PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE AND STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTIONS
AMONGST AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSISTERS IN A BUSINESS PROGRAM AT
A PREDOMINANTLY-WHITE INSTITUTION

By

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ABSTRACT

MONICA E. ALLEN. Perceptions of Climate and Student-Faculty Interactions Amongst African American Persisters in a Business Program at a Predominantly-White Institution. (Under the direction of DR. SANDRA L. DIKA)

While representation of African American students in freshmen enrollment has improved, degree attainment of African Americans and other minority groups continue to lag behind the White and Asian American populations. Compounding the issue of lower attainment is the issue of degree major. African American students are highly concentrated in lower-paying college majors and are underrepresented in high-paying majors, including business. With the scarcity of research on African American students in a business discipline, there remains the necessity of understanding the academic success and persistence issues they encounter. Gaining a better understanding of African American students' experiences and perceptions is vitally important for institutional agents and scholars.

Using a phenomenological research method, the researcher listened to the stories of ten African American students in the business school at Southeastern University (SEU), while focusing on their experiences and perceptions of the interactions they have with business faculty members. In addition, the researcher aimed to identify how these interactions impact academic success and persistence to graduation amongst this sample population. The themes that emerged included (a) A Racially Charged Climate; (b) Business Faculty Can Be Accessible, But Not Approachable; and (c) As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong? The study results indicated that student interactions with faculty were viewed as essential to supporting the African American business students' academic success and persistence.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my loving parents, Thomas and Medessa Moore. The love and support that they provided me, throughout my life, has been vital to my success. Wish they were here to enjoy this with me. However, I know that they are looking down from heaven, with a big smile on their faces!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Access to and successful completion of college continue to be defining factors in

the growing economic divide in America (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016).

Carnevale and colleagues (2016) from the Georgetown University Center on Education

and the Workforce (GUCEW) describe the shift in the U.S economy from being driven

by high school-educated workers to one in which the majority of jobs require

postsecondary education or training. Of the 11.6 million jobs that were created since

2010, after the economic recession of the late 2000s, 73% were obtained by workers with

a Bachelor's degree or higher. Thus, the attainment of a college degree is a vital

requirement for participation in the current labor market and the achievement of

economic mobility.

Economic mobility is elusive for some Americans, especially those from

historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups. African Americans make up 13%

(42,632,530) of the U.S. population, with 24% of this group below poverty level (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2016). A recent report from the Pew Research Center (2016) revealed

persistent and significant gaps in employment and wages. While the unemployment rate

of all racial groups has declined since 2010, the unemployment of African Americans has

remained at least twice as high as that of Whites (10.3% vs. 4.5% in 2015). Further, 2015

data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics determined that African Americans earned

seventy-five percent (75%) of median hourly earnings of Whites among full- and part-

time workers in the U.S. The report concluded that the wage gaps can be attributed to the

fact that there are lower numbers of African Americans who are college educated.

While there are several factors that contribute to the disproportionate

unemployment and poverty levels among African Americans, two of the most important

are: (a) lower attainment of college degree, and (b) the majors in which they are concentrated (Carnevale, Fasules, Porter, & Landis-Santos, 2016). National data indeed shows improvement in the college enrollment rates of African Americans since the mid-1990s. According to the 2013 GUCEW report by Carnevale and Strohl (2013), African American freshman enrollment in 2009 had increased by 73% since 1995. Specifically, college enrollment data (Table 1) for 1995 demonstrated that White students were overrepresented by five (5) percentage points, while African Americans were underrepresented by two (2) percentage points. In 2009, Whites remained overrepresented despite a decline by three (3) percentage points, and African American representation improved by three (3) percentage points. In 2009, the White freshman enrollment share was 63% and the African American share was 16%.

Table 1: Distribution of U.S. Population and Freshman Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (percentage)

	1995			2009		
	Population aged 18-24 (%)	Enrollment (%)	Difference	Population aged 18-24 (%)	Enrollment (%)	Difference
White	68	73	5	62	63	2
AA	14	12	-2	15	16	1
Hispanic	13	9	-5	18	13	-5
Asian	4	5	2	4	6	2
Nat Am	1	1	0	1	1	0

 Source: Carnavale & Strohl (2013). Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Although enrollment rates are on the rise for African Americans, Whites are still more likely to attain a college degree, both among recent cohorts and in the broader adult (25 and older) population. A recent National Center for Education Statistics (2012) report found that degree attainment among four-year degree students who began their studies in

2003-04 varied widely by racial/ethnic backgrounds, from 17% for African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos, to 36% for White and 46% for Asian American students. Looking at the broader population of individuals aged twenty-five (25) years or older, in 2015, showed that more than thirty percent (35%) of Whites and 53% of Asian Americans have a degree, compared to only twenty three percent (23%) of African Americans and fifteen percent (15%) of Latinos. Thus, even though the gap has decreased, Whites are more than 1.5 times more likely to have a degree than African Americans (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Compounding the issue of lower attainment is the issue of degree major. High-skill occupations have fifty percent (50%) or more workers with Bachelor's degrees or higher. These workers have taken the majority of occupations added between 2010 to 2016; 5.8 million jobs out of 6.4 million. The largest gains have been in occupations including management, business, finance, healthcare, and mathematical sciences (Carnevale, Fasules, et al., 2016). African American students are highly concentrated in lower-paying college majors and are underrepresented in high-paying majors, including engineering, health, and business. While underrepresentation is most acute in engineering (4%, NACME, 2011), African American students also obtain a slightly disproportionate share of degrees in business education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

This dissertation study was conducted to respond to the need of understanding African American students' experiences in majors within the business disciplines and to inform efforts to increase participation and graduation. Chapter One begins with the exploration of the history of African Americans in Higher Education, African American Students Attending HBCUs vs. predominantly-White institutions (PWIs), African

American Students in Business Studies, and African American Student Interactions with Faculty. These sections will be followed by the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, the Significance of the Study, Theoretical Framework, and Key Terms/ Definitions. The final section of this chapter provides the details of the organization of the remaining chapters.

History of African Americans in Higher Education

The fight for access to higher education for African Americans has been accompanied by racism, exclusion, racial discrimination and alienation (Carter, 2006). In spite of the improvements in access, societal and historical barriers that must be overcome by students from marginalized groups, including African Americans.

Prior to the Civil War, formal education for African Americans was nonexistent. Those that did receive schooling often studied in informal and hostile settings (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Although some schools provided elementary and secondary training (i.e., the Institute for Colored Youth), most African Americans were forced to teach themselves (Anderson, 1988). The first institutions for African American youth were established in the pre-Civil War years by White philanthropists to provide religious education and basic skills training. "Because of poor financing and enslavement of most African Americans, the success of these institutions was limited" (Redd, 1998, p. 34). Although these institutions were called "universities" or "colleges," it was not until the early 1900s that most of these institutions began to provide courses and programs at a postsecondary level (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

By the end of the Civil War, the U.S. government and many northern church missionaries began to establish schools in the south to provide formal education to the

millions of freed slaves. The government created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (commonly known as the Freedmens' Bureau) to help establish colleges for African Americans. In addition, the American Missionary Association (AMA), the Disciples of Christ and the Methodist Episcopal Church founded colleges for religious education and training (Hoffman, 1996; Redd, 1998).

Most institutions prepared African Americans for vocations or advanced studies through elementary and secondary programs. This created a demand for higher education, particularly in the area of training teachers for the schools to educate other African Americans. Many of these institutions, along with those founded by the AMA, the Freedmen's Bureau and African American churches, became the foundation of African American higher education in the U.S. (Anderson, 1988). The cultural biases of White missionaries largely dictated the curriculum by which the goals of (a) the education of African American youth; (b) the training of teachers; and (c) the continuation of the "missionary tradition" were achieved (Allen & Jewel, 2002).

The need for better education opportunities for African Americans prompted a movement that resulted in the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). HBCUs were the first private, nonprofit institutions established without state government support. In 1862, the National Land-Grant Colleges Act (First Morrill Act) helped to establish and publicly fund African American colleges. This Act provided land and money to the states for the establishment of colleges that would provide education to lower- and middle-income Americans (Harper et al., 2009; Hoffman, 1996).

Public college education for African Americans was significantly enhanced when Congress passed the Second Morrill Act in 1890. The Act required states with higher education systems that were racially segregated to provide a land-grant institution for Black students whenever a land-grant institution was established and restricted for White students. As a result, 19 public land-grant institutions for African Americans were established in each of the southern and border states and offered courses in agricultural, industrial and mechanical subjects. Only a few offered college-level courses and degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). In the last part of the 19th century, most institutions had White teachers and administrators who sought to teach the African American students codes of conduct that were acceptable in White society (Redd, 1998).

Although the Morrill Act called for the equitable division of federal dollars, the newly founded African American public colleges received overall lower funding than their White counterparts. As a result, these African American institutions had substandard facilities (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). The 1896 decision, by the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, established a "separate but equal" doctrine in public education. According to Allen and Jewell (2002), despite the language of "separate but equal," African American public education was underfunded on the state and local levels. To compensate for the lack of government funding, institutions were compelled to serve the varied educational needs of the African American community by providing educational opportunities to secondary, college preparatory, and college level students. These actions had negative impacts on the development of HBCUs as "full-fledged collegiate institutions" (Allen & Jewell, 2002, p. 248).

Because of their pre-collegiate departments, many of these institutions were not recognized as college-level institutions by the federal and state governments and for many years were denied accreditation. By the end of the 19th century, missionary funds for private African American colleges had been exhausted. A new form of support came from industrialists like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Julius Rosewald, and John Slater (Grasman & Tudico, 2008). Around 1915, there was a shift in the attention paid by White philanthropists to African American institutions that emphasized a liberal arts curriculum. As a result, many African American colleges, led by White men, were supported if they accommodated segregation. Although this caused many conflicts, industrial philanthropists provided major support for private African American colleges well into the late 1930s (Grassman & Tudico, 2008).

Public and private HBCUs in the South remained segregated and were the only options for African Americans in higher education in those states (Gasman & Tudico, 2008). By the 1910s and 1920s, there were major expansions in programs to include professional graduate studies. These trends were mostly in response to the large number of African American World War I veterans who wanted higher education opportunities. Despite the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, in 1954, that overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine, most African Americans remained segregated in institutions with poorer facilities and budgets compared with traditionally White institutions (Allen, 1992).

African American Students Attending HBCUs vs. PWIs

However, by 1975, there was a migration of African American from HBCUs to PWIs, where African American students were not easily accepted with open arms (Allen

& Jewell, 2002). The process of these students entering into institutions of higher education happened faster in areas outside of the South. During the 20 years after *Brown*, there was a second "Great Migration" of students migrating from HBCUs to traditionally White colleges and universities. Once students arrived at these White institutions, they faced many challenges with a system that remained plagued with racial inequities.

Scholars contend that when African American students relied only on HBCUs for education, they benefited from the educational and social commitment provided by these institutions. Throughout history, HBCUs have provided not only education, but also social, political and religious leadership for members of the African American community. These institutions were built on a foundation of "achieving against the odds" of fighting to produce a "highly educated and politically astute generation of leaders", who could represent the interests of the African American community within a White power structure (Allen & Jewell, 2002, p. 243).

Research conducted by Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) concluded that African American students at HBCUs "achieved twice as much intellectual development as their peers" attending PWIs, and "experienced enhanced involvement in the career process, greater satisfaction with academic life, and higher occupational aspirations" (p. 316). Students at HBCUs found the academic support they needed from professors who were committed to their success.

When African American students left HBCUs, they found that they were leaving institutions that provided students with higher levels of satisfaction and a sense of commitment, which resulted in higher levels of student persistence and degree attainment (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). On the White campuses, the

students were exposed to a climate of prejudice and discrimination. Under these circumstances, African American students experienced many factors that interfered with their integration into the social and academic environments of the campus. As a result, students suffered from increased stress and pressures that affected their academic performance (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pscarella, & Hagedorn, 1999).

Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) found that African American students at PWIs were more likely to experience a disconnection between their aspirations and their ability to academically integrate into the culture of the institution. In addition to lower levels of academic integration, the authors' research concluded that these students experienced less satisfaction with their institution and suffered more from discrimination.   On many campuses students were seen by their professors and peers as underprepared for college.

African American Students in Business Studies

According to the work of Boussard (1931), as the need for professional personnel in the business world grew, universities developed education for business. In 1881, the first collegiate school of business, the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business was established through a gift from Joseph Wharton. Within in the following seventeen (17) years, two more schools of business at both the University of Chicago and the University of California.

By the early 1900s, business education began to spread rapidly across the country. By 1913, twenty-five (25) universities had developed schools of business. Expansion continued during the years of World War I, and by 1924, there were 117 universities that offered business education to students. Despite their rapid growth, business schools had

little to no interest in racial and social issues. Racial diversity was not as much on the radar for business schools as it was for other professional schools.

Before the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of African American students found in business administration programs was very low because there was a low demand for African American business managers, and African Americans, who did gain access to higher education, chose fields of study other than business as a result of little or no opportunities in corporate America (Altbach, 1991). By the early 1970s, at the same time there was the increase in the number of African American students at PWIs, there was an increase in corporate affirmative action efforts to create diversity in the workplace (Trent, 2011). As these affirmative action policies spread onto campuses throughout the country, efforts were made to recruit, admit, retain and graduate African American students in business schools (Trent, 2011).

Today, although there is a need for more workers with degrees in business, African American students continue to obtain a slightly disproportionate share of degrees in business education, when compared to their White peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The proportion of business degrees awarded to African Americans held steady around 11-12% between 2010-2015, roughly proportional to the population (13% African American) (Citation NCES). While these national figures do not provide cause for alarm, disproportions become clearer when looking at particular regional settings. For example, Southeastern University (SEU), the site for this study is located in an urban city that has a population of over 700,000 with the following race/ethnic distribution: White (50%), African American/Black (35%), Hispanic/Latino (13%) and Asian (5%) (US Census Bureau, 2016). At this Predominantly White

institution, African Americans made up only 14% of the enrolled business students and 17% of all students in 2015-16. This gross underrepresentation illustrates the importance of understanding student experiences in particular contexts and institutions, rather than aggregate national figures.

African American Student Interaction with Faculty

According to Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997), higher education systems in the US provide "constructed and unequal hierarchies" (p. xvii) in which African American students experience differential access to power and privilege, and as a result, students find themselves in an unjust and oppressive environment when they step onto campus. To counteract these experiences, institutions can provide students with a campus environment that values diversity, inclusion and equity that provides the opportunity for students to flourish academically and persist to degree completion. Reaching the goal of obtaining a degree will help these students begin to change the social fabric of the country and allow them an opportunity to gain the power and privilege that results in their ability to be viable members of society with the ability to demand a higher income.

When students, particularly African American students, sense that they are valued and that there is someone who will help them reach their academic goals, they feel more satisfied with their college life and aspire to persist. Faculty interactions with students may help to increase students' aspirations to achieve at higher levels and increase their self-confidence (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). Therefore, African American students' perceptions of the impact of interactions with faculty on their academic success and persistence is vital information for administrators and faculty.

Statement of the Problem

By the year 2020, Carnevale, Smith and Strohl (2013), at the Georgetown

University's Center on Education and the Workforce, project that 65% of jobs will be

held by workers with postsecondary education. Degrees in professional fields, including

business, are needed to meet these projected demands. However, at the current rate in

which universities are producing workers with college degrees, the U.S. will fall short by

5 million degreed workers that will be needed by 2020. The number of jobs requiring a

Bachelor's degree in a business discipline outnumbers those that require a high school

diploma, some college, Associate's degree and Master's degree (Table 2).

Table 2: Education Distribution of Total Jobs within Business Industry, 2020 (in
thousands of jobs)

Business discipline jobs	High school diploma	Some college	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Sales & office Support	11,330	10.420	5,790	9,960	1,400
Managerial & Professional Services	2,790	3,440	2,580	10,220	3,700
Financial activities	5,670	5,850	3,300	11,900	2,320
Wholesale & retail trade services	7,190	4,680	2,180	4,380	620
Manufacturing	3,480	1,720	1,110	1,950	630
Professional & business services	2,140	1,870	1,170	3,720	1,210
Hospitality	4,610	3,120	1,540	2,600	390

SOURCE: *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*, Center on
Education and the Workforce: Georgetown University, 2013.

While African American students are entering college at a higher rate than in past

decades, less than a quarter of African American adults have attained a college degree

(Pew Research Center, 2016). Researchers have emphasized the need to improve the educational attainment rates of minority students, including African American students, to be able to increase the country's competitiveness in a global economy (Engle & Tinto, 2008). However, the gap remains and in order, to compete in a global economy, African American students must achieve academic success and degree completion to meet the requirements for the projected job market for high-paying jobs.

Despite an increase in access, research has shown that African American students face many challenges that impact their ability to adjust to the social and academic demands of college. These challenges include (a) lack of preparation for college level work (Leverett, Parker & McDonald, 2007; Tinto, 1993); (b) lack of parental or institutional agent support (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Giuffrida, 2005; Hsaio, 1992; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Petty, 2014); (c) isolation due to the lack of academic and social integration into campus life(Atherton, 2014; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas & Thompson, 2004); (d) the lack of preparedness to sustain the competitive atmosphere found on many campuses across the country (Leverett, et. al., 2007; Petty, 2014; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1995); (e) challenge of functioning and thriving in two opposite worlds: the culture of home and the culture of higher education (Hsaio, 1992); and (f) financial concerns (Petty, 2014; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1995). As a result, many become overwhelmed and decide not to continue their studies. In addition to these challenges, African American students in business disciplines experience even more challenges due to the competitive nature of their program, resulting in the underrepresentation of African American students in business colleges.

Purpose of the Study

Previous research conducted with African American students from other professional undergraduate programs, such as engineering, has pointed to the critical role of relationships with faculty, other institutional agents, and institutional factors in enrollment and persistence of students (Li, Swaminathan, & Tang, 2009). The perceived quality of support and relationship from faculty members is linked to academic success for African American students (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole, 2008; Cole & Espinoza, 2008). Positive interactions with education personnel, including those with professors, have been identified as important influences for pursuit of and persistence in STEM fields among underrepresented minority (URM) students (Charleston, 2012). Limited research has been conducted to examine African American students in programs in the business disciplines, which leaves a gap in understanding the experiences of this group of students. In response, the researcher sought to understand the perceptions of successful African American business students, through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), as it relates to (a) the climate of SEU's College of Business and its programs; (b) the aspects of student-faculty interactions that affect how students and faculty interact; and (c) the importance of the interactions in motivating student academic performance in a business discipline.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1) How do African American students understand the climate, particularly related to race, of an undergraduate business program at a PWI?

2) How do African American students perceive their own relationships with faculty in the program, specifically how relationships with faculty have

hindered or contributed to their success in an undergraduate business program, at a PWI?

Significance of the Study

Seidman (2005) posits that academic success and the successful completion of a degree program is vitally important for not only African American students themselves, but also institutions in which they are enrolled. When these students decide to depart from the institution, the results are a lack of resources for the student, society and the institution. Research has supported that the presence of URM students on college campuses (a) adds to the diversity of the institution; (b) brings people together from different backgrounds, who can interact and share ideas in exchange for an atmosphere of cultural acceptance (Washington, 2008); (c) emphasizes the importance of respecting and accepting differences by creating learning environments that are supportive and inclusive (Goodman, 2011); (d) provides students with their first encounters with students who are different than themselves; (e) prepares students to be able to work in a diverse workforce; and (f) provides opportunities for students to challenge the ideas and experiences that they bring from home which strengthens their cognitive abilities (Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, & Gurin, 2003).

In response to the need for a diverse student population, many institutions have designed and implemented programs, policies and resources to ensure that the needs of students are met (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2010). Despite institutional efforts, the existence of these programs, policies, and resources alone is not enough to have a positive impact on African American students and their progression towards completing their degree. Diversity on the college campus goes beyond access and increasing

numbers of racial and ethnic diverse students. The increase in enrollment must be accompanied by the institution's appreciation of the relationship between access, success and retention.

Unfortunately, many African American students experience feeling as if they are an "outsider" or "the other," causing feelings of invalidation that can have "detrimental educational consequences" (Cress, 2008, p. 97). For most students, the normal challenges associated with navigating the campus and transitioning from secondary education is stressful. However, African American students on predominantly White campuses encounter additional stresses that come specifically from their minority status.

African American students need guidance and support to help them achieve academic success. The absence of this support and guidance tends to result in the students' lower levels of confidence and lower academic performance. Although many institutions have designed and implemented programs, policies and resources to ensure that the needs of students of color are met, the existence of these programs, policies and resources alone is not enough to have a positive impact on African American students and their progression towards completing their degree. The increase in enrollment must also be accompanied by the institution's appreciation of the relationship between access, success and retention (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2010).

Therefore, it is critically important to challenge institutions to rethink how students are impacted by faculty, one of the most valuable resources they provide. With a better understanding of how faculty impact students, institutions will be able to identify ways to improve student persistence and degree completion. This study provided an opportunity for successful African American business students to share their perspectives

on the importance of student-faculty interactions and the role that these interactions have on their academic success. In particular, the students were able to share (a) how they "fit" in the academic environment of the college of business; (b) how they are perceived by faculty and peers; and (c) what they need from faculty in order to succeed. Having this knowledge, institutional administrators, faculty members, and staff will be able to design support systems that meet the changing needs of their African American student population.

Theoretical Framework

Volumes of research have been conducted on student retention and persistence. In addition, several theories provide explanations for student persistence in higher education exist. However, the missing element of much of the research has been the lack of incorporating the notion of race and how it impacts the lived experiences of students of color (Yosso, Parker, Solorazano, & Lynn, 2005). In response, the researcher used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the lens to view student experiences. CRT allowed the researcher to incorporate this notion of race by giving voice to the participants, who shared their counter-stories concerning their lives as underrepresented minorities (URM) at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

Key Terms and Definitions

Researchers have used different definitions for the following terms. However, for the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used.

African American (Black) – a person who self-identifies as having origins of any Black racial group in Africa.

Attrition – reduction in the number of students attending courses for a period of time.

Climate – perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the academic program or institution; at times, the word "culture" is used interchangeably with "climate" in this dissertation study.

HBCUs – Historically Black Colleges and Universities where the majority of students are Black/African American.

Persistence - the continual pursue of a student in a degree program leading toward the completion of the program.

PWI – Predominantly White Institution where the majority of students are White.

Retention – institution's ability to retain students occurs when a student enrolls each semester until graduation.

Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) – African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Latinos— who have historically comprised a minority of the U.S. population.

<center>Summary</center>

While representation of African American students in college enrollment has improved, degree attainment of African Americans and other minority groups still lag behind. There remains the necessity to understand academic success and persistence issues that impact students, especially for underrepresented students including African Americans. In addition, there remains a gap in the number of African American students graduating with business degrees required for participation in the current and projected labor markets driven by business industries. In addition, there is a gap in understanding

how best to support these students so that they can achieve academic success and persist to degree attainment. These gaps continue to present challenges for African American students, their community, and institutions of higher education.

Research has shown that one of the most valuable resources institutions provide to their students are the faculty. However, to this date, there is very little research on how interactions with faculty impact African American students' success and persistence in business disciplines. This study provides student viewpoints on how faculty affect students. In addition, it provides the opportunity to challenge institutions to change their thinking of how to support students of color to improve the number of African American students persisting to degree completion.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Although African American students are entering college at a higher rate than in the past, they leave before graduating at a higher rate than White students resulting in a widening of the educational gap (Carter, 2006). When compared to White students at PWIs, African American students have lower persistence rates, lower academic success, poorer psychosocial adjustment, and lower "post-graduation occupational attainments and earnings" (Allen, 1985). Seidman (2005) suggests that the outcomes not only have negative effects on the students, but also on their families and society. He argues that college graduates not only earn more money, but also, "incur fewer health problem, suffer less penal involvement, and live longer than non-college graduates" (p. 8). Student achievement of degree attainment has a life-long impact.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, begins with an overview of African American students' persistence in college and persistence in competitive majors where they are underrepresented. The overview is followed by a focus on recently published (2000-present) peer-reviewed literature, examining the relationship of student-faculty interaction and its relationship to student engagement, persistence and academic success among African American college students and other underrepresented minority groups. The review is guided by the following four (4) questions:

1) What is known about factors that affect African American students persist in college, and specifically, in competitive majors?

2) What are the major theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to study the phenomenon of student-faculty interaction and student success?

3) How is student-faculty interaction related to student engagement, persistence, grades and performance?

4) What are the methodological and conceptual gaps in the existing literature, and how can the study respond to these gaps?

For question #1, the researcher sought literature that examined African American persistence and those specifically persistent in STEM majors, as literature on business majors was not available. For question #2-4, the researcher employed a specific methodology to locate and summarized the literature, which is described in the corresponding section. Given the focus of this dissertation study, specifically on student-faculty relationships, a more methodical review of this body of literature was undertaken.

African American Student Persistence in College

Historically, African Americans have been stripped of opportunities and have had fewer economic assets and resources. Lack of access to degree attainment has resulted in fewer high-paying jobs that in turn render fewer positive role models to younger generations and fewer opportunities to contribute economically to family and society (Carnevale, Fasules, Porter, & Landis-Santos, 2016). However, over time, institutions of higher learning increased their focus on engaging and retaining African American students, resulting in an increase in the proportion of African Americans with bachelor degrees (Allen, 1992).

Even though institutions have the best intentions of committing more resources to retain this groups of students, institutional "leadership often lacks clear direction on how best to extend their resources" (Allen, 1992, p. 27). African American students leave at a rate higher than their White counterparts, thereby impacting the socioeconomic gap

between them and their White counterparts (Allen, 1992; Harper, 2009). Once enrolled in an institution, African American students continue to face many challenges that impact their ability to adjust to the social and academic demands of college, and consequently their persistence in college. Unfortunately, this not only has a negative impact on the students, but also on the institutions who need to retain students to survive financially (Crissman, 2001). When African American students leave an institution, there is a negative impact on the student, the institution, and society. The student is riddled with debt, the institution is at risk of losing funding, and society loses the opportunity to have educated citizens who can contribute to the workforce and the economic growth of the country (Allen, 1992).

African American students tend to leave college, voluntarily or involuntarily, for many different reasons. Research on persistence, engagement, and academic success has identified several factors that may impact African American student attrition, including: lack of preparation for college level work (Leverett, Parker, & McDonald, 2007; Petty, 2014; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1995; Tinto, 1993); lack of support from parents or institutional agents (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Guiffrida, 2005; Hsaio, 1992; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Petty, 2014); isolation due to limited academic and social integration into campus life (Atherton, 2014; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004); challenges of functioning and thriving in opposing cultures of home and higher education (Hsaio, 1992); and financial concerns (Petty, 2014; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995).

In the body of research that has focused more specifically on factors that influence the academic performance of African American students and their decisions to

persist at a PWI, common threads include feeling isolated, lack of support from faculty, being singled out in class, lack of campus diversity, prejudice and discrimination on campus, and needing to prove worthiness. To overcome these challenges, the students sought support from family, African American student organizations, and African American faculty. Some exemplary studies illustrate these common threads.

Davis et al. (2004) completed a study with eleven (11) African American students majoring in engineering, psychology, accounting, education and English, who had successfully completed their coursework and were about to graduate. During the study, the participants shared experiences of unfairness, condescension, invisibility, and sabotage. When it came to interactions with White faculty and peers, the participants felt that they needed to: (a) prove their worthiness to be there; (b) make the initial approach; (c) endure insensitive attitudes; and (d) deal with negative prejudices about the academic abilities of African American students. In addition to these daily negative experiences, the participants described incidents when graffiti and objects symbolizing overt racism were found on campus. Although the incidents caused great distress, the fact that the University's administration was not particularly interested in investigating made the situation worst for the students. Despite all that they experienced, they persisted.

During their study of 183 African American students, Furr and Elling (2002) found that students faced many challenges at a PWI. Participants reported the lack of financial aid, feelings of not being valued by the university, having to work 20+ hours to pay for college, finding that faculty were not available to answer questions outside of class, and not having knowledge about campus programs that could provide support as the challenges that contributed to their lack of persisting.

Allen (1985) questioned whether African American student outcomes (college adjustment, GPA, and occupational aspirations) are best explained by the characteristics of the students or the institution. During a study with 695 undergraduate African American students, he found that social involvement was highest for students who had positive interactions with faculty, participated in African American student organizations, and had positive views about the support they received from the institution.

Komarraju et al. (2010) also found that positive interactions with faculty had a profound effect on African American student academic success and persistence. In their study of 242 undergraduate students of which 24% were African American. The authors found that African American persisters felt alienated and distant from faculty, discouraged, less confident, and less motivated to persist to graduation.

Brooms and Davis (2017) conducted a study of 59 African American males attending several PWIs. Interested in learning more about how the students built meaning from their college experiences and what pushed them to academic success, the researchers concluded that the students found that peer-to-peer bonding and association with other males, as well as, being mentored by African American faculty were the factors that pushed them to persist through their studies.

Cabrera et al. (1999) conducted a study of 1454 students, of which 315 were African American. The results of the study showed that the social experiences of the African American participants were negatively dominated by prejudice and discrimination on the campus, which in turn, had a negative impact on their academic performance. The researchers concluded that the factors that most influenced persistence

with this group of students was encouragement from parents, commitment from the institution, and positive experiences of academic performance.

Sinanan (2012) found similar results to those previously mentioned, in her study of 13 African American males at a PWI. The participants, sharing their experiences, reported that they were not prepared for the "culture shock" they experienced when they first arrived on campus. They felt that they were singled out by students and professors, in the classroom, to speak for all things associated with African Americans. This resulted in feeling "different" from their White peers. The students also reported the sense of not belonging and underrepresented. The most important factor that emerged from Sinanan's findings was that the feeling of isolation was what led students to consider leaving the institution.

While the aforementioned studies identified factors related to persistence of African American students more generally, there is much to be learned from studies on the factors that impact persistence in competitive majors, such as business. The following section examines research on African American persistence in competitive majors.

African American Persistence In Majors Where They Are Underrepresented

Due to the scarcity of research conducted on the persistence of African American students in business disciplines, the researcher examined studies on the experiences of this student population in comparably "competitive" majors where they are underrepresented. According to Carnevale et al. (2016), African Americans are underrepresented in the number of degree holders in majors associated with the fastest-growing, highest-paying occupations. These occupations include STEM, health, and business. Their data show that African American students represent only eight percent

(8%) of general engineering majors, seven percent (7%) of mathematics majors, and five percent (5%) of computer engineering majors. A significant body of research has been conducted on African American students in STEM majors at PWIs. This literature can shed light on potential issues for African American business students.

Palmer, Maramba, and Dancy's (2011) research on six African American STEM majors at PWIs, concluded that there were three themes that students identified as having the greatest impact on their persistence: (a) peer group support; (b) involvement in STEM related activities; and (c) strong high school preparation. Students found group support valuable because it provided safe and engaging environments for asking questions, a healthy environment to achieve balance "in a world where academic anxieties were normalized (p. 500)," and an environment filled with motivation and encouragement. Students also found being involved in STEM related organizations provided opportunities to engage with other like-minded students. Finally, students valued the academic preparation they received prior to college where they were introduced to STEM majors and the potential career choices associated with them.

Ebony McGee's (2016) interviews with 38 high-achieving sophomore, junior and senior African American and Latino STEM students were filled with stories of enduring campus and program environments that were competitive, cutthroat, and full of stereotypes and microaggressions. The students also shared that there was lack of faculty diversity and perceptions that they harbored biases against students of color.

The 146 high-achieving STEM Latino student participants in Cole and Espinoza's (2008) study experienced the same type of environment as those described in McGee's study. Experiencing microaggressions, competitive environments, and the lack of a

diverse faculty, students sought support from the African American or Latino faculty, students, and organizations on campus. These supportive resources provided what the students felt was needed to successfully navigate their campus and programs.

Burrell, Fleming, Fredericks, and Moore (2015) conducted a study of 15 Black (domestic and international) engineering students at a HBCU. From analysis of the data, the researchers concluded that student persistence was influenced by faculty expectations, self-theories of intelligence, and peer support. Faculty expectations involved students receiving cues from faculty that indicate what is expected, the students internalize the expectation, and, in turn, achieve at the expected level. Self-theories of intelligence involved the students' ability to drown out the negative stereotypes of inferior intelligence and rely on their own self-realization of the intellectual abilities. The students also relied on their peers for advice, studying together, and sharing experiences.

Williamson (2010), like Cabrera et al. (1999), found that the persistence of 99 high-achieving African American male STEM students was impacted by support from family, friends, and faculty. Sharing their experiences, the students indicated that they found faculty to not be interested in spending time with students outside of the classroom, family was "pivotal" to their success, and there was a lack of Black males on campus.

In Charleston, George, Jackson, Berhanu, and Amechi's (2014) research with 15 African American female students in computer science majors, they found that women experienced feelings of isolation, a competitive culture that was not welcoming to women (particularly African American women), misperceptions and stereotypes about their abilities, tension amongst classmates due to favoritism, and the loss of a social life.

As in the literature on persistence of African Americans at PWIs, these studies on African Americans in STEM majors confirmed the common threads of feeling isolated, lack of support from faculty, lack of campus diversity, and the existence of a campus environment of prejudice and discrimination has had impact on student success and persistence. In several of the studies, students found the motivation to persist from family, friends, faculty, and from within themselves.

Literature Review Methodology: Student-Faculty Interaction and Student Success

Within the past 40 years, a vast amount of research and scholarship has informed and guided institutional administrators, faculty and staff to improve retention and academic success of college students. During the 1970s and 1980s, in response to federal oversight of graduation rates, focus was placed on identifying and understanding the effects of institutional retention efforts and student departure (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Pascrella, Smart, & Ethington, 1986). By the late 1980s and 1990s, studies began to seek to better understand the factors that impacted student departure, such as institutional climate and culture, student academic and social engagement, and student interactions with peers and faculty (e.g., Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). By the 2000s, focus shifted to studying the growing population of certain racial minority groups (i.e., Latino/Hispanic) (e.g., Anaya & Cole, 2001; Dika, 2012) and the push to increase the number of underrepresented minority students in the STEM majors (i.e., engineering) (e.g., Dika, Pando, & Tempest, 2016).

Broadly, research has focused on the effects of institutional climate and culture, student engagement and involvement, and student-faculty interactions on student

persistence and academic success. To guide this study on the experiences of African American junior and senior students studying in undergraduate business programs at a PWI, the researcher decided to focus the review of literature by seeking empirical literature that met the following criteria.

1) Published in peer-reviewed journal articles or conference proceedings since 2000,

2) Examines the relationship of student-faculty interaction with academic success, persistence and/or engagement (using qualitative or quantitative methodology),

3) Identifies population of interest as African American juniors and seniors attending a PWI, either as the entire sample or examined as a subset of a larger sample (preferred but not exclusive criterion),

4) Includes African American junior and senior business students in the sample (preferred but not exclusive criterion).

This search was conducted using Google Scholar, UNCC Library databases (ERIC, Education Research Complete, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete and citation searches from peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations). The searches were conducted by using the terms student success, academic success, student engagement, persistence, retention, faculty-student interactions, student-faculty interactions, African American/Black students, business education, higher education, and under-represented minority (URM) students. Databases searched also incorporated titles of academic journals, such as *Research in Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Harvard Business Review, The Journal of Higher Education, Journal of College Student*

Development, College Student Journal, and the Journal of Negro Education, were used to identify peer-reviewed articles that met the criteria for this study. Additionally, the review includes reference to a mixed methods study on student-faculty interaction for African American/Black and Latino junior and senior engineering students which was published in proceedings of the Annual Conference of the American Society of Engineering Education (Dika, Pando, & Tempest, 2016). The researcher participated as a graduate assistant on this study.

Using the search criteria eighteen (18) empirical studies were identified for review. The empirical studies are summarized in Table 3, including methodology, data sources, theoretical framework, sample, and factors examined (engagement/involvement, persistence, academic success, and student-faculty interaction). Several of the eighteen (18) identified empirical studies included students from other underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (i.e., Latino/ Hispanic) and/or in other professional majors (i.e., engineering). Twelve (12) of the studies employed quantitative methods for data collection. Only three (3) of the studies included junior and senior African American business students as participants, while only one (1) of the studies included junior and senior African American engineering students as participants. In addition to the empirical studies reviewed, over 60 related theoretical and conceptual works were cited to support or add context to the review.

Table 3: Studies of Student Success and Student-Faculty Interaction Included in Literature Review

Citation	Methodology	Data Sources	Theoretical Framework	Sample	Factors[1]
Anaya & Cole (2011)	Quantitative	CSEQ survey, institutional documents	Interactions with faculty, Latino student academic success	836 Latino students	P, A, SFI
Brint, Cantwell & Hanneman (2008)	Quantitative	Analysis of the UCUES	Engagement, Institutional characteristics, first-generation, graduation aspirations	6,215 students, various majors (including business), AA (N=150)	E/I, A, SFI
Carini, Kuh, Klein (2006)	Quantitative	NSSE, RAND, GRE, GPA	Student engagement, academic success	1,058 students, AA (N=9%)	E/I, A
Cole (2008)	Quantitative	CIRP Survey, institutional documents	Student-faculty interactions, constructive criticism, faculty feedback	1,422 students, AA (N=612), Latino (N=810)	A, SFI
Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas & Thompson (2004)	Qualitative	Interviews	Student attrition, student success, campus climate, social integration	AA (N=11) undergraduate students, 7 women (ages 21-24), 4 men (ages 22-26), various majors (including business), PWI	E/I, A, SFI
DeFreitas & Bravo (2012)	Qualitative	Institutional Records, MSPSE, Mentoring Scale	Academic self-efficacy, involvement with faculty, academic achievement	249 students, AA (N=105) and Latino (N=144)	A, SFI
Dika, Pando & Tempest (2016)	Mixed	Questionnaire & Focus Groups	Student-faculty interactions, Cultural Wealth	Engineering students, AA (N=24), Latino (N=17)	SFI
Eimers (2001)	Quantitative	CO survey, institutional documents	F-S relations, campus climate, college experience	923 students, AA (N=52)	E/I, A, SFI
Fries-Britt & Turner (2002)	Qualitative	Institutional records, focus groups, interviews	Student engagement, persistence, social interactions	34 AA junior/senior students	E/I, P, A, SFI
Furr & Elling (2002)	Quantitative	Institutional records, climate survey	Student persistence, retention, social interaction	183 AA students, 7 consecutive semesters	E/I, P, A

[1]E/I = engagement/interaction; P = persistence; A = academic achievement; SFI = student-faculty interaction

Table 3: continued

Citation	Methodology	Data Sources	Theoretical Framework	Sample	Factors[1]
Grantham, Robinson & Chapman (2015)	Qualitative	Thank a Teacher program responses	Interactions with faculty, recognition of faculty	157 students including AA students, percentage not reported	SFI
Kim & Sax (2009)	Quantitative	UCUES Core and Academic Engagement	Involvement, environments, outcomes, student-faculty interactions	58,281 undergraduate students, AA (N=3.0%)	E/I, P, A, SFI
Kuh & Hu (2001)	Quantitative	Questionnaires (CSEQ)	Student-faculty interactions, frequency & nature of interaction	5,409 students from 126 college and universities, AA (N=5.3%)	A, SFI
Lundberg & Schreiner (2004)	Quantitative	Questionnaires (CSEQ)	Student-faculty interactions, academic integration	4,501 students, AA (N=643)	A, SFI
Museus, Nichols & Lambert (2008)	Quantitative	NCES, BPS	Student persistence, student involvement, environmental factors, institutional climate	8,492 students, including AA students, percentage not reported	E/I, P, A
Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini (2004)	Quantitative	Analysis of longitudinal data – NSSL, precollege survey, CAAP	First-gen, transitions, persistence, degree attainment, experiences, engagement	Fall 1992 (N=3,331), Spring 1993 (N=2,416), Spring 1994 (N=1,613), including AA student, percentage not reported	E/I, P, A, SFI
Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso (2001)	Qualitative	Focus Group Interviews	Collegiate racial climate, threats within academic/social spaces, CRT	AA students (N=24)	E/I, A, SFI
Strayhord (2008)	Quantitative	CSEQ	Student integration, departure, relationships	231 AA male students	E/I, A, SFI

[1]E/I = engagement/interaction; P = persistence; A = academic achievement; SFI = student-faculty interaction

Theoretical Frameworks for Student-Faculty Interaction and Student Success

Scholars have used various conceptual and theoretical perspectives to explain student navigation through higher education. The second research question guiding the literature review for this study was focused on identifying predominant and potential theoretical frameworks for the study of student-faculty interaction and student success. The current review of empirical studies revealed several sociological and psychological models that have been used to explain student-faculty interaction and its relationship to student success, with Alexander Astin's IEO Model and Theory of Student Involvement (Astin 1977, 1993) and Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Departure (1975, 1987, 1993) being the most common. Studies that critically examine the experiences of African American college student success in particular frequently utilize Critical Race Theory (CRT) or variants of the theory. Due to the scarcity of studies on the climate of business colleges at PWIs, and the evidence that business careers offer greater economic mobility, it is important for the current study to investigate factors relating to the persistence of African American students in business-related majors. Based on a review of the extant work, the researcher utilized what scholars know based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Astin and Tinto. However, a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens was used throughout this study to view the experiences of the African American student participants.

Critical Race Theory

"Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars in education have theorized, examined, and challenged the ways in which race and racism shape schooling structures, practices and discourses" (Yosso et al., 2005, p. 3). In the past, CRT research has informed educators, particularly in the effort of identifying and challenging the macro- and micro-

aggressions that have been experienced by African American students on campuses across the U.S.

CRT was born out of the work of several legal scholars in the 1970s, who were reexamining the persistence of racism in America and the lack of racial reform in traditional civil rights legislation. A growing movement, sparked by Derrick Bell Jr., Alan Freeman, Charles Lawrence, Lani Guinier, Richard Delgado, Mai Matsuda, Patricia Williams, and Kimberle Crenshaw, began to spread into other areas, including education (Hiraldo, 2010; Taylor, 1998). Their research put race and racism at the center of their scholarship and analysis, while trying to understand how the dominant culture and its oppression of African Americans had been established and perpetuated (Lynn & Adams, 2002).

"Although CRT is not an abstract set of ideas or rules, its scholarship is marked by a number of specific themes" (Taylor, 1998, p. 122), five "themes" or tenets of CRT have been described by scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1999; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Yosso et al, 2005):

1) Racism is Permanent - CRT seeks to "unmask and expose" racism in America (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It realizes that the basis of racism, which is ingrained in American culture appears to be "normal" and natural because American society expects everyone to conform to the norms of the White, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual dominant group.

2) Challenge to Dominant Ideology – CRT challenges White privilege and argues that the concepts of objectivity, meritocracy,

colorblindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity act as a

camouflage for the self-interest, power and privilege of the dominant

culture in America (Solorzano, 1997; McCoy et al., 2015).

3) Centrality of Experiential Knowledge – CRT uses the counter-stories

of African Americans to understand their experiences, narratives and

histories, which supports the concept that their experience of

oppression is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding and

analyzing their plight (Closson, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et

al., 2007).

4) Interest Convergence Theory – CRT informs us that the interests of

African Americans will only occur when there is a convergence with

the interests of those in power (McCoy et al., 2015). The theory

focuses on the opposition and elimination of racism, sexism and the

empowerment of African Americans. (McCoy et al., 2015; Yosso et

al., 2007).

5) Intersectionality – CRT contends that African Americans, not only

experience oppression because of their race, but also because of other

identities (gender, class, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation,

etc.) and forms of oppression (sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.)

(Ladson-Billings, 1999; McCoy et al., 2015).

Upon review of the literature, it is apparent that the framework of the

"majoritarian" remains the norm on campuses across the country. Scholars posit that the

needed attention to the concepts of race and racism in higher education are rarely the

focal point of the analysis of academic success and achievement of African American students. Therefore, the need for a change in viewpoint is vital to the transformation of the inequities in the higher educational system (Closson, 2010).

Although this researcher used CRT as the lens through which to review student experiences in this study, it is appropriate to explain the works of Astin and Tinto which are more commonly used by researchers to support their research on student interactions with faculty and persistence. The following section will provide an overview of the work of these two theorists.

Astin's IEO Model and Theory of Student Involvement

Alexander Astin (1977, 1984, 1993) spent many years researching student engagement and involvement on college campuses. His work, conducted through a psychological lens, provides a foundation that assists researchers and institutional agents gain a better understanding of how college impacts students. Two outcomes of his work, the Inputs-Environment-Outputs (IEO) Model and the Theory of Student Involvement, have been used extensively in the empirical literature and thus are used to inform the development of the study.

The IEO model follows the journey of students from life before college through life after college. The model depicts the relationships between inputs (I) (gender, race, academic ability, motivation to learn, learning style), environments (E) (family, educational experience, college courses, interactions with peers and faculty) and outputs (O) (academic performance, persistence, graduation) (Astin, 1977, 1993; Backes, Holzer, & Velez, 2015; Renn & Reason, 2013).

By 1999, Astin expanded the IEO model into the Theory of Student Involvement on the premise that student involvement, which includes their commitment to academic work, participation in campus social activities, and their interaction with peers, faculty members and other institutional personnel, has a direct impact on student learning and personal development.

Although much of his work was conducted with White, full-time students at 4-yr PWIs, Astin began to incorporate racially diverse groups into his work. Finding that racial minorities are largely underrepresented on college campuses and within many occupational fields that require a college education, Astin (1982) argued that equal access and equal opportunity are needed for racial minorities to not only achieve monetary gains but also to develop (a) a positive self-image; (b) intellectual and interpersonal competencies; and (c) to gain more tolerant views and attitudes towards others. In addition, he concluded that not all institutions of higher education provide equivalent resources to URM students. Although institutions have made it clear that they are committed to increasing the number of URM students in their student body, there remains a need to focus on creating a learning environment that provides the necessary resources for this student group to achieve academic success. One such resource that affects the quality of student development is that of a supportive faculty.

Tinto's Theoretical Model of Institutional Departure

Vincent Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993, 1999, 2000) vast research on persistence in higher education not only provides the framework that has been used by other researchers over the decades, but also has provided the framework, used by institutions, to identify effective policies and programs aimed at increasing student academic success and

retention.   Through a sociological approach, his Model of Institution Departure (Figure 1) serves as a foundation that introduces the concepts of student experiences and integration to explain persistence (Eimers, 2001). Tinto's (1975) model assumes that students enter college with individual characteristics (race, sex, and socioeconomic status (SES)) and attributes (family background, skill and ability, and prior schooling), which help the students form their individual goals and commitments towards obtaining a college degree. These student goals and commitments influence their academic and social experiences on campus, which, in turn, have a direct impact on the level at which the student feels integrated into the academic and social system of the institution (Allen, 1992; Pascarella, Smart, & Ethington, 1986; Renn & Reason, 2012; Seidman, 2005).
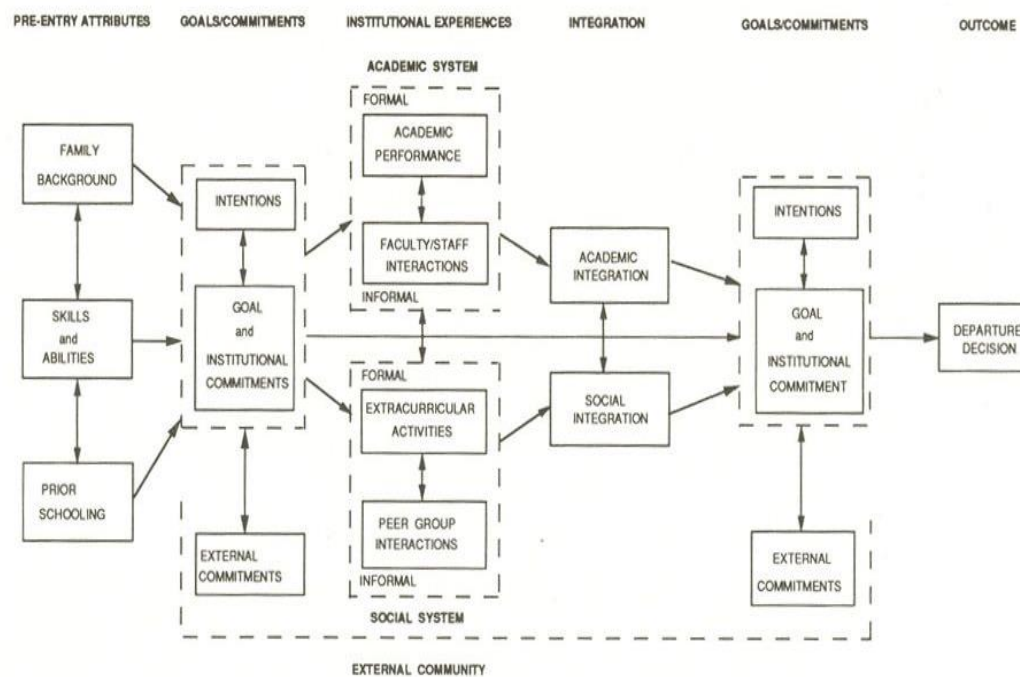

Figure 1: Tinto's Theoretical Model of Institution Departure (Tinto, 1975)

Tinto (1987, 1993) informs that frequent contact with faculty is an important element of student persistence, especially when that contact extends beyond the classroom to various informal settings. Interactions that appear to students to be inviting and "rewarding

appear to be strongly associated with continued persistence" (p. 57). He posits that not only is faculty behavior in the classroom an influence on academic performance, it also sets the tone for interactions that occur outside of the classroom. How students perceive the approachability of the faculty is a determinant as to the likelihood of further interaction beyond confines of the classroom. Tinto indicates that faculty must appear available and interested in having interactions with students for interactions to occur.

In 1999, Tinto identified five conditions that support retention of students including expectations, support, feedback, involvement and learning. First, post-secondary institutions must have high expectations for student achievement that are clear and consistent. Second, students need both academic and social support. Academic support includes, but is not limited to, developmental courses, tutoring, study groups, and supplemental instructional programs. Socially, students need the support of counseling and mentoring from institutional agents, including faculty. Third, feedback provided by faculty and staff is very important to student success. When clear and frequent feedback is given, students have the opportunity to adjust their learning. Fourth, the more students are involved academically and socially, they are more likely to persist to completion of their degree. Finally, as they progress through their degree program, the more value students place on their learning the more likely they are to persist to graduation.

Similar to Astin, Tinto's work focused mostly on White students at PWIs. Hence, with the increase of diverse student populations on college campuses, Tinto's model has come under criticism over the years. Tierney (1999) argued that "to a large extent, African American adolescents' cultural backgrounds differ in significant ways from the middle- and upper-class Eurocentric cultural framework upon which U.S. postsecondary

education is based" (p. 82). Tierney's critique is based on Tinto's assumptions that (a) in the U.S., higher education serves as a "rite of passage", and (b) students must sever ties from their community to fully integrate into their new collegiate environment. For students of color, Tierney (1999) argues that

"Tinto's notion is that college initiates must undergo a form of cultural suicide, whereby they make a clean break from the communities and cultures in which they were raised and integrate and assimilate into the dominate culture of the colleges they attend. To the extent that they integrate and assimilate, Tinto contends, college students will be successful. Conversely, if they fail to assimilate, they will fail at college" (p. 82).

Empirical Research on Student-Faculty Interaction and Student Success

The third question guiding the review of literature asks how student-faculty interaction is related to student success in the empirical literature on African American college students. A total of eighteen (18) studies were identified (Table 4) for review, using specific criteria for selection. The literature findings are summarized in three areas of student success: student engagement, persistence, and academic performance.

Relationship of Student-Faculty Interactions to Engagement

Through academic and social engagement, students are able to identify and experience the culture and climate of the institution. Researchers and institutional administrators have been very interested in how students interpret the campus environment and their attitudes about academic and social engagement. Researchers have concluded that there is a direct link between student engagement and student

persistence and learning (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Kuh, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Instruments such as the National Student Engagement Survey (NSSE) and the Cooperative Institution Research Program (CIRP) survey have been used by researchers to identify students' attitudes and experiences and to gain a better understanding of what impacts students on campuses. In particular, the NSSE is designed to obtain information on comparative benchmarks such as (a) the level of academic challenge, (b) active and collaborative learning, (c) student-faculty interaction, (d) enriching educational experiences, and (e) supportive campus environments effectively contribute to student learning (NSSE, 2001). Since 1965, the CIRP survey has been used to collected data that has allowed researchers to assess the experiences of first-year college students and to determine how different campus environments impact their development. These instruments, as well as other institutionally designed instruments such as the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) and Indiana University's College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), have informed institutional practices and policies (HERI, 2016).

Although there are many reasons why students fail to persist to graduation, research shows that the level of a student's engagement can be a determining factor in a student's decision to persist (Milem & Berger, 1997). Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2007) posit that students need to feel integrated into the academic and social life on campus. Students who leave college tend to have lower levels of engagement compared to their peers that do persist (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008).

The same remains true for factors that influence integration. Interactions between faculty and students seem to be extremely important, in that the more time faculty give to their students, the more likely students will achieve academic success and persist to graduation.

Eimers' (2001) study on 923 students (N=52 African American) confirmed that the impact of college on undergraduate students increases "when students believe they are valued, when undergraduate education is taken seriously, when student and faculty interaction is frequent and meaningful, and when students with similar aspirations can interact" (p. 389). Unfortunately, the experiences that racial minorities encounter in college are different from their White peers (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). This was apparent in the work of Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascaarella, and Hagedorn (1999). Their research with 1,454 students (N=315 African American) concluded that prejudice and discrimination still exist in the classroom and on campus and African American students' exposure to a prejudiced campus climate has the largest effect on their commitment to the institution. Studies continue to echo these findings in that African Americans experience racial microaggressions, macro-and micro-level barriers, resulting in a dissatisfaction with their campus' racial climate (e.g., Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001).

Museus, Nichols, and Lambert (2008) found similar results a study with 8,492 (White, African American, Latina/o & Asian) students. Although they did not include measures of prejudice and discrimination experienced in the academic arena, they did place their focus on the effect of campus racial climate on degree completion. They concluded that students from different racial groups perceive and react differently to

campus racial climates, which do indirectly affect persistence and completion via academic and social involvement. In particular, African American students reported least satisfaction with the racial climates of their campuses, with Asian and Latina/o students' level of satisfaction only slightly higher.

As a result of the continuation of inequality and prejudice found on campuses across the country, institutions are encouraged to continue to assess the campus environment for opportunities to move toward greater inclusiveness by fostering a model of academic engagement that is suitable to all students (Brint, Cantwell, & Hanneman, 2008; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) noted in their study of 34 African American juniors and seniors that learning how to build confidence in African American students can be achieved by creating personal and institutional systems of support. "The energy that is cultivated or diverted in students can propel them toward academic pursuits or impede their progress. Seeking genuine engagement with African American students in and out of the classroom may help students feel a stronger connection to their faculty" (p. 326).

Brint, Cantwell, and Hanneman (2008), in their study of 6,215 students (150 of whom African American), noted that because campus social structures are important in the production of cultures of engagement, they questioned normative institutional practices, which are thought to be equally applicable to all students. They concluded the patterns of student engagement are shaped by divergent cultures of academic majors. In particular, there are two distinct cultures 1) the arts, humanities and social sciences; and 2) the natural sciences/engineering and business. As a result, educators who seek to increase academic engagement should 1) build on the existing culture of engagement in

the majors by expanding opportunities for collaborative learning activities that will build

skills valued by the two cultures; and 2) foster a model of academic engagement that is

suitable for all students. Brint et al.'s (2008) work has particular implications for the

current study given the findings that business majors have a distinct culture from the

engagement culture studied as normative in higher education.

Relationship of Student-Faculty Interactions to Persistence

Over the past five decades, institutions have placed more and more emphasis on

identifying ways to put into practice what has been learned about students and what

actions will lead to substantial gains in student academic success and persistence to

graduation. Although there are many factors that influence student success and

persistence, researchers seem to agree that student-faculty interactions have a direct

impact on these areas (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Cole, 2007;

Endo & Harpel, 1982; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Pascarella, 1980; Schwitzer, Griffin,

Ancis, & Thomas, 1999; Tinto, 2006).

Research conducted by Furr and Elling (2002), which monitored 183 African

American students for seven consecutive semesters, concluded that students who left

during the third year more frequently reported that faculty were not available to answer

questions outside of class. Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) found that when the faculty

encouraged students to work harder, the students reported that they worked harder

because of the faculty feedback or because they wanted to meet the expectations of the

faculty. Thereby, the researchers concluded that frequent and satisfying relationships

with faculty were strong predictors of learning. Strayhorn (2008) found similar results in

his research with 231 African American males. In his analysis of the data, he found that

relationships with faculty had a central importance in shaping "the nature and direction of

developmental outcomes" (p. 37) and that supportive relationships with faculty was linked to higher student satisfaction.

Student-faculty interactions have been studied since the 1960s. Over the decades, researchers have agreed that these interactions have influence on student outcomes (Cole, 2007). Student-faculty interactions are viewed as a vital component of student engagement, persistence and academic success. These interactions, either formal or informal, can occur inside the classroom or outside of the classroom. Kuh and Hu (2001) found that meeting and talking to faculty members encouraged students to devote more effort to their studies and validated them as full members of the campus community. Lundberg and Schreiner's (2004) research with students of color and their interactions with faculty, led to conclusions that the frequency of the interaction between faculty and students is more important than the quality of the interactions. Students seemed to be most satisfied with interactions when the faculty were "approachable, helpful, understanding, and encouraging, rather than remote, discouraging, and unsympathetic" (p. 563).

Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) argued that students benefit from interactions with faculty who know and validate them, stating "student persistence rates were enhanced by students who felt known and mentored by faculty, who viewed faculty as committed to their welfare, and who received encouragement and validation" (p. 81). This led to the conclusion that these interactions and their frequency were strong predictors of learning since the students were encouraged to work harder.

Dika, Pando, and Tempest (2016), in their study with 24 African American and 17 Latino engineering students, sought to gain a better understanding of how persisters find

support from faculty in the competitive climate of engineering. They concluded that

positive connections with faculty helped students get through difficult courses, make

future course selections, find research or internship opportunities, and think about future

career and graduate school options.

Relationship of Student-Faculty Interaction to Academic Performance

Student success, traditionally measured by grades in a course, overall GPA and/or

degree attainment, is often achieved when student involvement occurs in spaces of

engagement. Involvement in the classroom with other students and faculty leads to

greater effort, enhanced learning and success (Tinto, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for

the institutions to provide a community that promotes student achievement (Engstrom &

Tinto, 2008).

Student-faculty interactions can be vital to enhancing motivation and achievement

(DeFreitas & Bravo, 2012; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Strayhorn, 2008). Faculty can

have a great impact on student aspirations to achieve at a higher level, a significant

increase in feelings of confidence of academic skills, and an enhancement of intellectual

self-concept (Cole, 2007; Grantham, Robinson, & Chapman, 2015; Komarraju et al.,

2010). In contrast, when students feel distant from faculty members, they experience a

lack of motivation, discouragement and a feeling of apathy (Komarraju et al., 2010).

Students appreciate the feeling of being cared about and they welcome an

opportunity to connect with faculty on a personal level. As a result, faculty may need to

take the first step and reach out to URM students who may find it difficult to approach

them, particularly when the faculty member is of a different race (Museus, Nichols, &

Lambert, 2008). The research of Schwitzer et al. (1999), with 22 African American

students, informs the literature that the students feel that the majority of faculty members

are not familiar with African Americans resulting in the students being reluctant to

"approach faculty for the risk that the faculty would view them as needing help as a direct

result of being African American" (p. 194). DeFreitas and Bravo's (2012) research with

249 students (N=105 African Americans) found that when ethnic minority students have

positive interactions with faculty, it counteracts the belief that faculty maintain negative

views of them and their academic potential. As a result, they feel a sense of belonging in

the academic environment and embrace the idea that they can have a successful academic

career.

Studies conducted by Anaya and Cole (2001) and Cole (2008) found similar

results. Anaya and Cole's (2001) research with 836 Latino/a students concluded that

educationally related interactions with faculty and the perception that faculty are

accessible and supportive contributes the most to the student's academic performance.

Cole (2008) echoed these findings in his study of 1,422 African American and Latino

students. He found GPA was directly influenced by interactions with faculty when the

students received constructive feedback. The support and encouragement received from

faculty was statistically significant. Even when the feedback is negative, when it is

constructive it is perceived as being in the spirit of improving student learning.

African American students at PWIs can be particularly influenced by interactions

with faculty. These interactions play an important role by providing the necessary

support and guidance needed to increase the students' levels of confidence and academic

performance. Positive interactions with faculty encourages the student to become more

confident and academically successful, which tends to lead to an increase in the student's

persistence to graduation. Guiffrida's (2005) research on African American students

identified the need for faculty to be "student-centered" and culturally sensitive to the needs of the students. The students in his study perceived faculty interactions as most valuable when the faculty invested time in the students, listened to the students, understood their career fears, dreams and goals, provided academic and personal advising, supported and advocated for the students, provided information and resources needed to navigate the institution, and most importantly, showed that they cared about the students' success.

Allen (1992) informs the literature that African American students' relative lack of success in higher education is not a mystery. "It is the results of the same historical, political, economic, social cultural and psychological patterns that have perpetuated Black subjugation and oppression since Blacks arrived on these shores in 1619." In response, Cress (2008) argues that through positive student-faculty relationships, institutions can fulfill their social justice ideals of the equality of opportunity and treatment of all students. In turn, it is through the development of these relationships with students that faculty can help minimize the effects of a negative campus climate experienced by many African American students on predominantly White campuses.

African American students have a need to feel that they belong, that they are cared about, and they have allies to support them through their learning process (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Satisfying and frequent relationships with faculty encourages them to work harder. These positive interactions can provide an important foundation for student effort toward academic success and persistence (Cotton & Wilson, 2006). It is during these interactions, that faculty have "the opportunity to model the principles of equity, democracy and respect" (Goodman, 2011, p. 179).

Summary of Empirical Research on Student-Faculty Interaction

The empirical studies reviewed in this section reveal that student-faculty interactions indeed are linked to the success of African American students, with some important contextual aspects. Discrimination in the form of classroom microaggressions and mismatch or misunderstandings between majority White faculty and African American students influence their level of integration and engagement. Further, the quality and nature of interactions with faculty – the perceived time investment, cultural sensitivity, and caring of the faculty – are linked to the persistence and academic achievement of African American and other underrepresented (e.g., Latino) students. Research also suggests that in addition to unique experiences based on race/ethnicity, there are also differing cultures of engagement based on academic major – particularly, related to the aims of this study, a different culture among business majors than among those in the liberal arts and humanities.

<div align="center">Gaps in Theories and Literature</div>

The fourth and final question guiding the review of literature in support of the study asks what conceptual and methodological gaps are present in the extant literature linking student-faculty interaction and student success for African American students and how the study can respond to these gaps. Only one (1) of the eighteen (18) empirical studies, included in this review of the literature, used CRT as a guiding framework (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Gaps

Vincent Tinto (2016) informs the literature that although student retention and persistence are two related concepts, they are very different. Student retention is viewed through the lens of institutional action and student persistence is viewed through the lens of students' goals. Despite the challenges students face, they must be persistent in their journey towards degree attainment and be willing to expend the effort that is necessary to reach that goal. No matter what actions the institution takes to increase student retention, it is up to the students to continue to forge through the barriers and reach graduation. Therefore, it is critical that the students' voices are heard as to what they are experiencing and what they need to reach degree attainment. Tinto supports this concept by stating that "to promote greater degree completion, institutions have to adopt the student perspective and ask not only how they should act to retain their students, but also how they should act so that more of their students want to persist to completion" (Tinto, 2016, p. 1).

The scholarly critiques of earlier research include: (1) lack ethnicity/race as a factor of engagement (Tierney, 1999); and the (2) relative efficacy of different assessment methods for measuring adjustment of African American students at PWIs (Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999). Kim and Sax (2009) noted that research until the 1990s documented a general positive effect of faculty interactions on student outcomes; however, the research most often did not disaggregate the student samples by race, gender or other factors. "More recent studies highlight that the effect of student-faculty interactions may be conditional." Hence, "the estimation of general effects using

combined student samples cannot fully explain the relationship between student-faculty interaction and student educational outcomes" (Kim & Sax, 2009, p. 438).

Research shows that there is a performance gap in higher education and that the underlying reasons for the gap are complicated and have not been explained by data-driven theories (Fleming, 2012). Therefore, there is an opportunity for research to pay attention to the precise factors that promote the academic performance of African American students.

Other researchers have found that the context of Tinto's model does not fit well for minority students because these students (a) encounter different experiences, on campus, than those of their White peers (Eimers, 2001; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008), (b) may be less likely to get involved in campus activities because they do not identify with their White peers and faculty (Cole & Arriola, 2007; Eimers, 2001), and (c) have cultural/traditional differences from their White peers (Eimers, 2001; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004; Renn & Reason, 2012; Tierney, 1992). Hence, the way in which African American students attempt to successfully navigate predominantly White campuses involves the adoption of a second culture, as opposed to, fully integrating into the culture of the institution (Carter, 2006). This concept requires the students to retain their culture and identity while adapting to the institutional culture (Cole & Arriola, 2007). According to Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003), these students must simultaneously live between these two "realities" or "cultures".

Faculty have the power and responsibility to create an environment where there is questioning versus acceptance of a few having power and privilege over marginalized groups (Berryman, Nevin, SooHoo, & Ford, 2015). Research encourages institutions and

faculty to set goals to initiate relational and culturally responsive interactions that lead to honoring cultural pluralism. Berryman et al. (2015) posit that institutions should consider not only what happens on the college campus but also society as a whole. Educational institutions continue to have a role in reproducing the "fabric of society" (p. 149). Administrators and faculty hold the power and they are encouraged to question how they may be contributing to the status quo "where some groups are successful and others continue to be less so" (p. 158). Berryman et al. (2015) contend that faculty should use a culturally responsive framework that "challenges the traditional notion of the professional expert working within an objective context; instead, to open up spaces that call for engagement through the establishment of relational and interdependent discourse that encourage us to co-create an interdependent, socially just reality" (p. 160).

Methodological Gaps

A vast amount of the scholarly research, including that reviewed for the purposes of this study, employed quantitative methods to collect data via instruments, such as the Cooperative Institution Research Program (CIRP), College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), in which student-faculty interactions is just a small percentage of the focus of study. Schwitzer, Griggin, Ancis, and Thomas (1999) argued that the use of quantitative research methods for measuring adjustment of students of color results in limited information. They argued that the use of standardized instruments is often inappropriate for African American student populations and recommends the use of qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, that will allow the research to more fully examine questions about the adjustments of nontraditional groups such as African American students.

In the larger body of literature on student-faculty interactions, a vast amount of research has sampled predominantly White, first and second-year, and first-generation students. Although these studies have contributed to the literature, there remains a gap in research that focuses on African American students that have persisted through their third, fourth and fifth-years of college. Further, although the reviewed studies have greatly added to the literature, there remains a dearth of research on the African American business majors and their academic success and persistence.

The current study responds to these identified conceptual and methodological gaps by including CRT as a lens to understand the experiences of African American business students and their academic success; employing qualitative methods to hear the counter-stories of these students; and focusing on persisting students in an understudied academic major (business education) where the culture of engagement is different than the liberal arts model on which most theoretical work is based.

Summary

Relationships experienced between students and faculty are vital particularly for URM students, on predominantly White campuses. Without relationships to serve as a protective factor for students, students may not persist to degree attainment. This, in turn, can lead to occupational and income disparities within the workplace. The number of inequities in society and on college campuses can channel these students on a pathway of reduction of the opportunity of obtaining a good education. As a result, the campus racial climates can shape the experiences of these students in negative way for a life time (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015).

The literature review herein suggests that to support persistence to graduation, institutions should focus on providing a just and equitable culture that is aimed at

assisting student development by bringing out their full potential as learners and human beings (Berryman et al., 2015). This is important because evidence suggests that racial disparities in higher education outcomes are related to the failure of administrators and faculty to effectively and efficiently adapt to changes in student populations. Museus, Ledesma and Parker (2015) argue that "it is time to rethink higher education's approach to addressing racial inequities and adopt a more holistic and aggressive strategy to advance equity agendas" (p. 73). If institutions are truly committed to achieving the outcomes they desire, they must embrace diversity more consciously and engage in intentional long-term efforts to achieve racial equity.

In response to the gaps that exist in the literature, this study used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a conceptual framework to support the need to include race as an aggregate for gaining a better understanding of the experiences of African American students at a PWI. In addition, the study focused on African American junior and senior students in business education where data was collected using qualitative methodology to gain a better understanding of student experiences with faculty and how those experiences impacted their level of engagement, persistence and academic success.

Chapter 3 describes the design of this qualitative study that examined how African American students, in an undergraduate business program, at a PWI, (1) understood the climate and culture of their program, particularly the relationship between business faculty and students of color, in an undergraduate business program at a PWI, and (2) perceived their own relationships with faculty in the program, specifically how relationships with faculty have hindered or contributed to their success in an undergraduate business program at a PWI.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As established in Chapter 2, a better understanding of the perceptions of African American business students is critical to informing administrators and faculty as what is needed to ensure student academic success and persistence to graduation. This dissertation study focused on identifying how African American business students viewed the impact that interactions with faculty had on their decision to persist and their academic success. The additional knowledge gained from this study informs business faculty and other institutional agents as they assess their policies, programs and resources focused on student retention.

Research has shown that African American students at PWIs are quite different from those who attend other institutions (including HBCUs). W.R. Allen (1992) found that during the 1960s, society responded to the civil rights movement and made efforts to right the wrongs of inequality for African Americans. These efforts resulted in an increase in the number of African American students seeking postsecondary education. Institutions responded by expanding programs and policies to accommodate the students. Despite the increase in access to PWIs, many African American students continue to have negative experiences that eventually lead them to have lower academic achievement and higher attrition rates than their White counterparts.

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, student engagement and academic success influence students' commitment to an institution and to persisting to graduation. Greater integration in the academic and social environment of the institution, increases the likelihood that the student will commit to the goals of academic success and persistence (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Tinto, 1975). Interactions with faculty are an

integral part of the core components of a student's integration and can be crucial in enhancing student motivation and achievement (Astin, 1977; Bean, 2005; NSSE, 2007).

When students sense that they are valued and that there is someone who will help them reach their academic goals, they feel more satisfied with their college life and aspire to persist (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). For African American students, particularly those who are first-generation students, the need for support is particularly vital to their success, since they come to the institution with limited family support for navigating the academic and social terrain of the institution (Shelton, 2011). Faculty members, who play an important role in the overall college experience of African American students, can have a positive impact on increasing students' aspirations to achieve at higher levels (Allen, 1992).

In conducting this study, the researcher looked to gain an understanding of the experiences of African American students in the business program at Southeastern University (SEU), with particular focus placed on their perceptions of the quality of interactions with business faculty members and how these interactions impacted their academic success and persistence. In particular, the researcher sought to examine:

1) How do African American students understand the climate, particularly related to race, of an undergraduate business program at a PWI?

2) How do African American students perceive their own relationships with faculty in the program, specifically how relationships with faculty have hindered or contributed to their success, in an undergraduate business program at a PWI?

Using a qualitative research approach, the researcher conducted interviews with the students as a means of collecting data (Gay, Mills & Airisan, 2012; Merriam, 2009). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), qualitative research is the most appropriate method to gain understanding about "structural conditions, norms, processes, patterns and systems (p. 18)." By employing qualitative methods, the researcher systematically gathers data, analyzes it to draw insight and understanding from the data. The results from this process is to gain understanding, to explain and predict events, and provide directions for action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Successful use of qualitative research requires the researcher to critically analyze situations while recognizing the tendency towards bias. The researcher thinks abstractly, and remains flexible and open to the information that emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The researcher was aware of the need to purposefully select participants for the study. Taking such actions helped the researcher understand the problem and the research questions. The use of qualitative interviews involved unstructured and open-ended questions that were intended draw out the viewpoints of the participants. Although the method used allowed for the researcher to have control over the line of questioning, there were limitations including: (a) information was through the perceptions of the participants; (b) information was collected in a pre-arranged place rather than in a natural field setting; (c) researcher's presence possibly biased the responses; and (d) not all participants were equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher administered an electronic survey to gather demographic information and conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 10 students to

collect data about their perspectives of the climate of the College of Business and its major programs, and interactions with the faculty.

Institutional Setting

Research was conducted at the College of Business on the campus of Southeastern University (SEU), an urban university in the southeast U.S. SEU, one of fifty (50) private and public universities and colleges in its state that offer degrees in business, is located in a diverse city with a population of over 700,000 with the following race/ethnicity distributions: White (50%), African American/Black (35%), Hispanic/ Latino (13%) and Asian (5%) (US Census Bureau, 2016). During the 2015-2016 academic year, among over 40,000 enrolled students at SEU, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos were represented at much lower rates than their proportion in the university's metropolitan area: African American (17%); White (59%); Hispanic/Latino (9%); and Asian (6%).

The College of Business at SEU offers bachelor's degrees in Accounting, Economics, and Business Administration, Finance, International Business, Management, Management Information Systems, Marketing and Operations and Supply Chain Management. During the 2015-16 academic year, the college had 7,275 undergraduate students, with majority White (61%) followed by African American (14%), Hispanic (9%), Asian (7%) and Native American/Alaskan (<1%). Table 4 provides a breakdown of the undergraduate students by race and major.

Table 4: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 SEU's College of Business Undergraduate Students by Race and Major (percentage)

2014-2015	Accounting	Economics	Finance	Int'l Business	MIS	Management	Marketing	Operations/ Supply Chain
African American	13	21	11	9	15	13	7	18
White	60	55	30	58	63	66	70	56
Hispanic/ Latino	8	5	29	3	9	6	6	9
Asian	10	9	10	17	6	6	2	6

TOTAL=6811

2015-2016	Accounting	Economics	Finance	Int'l Business	MIS	Management	Marketing	Operations/ Supply Chain
African American	10	16	12	15	11	14	12	9
White	63	54	61	31	56	66	66	64
Hispanic/ Latino	7	9	9	26	8	9	8	2
Asian	11	6	7	9	17	3	4	5

TOTAL=7275

Data Source: SEU Institutional Research

Note: Numbers do not add up to 100% due to non-inclusion of Native/Am, Mixed and Unknown

Data Collection and Analysis

Students selected to participate in this study were full-time junior and senior African American business students in their third, fourth or fifth-year at SEU. The qualitative methods used to gather data included an online survey and semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted with 10 students. Student participants for the interviews were identified through participation in the online survey (Appendix A). Selected students met all of the following criteria:

-- Self-identify as Black/African American;

-- Junior or senior student enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in the

College of Business at SEU, with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed;

-- Enrolled as a full-time student in a business discipline;

-- Female or male, age of 18-24 years old; and

-- Not on academic probation and have a C-average or higher in coursework

An IRB application was submitted through the IRB online system to the SEU's Office of Research and Economic Development. After the IRB application was approved on February 15, 2017, recruitment of participants began using two different methods. First, the researcher obtained assistance from the office of the College of Business' Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, and officers from the campus chapters of the National Association of Black Accountants and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. They were asked to identify African American business students that met the criteria set for participation in this study. Once the students were identified, these individuals were asked to forward an invitation for participation to the identified students to inform them of the purpose of the study, the criteria for participation and an overview of design of the data collection process (Appendix A).

The second method included the researcher gaining permission from the College of Business to set up a table in the lobby of the college to make invitations available to students as they moved throughout the first floor of the building. Based on the days and times where there was the greatest number of junior and senior level business classes were being conducted in the college, two dates were selected to set up the table. Students were drawn to the table by a sign that invited students to stop and get information about a study being conducted in the College of Business. As students approached the table, they were given the aforementioned invitation to review. All students who stopped by the

table were provided the information. The researcher was careful not to profile students and approach them to solicit participation.

The invitation for participation directed students to go to a link for the online survey. Once the students entered the link, they were provided a consent form which required completion. Once they had provided their consent, they began the survey. The online survey collected demographic information and preliminary information about their educational experiences prior to and during their studies at SEU (Appendix B).

After the survey was completed, the researcher set up appointments with each student to conduct a 60-90 minute individual interviews on dates and times that were convenient to the students (Appendix C). The researcher conducted interviews with 10 African American full-time business students, during which open-ended questions were used to encouraged student participants to reflect on their experiences and provide their answers in their own words (Roulston, 2010).

Phenomenological interviewing allowed the researcher to examine the lived experiences of the students. The questions used generated detailed information about these experiences, in addition to the students' responses to the experiences (Roulston, 2010). The interview protocol included questions prompting discussion about interactions with business professors; factors that affected how students and professors interact; and the relative importance of their relationships with professors in motivating their academic performance in business school. During the interviews, the researcher was mindful to listen, not interrupt, allow silence, avoid leading questions, keep the process on track, follow up on what the participants says, avoid being judgmental, and not debating with participants (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). It must be noted that after a

few interviews, the researcher realized that it was necessary to have tissues available. During the interviews, several students became very emotional and overcome with tears.

Once the interviews were completed, the recordings from the interviews were transcribed by a university-approved vendor. Survey results and transcripts from the interviews were reviewed, coded, and noted for analytical thoughts about the significance of and the relationship between codes. Key quotations were identified while coding and developing themes. The researcher planned to ask students for a follow-up interview, if the collected data was not sufficient. However, this action was not necessary.

This study was limited to one college within an urban, public PWI in the southeast U.S. It would be unwarranted to generalize the findings of this study to other underrepresented minority groups, freshmen and sophomore business students, or junior and senior business students who attend similar institutions. This study did not have a control group nor did it involve randomization. Therefore, study results could not be generalized to other populations.

The strategies of trustworthiness included the use of memoing and reflexivity during the analysis. In doing so, the researcher (a) addressed any problems that are not easily explained; (b) included descriptive and other relevant statements that would help other understand the study and its final report; and (c) addressed the dependability and confirmability of the data (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). While the researcher considered using member checking, this strategy was not used due to the timing of the study (late in the semester) and the lack of ambiguity in the interview transcripts.

Participation in this research study was voluntary, and participants were free to leave the study at any time, if desired. Ethical behavior, was maintained throughout the

research process, including selection of participants, collection of data, analysis of data, and the reporting of the data. The researcher remained sensitive to any possible ethical issues that may have arisen during the study. All participants were asked to sign an informed consent form that fully disclosed the purpose, protocol of the study, and their rights as participants. The disclosure assured the participants of the fact that all data collected would meet the IRB's criteria for data collection. All collected data was stored in a manner that followed the direction of the institutional guidelines for data handling.

The validity of this study refers to its trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell, 2014). All precautions were made to ensure that the researcher did not bring bias into the study. As an African American female, the researcher has had her own exposures and experiences as both a student and a faculty member within a college of business. During the entire process of conducting the interviews and analyzing the data, the researcher made sure that her own perceptions did not influence the interpretation of the findings.

Student Participants

The ten student participants consisting of two males (Awoh and Red) and eight females (Denise, Livia, Majob, Amy, Valiant, Ursula, Amber, and Sharon) participated in the study. To protect the identification of the student participants, students selected pseudonyms to be used in reporting the results instead of their names. In addition, any references to specific major programs or professors were changed or left out.

All participants completed the demographic survey, providing the requested background information. However, during the face-to-face interviews, the researcher found that there were variances in the level of openness to talk in-depth about their

experiences, which impacted the length of the interview. The average length of the interviews was sixty minutes.

Table 5 provides the names and a snapshot of the demographics of the student participants.

Table 5: Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Class	Major	Transfer Student	First- Gen
Amber	Female	Senior	Finance	Y	N
Amy	Female	Junior	Management	N	Y
Awoh	Male	Senior	Marketing	N	Y
Denise	Female	Junior	Marketing	Y	Y
Livia	Female	Junior	Management	Y	N
Majob	Female	Senior	International Business	N	N
Red	Male	Junior	Management	Y	N
Sharon	Female	Senior	Management	Y	N
Ursula	Female	Senior	Marketing	N	Y
Valiant	Female	Senior	Marketing	N	N

Each of these ten student participants were selected based on the criteria set forth for this study:

1) Self-identified as African American/Black;

2) Junior or senior student enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in the

College of Business, at SEU, with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed;

3) Enrolled as a full-time student in a business discipline;

4) Male or female, age of 18-24 years old; and

5) Not on academic probation and have a C-average or higher in coursework.

All student participants self-identified as African American/Black and being between the ages of 18-24. Eight students were female and two students were male. There were four junior students and six senior students in the group. Of the ten students, four were marketing majors, one finance, four management and one international

business. Two participants self-reported having an overall GPA of 2.0 – 2.9, while eight

reported overall GPA of 3.0 – 3.9. Five student participants transferred to SEU from

another institution and five started as freshmen. Of the ten student participants, four

participants identified as first-generation college students and six students were not.

First-generation students were those that had parents who did not either attend college or

attain a degree.

     As part of the study, student participants were required to complete an online

survey that captured the above mentioned demographic data. Once it was determined

that they met the criteria of the study, the students were invited to participate in a

confidential face-to-face interview from which the researcher learned more about their

lived experiences. Following is a description of each participant, listed in alphabetical

order.

     Amber, a female, senior finance major with a minor in women and gender studies,

is a student that is dedicated to her studies and is determined to succeed. She transferred

to SEU from a community college within the state. Amber describes herself as an

outgoing person who loves people. Evidence of this can be found in her starting an

organization to serve young girls. Juggling her studies, extra-curricular activities and

work has caused this semester to be very stressful. She finds support and encouragement

from peers in the student chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants. The

organization provides mentoring, networking and job opportunities. Most importantly,

the organization provides an opportunity for her to see others who look like herself.

     Amy, a female, junior management major, is a first-generation college student.

On campus, she is very involved in athletics. As a result, she knows other athletes in her

classes, which help her feel comfortable in new settings. In addition, she is involved in other extra-curricular activities where she volunteers for the new student orientation program. Amy finds her program to be very challenging. Despite the obstacles that are presented, she is determined to be resilient and do what is necessary to successfully complete her program.

Awoh, a male, senior marketing major, is a first-generation student. He has successfully completed his core courses and is currently taking his first marketing courses. Awoh, as with many of the other student participants, is involved in extra-curricular activities on campus. Currently, he is a member of the National Association of Black Accountants. Although he does not major in accounting, he finds comfort with having the opportunity to be with other African American students who challenge each other to be the best that they can be. In addition, Awoh's competitive nature drives him to get involved in other activities and events within the College of Business and his major program. Awoh keeps himself going by reminding himself that his goal is to always exceed expectations.

Denise, a female, junior marketing major, is a first-generation student. She is a transfer student from a community college within the state. Denise is a single mother who tries to balance school and her personal life. She does not find it easy to be involved in extracurricular activities because of the demands of being a mother, a student and a part-time employee. Although she recognizes that the college offers many resources, she finds that she does not have the time to take advantage of them. Therefore, she looks for support from outside sources, family and co-workers.

Livia, a female, junior management major, is a transfer student from another local university. She transferred to SEU because the campus provided more diversity. Livia describes herself as one who is confident, adapts to any situation, and only must prove herself to herself. As a result, she credits her fortitude for getting her through her program. Livia is also involved in extra-curricular activities. As a member of her business fraternity, she has been able to identify opportunities that have been helpful in preparing her for her future career.

Majob, a female, senior international major, immigrated to the United States, with her family, when she was five. She gets her drive "to be the best she can be" from her parents. Although she graduated magna cum laude from high school, Majob says she must work very hard at SEU to maintain a good GPA. Her love of travel inspired her to participate in a study abroad program. Majob recently joined the Women in Business Initiative, which provides an opportunity to connect with other female business students. Membership in the group has provided her many opportunities that she would not have necessarily had if she was not part of it.

Red, a male, junior with a double major in management and political science, describes himself as funny, social and very friendly. He is a transfer student from a community college within the state. Although he finds that his major is very competitive, he is determined to make sure that he does his best and demonstrate to others that he belongs. Red also believes that he is a natural leader and always seeks leadership opportunities within the community. He is looking forward to next year when he will a Resident Assistant (RA) on campus.

Sharon, a female, senior management major, is transfer student from another state university. As a full-time student and a working mother of two, she finds herself relying on her internal drive for success to help her get through life. Currently, Sharon has an internship at the corporate offices of a national banking institution. After graduation, she hopes to return in the fall semester to start her graduate studies in the College of Business. Although she claims to be an introvert, she finds it easy to adapt to an extravert world. Sharon has the desire to impact future generations and is seeking to get an advanced degree so that she can teach in higher education.

Ursula, a female, senior marketing major, is a first-generation college student. She grew up in an upper middle class suburban neighborhood. Although she would like to be more involved on campus than she is, Ursula says she suffers from anxiety. Unfortunately, this prevents her from reaching out to others and being involved in extra-curricular activities. As an African American woman, who is curvy, she believes that she stands out in a negative way. Despite her anxiety, Ursula finds that it is important for her to make a good first impression when in class. She accomplishes this by being early, participating, and asking questions for clarification.

Valiant, a female, senior marketing major, is very active on campus. She is involved in extra-curricular activities, such as her sorority. Currently, Valiant is an officer for the sorority. She describes herself as being very self-reliant and is "pretty good" at finding internships and career opportunities. As a result, she is very busy and finds that she has very little time to interact with faculty outside of the classroom. Valiant relies on support from her mother to keep her going. As an African American in

her program, she finds it stressful and somewhat lonely. However, she feels that it is

hard to really discourage her and take away her determination to succeed.

Participant Summary

The ten (10) student participants, two African American males and eight African

American females, were high-achieving students at SEU's College of Business. Five (5)

of the students transferred into the college from another institution within the state. The

other five (5) started as freshmen. Four (4) of the students were first-generation college

students, and the other six (6) were not. The students were either third, fourth or fifth-

year students with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed in their business discipline.

Summary

This study employed qualitative methods to examine how full-time junior and

senior African American students in an undergraduate business program at a PWI, (1)

understood the climate of their program, particularly the relationship between business

faculty and students of color and (2) perceived their own relationships with faculty in the

program, specifically how relationships with faculty have hindered or contributed to their

success in the program. Data collection methods included an online survey and 10 semi-

structured face-to-face interviews.

The findings of this study inform the development of programs, policies, practices

and other resources provided by institutions of higher education for the purpose of

increasing student academic success and persistence. The findings help faculty,

administrators, and staff gain a better understanding how to meet the needs of African

American business students in successfully navigating a PWI. In addition, the findings

showed that positive interactions with faculty provided rich descriptions of African

American business students' perceptions of their experiences and their interactions with

faculty members, and new insights into the role of interactions with faculty for

engagement, persistence, and academic performance among African American business

majors.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This qualitative study aimed to understand the educational experiences of African American business students, while focusing on their perceptions of the interactions they have with business faculty members at a university in the Southeastern United States (SEU, pseudonym). The purpose of this study was to understand student perceptions related to (a) the climate of SEU's College of Business and its programs; (b) the aspects of student-faculty interactions that affect how students and faculty interact; and (c) the importance of the interactions in motivating student academic performance in a business discipline.

The reporting of the findings emerged from data collected from face-to-face confidential interviews with ten African American, junior and senior business students at SEU. Eligible student participants were selected according to their responses to a demographic survey. The chapter will begin with profiles of the participants and will continue with a discussion of the emergent themes derived from analysis of the data. The three themes include, (a) A Racially Charged Climate; (b) Business Faculty Can Be Accessible, But Not Approachable; and (c) As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong?

These interviews provided insight on how the students perceived the climate of the College of Business at SEU, interactions with faculty and how those interactions impacted their academic success and persistence. The following section will discuss the three (3) themes identified from the analysis of the collected data.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The collected data were analyzed through the processes of coding, memoing, and reflexivity. From the analysis, there emerged several subthemes: "Business School and

Major Program Culture & Climate," "Available Resources," "Core Classes," "Attributes of Common Interactions with Business Faculty," "Relatability Impacts Approachability," "Faculty of Color vs. Non-Faculty of Color," "Faculty Impact on Learning," "Pressure To Prove One's Self," "What Keeps Me Going," "Not Same Playing Field w/White Students," "Am I Good Enough," and "What I Need From Faculty." These subthemes led to three cross-cutting themes (Appendix F) which are discussed in this section: (a) A Racially Charged Climate; (b) Business Faculty Can Be Accessible, But Not Approachable; and (c) As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong? These themes reflect the perceptions of the student participants as to their experiences in SEU's College of Business and their major program. In particular, the students describe the climate of SEU's College of Business and its major programs, their interactions with faculty, and the impact that these interactions have on their academic success and persistence.

<div style="text-align:center">A Racially Charged Climate</div>

When asked to describe the climate of SEU's College of Business and its major programs, student participants were very open to provide rich descriptions of the environment found within the college. Throughout the interviews, they described the college's climate and its program requirements, available resources, and the lack of diversity. Students described the climate as being structured, challenging, professional, rigorous, and having a lack of diversity.

> The college has a challenging environment that is very competitive and harder than it should be. It kind of gives you an insight into the business world."
> (Awoh)

There is really no room for flexibility. It's like they make it harder than it needs to be. (Valiant)

It's a very "corporate" climate. (Ursula)

I think the business college is very competitive… It is not very difficult, but, it is challenging. You have to take all your business classes and get at least a B in those. If you fall below the GPA requirement, they'll kick you out of the College of Business… It's very professional…They want you to be as professional as possible all the time…(Red)

It's supposed to be budding professionalism. It's supposed to be an opportunity for you to meet new people who have the same interests of getting involved with the business [industry] and being successful. That's the whole point. (Livia)

As Red indicated, several requirements must be met to proceed through the programs in the SEU College of Business. Upon admission, students are introduced to the climate through the required core courses that all students must take before starting their individual majors. These core courses introduce the students to the different majors offered in the college. Experiences in these courses help pique interest and allow students to determine if their desired major is a good fit.

When you start your first semester, you're just a generic business student. You don't have your major yet. You don't declare it until junior year. You learn basic business techniques and more behind the culture of the College of Business. You also learn what is required to remain in the college. Unfortunately, it is kind of hard to determine what you want that early in the program. Since you're so young, you don't really know what you want to do. The classes they have you

take really let you dip your feet into what each major might be. You must take a

finance, accounting, and basic marketing class. Once you take those [classes], you

figure out where you're going. (Ursula)

The courses definitely help to prepare you for your major classes, because they

teach you so much. (Red)

Hearing the students talk about the competitive environment in the College of

Business reminded the researcher about her experiences as a business student. After

getting an undergraduate degree in biology, going into a master's program in business

management was a foreign environment. Not only was the culture competitive, she had

no previous experiences to which she could relate it. Therefore, she truly understood

how the students in the study assessed the new environment that they were walking into.

As the students talked about the core courses, she related to her own struggles in

economics, accounting, and finance because they were different from her previous

biology courses. Whereas science was based on facts, business core classes were based

on "speculation" or "what if" scenarios.

According to the participants, these core courses play a role in "weeding out"

students from the college. This only adds to an already stressful environment. Amy and

Amber shared the belief that Accounting I is a main "weed out" course for many business

students at SEU. They both mentioned that they have had friends who struggled to pass

the class and eventually left the college.

The biggest thing that I struggled through was Accounting I, because that's not

my major, and, I had no interest in it. But, I had to take it because it was a

requirement. So, you just kind of suck it up, and you make it work, and you go through it. (Amy)

When you get into the College of Business, everybody takes the standard Accounting I and Accounting II, which are your "weed out" classes. There are different classes in the college where they're trying to weed out students who aren't strong. Academically, they will push you, they will challenge you. It's the survival of the fittest. If you can't grasp it, then you're gone. So, it's very stressful. I have learned to work off little sleep…I try to get a meal when I can! (Amber)

Other students felt that, in addition to the core courses, the college's GPA requirements also "weed out" students. Ursula explains that students must have a minimum of a 2.5 GPA (core courses), to remain in the college and declare a major. Not meeting the requirement leads to a student being put on probation. If their performance does not improve during the probationary period, the student is "kicked out".

Probation is your only time to get back in, technically, because there are so many people waiting for spots. They tell you that from the start…even when you come in for orientation. They tell you that it's a competitive program and you can get kicked out of at any point. I take it as they are telling us that this is a serious school and they only want serious students in it. (Ursula)

You must earn at least a C in your classes. However, just having a C is not going to get you by. You must earn a few A(s) to reach the minimum of a 2.5 GPA. So, it's highly competitive for sure. (Amy)

The business faculty for the core courses set the tone by reminding the students of the requirements. Unfortunately, some faculty members use words that come across as intimidating. Examples were shared by Amy and Valiant.

> For example, my teacher, was like, 'Hey, just to let you know, you all are not going to make it basically." Like she told us 'you're going to be broke, and you're going to have 10 different jobs, so just get used to it right now.' It was almost very intimidating. (Amy)

> It just feels like now, making an A is almost a dream. When teachers tell you 'the average is a B in here'…it feels like you can never get an A! (Valiant)

Not all faculty communicate this way to students. Three of the students shared that they have had faculty who have been very supportive and take extra steps to help students succeed in their core courses.

> They want to see you succeed, I can say that, hands down. Honestly, if I ask them anything, they were more than willing to help. I even had a professor stay over after class, who works for the company I got hired at, who was giving me tips and advice on what to say in the interview and things to look up. So, they're very, very helpful. (Amber)

> I had a teacher who was a very nice lady, great lady…She's always willing to sit and talk to you and help you work through whatever problem your bad grade was... (Ursula)

> Some professors are very passionate about what they do. You know, some of them are like 'Hey, I know this is a tough course. Let me help you through this, and do not get behind.' (Amy)

While describing the climate, some students talked about the resources that are provided to assist students to navigate their program, including academic advisors, and student organizations. According to the college's website, the college offers students a variety of academic, career and networking resources. Advisors are available to assist students to 'discover, plan and achieve their academic and career goals.' Although the resources are available, the student participants had different experiences while taking advantage of these resources.

Livia, Majob, Amy, and Ursula talked about their experiences with SEU's College of Business' advisors. Livia, who has had positive interactions with advisors, shared that "the advisors are really welcoming…if I call and ask for help, they'll give me an answer." However, Majob, Amy, and Ursula, shared that their experiences with advisors did not always meet up to their expectations. Ursula indicated that, "they don't always tell us everything we need to know. We rely on them to tell us what we need to know. They rely on us to be more responsible to know the policies. There's a disconnect." Majob's experience demonstrated this disconnect. One summer, she attended a program where students were informed about the requirements needed to declare a major. That following fall semester, she met with an advisor to register for classes and declare her major. She was told that she could not declare her major because there had been a change in policy and the requirements had changed. Unfortunately, she was not aware of the change. As one would expect, she was very disappointed.

> I remember just thinking, "Why would they do this to me? This is the second time
> that this has happened." When I spoke with one of my friends, she told me that
> she had a similar issue. She is also an African American woman in my

International Business program. I thought, "Well, what are these advisors

supposed to do? What is their job if it's not to inform us of these things?"

The paranoia in me thought…it's because I'm Black. They don't care whether I

graduate or not. They probably didn't even think I would make it this far in this

program, based on how much I struggled in the beginning… As a result of my

disappointment, I stopped relying on them to keep me on top of everything. I just

took it upon myself to make sure that I get everything done, because I can't trust

them. (Majob)

In addition to making advisors available to students, the college also provides

student organizations and clubs that encourage students to work with each other and local

business professionals. Several of the student participants shared their experiences with

these organizations that provide academic, career and networking resources, including the

student chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), a national

organization open to all majors with a majority membership of African American

students, and the Women in Business Initiative, a program offered by the College of

Business. According to the college's website, 'the initiative promotes the role of

professional women and provides activities to help students achieve their professional

and personal goals.'

I challenged myself to join an organization, the National Association of Black

Accountants, which helped make resources available to me. I had to step outside

my comfort zone. (Awoh)

The National Association of Black Accountants is my "home base." The reason

that I landed my job was because of this organization. Anything that I need, such

as, mentoring, personal assistance, and networking, come from this organization. I'm so thankful that it's here on campus. (Amber)

There's a Women in Business Initiative, here on campus, that I joined last semester. I kind of wish I would have found it when I was first starting off. It would have made me feel a lot better to know that I wasn't alone in some of the things that I was struggling with. I do wish that there is more mentoring. Some students have other mentors outside of this program, parents that have connections, and just know people from networking events that can help them. The same isn't necessarily available to us (African American students). (Majob)

Sharon and Denise mentioned that they would welcome an opportunity to join student organizations. However, they find it difficult to juggle school, work, and family responsibilities. As a result, they have not been able to take advantage of resources available to business students.

It's a culture that's very much catered to traditional residential students than those students who work or have families. Everything that's offered is offered during working hours. If you do not live on campus and/or work, you really can't attend events or join organizations. (Sharon)

For me it's more about how can I just get by in my own life, not really with the college. I don't really feel like there's a connection between me and the college. I'm a mother and I just have so much other stuff going on [that] I really don't interact with the school. With my other responsibilities, my main goal is just making sure I get through the basics and not really being involved. (Denise)

Another component of the college's climate is the scarcity of African American/Black students and faculty. Livia summed it up well: "I feel like when I walk in, a lot of times, I don't see me…it's not as diverse as it could be." Other participants revealed that not seeing students and faculty who "look like them" is difficult and intimidating.

The lack of diversity amongst the student population in the college becomes very apparent when sitting in the classroom. Majob expressed that the college does not seem to be inclusive and questions whether students, who look like her, tend to choose other majors throughout the university. She also wonders about the psychological impact that the lack of diversity has on herself and other African American students within the college.

I remember a lot of times, I would look around the classrooms. It was intimidating being in these classroom settings and looking around and often being one of the few Black people in there, particularly African American women. It (the business college) seems like it's very exclusive. Well, it's not very inclusive, more so, I would say. Sometimes I wonder if we (African Americans) just tend to go towards liberal arts more. Maybe the elements of learning about finance and accounting are not often shared with us in our homes. I don't know if it's just the lack of those essentials within our community. I just didn't feel like it is very inviting. I just didn't feel like it was very inclusive…. I kind of wish I did see more Black people in my program, because it wouldn't be as uncomfortable. At times, when you're looking around and wondering if you're the only person that's failing, or being the only person that doesn't understand things. I think it's that

whole psychological aspect of when you recognize or see other people of your

race, it makes you a little bit more at ease. (Majob)

Amy, a junior, indicated that she has yet to have a class with an African American

business faculty member. Although she does not like it, she says that she is used to it,

since her high school also did not have many African American teachers. She realizes

that there is nothing that she can do about it. However, having faculty, that looks like

her, provides someone she can relate to.

Actually, I have never had an African American professor within the College of

Business. I never really thought about it, before this. There should be more

diversity within the college so that students like me could have someone to relate

to. (Amy)

Other student participants commented on their awareness of lack of diversity in

the college.

I'd say the culture is very different from other colleges on campus. Because when

I walk into this building, I'm just feel like somebody's watching me. I need to

make sure I'm not slouching or make sure I'm walking straight. I just feel like I

should be more professional since this is business and they want you to succeed.

It's very intimidating because you do see a lot of the majorities around more than

minorities. So, it's intimidating, but then again, when you get in there and do your

work, it's just not that bad. (Red)

I would say it's hard… I don't see a lot of me. I don't really talk about it, but, I

don't see a lot of me. Sometimes I do feel out of place or maybe I don't belong.

But, then I know that I belong here because I know that I'm excelling. I know

what I'm doing. Sometimes it's awkward to be me. I don't think people who aren't like me really understand. (Amber)

Being in the College of Business and finding someone relatable is the hardest part of being a student of color. Finding someone to connect to and finding someone to talk to is difficult. When you are in a class and the professor is not of your color, you can't relate to them. Even though you put emphasis on schoolwork, it's often hard to concentrate because of the lack of being the same. (Awoh)

The student participants described the climate of SEU's College of Business as competitive, corporate, structured, challenging, professional, rigorous, exclusive and having a lack of diversity. The environment that has been created by this climate has left the students feeling intimidated, stressed, pressured, and excluded. To combat these feelings, students sought support from family, African American student organizations and African American faculty. The next section will provide the findings of the second theme that emerged from the data analysis.

Business Faculty Can Be Available, But Not Approachable

The second major theme highlights student interactions with faculty and how the interactions impact student learning. During the interviews, all ten student participants shared their experiences of various interactions with business faculty. These interactions took place either in the classroom or during office hours. One fact that stood out was that all students agreed that faculty members are a valuable resource to their academic success. However, what determined whether, or not, the students took full advantage of this resource, was the perceived approachability of the faculty member. The degree of

approachability, as determined by the students, was based on the faculty member's ability to be welcoming, caring, friendly, helpful, open and relatable.

Amber realized that faculty "can make or break a student". If the way a professor teaches is not conducive to student learning, then the student will struggle in class and will be "essentially on their own to understand the material." Since failure was not an option, she continued to "step out of [her] comfort zone and try to do everything [she] could" to reach out for help from her professors. When the faculty member "enjoys what they are doing," and shows concern about her success in the class, she was excited about learning the material and it encouraged her to do her best.

> I would say professors are so vital. It's just rewarding when you get a professor, who actually enjoys what they are doing. Professors play a huge role in the success of their students. Essentially, they're leading the flock. They are feeding us the information we need to know to be able to pass these exams. It's nice to have a professor that not only wants you to pass, but, wants you to understand what's going on. I've had professors push back exams or cancel an exam because they didn't feel we were grasping what we needed to know. They wanted to make sure that we got it and not just teach us for the test. It's very rewarding when you have a professor who teaches you to learn.

According to Awoh, he also had professors that were friendly and willing to help. As a result, he challenged himself to connect with them, even though he sometimes found it difficult. Realizing that they were a "learning tool" and had valuable experiences, he concluded that it was in his best interest to take advantage of approaching them and gaining knowledge from their insight. Livia, echoing the sentiments of Amy and Awoh,

also, believed that faculty had influence on her success in her classes. To her, the professor's level of passion and excitement about the material influenced their perceived degree of approachability.

In addition to being passionate and excited about a subject area, students voiced that they wanted faculty to place emphasis on ensuring that students understood the material being taught. As a resource, they expected faculty to reach out to them when the faculty realized that the student was not living up to their potential. When the faculty reached out and showed concern, the students felt that it had a direct impact on their own self-esteem. Knowing that someone cared and wanted them to succeed increased their desire to do their best so not to disappoint the faculty member.

I've had many positive ones (interactions), but, mostly with the same professor. She is very helpful. Anytime I'm struggling in a class, she makes me feel like I can pull an A out of this. I think twice, she reached out and said, 'Oh your test scores were a little lower than usual. What was going on?' And told her, I tried to binge study or I didn't get any sleep and I was not really on my A-game. But, thank you for checking.' The fact that she checked on me makes me want to make sure that I do better next time. [It's] like she is watching me and she knows I'm capable of doing better. I know I'm capable of doing better. But, even the fact that she is checking on me, really does make me want to do better. (Valiant)

I hated my managerial accounting class. Absolutely hated it…struggled… horrible. Absolutely loved my teacher. He was great. He's one of those teachers that say, 'Come back, talk to me. Let's work on your grade. Let's see what I can help you with here.' He would always work with me. He was great…To me,

that's a sign of a good teacher. They know not everything is for everybody. When

it's a class that everybody must take, you really must work with students.

(Valiant)

I've had positive experiences when I need to talk to them. When I emailed them,

they responded quickly! They take emails at different hours of the day and

night… I've never felt apprehensive to contact my teachers when I needed

anything. (Ursula)

The professors, they always say you need to 'come by my office hours.' They

want you to exceed. They're not just standing up there lecturing and be like 'okay,

I'm done. I got my paycheck!' They're like 'okay, I want you all to exceed. Here

are my office hours. Schedule a meeting with me. We can talk about this. Let's get

it done!' I always feel better leaving than I did walking in. When I walk in and

feel like I don't understand something, they always just help me out. They're

always like, 'Okay, here's what you did wrong. Here's how to fix it so you can do

better next time.' Just sitting there not knowing what you did wrong can be very

frustrating. So, when the professors try to help you, it makes it easier to learn the

subject. (Red)

She was very nice, very supportive, she had very strict expectations. You could

tell that she was an expert in what she knew. She was super-supportive, as far as,

making herself available to get the help. (Sharon)

A lot of professors know that they're teaching a tough course. And so, they say

'You can ask me questions. Make sure you do what you need to do to understand

the material.' (Amy)

Students found that interactions with African American faculty members were the most valuable interactions because they were 'more relatable.' When asked to explain what they meant by 'more relatable,' students provided examples where African American faculty members have a better understanding of the social, educational and personal needs of African American students. Interactions with African American faculty seemed more genuine, engaging, easier, open, less guarded and comfortable.

As an African American business faculty member, the researcher could understand what the students valued in their interactions with African American faculty. Thinking about her interactions with African American students, she realized how she too valued interactions with these students. Although she took pleasure in mentoring all of her students, she truly valued the interactions with the African American students especially those who were first-generation. She knew that she might be the only faculty member who would be able to relate to the students because of common experiences and exposures. In addition, the researcher remembered what is was like not having any African American faculty in undergraduate nor graduate school and what she missed by not having someone on the faculty that looked like herself.

Perceiving that White faculty's "open-door" policy did not apply to her, Majob shared a story about her interaction with an African American non-business faculty member. Finding comfort in this interaction, she felt that the professor took on a mentor role and helped her through a tough time.

> I remember that she closed the door when she saw me starting to breakdown. We had a long conversation for about an hour. She told me, 'It's okay. It's not like high school, where you can just get by and still do well.' This woman, who didn't

even know me, just took it upon herself to speak to me. She made me feel like,

it's going to be okay. I have accomplished a lot! Although I may not feel like I

belong in my program or the business college, I had to remember that I have made

it this far and I'm going be fine!

Other student participants also found African American faculty more relatable.

Most of their stories were about one particular African American professor who taught a

core course in the College of Business.

It's hard to navigate [my program]. When one can't relate to the faculty, you

don't know what to talk about with faculty. Some things become easier when you

have someone who is relatable. You can just talk about anything with them.

(Awoh)

I feel like I automatically let my guard down when I'm talking to my African

American professor. It felt more comfortable talking to him. (Ursula)

I had a professor who was African American. Immediately, I had a level of

comfort. When I was in class, the professor pushed us to do our best. Although I

am no longer in that class, I sent the professor an email, earlier this semester. I

needed to ask a few questions about a grad program I was considering. The

professor responded 'feel free to stop by my hours. Anything you need, I'll help

you.' The professor always made me feel encouraged. (Amber)

You talk to the professor (African American) about anything. You can send the

professor an email, text, the professor is real cool. The professor loves to talk

about his family and class. The professor will talk about the spouse in class and

connect everything back to what we are learning. There is a relationship with the

professor. If you see the professor in the hallway, the professor says 'Hey, what's up? How's work going?' The professor knows me. I feel like I have the best relationship with the professor. (Ursula)

I felt very comfortable just speaking with the professor about things that were going on in my personal life or with school. (Majob)

In contrast to the interactions they had with African American faculty, students found that interactions with White faculty lacked the same level of relatedness. This, in turn, impacted their comfort level with initiating any interaction. Students seemed to look for "signals" to let them know whether or not a faculty member was approachable. These signals included, but not limited to, how the faculty member communicated, demonstrated interest in students' success, engaged with students, and demonstrated they might harbor stereotypes associated with African American students.

With non-African American professors, it's kind of like that unknown. I don't know if they are going to relate to me, I don't know if we're going to be on the same page, I don't know if they're going to be able to understand what exactly I'm going through. So, it's kind of like that awkward phase and I think both parties feel it. (Amber)

I just choose not to interact with some of them (professors), just because of their attitudes. When they're in class, it's just not very welcoming. I had this one professor that I visited during office hours. I was preparing for a test and I had a question. He did not take the time to explain things to me. He basically just read the information, and said 'You should know this.' I felt that if I understood it by just reading it, I didn't need to come to him. So, I asked another question and he

just gave me a smart-alecky response that didn't help at all. I just didn't go back

to his office after that. (Livia)

I do go to office hours. I do feel comfortable going to get the extra help.

However, I don't get my hopes up. I go just to exhaust all my chances. I'm not

really confident when I do go to office hours. I am not confident that either my

question will be answered or my problem will get solved. (Valiant)

I never really had any of my professor, in my business classes, be a mentor or

people I can go to. I never really felt a relationship with them. I never felt an

open-door type thing where I can just come and talk to them about anything,

(Majob)

I don't really talk to the faculty about what I want to do. I haven't gone up to ask

any of the faculty about it. I've talked to my advisor. Other than that, I talk to

people outside of the university. I don't really think my professors have a big

impact on me going out and looking for opportunities. (Livia)

How faculty communicated to students was very important to them. The words,

tone, and body language used while communicating a message affected the student's

aspirations for success in the course. They found the use of intimidating messages very

unsettling. It was explained to the researcher that when the students walked into class, on

the first day with the goal of getting an A in the class, the faculty member's messaging

and communication style could "crush their dreams."

I had one professor who was condescending. He would say 'Well, I give you

homework and if you do that, then you should be fine. I've already given you the

tools. Go from there.' I did not feel that he would be open to other questions so I did not approach. (Majob)

For example, my teacher, was like, 'Hey, just to let you know, you all are not going to make it basically." Like she told us 'You're going to be broke, and you're going to have 10 different jobs, so just get used to it right now.' It was almost very intimidating. (Amy)

When teachers, in the beginning, talk about their course and what to expect and stuff, they'll tell you 'The average is a B in here'…it feels like you can never get an A! (Valiant)

Communication shaped the view of the climate, as well as affected student relationships with professors. This supports the fact that the identified themes are cross-referenced.

Valiant shared an experience where the faculty member did not seem interested in her success in the class. It was during this office visit that Valiant became very frustrated. She explained that throughout the visit, the professor kept giving her "signals" that he was not interested in what she was asking. He continually checked his watch. He asked 'So did you just want to look over your test? What did you need?' She replied that she wanted to look over the test to better prepare for the next test. His reply was 'I don't know what you don't get. It's simple, it's not rocket science.' At that point, Valiant said that she didn't ask any more questions and left upset. She found his reaction puzzling. Once "turned off" by this professor, she limited herself from reaching out to other faculty members. She felt that she would rather figure out things on her own.

In the classroom, students looked for faculty to be welcoming and engaging. Students wanted to be included in the learning process. When they felt that they were expected to come to class and listen to a lecture, the faculty member was perceived as not being interested in their success in the class. This behavior sent a signal to the students that this faculty member was not approachable.

> They are just reading through the slides and not engaging the students. It makes it harder on the student to grasp the material being taught. (Awoh)

> The way they walk into classroom and present the material has influence on how well I can do in that class. Unfortunately, I feel like the majority of my interactions are the same, as far as, just sitting in the classroom and watching them present whatever to us. Some of them, I just choose not to interact with. Just because of their attitudes when they're in class…it's just not very welcoming. It makes me feel a little uncomfortable. (Livia)

Students often did not approach faculty because they perceived that the faculty member harbored potential pre-judgements about African American students. In instances where students felt they were misunderstood, stereotyped, or assumed incompetent by the professor, they were hesitant about approaching. Their hesitancy came from experiencing stereotypes and prejudices from other Whites on campus and in the community.

> Throughout my experiences, there were some down times when I just didn't understand the material. Even though I wanted to go to the professor for help, I was afraid. I felt he made pre-judgements about me. (Awoh)

I've had an interaction with a teacher who was just very demeaning. You could ask a question, and he would almost chastise you for asking him a question. It really made it hard for me to want to go to that class and deal with that for an hour and 15 minutes. He just kind of made me question my intelligence. I know I'm not dumb. But, his reactions would make me wonder if I did ask a dumb question or am I stupid? He was terrible! I never asked him for anything again, because he gave that vibe and I didn't like it. So, I'd rather figure it out on my own, which I did. (Amber)

I would never go after a class and ask, 'Can you help me through this.' A lot of students that I've talked to, in other classes, say 'She kind of makes you feel dumb for asking a question.' (Amy)

You just don't want to ask them questions. You don't want to ask for help, because you might be made to feel dumb. If you're saying, 'I don't understand this' and they say, 'Well, I don't know what you don't understand. I don't know what you don't get.' It's like, "Okay, thanks for your help!" (Valiant)

Amber added that she hesitated to initially approach faculty, because she did not want to be perceived as being "not good enough".

I hate asking for help. Being a Black woman, I don't want to seem that I'm not good enough. Growing up, I've always been told 'You have to be twice as good, because it's not just going to be handed to you.' So, I guess just from that standpoint, it kind of limits me on how I feel about asking for help. I don't know how it's going to be received. Although I haven't had that feeling that it wouldn't be received, it's just the not knowing how it's going to go. So, only if it's a dire

need I'll interact. I'll talk to them. However, asking for help, it's very hard for me.

If I'm reaching out, then I am on my last leg and I just had to (Amber)

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that the students understood that the faculty were valuable resources that must be "used". They also realized that, despite the perceived lack of approachability, they needed to take the initiative to reach out and interact with the faculty. They acknowledged that, by doing so, they would have a better chance of being successful in their program.

The professor isn't always the first one to engage with students. Oftentimes, you don't get that connectivity with professors, because they don't approach first. They want you to approach first. That is what's lacking…the lack of approach to students. (Awoh)

[African American students] are not always going to be comfortable necessarily speaking up. There is a race barrier. It sucks! I think there are some things, culturally, that are just different. When I go into the classroom, I am probably not going to speak to the professor unless he/she engages first. (Sharon)

If you want that relationship with your professor, you actually have to be the first one to initiate that. But, I would say a lot of African American students don't usually reach out to their professor. I know this one student in my class, who said, 'Well I'm failing, so I'm just going to withdraw.' A lot of professors are not going to reach out to a student that's struggling. (Amy)

When I initially approach my professors, I feel like I have to prepare something. I can't just go up and have a normal conversation. I have to prepare first, then go. (Livia)

As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong?

The participants expressed strong perceptions regarding the college, program, and faculty. Finding themselves in a competitive environment and trying not to succumb to the associated pressures sometimes was very overwhelming. Although the students looked for the business college to be a place of acceptance and inclusion, they found that the road to obtaining their degree was not going to be an easy one. African American students brought with them "baggage" from previous experiences and exposures that informed them no matter what they accomplish, they always be viewed as being an African American, first. During the interviews, students talked about their lived experiences as an African American in the business college, the pressures to prove themselves, what keeps them going, and what they need from faculty to succeed.

Being African American at a PWI, students felt that their experiences were not too different from African Americans in other disciplines. However, they believed that the competitiveness of their programs came with more challenges and pressures, adding to what they already deal with. The competitive environment of the business school served as a reminder to students that they needed to work harder than their peers, overcome stereotypes, and rely on support from family, friends and co-workers.

> I have had some bad experiences. However, I feel like all African Americans have encounters. Some of us have these encounters all the time and others have them not so often. I feel like, for the most part, my experiences would be typical for being at this university. (Livia)

Being in a program, where there are few faculty members and students who "look like them," added to the pressure.   It was very daunting for the student participants to

find someone relatable to connect with, talk to, and use as a resource. As a result, they experienced feelings of discomfort, isolation, discontent, intimidation, ostracization, and extreme stress. In order to overcome these feelings, the students voiced that they had to learn to adapt and adjust to the different environments in which they found themselves.

I often feel discomfort and discontent. There are few individuals that relate to me. In one of my classes, there is only four African Americans out of 40 students. You see the White students and the resources made available to them. It's very challenging. Most of them appear to come from upper-middle and upper-class families. It seems things have been given to them throughout their lives, versus where, I, coming from a family of refugees, have to battle and overcome everything. (Awoh)

It's very noticeable, being an African American in my program. When you look around, the numbers are very slim for others who look like me. It's definitely noticeable. When you are one of maybe five out of 100 people, it is intimidating. This causes me to not be confident. Therefore, I don't always speak up and ask questions. I feel alienated when I am the only Black female in the class. (Amy)

Stressful, and somewhat alone. Stressful because sometimes you feel like being and African American, you do feel like you have to put in a little extra work. (Valiant)

I really felt ostracized in some of my classes, because there were times where I needed help and even though I asked others for help, I didn't get it. I don't know if it's just because they felt like, 'Well, she already knows everything, or she

thinks she knows everything.' I didn't feel like I fit in with everyone else in the class. (Majob)

Although believing being African American made her more "noticeable," Amy relied on tips she received from her brother, who had graduated from the business college. He suggested that she 'continue to push through the challenges and try not to let differences impact her success.' Realizing she had to work for what she wanted, Amy always tried to do her best to ensure that she did not become "another statistic" in the African American community.

Realizing that they did not have the same privileged backgrounds as their White peers, some participants indicated they worked hard to show that they had earned their place in their program. Trying to make sure that she did not appear "less than", Ursula tried to project a positive image of herself, because of her being "different" from her White peers in the business college. She always made sure that she was well-prepared for class and arrived early, hoping to send the message that she was ready to learn. To her, first impressions were very important and she wanted to show that she was not a "slacker."

She continued with, "I'm a millennial. I'm African American. I'm a woman. I have to be on my Ps and Qs." Being a curvy woman of color, she found it difficult to overcome her own anxiety about her body.

It's just part of comes from being an African American woman. I think African American women already stand out in society. Although we stand out. I just prefer to blend in. This has affected me going to certain events in the college. For example, freshman year, we have a lot of mandatory events. We had to dress

business professional. While my White friends could wear certain outfits that were considered appropriate, I needed to dress down, because I have thighs and big breasts. I had to cover up more of my body. I had to wear longer skirts. I needed to carry myself even better than they did, because I was worried about first impressions. Things look different on different people.

Valiant and Sharon echoed similar feelings of discomfort and stress associated with being African American.

Just growing up in American culture, seeing racism and how everything comes back to race, I really needed to be on top of everything. You never know who's racist and who's not. You never know what somebody might be thinking. You never know how nice they can be and really be like, "Ugh, she's stupid. She doesn't understand this. Everybody else gets it."

9 times out of 10, I am the only African American in groups for class projects. I try to do my very best, because I don't want my counterparts to look at me and think that I'm not doing my part. Everybody has stereotypes that are ingrained into their head. I think a lot of the times, when people see that they're in a group with me, they question whether, or not, I will do my part. I do not want to live up to the stereotype of African Americans being lazy. It's what they see on TV. Because it is thrown at you, all the time, you internalize these things without even knowing it. With group work, I just always try to make sure I'm on top of things and communicating. I want my group mates to know that I'm going to do my part and that I'm not going to slack off. (Amber)

Other students expressed similar beliefs that the way African Americans are portrayed on television leads to stereotypes. Having to disprove the stereotypes of African Americans being lazy, not smart or need to be in other majors, proved to be overwhelming.

I am aware of the judgements that people may have, whether they show it, or not. That's always in the back of my head. It's natural. I just hold myself to a higher standard because I am aware of stereotypes. Whether you're Black, White, Puerto Rican, whatever, you are going to have others pass judgement on you. I guess I have to work harder because of the stereotypes assigned to Black people. Being a Black female, I have to make sure I'm not feeding into the stereotypes. (Denise)

There were times when I would be the only person answering questions in class. A lot of times, I have been that one person that understands what the professor is talking about. I think some of my classmates were puzzled that I knew so much. I don't think they expected me to know more than them. (Majob)

I feel like people would assume that, because I'm African American, that I would do like a psychology, or easier major. (Amy)

Amber expressed that she not only dealt with stereotypes associated with African Americans, in general, she had to also deal with those of African American women. Society sees African American women being aggressive and/or angry. This reality caused her to question whether, or not, she should speak up, when she had a question or disagreed with what was being discussed. Not wanting to be seen as an angry or nagging

African American female, she just usually kept her thoughts to herself, and figured things out on her own.

Denise also did not want to "feed into the stereotypes." However, it was always in the back of her mind that she needed to be aware of the judgements people harbor.

I am aware that the first time I meet someone, they will develop a first

impression. Therefore, I automatically think, 'Let me be more appropriate,' or

'Let me make sure I let them know by my actions that I'm not that typical African

American you may think I am.'

Red mentioned that he felt intimidated going to class and performing on tests. Trying to deal with these feelings, he motivated himself by remembering that he "needed to do this" for himself and that he needed to "show others that he could excel and get an A." Although he did not always understand this sense of pressure, he did know that it made him feel "extra good, when he outscored everybody else." When he received an A on a test or assignment, he felt like "Oh, I can hang with y'all! I can do whatever y'all can do!"

The students tried to remain resilient, despite feeling the need to prove themselves to others. Their goals of completing their program and getting their degree needed to stay in the forefront of their minds. Whatever it took, to remain in their program, was what continued to drive them forward.

At times, I felt out of place. I felt like everybody's just looking at me to be the

person to speak for things. Because I was the only Black person in there, I kind of

thought, 'Do they think that Black people are not smart? Do they think that we

don't know these things? That we're [African Americans/Blacks] not capable of these things?' (Majob)

There are days where I have to stay up until 5 o'clock in the morning to study for an exam just to make sure that I succeed. I feel like it's not even an option, it's I what I have to do. I don't get a chance to just be a mediocre student. I don't get that option. So, it's challenging, it's stressful, but, I'm making it. So, I can't really complain. I just take what I've been given and I make it work. Most African American students feel a pressure to be good. You can't be mediocre, you have to be good, so, when you graduate, you can compete. (Amber)

I don't want to just do good in this class, I want to learn something. I want to take this out into the world and apply it. When I get my A, I don't want there to be any question of my A. If these are your expectations, I want to exceed them. (Sharon)

Although sometimes the goals seemed unobtainable, they continued rely on self-motivation even though they questioned why others wanted to believe that they were not capable of achieving in the business school setting.

I think because I feel like people would assume that, because I'm Black, that I would do like a Psychology, or an easier major. (Amy)

I decided to pursue also a business degree, because it was challenging to me. It interested me, but it didn't come naturally to me. Do we just tend to go towards liberal arts, more often than business programs? Maybe the elements of learning about finance and accounting, are subjects that are not often shared with us in our homes. It took me a while to just realize this is what I'm supposed to do. (Majob)

Trying not to succumb to the additional pressures associated with being African American, Livia felt that at the end of the day, she only had to prove herself to herself.

I feel like, at the end of the day, I only have to prove myself to myself. I understand why people would feel the way they do. I try to do my best and not have to feel that I need to prove myself to them. (Livia)

Despite the challenges and pressures, the student participants expressed that relying on their own self-motivation was not always enough. They had to reach out to family members, other minority students, student organizations, and co-workers for support.

I think I would say getting involved, finding organizations on campus that kind of help make resources available. Get involved and get outside your comfort zone. Allow yourself to be a person who exceeds expectations instead letting them believe otherwise. (Awoh)

My family immigrated to United States when I was five. My parents branded in our minds, that, 'You can't not do well. We didn't bring you up to fail.' Having that in the back of my mind, helps me when being in this environment, where I'm constantly wondering if I'm good enough. It takes a toll on you. I always try to pat myself on the back, like, 'You're resilient. You'll be fine.' However, there were times when I just felt like, 'No. This isn't for me. You can't do this.' For some reason, I stayed. I think it was because of my Mom. She went to college and got her master's degree, while raising six kids, and working two jobs. So, I would always think, 'Well, if she could do all of that, I can't complain. I just have to stick to it and try to figure it out.' (Majob)

I'm a mother. It is just me, my boyfriend and my son. I really have a lot of things going on. Therefore, I don't have time to really interact with others on campus. I try to network with family, friends, and people I know at work to help keep me going. (Denise)

I do know that there are people I can count on. Because of this, I'm going to succeed. (Valiant)

As the interviews concluded, the researcher asked the students what they needed from faculty. The students voiced that faculty needed to be encouraging, open to approaching students first, engaging, aware of the challenges African/American students face, understand cultural differences, willing to get to know the students, and provide the support students need to be academically successful.

It was important to the students that faculty understood that they were all working towards the common goal of graduating. Therefore, when they needed help, they expected the faculty to provide it. In order, to assist the students accomplish this goal, faculty needed to be more engaging and draw the students into the learning process.

Getting to know the students and know that we're working towards something. I guess the whole thing is understanding we're making sacrifices. If we need extra help, provide it. Everybody isn't the typical college student. (Denise)

Be aware of how they communicate to African American students. Sometimes I often hear their voice or mannerism change when they speak to me versus when they speak to my White peers. I need them to try to connect to students and make themselves available. You want your professor to be able to help you. (Awoh)

Engaging the students meant different things to each of the students. Whether interacting with students in the classroom or during office hours, students wanted faculty to be aware that sometimes African American students hesitated to approach faculty. Therefore, it may be necessary for the faculty to approach first.

> I would like for professors to be more open. So, that students feel like they can just approach them, at any time. You never know what a student is going through or what kind of personality that student might have. They might be very introverted. Knowing that the professor is open and willing goes a long way. Also, I think having professors, who genuinely love what they do would help solve a lot of problems that students may face. It's hard to want to get help from somebody, who acts like they just hate their job or they don't want to be here. (Amber)

By reaching out, the faculty would get to know the students and help to build a relationship. Students wanted faculty to get to know them and their background. This would help the faculty have a better understanding of the challenges that the students face.

> I wish they would do more to get to know their students. I know it can be hard, because there are so many of us. However, I appreciate those professors, who actually do try. In one class, at the beginning of each session, the professor would get to class early and walk up to different students. Although he might not remember their name, he would interact with them. Whereas, in other classes, the professor will walk in late, say their lecture, and leave. (Livia)

Understand that we're, most of the time, first generation college-students. Therefore, we may feel a lot of pressure. Be a little more personable and try to understand where [we're] coming from. [Professors should] let everyone know that they're available. (Denise)

I think just be more mindful that all students are not on the same playing field. We didn't have the same start as our other counterparts. Everybody's different. Therefore, be more aware of challenges that exist. (Majob)

Be more interactive with students. Try to find out if students understand the topic that you're discussing. Force students to share their ideas, because sometimes they don't feel comfortable with sharing what they think, or how they feel. (Amy)

By building relationships, faculty would know that the students wanted to be seen for who they are and what they bring to the classroom. They needed to feel that faculty are aware that things can be different for them because of their skin color.

I think being aware of things is very important. People say they don't see color or like it doesn't matter, but I feel like it's important to address the fact. Be aware of what you say. Be mindful of to whom you are speaking. Know that things can be taken differently when you are from a different race. (Livia)

Despite the challenges that they face, the students want the faculty to show that they care and are willing to be a resource. Students want faculty to create environments where they feel included and valued.

I want to know that they're supporting me and that they care about my future. While I don't get all of the support that I want, I do feel like I do get some.

Although I feel alone a lot of the time, I do know that there are some professors

that do care. (Valiant)

Don't discriminate. Be professional. Don't pity people. Don't be like 'Oh, I need

to help the poor Black kid out. He needs an A.' Just everybody equally. (Red)

Amber concluded her interview with a suggestion for improving relationships

between faculty and African American students in the college. She believed that there is

a need for faculty, staff, and administration to receive cultural competency training. By

doing so, they would be able to better understand the cultural differences that the students

bring with them to the classroom. Having this better understanding help create a more

inclusive environment for all students. Amber expressed that all students want to feel

like they belong and that their success is valued by all.

I think our faculty members should have some sort of cultural training, in my

opinion, because they are going to deal with different types of people. Maybe

every year or once every two semesters. They should have cultural training,

where they can go and just learn how to better connect with all of their students,

not just the ones that look like them. When it comes to everyone feeling included

here, I would like for this campus to do a lot more. I feel like no one should go to

a school or any institution and feel like they don't belong. I got here, I belong

here. I feel like everyone, even up to the Chancellor should be aware of the

different cultures that are on their campus. It would be amazing for everybody to

just feel included and to know that people care about you and your background.

Although the student participants found themselves in a competitive environment

that posed challenges, they were determined to academically succeed and persist to

graduation. As an African American female business faculty member, the researcher has always valued building relationships with her students. The value of interacting with students beyond the classroom has proven to provide opportunities to get to know students, the challenges they face, and provide the support that they need to be academically successful.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Chapter 4 reports the perceptions and experiences of the ten (10) student participants. During data collection, the students shared their counter-stories about the climate of SEU's College of Business and their major programs, the interactions they had with faculty, the impact these interactions had on their academic success and persistence, and what they need from faculty to cultivate relationships. The three emerging themes are a testament to how the students' experiences have impacted their journey to degree completion.

The competitive climate of the College of Business provided challenges for the students. However, they were determined to reach their goals of completion. Although the College of Business provided resources, including faculty, to help the students navigate through their programs, the students did not always find these resources to be as helpful during their journey.

The students realized that faculty members are a valuable resource. However, sometimes the faculty were perceived as being not approachable. Having the desire to build relationships with faculty members, the student participants provided suggestions of what they need from the faculty. In the next chapter, the researcher analyzes and discusses the three emerging themes.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

While representation of African American students in first-time enrollment has improved, degree attainment of African Americans and other minority groups lags behind that of White and Asian Americans. There remains the necessity of understanding African American students' academic success and persistence issues. Therefore, gaining a better understanding of student academic success and persistence is vitally important for institutional agents and scholars.

This qualitative study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of African American students in the College of Business at Southeastern University (SEU), while focusing on their perceptions of the climate of the College of Business, the quality of interactions they have with business faculty members, and how the quality of these interactions impact academic success and persistence to graduation among this population. Two questions guided this study:

1) How do African American students understand the climate, particularly related to race, of an undergraduate business program at a PWI?

2) How do African American students perceive their own relationships with faculty in the program, specifically how relationships with faculty have hindered or contributed to their success in an undergraduate business program, at a PWI?

The study's findings were drawn from a demographic survey and face-to-face interviews with the ten African American student participants. During data analysis, three (3) major themes emerged: (a) A Racially Charged Climate; (b) Business Faculty Can Be Accessible But Not Approachable; and (c) As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong?

Among these themes, seven statements broadly reflect the shared student perceptions regarding the climate of the college of business and the impact of interactions with business faculty on their academic success and persistence:

- The College of Business at SEU has a competitive and "corporate-like" climate that accompanies a racially charged climate.

- Students experience feelings of isolation, discomfort, discontent, intimidation, ostracism, and extreme stress, due to the competitive environment and the lack of diversity with the college.

- Although students agree that faculty are valuable resources, not all faculty are perceived as being welcoming to students and committed to student success.

- Students find it challenging to approach faculty members, who are perceived as harboring stereotypes of African American students, unwelcoming, and not committed to the students' success.

- Students welcome the common bond they have with African American faculty, due to their race and shared experiences.

- Students turn to family, friends, student organizations and others outside of the university for the support they need.

- Students have self-determination to reach their goals of completing their programs.

Throughout the study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided the framework needed to examine the lived experiences of the African American student participants. The researcher chose CRT because it supports the need to include race as a lens to gain a

better understanding of the experiences of the students. Within the field of higher education, CRT has been identified as an increasingly important tool used to broaden and deepen the analysis of the racialized barriers for people of color (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguero, 2005). Scholars of CRT have concluded that the needed attention to the concepts of race and racism in higher education is rarely the focal point of the analysis of academic success and achievement of Students of Color. Although race is mostly used as a demographic variable, there is a need for a change in viewpoint to transform the inequities found in the U.S. higher educational system (Closson, 2010).

In this chapter, the researcher provides a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. In addition, the researcher discusses the significance of the study for faculty and administrators along with implications for practice.

<div align="center">Discussion of the Findings</div>

According to Carnevale, Fasules, et al. (2016), African Americans are underrepresented among the number of degree holders, in degree programs associated with the fastest-growing, highest-paying occupations, such as engineering, health, and business. Degree programs associated with these industries are considered highly competitive and academically challenging. In this study, the researcher sought the perceptions of successful African American students in one such challenging major – business.

A Racially Charged Climate

In this study, the student participants described the climate of the College of Business at SEU, a PWI, as competitive, challenging, professional, and rigorous. In their

descriptions, students believe that there is a connection between this climate and the "real corporate world." To them, the college's many strict policies, procedures, and requirements help to reinforce the competitive nature of the climate and appear to be used to weed out unsuccessful students.

Being in a climate perceived to be riddled with stereotypes and prejudices about African Americans, the students felt overwhelmed, intimidated, and extremely stressed. Battling these feelings have caused several of their peers to give up and leave the programs, and in some cases, the university. Fries-Britt and Turner's (2002) research on African American students at PWIs had similar findings where the students, burdened by these feelings, departed and transferred to HBCUs or other institutions.

Earlier research would contend that students coming into college, meet the admissions requirements of the university. Therefore, they are to be homogenous based by the institutions (Allen, 1985). Once on campus, African American students are expected to break away from the cultural conditioning that they come from and assimilate into the culture of the university, and in this case, the College of Business. This concept, supported by the earlier research of Tinto (1999), requires college students to break from their communities and cultures and assimilate into the dominant culture of the institutions they attend. However, due to the lack of students of color in Tinto's studies, Tierney (1999) and others critiqued the notion that integration and assimilation were necessary for success in college. It is these suggestions of assimilation that caused CRT scholars to devise the CRT's tenet of "Racism is Permanent" which realizes that the basis of racism, which is ingrained in American culture, appears to be "normal" and natural because

American society expects everyone to conform to the norms of the white, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual dominant group.

The students in this study did not find it easy to assimilate into the dominant culture of the college, based on the constant reminder that they were "different" and that several of their White peers and faculty members were perceived as harboring stereotypes and prejudices against them. Cress (2008) stressed that the constant experience of stereotypes and prejudices result in African American students realizing that they are the "other" or an "outsider." These feelings of invalidation can result in educational consequences for the students. For most students, the normal challenges associated with navigating the campus and transitioning from secondary education is stressful. However, African American students, on predominantly White campuses, encounter additional stresses that come specifically from their minority status. Therefore, when African American students experience stereotypes and negative environments, there is no room for assimilation and there is a negative impact on their academic performance (Steele, 1997).

For the student participants, the feelings of being different were greatly emphasized by the lack of diversity in the College of Business. Not being able to find others who "looked like them," limited the needed support to navigate the environment the students found themselves in. As indicated in the literature review, McGee (2016) and Cole and Espinoza (2008) asserted that the only relief for students of color in competitive majors at PWIs was to purposefully seek out support from African American faculty, other students of color, and student organizations when they experienced stereotypes and microaggressions in competitive and cutthroat environments. It was these

resources of support that provided what the students felt was needed to successfully navigate their campus and programs.

Upon reflection, the researcher realized that she too has been in many situations where she has felt like the "other" or the "outsider". She had to learn how to put on her "armor" every morning to make sure that she was ready to handle whatever she might face at school, work or within the community. She has had to learn strategies that have allowed her to successfully plot her course through systems that were built for the dominant culture. The need to stand tall when experiencing microagressions and trying to dispel the stereotypes about African Americans has always been exhausting for her. However, she has pressed on and has been grateful to those who have mentored her along the way.

Business Faculty Can Be Accessible, But Not Approachable

SEU's College of Business provides a variety of academic, career and networking resources to students. Several of the student participants felt that some of these resources were not always as helpful or effective. Despite the availability of these resources, the manner in which they are provided is not necessarily conducive to African American students as they may be to White students. CRT reminds educators, through the tenet of "Challenge to Dominate Ideology," that the concept of equal opportunity acts as a camouflage for the self-interest, power and privilege of the dominant culture in America (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Yosso & Solorzano, 2007).

On a daily basis students come in contact with faculty members, the main resource they look to for guidance and knowledge. Understanding the value of the faculty, students have a desire to form and cultivate relationships with them. However,

they have found that the experiences of interacting with faculty members have had both positive and negative impact on their academic success and persistence.

Scholars have concluded that African American students at PWIs often find themselves in programs where their faculty and peers are members of the dominant race. These students do not often initially approach faculty because they perceive the faculty as not being interested in them or in their learning. As a result, students feel discouraged, less confident, and less motivated to achieve academically and persist to graduation. Student participants expressed that they often did not approach faculty because they perceived that the faculty member harbored potential pre-judgements about African American students. In instances where students felt they were misunderstood, stereotyped, or assumed incompetent by the professor, they were hesitant about approaching. Their hesitancy came from experiencing stereotypes and prejudices from other Whites on campus and in the community. Students expressed similar beliefs that the way African Americans are portrayed on television leads to stereotypes. Having to disprove the stereotypes of African Americans being lazy, not smart or need to be in other majors, proved to be overwhelming.

Tinto's (1987, 1993) research provides a context for this finding, indicating that faculty behavior in the classroom is not only an influence on academic performance, it also sets the tone for interactions that occur outside of the classroom. How students perceive the approachability of the faculty is a determinant as to the likelihood of further interaction beyond the confines of the classroom. Tinto asserts that faculty must appear "available and interested" in having interactions with students for interactions to occur.

In the College of Business at SEU, there is a lack of African American faculty members. As a result, students are expected to interact with predominantly White faculty that may not directly understand their challenges and needs. Throughout the study, students shared their experiences interacting with faculty in the classroom, during office hours, and at events held by the college. Despite the understanding that they need to build relationships with the faculty, students found it difficult to approach these faculty members. The barriers that prevent students from making the initial approach included: (a) faculty did not seem inviting; (b) faculty did not appear to be interested in assisting the students; and (c) students did not want to confirm any stereotypes or prejudices about African American students.

Students picked up on "cues," received from faculty, to determine if the faculty member is welcoming, committed to students' success, and willing to help the students succeed. These cues are often observed in the classroom and are associated with how the faculty member communicates, their body language, and their responsiveness to questions. When the cues are positive, the students find that they have no concerns about approaching the faculty member. Research informs the literature that when faculty interactions appear to be inviting and rewarding, there is a strong association with continued student persistence and academic success (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole, 2008; Cole & Espinoza, 2008; Li, Swaminathan & Tang, 2009; Tinto 1987, 1993).

Interacting with faculty helps to encourage students to devote more efforts to their studies and validates them as full members of the learning community (Kuh & Hu, 2001). It is through supportive relationships with faculty, that students find higher satisfaction with their academic studies, and are encouraged to work harder (Lundberg & Schreiner,

2004; Strayhorn, 2008). When faculty encourage students to work harder, students reported that they did work harder, because they wanted to meet, or in most cases exceed, the expectations of the faculty (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004).

Student participants expressed that they not only want faculty to be welcoming, but also need faculty to be: (a) encouraging; (b) open to approaching students first; (c) engaging; (d) aware of the challenges African American students face; (e) understanding of cultural differences; (f) willing to get to know the students; and (g) supportive of the students' need to be academically successful. Attributes that they associated with interactions with African American faculty members.

Because they have a better understanding of the students' challenges and needs, students indicated that interactions with African American faculty were critical to their success. Students perceived these faculty members as more approachable, because there was a sense of relatedness. The interactions were considered more genuine, engaging, easy, open, less guarded and comfortable, while encouraging students to become more confident and academically successful. Interactions with African American faculty encourage students to build positive beliefs about their own abilities. The findings extend this concept by suggesting that when African American faculty members express high expectations of student abilities, students are motivated to increase their academic performance in the classroom.

Using a CRT lens, this researcher concludes that the student participants did not perceive the same bonding and support from their White faculty members as they received from the African American faculty. They perceived the White faculty as having lower expectations of their academic performances. This, in turn, caused the students to

feel academically and socially alienated and excluded from the learning process (McGee & Martin, 2011). The faculty's lower expectations of African American students maintain a direct link to the tenets of CRT that draws attention to the fact that these expectations exist because of the concepts that the students are deemed inferior because of their race.

The factors of peer-to-peer bonding and supportive interactions with faculty were also apparent during the research conducted by Brooms and Davis (2007). The researchers found that these factors, associated with African American faculty, pushed students to persist through their studies. Unlike students, who attend HBCUs, African American students, at PWIs, do not always have access to African American faculty. Research conducted by Fries-Britt & Turner (2002), concluded that African American students at HBCUs "achieved twice as much intellectual development as their peers, attending PWIs. These students experienced enhanced involvement in the career process, greater satisfaction with academic life, and higher occupational aspirations" (p. 316). Students at HBCUs found the academic support they needed from African American faculty, who were committed to their success.

These findings are supported by Guiffrida's (2005) research on African American students at PWIs. He identified the need for faculty to be "student-centered" and culturally sensitive to the needs of the students. In particular, he found that students perceived faculty interactions were valuable, when the faculty: (a) invested time in the students; (b) listened to the students; (c) understood their career fears, dreams and goals; (d) provided academic and personal advising; (e) supported and advocated for the

students; (f) provided information and resources needed to navigate the institution; and most importantly, (g) showed that they cared about the students' success.

Despite the challenges that the student participants experienced, they had a shared sense of determination to reach their goals of completing their programs. Striving towards graduation brought pride, not only to the students, but also to their families. As the students progressed through their degree program, they began to place more value on their learning and were more likely to persist to graduation (Tinto, 1999).

During the interviews, the researcher was reminded of her experiences as an African American business student. She would have truly welcomed having faculty members who looked like her to provide assistance during her educational journey. She had to rely on White faculty members to get the assistance that she desired. Some of her experiences were positive and some were not. The researcher did join a national African American sorority while in her undergraduate program. During her master's program, she had to make do with the resources that were available. Listening to the student participants and reflecting on her own experiences, the researcher wondered if the lack of welcoming faculty members, and her own determination for success is what has made her a very self-reliant individual.

In addition, as an African American faculty member, she has found it very important to be available to all students. Through her actions and communications, she has strived to demonstrate to students that she is open to getting to know them and building long-lasting relationships. In her experience as an educator, she has always had the goal of helping students be successful, this included being available both inside and outside of the classroom, checking up on how well students are learning the materials,

and providing the guidance that the students need to get through their program. The researcher believed that this was a very important part of her job as an educator.

As An African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong?

Tinto's (1975) Model of Institutional Departure assumes that students enter college with individual characteristics (race, sex, and socioeconomic status), and attributes (family background, skill and ability, and prior schooling), which help the students form their individual goals and commitments towards obtaining a college degree. These goals and commitments influence students' academic and social experiences on campus, which, in turn, have a direct impact on the level at which the student feels integrated into the academic and social system of the institution (Allen, 1992; Pascarella, Smart & Ethington, 1986; Renn & Reason, 2012; Seidman, 2005).

Student responses on the demographic surveys, show that the participants differ based on socioeconomics, academic preparation, family background, and gender. These characteristics and attributes, according to CRT's tenet of "Intersectionality," influence the lived-experiences of African American students. The intersectionality of the students' identities affect their experiences in SEU's College of Business, because it embodies the concept that "race and racism work with and through other social identity categories such as gender, class, sexuality, religion, and citizenship as interlocking and mutually reinforcing systems of power, rather than as isolated and individual" (McCoy, 2015, p. 62). This is apparent among the participants in the current study, where the female students expressed their stories of how being female added challenges that they face as not only being African American, but also being female in a competitive major program. In addition to being African American and female, the student participants who

are also mothers shared their experiences of isolation and alienation because of their need to meet both academic and family responsibilities.

CRT contends that African Americans not only experience oppression because of their race, but also because of other identities (gender, class, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation, etc.) and forms of oppression (sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.) (Ladson-Billings, 1999; McCoy et al., 2015). This was seen in the Charleston et al. (2014) study of African American female students in computer science majors. The researchers found that the women experienced feelings of isolation, a competitive culture that was not welcoming to women (particularly African American women), misperceptions and stereotypes about their abilities, tension among classmates due to favoritism, and the loss of a social life.

Crenshaw's (1989) work with African American women also found that the different forms of oppression, experienced by the students, shaped the students' sense of self. This became apparent, in this study, when the students began to question "where they belonged." Students find themselves constantly wondering if White faculty and peers are: (a) questioning their worthiness of being in their degree program; (b) expecting them to live up to the stereotypes associated with African Americans; and (c) thinking that they are not capable of doing the work. This was also found in the Davis et al. (2004) study with African American students. Their findings showed that, when it comes to interactions with White faculty and peers, the participants felt that they needed to: (a) prove their worthiness to be there; (b) make the initial approach; (c) endure insensitive attitudes; and (d) deal with negative prejudices about the academic abilities of African American students.

Realizing that they did not have the same privileged backgrounds as their White peers, some participants in the current study indicated they worked hard to show that they had earned their place in their program. For example, Ursula tried to project a positive image of herself, while trying to make sure that she did not appear "less than." Knowing that she was "different" from her White peers in the business college, she always made sure that she was well-prepared for class and arrived early, hoping to send the message that she was ready to learn. Valiant shared "Just growing up in American culture, seeing racism and how everything comes back to race, I really needed to be on top of everything. You never know who's racist and who's not. You never know what somebody might be thinking."

Other students expressed similar beliefs that the way African Americans are portrayed on television leads to stereotypes. Having to disprove the stereotypes of African Americans being lazy, not smart or need to be in other majors, proved to be overwhelming. Research has found that the need to prove one's worthiness is a major barrier to academic success that is faced by African American students, at PWIs. The assumption of unworthiness is associated with lower academic performance, mistrust of faculty, decreased class participation, and increased anxiety. The pressures, associated with harboring the threat of doing something that may inadvertently confirm a negative stereotype, is what impairs students' academic performance (Davis et al., 2004).

African American students sometimes find themselves trying to function and thrive in two opposite worlds: the culture of home and the culture of higher education (Hsaio, 1992). As a result, students try to determine where they "fit" best. In most cases, they find that they must learn how to fluidly move between the two worlds. In this study,

the student participants found that having an ability to be with other African Americans made the academic journey more bearable. African American student organizations, other African American students, their families and friends provided the students a "home base" with individuals from similar cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. These resources provided, not only a sense of belonging, but also, a sense of relief of the feelings of isolation, discomfort, discontent, intimidation, ostracization, and extreme stress. Research concludes that this sense of belonging is one of the factors that most influences persistence (Atherton, 2014; Cabrera et al., 1999; Davis et al., 2004; Sinanan, 2012).

Students find having these support resources valuable because they provide a safe and engaging environment filled with motivation and encouragement (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011). There is comfort in having others that can be relied on for advice, studying together, and sharing experiences (Burrell, Fleming, Fredericks, & Moore, 2015). There are many benefits that students gain by utilizing these resources. One major benefit is that the more students are involved academically and socially, they are more likely to persist to completion of their degree (Tinto, 1999).

Despite the fact that students have these other resources to rely on, they still need faculty members to be their main source of guidance as they move along their academic journey. It is important to the students that faculty understand that they are all working towards the common goal of graduating. Therefore, when they need help, they expect the faculty to provide it. In order, to assist the students accomplish this goal, faculty need to be more engaging and draw the students into the learning process.

Again, the researcher could relate to the counterstories of the student participants. As most students, she wanted to be academically successful and persist to graduation. Although the road was challenging, she became self-reliant and found the resources that she needed to meet her goals. It was not only important to her, but also to her family that she graduate from college. Throughout her life, she heard stories about the experiences of her parents and her ancestors. The value of a good education was drilled in her head because it would open more doors for her than were open for her family. Although in many situations during her educational journey and working in Corporate America, the researcher did not always feel that she "fit", she kept her goals foremost because she wanted to make her family proud, as well as herself.

Through A Critical Race Theory Lens

Racism is Permanent and Intersectionality

CRT is a framework that seeks to delegitimize whiteness as the norm and works to deconstruct the system of privilege and hegemony it has built. This is done by creating critical discourse around the subject of race which allows for the potential to be able to achieve racial fairness, justice and equity (Chaisson, 2004). It also allows scholars to identify "race-neutral" practices, policies and patterns of racial inequalities that exist in higher education. It highlights the importance of considering how race and racism affect the experiences of African American college students. Race and racism are central constructs that intersect with other dimensions, such as generation status, gender, sexuality, and class. According to Villalpando (2004), each dimension of the student's identity can "potentially elicit multiple forms of subordination, and each dimension can also be subjected to different forms of oppression" (p. 43). Gender oppression, racial

oppression, and class oppression do not work in isolation. The effects of these oppressions can lead to students feeling isolated and alienation on campus.

CRT contends that there is a need for institutions to fully understand that African American students might experience different levels of racial discrimination on their campuses. These experiences may not be in the form of overt racism, but more likely, in the form of microaggressions (Villalpando, 2004). Microaggressions can come in the forms of faculty comments, disengagement, and disingenuous actions.

Student participants in this study experienced microaggressions during their interactions with business faculty at SEU. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the students picked up on the "cues" that were given by the faculty. Even though the participants did not use the word microaggressions, it is apparent to this researcher that what the "cues" they described were microaggressions. The students shared their stories about the presence or absence of a welcoming demeanor, commitment to student success, and the willingness to help students succeed.   When the cues are positive, the students had no concerns about approaching the faculty member. However, when the microaggressions did exist, the students were hesitant about approaching the faculty member. As a result, there was a negative impact on their academic performance in the class because they were not able to take advantage of the faculty member as a resource for assistance.

Challenge to Dominant Ideology

CRT looks to institutions to understand that programs, policies and practices should not be created within a "one size fits all" model. Although higher education is available to African American students, institutions should not assume that these students

have an equal opportunity to succeed as their White peers. A "one size fits all" model, built on the foundation of meritocracy, color blindness and race-neutrality, works in favor of the dominant group. Although predominantly-White institutions have tried to ensure that there are resources put into place that would service their African American students (i.e., Black Cultural Centers, Black Student Unions, and Black Student Organizations), creating these resources can be viewed as a culturally relevant response to an attempt to understand the needs of students. However, it is imperative that institutions seek to identify the needs of its African American students before putting into place resources that are presumed to be valuable.

The social construct of categorizing people by race is grounded in the notion of superiority (Lorde, 1992). The concepts of superiority and inferiority lead to assumptions and beliefs about other groups of people. These assumptions and beliefs about a group's culture, intelligence, and language lead to the formation of stereotypes. The media has been deemed as the greatest source of the perpetuation of stereotypes. In particular, for African Americans, they are portrayed as lazy, dumb, slow, aggressive, etc. CRT challenges the ideology that supports these stereotypes by employing educators to look at their attitudes and behaviors towards African American students (Soloranzo & Yosso, 2001).

The student participants in this study expressed their feelings of isolation and alienation associated with their race, and how they might be perceived by the faculty. Not being able to approach some faculty for needed assistance, the students had to find the support that they needed from other resources. As a defense mechanism, students

sought race-based organizations as counterspaces where they could get the support that they needed (McGee & Martin, 2011).

Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

CRT contends that it is invaluable for institutions to understand the needs of students. Gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences of African American students, can provide an opportunity for creating culturally relevant programs, policies and resources. Soloranzo and Yosso's (2001), research on Latino/a students concluded that these lived experiences are "generally marginalized, if not silenced from educational discourse" (p. 3). Institutional agents can give "voice" to African American students by allowing them to tell their counter-stories to better understand their needs and desires that are needed to nourish and empower their academic success and persistence (Villalpando, 2004).

The research methods used for this study provided the students with an opportunity to tell their counterstories. During the interviews, many of the student participants mentioned that they had never stopped to think about what it was like to be an African American student in their program. Talking about their experiences forced the participants to examine how their race defined them, how it impacted their academic journey, and how it impacted their interactions with faculty in the College of Business. In several cases, the student participants became very emotional because of being overcome with feelings that they have had to suppress in order to focus on their studies and get through each day. CRT encourages giving voice to the students so that they have an opportunity to tell their stories. By doing so, others can gain a better understanding of

their lived experiences, and they can release the stored up hurt and pain that they accumulated while navigating through their program at SEU.

Interest Convergence Theory

CRT focuses on the commitment to social justice and offers a response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This tenet suggests that institutions strive towards the empowerment of African American students, and the elimination of racism and sexism by creating an environment of educational equality for all students.

All of the student participants provided examples of what they need from SEU's business faculty, and what is needed to create a welcoming and inclusive environment within the College of Business. Their desires of having an environment where faculty are encouraging, engaging, aware of the challenges African American students face, and understanding of cultural differences can only be achieved with the elimination of the existence of racism and the incorporation of practices of equality.

Implications

With an increase in the number of jobs requiring a Bachelor's degree in business, there is a need to understand the underrepresentation of African Americans in the business disciplines. Therefore, this study is significant because:

1) It contributes to the literature as to the lived experiences of African American students in the competitive field of business at a predominantly White institution. This study is relevant because of the limited number of studies focused on the academic success and persistence factors of this student population and institutional type.

2) It provides a less studied look at how interactions with faculty impact African American business students' academic success and persistence to graduation.

3) The findings reveal the importance of student-faculty interactions and the role that these interactions have on the students' perceptions: a) how students "fit" in the academic environment of the College of Business; b) how they are perceived by faculty and peers; and c) what they need from faculty, in order, to academically succeed.

4) The findings reveal the importance of how African American students must rely on self-motivation to overcome the challenges that impede academic journey.

Implications for Future Research

Although the findings of this study provide a better understanding of African American business students' perceptions of the climate of the College of Business and their interactions with faculty, more research is needed to understand the perspectives of African American students, at PWIs, in other competitive majors.

Limitations and delimitations of the current study suggest directions for future research. During the interview process, the researcher noted that students lacked clarity on the meaning of the word "culture". As a result, the students provided more insight on their perceptions of the climate versus the culture of the College of Business. While the interviews offered important information about student perceptions, future studies could employ ethnographic methods including observation and document analysis to provide more comprehensive understandings of program culture and student behaviors and experiences within that culture.

A second delimitation of the study was that CRT was used as a lens primarily to understand the findings, but not as explicitly in the development of the research questions and the interview questions for participants. This limited the ability of the researcher to connect the findings to CRT.

The major themes of the study findings also point to direction for future research. Students noted the competitive and corporate culture of the business college. Future studies could employ different methodologies (previously mentioned) or other theoretical frameworks that explicitly examine culture to more deeply understand how African American students experience business programs at PWIs. Future studies could also include African American students in other competitive majors (health, engineering) to understand how perceptions and experiences are similar and different.

The perception of business faculty as unapproachable among students in the current study also suggests directions for future research. Future studies could include faculty perspectives as well as observation of student-faculty interaction in and out of class to develop more nuanced understandings of the notion of approachability. Perspectives of White faculty and faculty of color about their interactions with African American business students would further explore the notions of how faculty perceive and interact with students, and how those interactions are in turn perceived by the students.

Finally, the overarching themes of being the "other" for African American students in business majors and careers is certainly worthy of additional exploration, particularly related to CRT and other critical theories.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study reinforce the importance that SEU's College of Business pays attention to creating positive experiences and environments for African American students. In her role as a business faculty member at another institution, the researcher developed three programs that could be adapted for implementation at SEU to improve climate and student-faculty relations for African American and other underrepresented students: a) Cultural Competency Training For Faculty; b) Student Professional Development Program; and c) Professional Mentorship Program.

Cultural Competency Training for Faculty. Based on student recommendations and the perceived climate, SEU's College of Business is encouraged to commit to providing cultural competency training for its faculty. This training would provide an opportunity for faculty to learn more about (a) one's own cultural worldview; (b) attitude towards cultural differences; (c) different cultural worldviews; and (d) developing cross-cultural skills through the use of workshops, roundtable discussions, and hands on activities. The training could be offered in 4-6 hour sessions available several times during a semester. This would provide faculty an opportunity to select a session that would fit their schedule.

If there is a desire to improve the learning environment for minority students, such training should be mandatory for administration and faculty. Cultural competency training would allow institutional personnel to develop and constantly evaluate ways to help African American students connect with various segments of the institution (Davis, et al., 2004). CRT contends that it is invaluable for institutions to understand the needs of students. Gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences of a diverse student

population can lead to the creation of more culturally relevant programs, policies, and resources.

It would be up to the college to determine what the value of this training has for their faculty. Once the college has determined the value and their level of commitment, it must be communicated to the faculty to ensure participation.

Student Professional Development Program. SEU's College of Business is also encouraged to develop a Student Professional Development Program that would teach students the skills that employers are seeking, while providing networking opportunities. The program should incorporate workshops, speaker events and other activities that would provide students and opportunity to build and hone communication and professional skills, strategic career development, leadership, ethics and integrity skills, and the development of global and diverse perspectives. Students would be partnered with local professionals, including alumni, who would provide guidance and play the role of mentors to help students gain experiences and exposures to prepare them for the culture and climate that they would find in the world of business. This program will help students to build skill sets that can be used during their academic journey and in the workplace. In addition to building skills, providing professional development for students will help build their confidence and learn how to find their "fit" in the different cultures and climates that they might find themselves.

Professional Mentorship Program. The SEU's College of Business is encouraged to develop a Professional Mentorship Program where students are partnered with local professionals and alumni for career preparation. Mentors and the students should meet throughout the academic year to discuss everything from choosing the best career fit to

their post-graduation life. Mentors will provide another voice that stresses the importance of a strong academic/work ethic that will translate into workforce success. Racial diversity amongst the mentors would provide added benefits for underrepresented minority (URM) students. The relationships that would be developed would not only help the students while they are in school, but also after they began their careers. In particular, relationships with successful professionals, who look like them, would provide URM students an opportunity to learn strategies for success in a business world full of "race-neutral" practices, policies and patterns of racial inequalities. The ultimate goals of this program would be to help students shape their lives, professions and community.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of African American business students in the College of Business at Southeastern University. It sought to gain a better (1) understanding the climate of their program; and (2) how the students perceived their own relationships with faculty in the program, specifically how relationships with faculty have hindered or contributed to their success in the program.

The findings indicated that the competitive climate of the College of Business provided challenges for the students. However, they were determined to reach their goals of completion. Although the College of Business provided resources, including faculty, to help the students navigate through their programs, the students did not always find these resources to be as helpful during their journey.

Realizing that faculty members are a valuable resource, the students sometimes perceived faculty members as not being approachable. Having the desire to build

relationships with faculty members, the student participants provided suggestions of what they need from the faculty.

It is very important to point out that the normalcy of racism was evident throughout the study. During the interviews, it became apparent that the students had never stopped to think about what it was like being African American in their program. Once given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and feelings, they became overcome with a flood of emotions. As an African American student and faculty member, the researcher had a deep connection with and understanding of the counterstories and the emotions that accompanied them. It was very apparent to her that her experiences were very similar and that she too had to take the time to reflect and realize the impact of the journey that she has taken. It was through this act of reflection that it became apparent to the researcher that there is need for future studies to identify the connection between students' methods of self-preservation and the normalcy of racism. Indeed it was only upon completion of the study that the researcher realized that the first time she had a faculty member of color was during her doctoral studies. This was an important revelation that the researcher will continue to explore in future work.

The findings of this study are important to the research surrounding academic success and persistence of African American students. While representation of African American students in college enrollment has improved, degree attainment of African Americans and other minority groups still lag behind. There remains the necessity to understand academic success and persistence issues that impact students, especially for underrepresented students, including African Americans.

In addition, there remains a gap in the number of African American students graduating with business degrees required for participation in the current and projected labor markets driven by business industries. Compounding this issue, there is a gap in understanding how best to support these students so that they can achieve academic success and persist to degree attainment. These gaps continue to present challenges for African American students, their community and institutions of higher education.

Relationships experienced between students and faculty are vital, particularly for African American students on predominantly White campuses. Without relationships to serve as a protective factor, students may not persist to degree attainment. This, in turn, can lead to occupational and income disparities within the workplace. The number of inequities in society and on college campuses can channel these students on a pathway of reduction of the opportunity of obtaining a good education (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015).

Student perceptions revealed in this study, combined with the extant literature, suggest that, institutions should focus on fostering a just and equitable climate that is aimed at assisting student development by bringing out their full potential as learners and human beings (Berryman et al., 2015). Evidence suggests that racial disparities in higher education outcomes are related to the failure of administrators and faculty to effectively and efficiently adapt to changes in student populations. Museus, Ledesma and Parker (2015) argue that "it is time to rethink higher education's approach to addressing racial inequities and adopt a more holistic and aggressive strategy to advance equity agendas" (p. 73). If institutions are truly committed to achieving the outcomes they desire, they

must embrace diversity more consciously and engage in intentional long-term efforts to

achieve racial equity.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Dear Dr. _____,

My name is Monica Allen and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Leadership program at Southeastern University.

I am conducting my dissertation study on successful African American/Black business students. The study will explore students' academic and social experiences and interactions with business faculty.

Participants in this study will be asked to complete a brief 6-8 minute online survey through SurveyShare.com, followed by a 60-90 minutes confidential individual face-to-face interview with me. Students may be contacted by phone, if necessary, for follow-up information to address questions or information pertaining to their main interview. Students will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card for their successful completion of the face-to-face interview phase of the study.

To participate in this research project, students must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Self-identify as Black/African American;
- Enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in the College of Business, at [insert institution's name], with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed;
- Enrolled as a full time student in a business discipline; and
- Female or male, age of 18-24 years old
- Not on academic probation and have a 2.0 GPA or higher

I ask your assistance in identifying students who meet the above criteria and forwarding the attached recruiting email via listserv to the students to encourage their participation in this study. Strong participation will generate information to improve the representation of African American/Black students in business education through better recruitment and retention efforts. If you have additional questions, please contact me (email, phone number) or my dissertation advisor Dr. Sandra Dika (email, phone number).

Thank you, in advance, for your assistance,

Monica E. Allen
Doctoral Candidate, Education Leadership
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Dear [Student name],

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in a research study that focuses on how African American/Black business students navigate successfully through their program

This study will explore your academic and social experiences; personal qualities that aid in your success; interactions with business faculty; and racial and cultural factors that contribute to your role as a business student.

Participants in this study will be asked to complete a brief online survey, followed by a 60-90 minutes confidential individual interview with me. Students may be contacted, if necessary, for follow-up information to address questions or information pertaining to their main interview. Students will receive a $10 gift card for their successful completion of the interview.

To participate in this research project, students must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Self-identify as Black/African American;
- Enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in the College of Business, at [insert institution's name], with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed;
- Enrolled as a full time student in a business discipline; and
- Female or male, age of 18-24 years old
- Not on academic probation and have a 2.0 GPA or higher

The study will have two parts – a brief online survey (10-15 mins) and a confidential individual interview with me (60-90 minutes). You will receive a $10 gift card at the conclusion of the face-to-face interview. However, if you are ineligible for the study and complete the online survey, you will not receive the $10 gift card. Additionally, you may be contacted for a follow-up conversation pertaining to the information you provide during the interview.

Your participation will generate information to improve the representation of African American/Black students in business education through better recruitment and retention efforts. If you have additional questions, please contact me (email, phone number).

Please proceed to the link here to begin the survey [insert link here].

Monica E. Allen
Doctoral Candidate, Education Leadership
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC ONLINE SURVEY

Welcome to the survey! This is the first step of your participation in this study. Once you have completed the survey, you will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute face-to-face interview. At any time during this survey, you may skip a question if you do not want to answer it.

Name:
UNCC Email Address:
Telephone Number:

Section 1 – Demographic Information

1) What is your current student classification based on credit hours?
   a. Junior
   b. Senior

2) What is your business major?
   a. Accounting
   b. Economics
   c. Business Administration
   d. Finance
   e. International Business
   f. Management
   g. Management Information Systems
   h. Marketing
   i. Operations and Supply Chain Management
   j. Other

3) What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) or guardian(s) have attained?
   a. Less than high school
   b. High school graduate/GED
   c. Associate's degree
   d. Some college but no bachelor's degree
   e. Bachelor's degree
   f. Some graduate school but no graduate degree
   g. Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree (Ph.., Ed.D, MBA, JD, etc.)

4) Do you have a parent, guardian, sibling, or other family member who has a degree in a business discipline? Check all that apply.
   a. Father/male guardian
   b. Mother/female guardian
   c. Sibling
   d. No family member has business degree
   e. Other (please specify)

5) Prior to college, I graduated from a:
    a. Public high school
    b. Private high school
    c. Home school
    d. Other (please specify)

6) Where did you get most of your information about business education and/or other potential majors during middle and high school? Check one.
    a. Parents
    b. Siblings
    c. Other family members
    d. Peers
    e. Teachers
    f. Counselors
    g. Internet
    h. Other (please specify)

7) What is your current major in the College of Business? If you have a second major or minor, please list them as well.

8) What is your approximate overall GPA? (4.0 scale)

9) What is your approximate GPA in your major? (4.0 scale)

10) Are you a transfer student?
    a. No
    b. Yes, I transferred from (fill in the blank)

Section 2 – Academic Involvement and Career Goals

11) In COLLEGE, how satisfied (very satisfied to not satisfied, no applicable option) are you with the:
    a. Quality of teaching in business related courses?
    b. Academic counseling for major?
    c. Involvement in student organizations on campus?
    d. Formal or informal mentoring from a faculty member, advisor, etc.?
    e. Research or internship opportunities available?

12) Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences during your business studies?

13) The next step in the study involves a confidential interview, which will last between 60 to 90 minutes at a time convenient to you. Please mark all times that you are typically available during the week. Also, please provide a list of dates within the next three week that you will be available.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses have been recorded. If you have completed the entire survey and match the selection criteria for the study, you will be invited to participate in a confidential 60-90 minute face-to-face interview. At the completion of the interview, you will be compensated with a $10 gift card. You will be contacted shortly via email to set up an interview time and location.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My name is Monica Allen and I am a doctoral candidate at [insert institution name]. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on the impact of faculty-student interactions on the academic success and persistence of African American junior and senior business students. Your help is essential in this study and I thank you for taking time to talk with me about your experiences at this institution. During the next 60-90 minutes, I will ask questions about your academic background and experiences, future goals, race/ethnicity- and culture-related experiences, and social engagement while at the university. Do you have any questions about this process?

Let's get started!

The first set of questions will help me understand the decisions you made about going to college, selecting [insert name of institution], selecting your major, and your educational goals.

1. Tell me about the culture of the COB.

2. What words would describe the environment, climate, how you feel in the COB?

3. Tell me about the culture of your program.

4. Within this culture, tell me about the relationships between students and faculty.

5. Tell me about the relationships between faculty and students of color

The next set of questions provide you an opportunity to share with me your experience in the College of Business at [insert institution's name] and what helps you continue to successfully navigate through your major.

6. What is it like to be an AA student in your program?

7. Tell me about a time you felt pressured to prove yourself based on your race, culture, or ethnicity during your studies.

8. Describe the type of interactions you have had with faculty

9. How has being an AA affected your interactions with faculty?

10. How have interactions with faculty played a role in your learning experiences?

11. What behaviors do you think are most important for faculty to demonstrate during interactions with students of color?

12. Anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX D: ONLINE CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE

African American Business Students: Impact of Student-Faculty Interactions on Academic Success and Persistence

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by Monica Allen, a UNC Charlotte Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Education Leadership in the College of Education, under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Dika, Associate Professor in the Department of Education Leadership. The purpose of this research is to describe the perceptions and experiences of African American business students at one public, urban institution related to: (a) the culture of SEU's College of Business and its programs; (b) the aspects of student-faculty interactions that affect how students and faculty interact; and (c) the importance of the interactions in motivating student academic performance in a business discipline. Participation should take approximately 6-8 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

ELIGIBILITY
  You may participate in this project if you meet ALL of the following criteria:
- -- Self-identify as Black/African American;
- -- Third, fourth or five year student enrolled in an undergraduate degree program in the College of Business, at [insert institution name], with a minimum of 60 credit hours completed;
- -- Enrolled as a full time student in a business discipline; and

- -- Female or male, age of 18-24 years old

- -- Not on academic probation and have a 2.0 GPA or higher

BENEFITS & RISKS
You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about your interactions with business faculty. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your survey answers will be stored initially with SurveyShare.com in a password protected electronic format. Data will later be downloaded and stored electronically on a password protected computer. Any printed material will be locked in a filing cabinet that will only be accessible by the researcher. Your name, email address, and telephone

number will be collected for the purpose of contacting you for the second part of the project which will be a 60-90 minute face-to-face interview. Your survey responses will not be associated with your personal information.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in the face-to-face interview. If you choose to provide contact information such as your phone number and email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

If you meet the criteria for participation in this study and complete the survey, you will be invited to participate in the interview. At the end of the interview, you will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card for your participation.

CONTACT
[insert institution name] wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Research Compliance Office [insert institution's phone number] if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the actual project or study, please contact Dr. Sandra Dika [email and phone number].

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Project Title: African American Business Students: Impact of Student-Faculty
Interactions on Academic Success and Persistence

Project Purpose: The purpose of this research is to describe the perceptions and
experiences of African American business students at one public, urban institution related
to: (a) the culture of SEU's College of Business and its programs; (b) the aspects of
student-faculty interactions that affect how students and faculty interact; and (c) the
importance of the interactions in motivating student academic performance in a business
discipline.

Investigator(s): This study is being conducted by Monica Allen, a UNCC doctoral
candidate in the Department of Education Leadership in the College of Education, under
the supervision of Dr. Sandra Dika, Associate Professor in the Department of Education
Leadership.

Eligibility: You may participate in this project if you meet ALL of the following criteria:

-- Self-identify as Black/African American;
-- Third, fourth or five year student enrolled in an undergraduate degree program
  in the College of Business, at [insert institution name], with a minimum of 60
  credit hours completed;
-- Enrolled as a full time student in a business discipline; and
-- Female or male, age of 18-24 years old
-- Not on academic probation and have a 2.0 GPA or higher

Length of Participation: By agreeing to participate in this project, you will be asked to
participate in a 60-90 minute individual interview. I will record the interview on audio
tape and transcribe it later to obtain an accurate record of what you said. You may
choose, at any time, not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you
decide to leave the project.

Risks and Benefits: There is a risk that some participants may experience emotional
discomfort while discussing their experiences in the program, particularly related to being
a student of color. Students will be able to stop the interview at any time. The researcher
will direct student to the on-campus counseling center if the student appears very
distressed. The benefits of this project is to inform faculty development, as well as
programs, policies and resources made available to assist students towards academic
success and graduation.

Compensation for Participation: You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card for
participating in this interview.

Volunteer Statement: You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is
completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You

will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started.

Confidentiality Statement: The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records that identify you by name. Since the interviews will be transcribed, the transcriber will have access to the recordings. However, the researcher will have the transcriber sign a confidentiality form for added protection. Also, the transcriber will not have access to your real name. He/she will only receive your assigned pseudonym.

If there is a need to obtain clarification or additional information from you regarding your answers to the interview questions, you may be contacted, via phone, for a 15-30 minute follow up session.

Statement of Fair Treatment and Respect: [insert institution name] wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Research Compliance Office [insert phone number] if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the actual project or study, please contact Dr. Sandra Dika [email and phone number].

Approval Date: This form was approved for use on _____.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.   I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

_____   _____

Participant Name (PRINT)   DATE

_____

Participant Signature

_____   _____

Investigator Signature   DATE

APPENDIX F: LIST OF THEMES and SUB-THEMES

Sub-Themes	Major Themes

A. Business School and Major Program Culture & Climate
   a) Competitive
   b) Lack of Diversity
   c) Strongest Survives
   d) Lack of Needed Support
B. Available Resources
   a) Student Organizations
   b) Internships
   c) Job Fairs
C. Core Classes
	(1) A Racially Charged Climate

A. Attributes of Common Interactions with Business Faculty B. Relatability impacts approachability C. Faculty of Color vs. Non-Faculty of Color D. Faculty Impact on Learning	(2) Business Faculty Can Be Available, But Not Approachable
A. Pressure to Prove One's Self B. What Keeps Me Going C. Not Same Playing Field w/White Students D. Am I Good Enough? E. What I Need From Faculty?	(3) As an African American Business Student…Where Do I Belong?