).

Given your request to Dr. Cross, I need to point out that the CRIS is based on the expanded nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), which is a multidimensional model of attitudes and not a developmental stage model. You may wish to read Worrell (2008, Journal of Black Psychology) for a discussion of the differences.

There is no cost for using the scale. However, if you are willing, we would appreciate you sharing your CRIS data with us upon completion of your study, as we are in the process of collecting CRIS data for large-sample analyses.

There are separate citations for the scale and the manual, which are included on p. 17 of the manual. In addition, the citation for the expanded nigrescence model, on which the CRIS is based is as follows: Cross, W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. M. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), Handbook of multicultural counseling (2nd ed., pp. 371-393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Descriptions of the original, revised, and expanded nigrescence models and the differences among them can be found in the Vandiver et al. (2002) and the manual.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions and best wishes for the successful completion of your project.
Appendix F

Interview Questions

1. What have been some of your biggest challenges, if any, thus far in your college experience?

2. With what programs have you participated in associated with Black specialized student support services?

3. How would you describe those experiences?

4. How would you describe your relationship to other campus constituents (i.e., faculty/staff, peers, and alumni) associated with Black student support services?

5. What advice, if any, would you give future Black students regarding specialized student support services?
Appendix G

Sample Horizontalization of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Subquestion</th>
<th>Significant Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do Black students on predominantly White campuses perceive targeted student support services in regards to peers with similar experiences? | I started enjoying their influence and the input about their past experiences on campus and how to deal with certain situations. And just life in general, and what professors to take and like simple information that you never would have thought of or how to approach a situation when you feel a certain type of way or you do encounter a racial situation.  
Some of us share the same experiences and we know what it feels like to be homesick or not be in that diverse of a situation or setting.  
They just basically like kept doing that and kept coming to get to me and kept looking in on me, or they would text me, or message me on facebook, or just keep tabs on me or checking on me, like they would see me walk, they'd stop and have a conversation with me and see how my day was going, And basically help me, like just realize that I could have friends and basically, or be part of a community.  
So I think like, offices like that, that are there to help you, like, breathe and realize that you’re not the only person in this situation is really deep because some of my fellow peers, have never been in that situation, where they’re like, they don’t know how they are going to pay for something because it’s just available for them. And so, I think I do need offices like that or do just need an office to realize that I'm not the only person in my situation. Like, other people are going through it, and they are just like me.  
It's nice to be around somebody that looks like you, and may share some of the same experiences as you do, and just like fellowship with them.  
Yea, because it seemed like that was like the hang-out spot for minority students, so I was like, 'alright, I'm going to get to know them, I got to go to where they are going.'  
Yea, it was mostly I want to be around people with similar backgrounds to me.  
Ummm, mostly, the majority of my friendships come from being involved in the organizations. It allows me to learn about the other minorities on campus, like a more intimate level than just them passing, and be like 'oh, you’re Black let's talk.'  
I talk with them, and I like learn from them. They amaze me about their plan after college, how … Yea, and I just find it like, I don't even limit them. Back home, I really do limit the people to things that they do.  
Definitely, I've visited the, ummm, Office of Multicultural Affairs, ummm, yea, that's something that was important to me even in high school, I did lots of multicultural kind of things. So, definitely coming here I wanted to be involved. Ummm, it would also expose me more to, to some of the minorities that are on campus, so I could get to know other people. |
…since there are a lot of White people on campus, you know. So you can meet someone that does look like you, and maybe they're like you on the inside too, you know. Just different people.

But, I think it's good, like because I'm always with a set group of people, like usually all the athletes hang together. At first, only, the only other Black kids that I knew were usually the kids on the football team, basketball, and on my track team. And, so like, going to the OMA and stuff, I got to meet more people and everything.

If I didn't have those services, I probably would not know anybody at all. Yea. Because I'm, sometimes I'm kind of shy, it just depends but, I definitely have met a lot of people through that, and ummm, that I, I know wouldn't meet any other way.

But, umm, for people who aren't, who might feel alienated, the Office of Multicultural Affairs is like a God-send. And even if you wouldn't feel alienated, even if you want to, even if you just want to be around, you know, Black people, it's great because that's where you can meet them all, not all, well the majority of them. It's just a sense of community, you know.

Maybe you, maybe you can put, then maybe it can put that alienated person in contact with you, and they'll realize 'hey, maybe I shouldn't have felt alienated in the first place.' But the point of it all is that I feel like student… student support services, umm, organizations or whatever, umm, like help bring, people together.

I'm not like, I don't only want to talk to Black people and all that, but I mean it's definitely nice to get together like with people of your own race, and some of them who've had the same experiences as you've had.

I feel like it would. I feel like, if there wasn't all these organizations to get in and meet a lot of people at once, that you'd have to kind of go around and I guess like pick them out, kind of, out of like the mass population. Because like my hall, I live in South, and like, and everyone's like 'oh, you live in South' or whatever, my hall, there's, there are 2 Black people on my hall and they're both football players so they're never there. And the rest is like, White. And I mean, and all they do is like, go out and drink. And I don't drink, so like, I don't really hang with them. So, like, I guess, the organizations make it easier, like I could do it on my own, but like the organizations that I'm in take a lot of the work out of it.

Every now and then I go to the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Umm, very friendly people. They're not the type of people like, when I sit down, they're just so, I saw, I was sitting down and then a girl just jumped up and she was like 'hi!' introducing herself. And I, I wasn't used to that, I was like 'hi, how are you?' it was great.…. I use them as a resource, it's very comforting.

By going to the OMA, and, and through the resources that I have, I have definitely developed, umm, friendships. It's, it's helping my communication skills. Umm, it's taking me out of my shell and now I'm, I'm kind of branching out and trying to do things.
I think the type of support factors are very important. By being a White, a predominantly White campus, you do, it is good, it's a good feeling every now and then to go to a meeting where you see others, that are, umm, just like you. Or, you know, that might have the same background in common. Or, just, just, you know, being able, I guess looking in the mirror and saying ‘oh, you're just like me.’ The more comfortability. I think those are, I think it's very important to have those. Because, I mean, without them, I mean, might not feel as comfortable, you know, being on a campus that, where, where everything is so different from you.

Being a part of BSA and all that, do give you those moments where you guys could actually socialize and meet others that have the same type of music in common. Umm, for example, one in common, R&B. Umm, Lil Wayne, like the likeability of Lil Wayne. Drake, you know all the good stuff. [Laughs]
Appendix H

Sample of Information Reduction and Clusters of Meaning

Guiding Subquestion: How do Black students on predominantly White campuses perceive in regards to peers with similar experiences?

Same Experiences and Culture:

I started enjoying their influence and their input about their past experiences on campus and how to deal with certain situations. And just life in general, and what professors to take and like simple information that you never would have thought of or how to approach a situation when you feel a certain type of way or you do encounter a racial situation.

Some of us share the same experiences and we know what it feels like to be homesick or not be in that diverse of a situation or setting.

I'm not like, like, I don't only want to talk to Black people and all that, but I mean it's definitely nice to get together like with people of your own race, and some of them who've had the same experiences as you've had.

Being a part of BSA and all that, do give you those moments where you guys could actually socialize and meet others that have the same type of music in common. Umm, for example, one in common, R&B. Umm, Lil Wayne, like the likeability of Lil Wayne. Drake, you know all the good stuff. [Laughs]

Community:

They just basically like kept doing that and kept coming to get to me and kept looking in on me, or they would text me, or message me on facebook, or just keep tabs on me or checking on me, like they would see me walk, they'd stop and have a conversation with me and see how my day was going. And basically help me, like just realize that I could have friends and basically, or be part of a community.

But, umm, for people who aren't, who might feel alienated, the Office of Multicultural Affairs is like a God-send. And even if you wouldn't feel alienated, even if you want to, even if you just want to be around, you know, Black people, it's great because that's where you can meet them all, not all, well the majority of them. It's just a sense of community, you know.
But, I think it's good, like because I'm always with a set group of people, like usually all the athletes hang together. At first, only, the only other Black kids that I knew were usually the kids on the football team, basketball, and on my track team. And, so like, going to the OMA and stuff, I got to meet more people and everything.

Ummm, mostly, the majority of my friendships come from being involved in the organizations. It allows me to learn about the other minorities on campus, like a more intimate level than just them passing, and be like 'oh, you're Black let's talk.'

If I didn't have those services, I probably would not know anybody at all. Yea. Because I'm, sometimes I'm kind of shy, it just depends but, I definitely have met like a lot of people through that, and ummm, that I, I know wouldn't meet any other way.

Maybe you, maybe you can put, then maybe it can put that alienated person in contact with you, and they'll realize 'hey, maybe I shouldn't have felt alienated in the first place.' But the point of it all is that I feel like student…student support services, umm, organizations or whatever, umm, like help bring, people together.

I feel like it would. I feel like, if there wasn't all these organizations to get in and meet a lot of people at once, that you'd have to kind of go around and I guess like pick them out, kind of, out of like the mass population. Because like my hall, I live in South, and like, and everyone's like 'oh, you live in South' or whatever, my hall, there's, there are 2 Black people on my hall and they're both football players so they're never there. And the rest is like, White. And I mean, and all they do is like, go out and drink. And I don't drink, so like, I don't really hang with them. So, like, I guess, the organizations make it easier, like I could do it on my own, but like the organizations that I'm in take a lot of the work out of it.

Every now and then I go to the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Umm, very friendly people. They're not the type of people like, when I sit down, they're just so, I saw, I was sitting down and then a girl just jumped up and she was like 'hi!' introducing herself. And I, I wasn't used to that, I was like 'hi, how are you?' it was great…. I use them as a resource, it's very comforting.

**Someone Like Me:**

So I think like, offices like that, that are there to help you, like, breathe and realize that you're not the only person in this situation is really deep because some of my fellow peers, have never been in that situation, where they're like, they don't know how they are going to pay for something because it's just available for them. And so, I think I do need offices like that or do just need an office to realize that I'm not the only person in my situation. Like, other people are going through it, and they are just like me.
It's nice to be around somebody that looks like you, and may share some of the same experiences as you do, and just like fellowship with them.

Yea, it was mostly I want to be around people with similar backgrounds to me.

You know, since there are a lot of White people on campus, you know. So you can meet someone that does look like you, and maybe they're like you on the inside too, you know.

I think the, I think those type of, umm, support factors are very important. By being a White, a predominantly White campus, you do, it is good, it's a good feeling every now and then to go to a meeting where you see others, that are, umm, just like you. Or, you know, that might have the same background in common. Or, just, just, you know, being able, I guess looking in the mirror and saying 'oh, you're just like me.' The more comfortability. I think those are, I think it's very important to have those. Because, I mean, without them, I mean, might not feel as comfortable, you know, being on a campus that, where, where everything is so different from you.

Identity:

I talk with them, and I like learn from them. They amaze me about their plan after college, how … Yea, and I just find it like, I don't even limit them. Back home, I really do limit the people to things that they do.

Getting Involved:

By going to the OMA, and, and through the resources that I have, I have definitely developed, umm, friendships. It's, it's helping my communication skills. Umm, it's it's taking me out of my shell and now I'm, I'm kind of branching out and trying to do things.

Yea, because it seemed like that was like the hang-out spot for minority students, so I was like, 'alright, I'm going to get to know them, I got to go to where they are going.'

Definitely, I've visited the, ummm, Office of Multicultural Affairs, ummm, yea, that's something that was important to me even in high school, I did lots of multicultural kind of things. So, definitely coming here I wanted to be involved. Ummm, it would also expose me more to, to some of the minorities that are on campus, so I could get to know other people.
Appendix I

Textural Description

Participants described their perceptions on Black student support services as a place to find a niche for them on campus. They explained that this particular niche was attractive to them because it provided a sense of comfort. This comfort came from simply seeing someone that was the same race, sharing conversations with someone that had similar interests, or more intimately from the relationships they were able to create with campus community members they met through these services. For instance, multiple students referenced the importance of interacting with someone like them, racially, in experiences, or interests. The following quotes expressed this sentiment:

I started enjoying and then their influence and their input about their past experiences on campus and how to deal with certain situations. And just life in general, and what professors to take and like simple information that you never would have thought of or how to approach a situation when you feel a certain type of way or you do encounter a racial situation.

It's nice to be around somebody that looks like you, and may share some of the same experiences as you do.

Some of us share the same experiences and we know what it feels like to be homesick or not be in that diverse of a situation or setting.

By being a White, a predominantly White campus, you do, it is good, it's a good feeling every now and then to go to a meeting where you see others, that are, umm, just like you. Or, you know, that might have the same background in common. Or, just, just, you know, being able, I guess looking in the mirror and saying 'oh, you're just like me.' The more comfortability. I think those are, I think it's very important to have those. Because, I mean, without them, I mean, might not feel as comfortable, you know, being on a campus that, where, where everything is so different from you.

It’s something that says 'we understand.' …lots of them are recent graduates. And so, they all kind of, understand exactly where you are right now. So, I think that's
something, anybody that can empathize with you and where you are, I mean that's definitely a help.

In addition to wanting to find a place on campus where someone was similar to them, participants also described how they appreciated having someone to look out for them. They specifically mentioned the Office of Multicultural Affairs staff. Participants described situations where the office staff helped them in a particular tough situation, such as the following quote displayed:

Multicultural Affairs has really really helped me because the beginning of last semester, I got really really sick, they were like helpful. I was super worried, I just wanted to come back to school, and I was super worried about catching up and they did a lot of with the Office of Academic Advising and making sure that my professors knew where I was, that I wasn't just skipping class or not to delete me from the roster.

Participants also described a sense of gratitude for these support services, even if they were yet to need them in their college experience. They explained how knowing that someone was there to particularly support them provided them both a sense of security and comfort. This quote offering advice to future Black students supported that notion:

Be grateful that they're there, when everything else falls apart, you do have support, like you have people that you can go and talk to. You have people that will help you, in pretty much any situation if you actually go and talk to them. The people here are nice, they're sweet, they're open. And, they're reliable. You can actually, probably pick someone and depend on them if all else fails.

Beyond finding a place where they could find others like them or to look out for them, the participants also explained the significance of displaying a unified community to the rest of the campus. The participants either spoke about how they wanted to share their culture, and that part of themselves, with the rest of campus. It was important for
them to bring that piece of their heritage with them to college and have it celebrated. One participant summed up this description when she said:

I really would want someone to come to me and, and welcome me, and, and look at the culture, the African American culture that I have, and just, and just, have knowledge of it first off. And then, yea, and then welcome me. And, and help me and let's, let's do more things that fit with my culture.

Expressing both their culture and their interests as a sub-community on campus was important to the participants. They described Black student support services as a vehicle to change the campus environment for their good. Participants explained how they saw a unified community as a display of power and appreciated the work that staff in Black student support services did to increase the amount of diversity.

And it kind of shows like, to other people on the outside that, like, ummm, even though there's a small minority, they still have a lot of strength because, because if they can get like different events and different tasks done, that shows that a small group of people will have a lot of power.

Like, the OMA, everything that they do. It's nice, nice to be able to go in there and see other people and see them working really hard to get more diversity on campus and doing stuff like that. So I really, I really do like that.

Other participants described that sharing their culture with the entire campus population was not only about an outward expression to others, but also allowed them an opportunity to learn more about Black people themselves or overcome negative stereotypes altogether. The following two quotes expressed that perception in the participants’ own words as they talked about their experiences with Black student support services:

I know people that struggle with being Black and feeling like, everyone is looking at them to fail, you know. I know people like that, who need like support to be like, you're not in this alone, and we're all here for you.

Another aspect of Black student support services described by participants was their ability to encourage on-campus involvement and disseminate significant information about study abroad or committee opportunities, scholarships, etc. Participants explained how the staff of the Office of Multicultural Affairs would connect them to other offices, departments, and faculty/staff. Sometimes, these connections resulted in key positions of leadership on campus. The following two quotes relayed how participants were able to access information and opportunities through participating in Black student support services:

Once I got involved in OMA, and I just saw like, some of the other people just randomly come through there. Like I’ll talk to them when they come, and people from different faculty and different offices. I started to really see like, the potential, like of the, the opportunities and potential that there are to do those things.

I met with, umm, well, OMA recommended me, umm, she recommended me for it last year. And then I met with the Dean, and I got appointed last year, and I got elected to it again this year.
Appendix J

Structural Description

The context and setting of the college campus is significant in shaping Black student perceptions of targeted student support services. At this predominantly White campus, Black students were in the racial minority and this fact was noted in many spaces on campus. Participants described how they were generally the only Black student, or one of few, in their classes. They also explained how it was rare for them to have a professor of color, let alone a Black professor teaching their class. They explained that they had trouble forming work-groups in class with their White peers. They got the sense that White students did not want to work with them because they considered them academically inferior.

The participants also cited how they were constantly aware of their potential status as the only Black person outside of the classroom. They had this feeling in their residence halls, sometimes hiding some of their cultural practices for fear of scrutiny. They also were aware that when they entered an office or department on campus they were most likely to encounter White people, and not interact with Black professionals.

With such small numbers of Black students and professionals on campus, the participants explained that they had to combat many negative stereotypes attributed to Black people as a whole. Many of the male participants referenced situations where others assumed that they gained entrance to this particular college based upon their athletic ability. Others relayed stories about how White students would come to them for *ghetto* clothing when a predominantly White fraternity was hosting a hip-hop-themed
party. They also expressed occasions where they attempted to attend predominantly
White fraternity parties, but were denied access in one form or another. For those that did
gain access to these parties, they complained that they did not express their culture or
meet their social interests. Many of the participants explained that most of the campus-
wide programming did not match their cultural and social interests. They stated that if it
were not for the Black student support services’ program offerings, they would have to
go off campus to find extracurricular activities that they wanted to participate in.

The overall context of the campus environment neglected, alienated, or
underrepresented the participants. In addition to dealing with the normal struggles of
college students transitioning to a new environment and stage in life, these participants
grappled with additional issues associated with their identity as a Black person in a
potentially unfamiliar environment. For those participants that came from predominantly
White settings at home, living in this setting all the time, without going home to their
families each evening, brought with it some new challenges.
JOIN US FOR FRIDAY MORNING BREAKFAST, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th Benson 346

In this message:

- Panel Discussion: Arizona Senate Bill 1070: One State’s Attempt to Curb Illegal Immigration, TONIGHT, September 21st
- Native American Student Association (NASA) Social & Interest Meeting, TONIGHT, September 21st
- Black Student Alliance Panel Discussion: What I Wish I Knew as a Freshman, Wednesday, September 22nd
- Amnesty International: International Women’s Friendship Month Roundtable Discussion, Wednesday, September 23rd
- The Latino Experience in America – A Journey through Photographs, Featuring Pulitzer Prize winning photographer, Monday, September 27th
  - Artwork on display now through September 28th, Library
- BOUND by HAITI Documentary, Tuesday, September 28th
- Majors and Minors Fair with Career Services, Academic Advising and SGA, Wednesday, September 29th
- Join Afro-Cuban Poet for a bilingual reading of her works
  Thursday, September 30th
- Student Union spotlight for 9/20-9/25
Appendix L
NPHC Garden Articles

New monument is testament to history

Posted on August 26, 2010 by [Name], Production manager

A puzzling sight greeted students returning to the [Name] Campus for the Fall 2010 semester. A new monument composed of a central podium and nine smaller podiums, four with large marble plaques, occupies a space that was once a grass buffer between the [Name] Plaza stage and [Name] University Center. Speculations abounded during construction this summer about the final form and purpose of this new monument built into the heart of the campus.

The structure, traditionally called a "plot," is the culmination of four years of negotiations between the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) fraternity and sorority leadership on campus and the university's administration. The final result is the NPHC Garden, a symbolic and practical space designed to serve the needs of the local NPHC community and to pay tribute to nearly a century's worth of history bound up in the NPHC organizations. The nine podiums surrounding the central podium in the garden each represent one of the "Divine Nine" traditionally black fraternities and sororities that compose the NPHC. Four of the nine currently have chartered organizations on campus though several of those no longer represented once held positions of prominence in university history.

Plots traditionally serve as social and ritual centers for NPHC organizations around the country. Akin to fraternity lounges or hall space, these areas are dedicated exclusively to members and are for their use only.

"It is a sacred space," [Name] Fellow in the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and alumnus member of Phi Beta Sigma ('10) said. "A lot of people (traditionally) do not use the space if they are not invited. The Plot is really a meaningful and powerful area for the organization."

The university's NPHC Garden differs from this traditional exclusivity in an important way — the use of the space has the potential for campus-wide education. "A lot of it (activities at the NPHC Garden) is going to be educational," said. "Our numbers are not as big as at other universities, so we are going to use this as an opportunity to educate the campus." [Name], director of the OMA, seconded the importance of the educational aspect of the space. "Very important to achieving inclusion is raising awareness. This space may not propel people into meaningful cross cultural relationships, but it will promote awareness of less represented organizations," she said.
The NPHC Garden has already achieved that goal. Concerns, compliments and criticisms surround the completion of the structure. Foremost on many observers’ minds was the prominent location on campus. The appearance of the monument occurred only a short time after the university made strides to minimize the visual presence of Greek life on campus by removing large letters from residence halls and replacing them with small plaques.

Steve Hirst, director of student leadership and organizations, described the selection process for the location of the NPHC Garden. Many locations around campus were considered during the long planning process, but when it came time to cement building plans. “We didn’t want it to be on the periphery of campus. We wanted it to be where it was visible,” he said. Williams agreed with the importance of a centralized location. “It makes sense that it should be on the quad. You can’t miss it,” he said. “You walk to classes everyday and it is right there in front of you.”

Many students also expressed concern about the lack of transparency surrounding the project.

When asked about this, Steve Hirst, director of student leadership and organizations, explained that the process had been so drawn out over so many successive student government and NPHC administrations that discussions held at the beginning of negotiations may not have carried over to the current Student Government administration. Though, added, the most important part of the process is “for the students (involved in the NPHC organizations) to know that the university values them.”

This value can be taken with a grain of salt according to Mauro. “We are trying to be as supportive of people in Greek Life as we can. After all, this is something good where there wasn’t anything before,” she said. “But when has stopped when something was just good enough? The last thing we need at is another story of people of color that is half good. You know?” Many students and NPHC constituents object to the physical structure of the NPHC Garden.

Though all nine organizations of the council are represented by podiums, only those on campus have detailed plaques. “A lot of students don’t think that tells the full story of the NPHC,” Mauro said. “At a place where students of color are such a small minority and feel excluded, the monument is great, but there is the fear that less than half of the organizations were represented.”

This element comes into play poignantly in the case of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity that once had a powerful presence on campus, but no longer retains an active charter. It is not one of the organizations that received plaques in the NPHC Garden, despite its history with the university. Despite the criticisms, the NPHC Garden represents an important step for the university, according to Williams. “For me it means progress, it is a visible sign of the administration’s commitment to diversity. You know, we say things all the time, but to actually see something on campus that is dedicated to a small group that is looking to get bigger? I really appreciate its presence, it gives me hope for the future,” he said.
A formal dedication ceremony and ribbon cutting for the NPHC Garden will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Oct. 1. The event is open to all members of the university community.

Comments

September 2, 2010  2:16 pm

Instead of focusing on the lack of transparency surrounding this “puzzling sight,” I believe this article would have been better suited by immediately delving into the sacredness and symbolism of the space. I do commend [name] for attempting to uncover the mystery; however, the the tone of the article still resonates the very confusion she attempted to dispel.

Also, I’m disheartened by [name] statements. Why can’t this space “propel people into meaningful cross cultural relationships?” The plots, which are in such a visible location, will spark conversation leading to a more informed student body and, yes, more meaningful relationships. The Director’s statement, bound by limitations, is somewhat unsettling. We must encourage both awareness and cross cultural relationships without any reservations. I too agree that [Wake Forest University] is an institution characterized by innovation with an administration that is not afraid to take steps in new directions. Although stated, [name] downplays that fact that this is a superior leap for black Greek letter organizations at [Wake Forest University]. Yes, we still have a ways to go to achieve inclusion but let’s revel in this moment and remember what it means for the 20+ year history of black Greek letter organizations at [Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.].

In the case of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., perhaps the administration did not do enough homework. All chartered black Greek-letter organizations should receive a plaque, whether active or not, to commemorate the chapter chartered on a particular campus. I would hate to see the Alphas not recognized—they did such great things for the campus and the community.

University celebrates Pan-Hel garden

Posted on October 8, 2010 by [name], Contributing writer

Several members of the [Wake Forest University] community gathered on [Manchester Quad] Oct. 1 to witness “the culmination of a historical dream.”

On a pleasant and sunny day, the university’s administration teamed with affiliates of the National Pan-Hellenic Council to formally dedicate a unique and immaculate garden. This landscape was expressly cultivated to honor the nine historically African-American, international Greek lettered fraternities and sororities often referred to as the “divine nine.”
These organizations are the fraternities and sororities: Iota Phi Theta, Sigma Gamma Rho, Zeta Phi Beta, Phi Beta Sigma, Delta Sigma Theta, Omega Psi Phi, Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Kappa Alpha and Alpha Phi Alpha.

At the dedication ceremony, a blend of students, administrator and council representatives celebrated the completion of “tangible commitment to diversity and inclusion.”

Speakers including Nate French, Provost Jill Tiefenthaler, Christina Sandidge and President Nathan O. Hatch spoke of continued effort to foster an inclusive and accepting student body. French, a representative of NPHC and former Wake Forest student, referenced the strong commitment to service demonstrated by the divine nine.

“These organizations are continuing to train and develop exceptional leaders in our society,” he said. Tiefenthaler complemented this speech, saying: “The service effort of these organizations has had a deep impact on Wake Forest University’s reputation.”

The garden is composed of a circular walkway containing nine podiums for each specific Greek organization. The serene and tranquil nature of the plot allows students to gain a deep sense of the cultural enrichment, a growing trend and interest on campus. Mary Gerardy, associate vice president for student life, has remained a driving force behind the garden’s cultivation for the past several years. She references completion of the NPHC garden as “one of the university’s biggest and primary initiatives.”

This initiative, according to Gerardy, is still ongoing. “We’re still waiting to implement permanent signage for the garden. These should be put up in the coming weeks,” she said.

Gerardy, discussing the divine nine’s positive contributions to society, stated: “These nine organizations symbolize a lifelong commitment to dedication and remain a staple of service in the community.”

The divine nine do indeed continue to play an active role in the greater Winston-Salem area. One of the primary events sponsored by these historically black fraternities and sororities is “Sleepout for the Homeless.”

This fundraising venture seeks to promote awareness and bring in capital to aid the local homeless population.

Tutoring and mentoring children from unfavorable socio-economic circumstances is also a popular undertaking for many of the NPHC establishments.

Historically, our school’s student body is often characterized by uniformity.

In the past several years, however, a greater commitment has been shown by the admissions department to encourage an increase in racial diversification. Currently, 20 percent of the student body is comprised of minorities. The dedication of this new
garden and memorial will surely provide greater interest to minority students interested in attending the university.

Comments

October 13, 2010  8:01 am

As a proud ‘06/’09 (BA/JD) of Wake Forest and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (and a former editor of the OGB!), this story warmed my heart. Plots like this are a huge part of the black Greek tradition and I am thrilled that [redacted] has embraced it!
REFERENCES


