A CASE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK STUDENTS AT A COUNCIL FOR

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES MEMBER INSTITUTION

by

HAROLD GOSS

CLAIRE MAJOR, COMMITTEE CHAIR
ARLEENE BREAUX
DENISE GREGORY
KARRI HOLLEY
FRANKIE LAANAN

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, & Technology Studies
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2018

ABSTRACT

Black students continue to be underrepresented at Predominantly White Institutions and persist at lower rates than their White counterparts. Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) member institutions with evangelical missions continue to struggle more than other private institutions with racial inequality as it relates to retention and graduation rates. The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Black students at a CCCU institution. Specific objectives were to better understand how Black students experience campus, academic, and religious life at a CCCU institution. Using a descriptive case-study approach, I interviewed 22 participants at Private Christian University (PCU) and analyzed the data using In Vivo Coding, constant comparison, and thematic analysis.

The findings indicate that Black students at PCU face a number of academic and social challenges. They rely on relationships with peers, faculty, and staff to help navigate those challenges and in many cases are able to look back on them in constructive and positive ways. Findings also suggest formal religious activities that are required and presumed by the institution to be nurturing are having the opposite effect for some Black students at PCU. I also found that Black students are turned off by the style of worship and in particular the type of music that is central to the religious services. Many of them cope with disliking the campus convocations by seeking other religious outlets on campus and in the local community.

Understanding the experiences of Black students at an individual CCCU institution may provide insights for improving retention and graduation rates for Black. A better understanding of how Black students experience this CCCU institution can also help practitioners create

programs and initiatives that improve their experience. Educating faculty and staff regarding the importance of relationships with Black students should be a priority.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Heather, my daughter Georgia, and my daughter Marley. I love each of you more than words can express. Thank you for being my inspiration and walking with me on this journey!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Black students continue to be underrepresented at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) and persist at lower rates than their White counterparts. PWIs can be unsupportive and unresponsive to the needs of Black students (Bimper, 2017; Fries-Britt, & Turner, 2001; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Park, 2012). While this is an issue for both public and private PWIs in general, the problem is even more pronounced at Protestant institutions with strong evangelical cultures (Smith, 2010; Young, 2013). Colleges and universities with evangelical missions promote equality and justice yet continue to struggle more than other private institutions with racial inequality as it relates to retention and graduation rates (Smith, 2010; Young, 2013).

Black student enrollment at PWIs has been steadily increasing since 1954 Brown v. Board of Education and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Bourke, 2016). By 1990, more Black students graduated from PWIs than historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Allen & Haniff, 1991). While access to higher education for Black Americans may have improved in recent decades, retention and graduation rates of Black students remain low compared to those of White students (Goings, 2017; Miller, 2016). There has been a slight improvement since the mid-1990s as the entering cohort of Black college students for 1996 reported a 38.9% graduation rate while the graduation rate for 2007 was 40.8% (Goings, 2017; Miller, 2016). Graduation rates for Black students are currently more than 20 percentage points behind White students (NCES, 2016).

1

The number of Black students being admitted to institutions of higher education is not in proportion to the number of minorities in the general population, with Black students graduating from college at lower rates than their White counterparts (Goings, 2017; Miller, 2016; New, 2017). Low rates of graduation for Black students are a phenomenon that can be found on campuses across the United States. Low graduation rates for Black students occurs at community colleges, private schools, and public institutions. The lack of Black students earning baccalaureate degrees has resulted in a high percentage of the Black community with little education, limited employment options, and continued socio-economic disparity (Greenstone, 2013; Toby, 2006).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2015a), unemployment rates for Black Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher is 5.2% as compared to 10.7% unemployment for Blacks with a high school diploma and no college. BLS numbers also indicate that Black Americans with a college degree earn 65% more than those that have not graduated from college. Access to higher education, persistence in college, and graduation can play key roles in improving these statistics for Black people (Larnell, 2016; Wilkins, 2014).

Private institutions report slightly higher graduation rates for Black students than public institutions (Oseguera, 2006; Smith, 2010; Young, 2013). The higher graduation rates may be due in part to institutional selectivity which is positively correlated with graduation rates for Black students (Small & Winship, 2006). While private colleges and universities have higher graduation rates for Black students, private institutions with a Protestant affiliation have graduation rates lower than public and other private institutions (Oseguera, 2006, Smith, 2010; Young, 2013). Lower graduation rates for Black students is particularly problematic at Council

for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) that have evangelical cultures (Smith, 2010; Young, 2013).

<div align="center">

Statement of the Problem

</div>

Introduction

    The concern with academic outcomes for Black students needs to be better understood in light of their on campus experience, issues connected to faith at CCCU institutions, and candid discussions of race and racism. I will begin with a brief discussion about the CCCU. This section will also highlight points that indicate the significance of the environment and experiences on campus to retention and graduation. I will then discuss race and racism in higher education and in the literature. Experienced racism is a normal occurrence for Black students in higher education, and there is a need for more research that addresses it openly and honestly. This section will be followed by information dealing with the importance of spirituality for Black college students and how CCCU institutions might serve in both positive and negative ways for Black students regarding spirituality.

CCCU

    The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) is a nonprofit organization of more than 180 Christian institutions around the world. CCCU institutions have missions that are rooted in historic Christian faith and most have curricula built around the arts and sciences. The CCCU has been in existence for more than 40 years. The founding purpose was to support professional development and leadership activities and to create a platform for a unified voice for Christian higher education. The CCCU accomplishes its purpose through the development of scholarly research projects, creating opportunities for collaboration on projects for faculty with peers from other campuses, and by providing campus leaders with opportunities to learn from

one another through workshops, conferences, forums, webinars, and other formal gatherings. In all, the CCCU provides more than 100 programs and services to support the Council's mission and to meet the needs of member institutions.

Graduation Rates and Black Student Experience

White students at private institutions graduate within six years at a rate of 68.3% while Black students graduate at a rate of 44.6% (NCES, 2016). This represents a graduation gap at private institutions of more than 23%. Among private schools, Protestant universities struggle with graduation rates among Black undergraduate students (Oseguera, 2006). In a study of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), Smith (2010) found that CCCU affiliation had a negative association with graduation rates among Black students. Graduation rates at Protestant institutions were 45% for Black students and 57% for White students (Oseguera, 2006). While this citation is somewhat dated, findings are consistent with graduation rates among students enrolled at the institution of interest in the present study. Within Protestant institutions, those that are CCCU-affiliated had even lower rates and a larger gap between Black and White student graduation rates (Smith, 2010; Young, 2013).

While graduation is one of the outcomes the higher education community desires for all students, a better understanding of the Black student experience is necessary to create environments that will more likely lead to persistence and degree completion. Understanding the experience of Black students is critical as lower Black student graduation rates can be attributed at least in part to the environment and support services that do not adequately meet their needs (Carey, 2008; Ensign & Woods, 2014). To succeed academically, Black students need to be supported holistically in environments that promote positive experiences (Luedke, 2017). When students are comfortable with the university environment and nurtured emotionally they are more

likely to remain at the institution and graduate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Upright et al, 2014).

It is possible to create environments at PWIs that promote academic success for Black students as there are PWIs in which there is no difference between the graduation rates of Black and White students (Lynch & Engle, 2010). There are also PWIs where Black students not only keep pace with but outperform White students in terms of graduation rates (Lynch & Engle, 2010). The difference at institutions that report positive academic outcomes for Black students is not the students but what institutions do with and for Black students to support them holistically. The priorities, structure, resources, and programs an institution focuses toward this issue are the key factors that shape the campus environment and lead to positive experiences and academic outcomes for Black students (Lynch & Engle, 2010; Soria & Taylor, 2016).

There are specific examples of initiatives that shape the experience of Black students and promote retention and graduation. Faculty mentoring has been shown to be critical for student success for Black undergraduates (McClain & Cokley, 2017; McCoy et al., 2015). Positive relationships with instructors can lead to better academic performance and higher likelihood of persistence (Hubbard, 2006; Phelps-Ward & DeAngelo, 2016). Leadership programs focused on providing opportunities for Black students helps them build positive relationships and can increase their level of engagement with the institution academically and socially. Initiatives such as peer mentoring or summer bridge programs that create a family-like environment can also contribute to Black students achieving academic success and persisting until graduation (Carter-Francique et al., 2015).

Campus environments that are more positive toward diversity can shape the experience of Black students in constructive ways that promote positive academic outcomes (Lee & Barnes,

2015; Maestas et al., 2007). To create better environments for Black students at PWIs it is paramount to first understand what is happening from the student's perspective. We cannot fully address the challenges and obstacles Black students face if we do not allow them to describe the experience from their point of view (Allen & Nichols, 2017). Culturally sensitive programming and innovative approaches to improving the experience for Black students needs to include their input.

Experienced Racism on Campus

Black students confront mistreatment and discrimination as part of their everyday college experiences at PWIs (Smith et al., 2007). The reality of racism and discrimination can be damaging to Black students in several ways. First, this type of environment can contribute to Black students experiencing feelings of loss, emotional strain, frustration with their circumstances, and a sense of injustice (Smith et al., 2007). Second, interracial tensions experienced by Black students on campus can contribute to shaping academic performance, social experience, retention, and graduation (Gregory, 2000; Suarez-Balcazar, 2003). Finally, Black students can sometimes become preoccupied with proving racial stereotypes wrong and seeking the acceptance of groups or individuals who express these stereotypes (Ebony & Danny, 2013). The mental and emotional energy exerted to disprove racial stereotypes is energy that ought to be expended in positive ways that contribute to social and academic success.

The reality of racism on campuses is a nationwide challenge and a clear indicator that the higher education community has not moved beyond race (Troutman, 2017). Blatant acts of racism are less common than covert racial incidents such as microaggressions but can be just as hurtful to the student on the receiving end (Smith et al., 2007). Minority students experience behavior such as microaggressions on college campuses that are insensitive and even

6

discriminatory (Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010). Microaggressions are subtle racialized insults that are experienced by Black students at PWIs on a regular basis (Barker & Avery, 2012; Domingue, 2015; Lee & Barnes, 2015; Morales, 2014; Park, 2012; Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions can lead to Black students feeling that their environment is both exhausting and stressful (Smith et al., 2007). These challenges around race need to be acknowledged and addressed in honest ways (Park, 2009). The challenges have to be heard in order to be acknowledged. In order to hear the challenges Black students face, we have to ask Black students what they are experiencing from their perspective and report on it in ways that reflect their authentic voice.

The Need to Discuss Race and Racism

A discussion of racism that is substantive and meaningful is lacking in the discussion around race in higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The title of the Bonilla article "Anything but Racism" highlights the approach that many researchers in the field use to explain various racial issues in higher education environments (Harper, 2012). Instead of calling campus climates "racist," researchers commonly use substitutes such as alienating, hostile, marginalizing, isolating, unfriendly, negative, unwelcoming, exclusionary, and unsupportive (Harper, 2012). Similarly, instead of calling experiences "racism," researchers use terms like minority stressor and racial tension (Harper, 2012). Due to vague and indirect language regarding race, university administrators have been unable to recognize and effectively address racial tension on campuses (Simmons et al., 2013).

The first step toward addressing inequality in educational attainment is to deal with race and racism in an open and honest way (Harper, 2012). Even in studies on race, researchers avoided the terms "race" and "racism" (Harper, 2012; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015). Students,

faculty, and administrators avoid terms like "race" and "racism" often to avoid making others feel uncomfortable (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015). Campuses with positive racial environments address racial issues honestly and also have a clear commitment to providing a number of focused support programs that can reach large numbers Black students (Museus, 2012). One of the reasons this study is needed is to allow for Black students to discuss issues dealing with race and racism if that happens to be a part of their experience.

All of us in higher education want students to enjoy learning environments that are safe and nurturing, and create positive experiences. We see it in mission statements, strategic plans, and diversity related initiatives at our respective campuses. To truly create healthier learning environments for Black students, the first thing we have to do is understand how Black students are experiencing our institutions and report the findings candidly. Research on Black students in higher education clearly indicates a need for educators do more for Black students to reduce negative experiences associated with race. In order for us to not just do more but to do the right things we need to better understand what is happening on campus from the perspective of Black students. In my own experience, when administrators and faculty are discussing issues around race and diversity the voice that is missing is the student voice. As such, bringing their perspectives to the table is critical to identifying solutions and ways to improve campus climates relative to race and diversity.

CCCU Campuses, Religion, and Black Students

One space in particular where there is a dearth of research is the Black student experience at CCCU affiliated institutions. There may be things CCCU institutions do well to create positive environments for Black students. CCCU institutions also might have characteristics that are uniquely challenging for Black students. For example, religion can serve Black students in ways

that are both positive and negative at CCCU institutions. The role of religion is frequently reported as important for many college students (Astin, 2011, Bryant & Astin, 2008). Religious life can be meaningful for all students but is especially significant for Black students (Astin, 2011). Religion is a central component of Black culture, and Black Americans report higher levels of religious participation in religious activities than White Americans (Walker & Dixon, 2002). Religion often matters a great deal in the lives of Black undergraduate students (Constantine et al., 2006, Mattis, 2000). Religious life can affect a wide range of student outcomes including academic performance, satisfaction, and cross-racial relationship building (Astin, 2016). Religion also can inform coping strategies and enhance an individual's capacity to resist racial stress (Constantine et al., 2006).

Religious involvement may contribute to enhanced student satisfaction with the college campus experience (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). Students who participate in activities such as attending religious services, reflecting on their faith, and practicing regular prayer can be more satisfied with their college experience and inclined to view the campus environment more positively than their peers (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). Religion can be used by students to help them understand and interpret their personal identity, and help them make sense of and find meaning in their experiences (Stewart, 2009). Black students can also find it helpful to have someone to discuss religious concerns with as a way to positively manage life on a college campus at a PWI (Longman & Schreiner, 2010).

On the other hand, Black and White Christians generally worship in separate congregations despite sharing a common religious beliefs (Emerson & Chai Kim, 2003; Mayrl, & Oeur 2009). College campuses can be a reflection of the larger culture. As such, segregated worship also occurs in college as campus fellowships tend to be racially and/or ethnically

9

homogenous at PWIs (Park, 2012). Students who are more religious and participate in campus religious organizations are somewhat less likely to have close friends from different races during college (Park, 2012). As worship experiences are central activities at CCCU institutions, there might be a high number of opportunities for religious events to unintentionally reinforce student segregation along racial lines.

Inequality with regard to educational outcomes for Black students at CCCU institutions begs the question of whether the practice of religion at CCCU institutions shape the experience of Black undergraduates in ways that might help explain the gap in educational outcomes. There is almost no research that explores the experience of Black students at CCCU schools. As such, research that explores issues dealing with race on these types of campuses could add valuable insight to help educators better understand Black student experience in a setting that has not been previously examined.

Purpose

Black Student Experience at a CCCU Institution

At the conclusion of a study on race, rates, and religion, Smith (2010) recommended further study of individual CCCU institutions. Specifically, the author called for investigation of campus climate and how it is related to Black graduation rates. Smith's second recommendation was to examine the experiences of Black students at individual CCCA institutions. Smith (2010) asserted that such information would add valuable knowledge to understanding why Black students at Protestant institutions have lower graduations rates than their White peers.

The purpose of this study will be to address Smith's second recommendation. Specifically, this study explored the experiences of Black students at a CCCU-affiliated institution. The objective was to better understand how Black students experience campus,

academic, and religious life at a CCCU institution. Understanding the experiences of Black students at an individual CCCU institution may provide insights for reducing the achievement gap between Black and White students.

The institution of interest is a CCCU institution that is the top ranked private institution in its state and affiliated with the Baptist denomination. The demographic profile of the selected institution is ideal for this inquiry as it is predominantly White and has a strong evangelical culture. The racial and ethnic composition of this institution is as follows: White (81%), Black (8%), and Hispanic (4%). The graduation rate for White students is 67% as compared to 53% for Black students. The challenges that persist nationally with regard to the achievement gap between White and minority students are evident at the study institution. I sought to discover how Black students experienced academic, social, religious, and campus life by answering the following questions:

Research Question

1. What is the experience of Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution?

Research Sub-questions

1. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience academics?

2. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support services?

3. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social life?

4. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities?

Significance

Empirical research on issues related to diversity in Evangelical Christian higher education is limited (Kratt, 2004; Smith, 2010). There is a need for more research that addresses diversity and inclusion at CCCU institutions. This study will contribute to the body of literature from the perspective of Black students and their individual experiences at a CCCU school. Specifically, it will give voice to current Black students at an Evangelical Christian institution. There is currently nothing available in the literature that reports on the personal experiences of Black students at this type of institution.

Furthermore, this research will serve as a platform for participants to express how they experience academic, social, religious, and campus life at their institution. The findings of this study will provide Evangelical Christian institutions of higher education data directly from the perspectives of Black students regarding how they experience academic, social, religious, and campus life at a CCCU member institution.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on Black students and how they experience college at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) is extensive. My literature search centered primarily on studies focused on Black students on college campuses and their experiences. I utilized several databases to search for and gather literature. Specifically, I used OneSearch, Scout, and Education Resource Information Center. I located nearly 200 scholarly sources from publications such as College Student Journal, Equity & Excellence in Education, Journal of College Student Development, Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, Journal of Negro Education, and Research in Higher Education.

My review of the literature on Black student experiences at PWIs reveals three main themes: (1) The achievement and representation gaps between Black and White students, (2) on campus experiences of Black students, and (3) campus response to the needs of Black students. With regard to Protestant institutions in particular, this literature review incorporates relevant information about CCCU institutions and highlights characteristics and factors of CCCUs that may contribute to lower persistence and graduation rates for Black students. This literature review concludes with a summary of how researchers have used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to frame qualitative research on Black student experiences at PWIs and related diversity issues. I will provide a synthesis of CRT research in order to set the context for my own research topic and design.

Representation and Academic Achievement Gaps between Black and White Students

There are five distinct concerns in the research literature regarding the representation of Black students at higher education institutions. Those concerns are low representation among Black undergraduates, recruitment of Black students, low representation of Black males, a lack of diversity in graduate and professional programs, and a lack of Black professors and administrators. Recent research also highlights three areas of concern related to academic achievement: lower retention rates for Black students relative to White students, graduation rates for Black students that lag behind other students, and very low college completion rates for Black male students.

Representation on Campus

The low representation among Black undergraduate students in higher education tells a story that is concerning. It is true that Black Americans have greater access to higher education today than in previous decades (Harper, 2013). For example, the percentage of Black college students between the ages of 18-21 has steadily increased since 1970. In 1970, only 15% of Black 18-21 year olds were enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions (NCES 2015). By 2015, the number of Black 18-21 year olds enrolled at higher education institutions stands at 35% (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). However, Blacks still only comprise 14% of total undergraduate students enrolled in college while the number for White students is 57% and 18% for Hispanics (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

One problem that is particularly related to low representation of Black students in higher education concerns recruitment. Many institutions find that a lack of diversity is a particular stumbling block to the recruitment of Black students (Bimper, 2017; Larnell, 2016; Womack, 2016). Two other challenges include the K-12 pipeline needs to produce more college ready

Black students and colleges need to identify more active approaches to recruiting students of color (Ferrell et al., 2016; Henfield & Byrd, 2014). PWIs in general and CCCU institutions in particular continue to struggle to recruit and retain students of color (Simmons et al., 2013). In a study on the experience of Black students at CCCU institutions, Young (2013) noted that a lack of diversity is a central reason that Black students frequently choose not to enroll at CCCU institutions.

While the literature indicates low representation for Black students enrolled at higher education institutions, the problem of representation is particularly acute among Black males. Nationally, only six of 10 Black males graduate from high school, which severely limits the pool of Black males that might attend college (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Black males comprise only 4.3% of all students enrolled at higher education institutions, and their completion rates are the lowest among all gender and racial/ethnic groups (Strayhorn, 2010). In a survey that included four undergraduate cohorts, the six-year graduation rate for Black male students attending public institutions was 33.3%, compared to more than 48% for students overall (Harper, 2012). In 2014, Black males earned 68,259 bachelor's degrees compared to more than the half of a million degrees earned by White males (NCES, 2016).

While the literature I reviewed focused on undergraduate students, there was also discussion of Black student representation in graduate and professional programs. The representation gap at the undergraduate level contributes to a lack of diversity in graduate and professional programs (Hinton et al., 2010). In 2016, Black students comprised just over 9% of all first time graduate students enrolled at U.S. higher education institutions (Okahana & Zhou, 2017). There is also a particular concern in the health-related professions and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields regarding representation of Black graduate

15

students (Fletcher et al., 2003; Okahana & Zhou, 2017). For example, minority populations are overrepresented in health problem areas and are a rarity in nursing (Fletcher et al., 2003; Hinton et al., 2010). Additionally, Blacks were less than 6% of all entering graduate students in engineering and under 4% in the physical sciences (Okahana & Zhou, 2017).

The lack of diversity in the student body at PWIs in general and CCCU institutions specifically is not the only challenge regarding student representation. The lack of Black professors is a negative factor regarding the academic and campus experience for Black undergraduates (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2013). The lack of Black faculty and administrators is a particular concern on CCCU campuses. In a CCCU report on diversity, Reyes and Case (2011) found that CCCU institutions averaged less than 2% Black tenured faculty. The exceptions were CCCU schools in the Northeast which averaged slightly less than 4% Black tenured faculty. The percentages were virtually identical for administrators at CCCU institutions. The Northeast region was represented by nearly 4% Black administrators while all others hovered around 2% (Reyes & Case, 2011).

Academic Success and Graduation

Academic outcomes for Black students continue to not keep pace with White students. The graduation rate for Black students continues to lag behind White students (Eberle-Sudre, 2015; Lee & Barnes, 2015). Black students represent the lowest percentage of students who graduate from four-year postsecondary institutions within six years (Henfield & Bird, 2014; Muses, 2012). In a nationwide study that reported data for students that entered a higher education institution in the fall of 2010, Shapiro et al. (2017) found that within six years 44% of Black students had not graduated and were no longer enrolled at any institution while only 38%

had graduated. On the other hand, White students graduated within six years at a rate of 62% with 27% not finished or enrolled (Shapiro et al., 2017).

The college completion rate for Black undergraduate men is particularly alarming (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper, 2016; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Toby, 2006). Only 32% of Black males that entered college in 2010 graduated within six years (Shapiro et al., 2017). In the fall 2013, 955,400 Black men enrolled in college in the United States. Current trends predict that 636,000 of these individuals will depart without earning a degree within six years (Harper, 2016). Some researchers argue that Black male students are uninterested in education while others assert that educator apathy and traditional methods of instruction are the primary reason for the problem (Ebony & Danny, 2011; Harper 2013; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015).

Representation of Black students enrolled at PWIs and the academic performance of those students once they arrive on campus is troubling. There is a problem in the K-12 pipeline as there are too many Black students not completing high school. This in turn leads to a relatively small pool of potential Black students to enroll in colleges universities. When Black students do make it to college, they are more likely to not finish than to graduate. This raises several questions. What happens to Black students on campus? Why are they not as successful as other racial/ethnic groups? How are they experiencing college life?

On Campus Experience for Black Students

Previous research pertaining to the on campus experiences of Black students at PWIs can be categorized along six broad themes. The initial theme pertains to academic experiences which includes dealing with academic stereotypes, experiences in the classroom, the role of faculty, and remedial education. The second broad theme related to the on campus experience for Black students involves social experiences. Social experiences include areas such as campus

involvement and residence hall life. The third theme deals with racial microaggressions and experienced racism for Black students. The section on this theme includes background and cultural context, specific concerns related to faculty and administrators, and the effects of racial microaggressions on Black students.

Since the university of interest in this study is a CCCU institution, it is also necessary to include a summary of literature related to the significance of faith and religion for college students as the fourth theme. The review of faith and religion on campus includes background, how it is experienced on campus, and how it is related to the well-being of students. Experiences that are not necessarily social or academic which are relevant are considered under a fifth broad theme entitled "Other Challenges for Black Students at PWIs". Those other challenges include structural diversity concerns, stereotype threat, battle fatigue, and financial issues. The final theme found in the literature on the campus experience of Black students at PWIs deals with the coping strategies Black students use to manage their experience while in college. Black student turn to coping strategies that are individual, involve the community, and may include mentoring relationships.

Academic Experiences

Academic stereotypes. The notion that Black students routinely encounter negative academic stereotypes such as not being academically prepared, academically deficient, or had low aspirations was present in the literature (Lee & Barnes, 2015; Harper & Newman, 2016). Assumptions faculty make about a person or a group can shape perceptions and actions toward those individuals. A common stereotype is that Black students are not academically as strong as other students which leads to assumptions that their academic work will not be at a high level (Morales, 2014). The behavior of faculty members at PWIs toward Black students can be

influenced by negative academic assumptions about Black students (Domingue, 2015; McCoy et al., 2015). In a study of a program that included White faculty serving as mentors for students of color, faculty did not want to be perceived as biased or racist toward Black students but they regularly highlighted the lack of preparation, lack of commitment toward research, and low aspirations of students of color (McCoy et al., 2015). In a study focused on social support for black student athletes at a PWI, Carter et al. (2015) found that faculty assumptions about Black students included low aspirations and a lack of academic preparation, which were seen as normal characteristics. As such, some faculty members unintentionally approached relationships with Black students in ways that were insensitive or racially uninformed (McCoy et al., 2015).

As is the case for representation and academic success, the problem related to academic stereotypes is particularly troubling as it pertains to Black males. In a qualitative case study on Black males at a PWI in the South, Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) found that college personnel frequently presumed Black males were unprepared regardless of their actual academic readiness or their circumstances before coming to college. That notion was affirmed in a study by Iverson and Jaggers (2015) on racial profiling and the experience of Black males at a large, public PWI in the Midwest. Iverson and Jaggers found that Black males were sometimes stereotyped as academically deficient and encountered educators that presumed they were disinterested and lacked focus on academic work. Additionally, Iverson and Jaggers noted that Black males were also subjected to "comparative racialization" (p. 39) which occurs when racial minorities are measured against a normative standard.

Classroom experiences. The classroom experience of Black students was a common point of emphasis in the literature on Black student experience at PWIs (Ackerman-Barger & Hummel, 2015; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Morales, 2014). Classroom experience is related to

19

overall student satisfaction and includes how students are treated, how connected or isolated students feel, and how they participate or engage in the classroom environment (Marne & Michael, 2005). Ancis et al. (2000) studied student perceptions of campus climate and found that Black students perceived more negative classroom experiences than other students, inequitable treatment by faculty, and more racism than other students from both peers in the classroom and faculty. It is also not uncommon for Black students to feel a sense of alienation in the classroom because of their race (Gregory, 2000). In a study on the educational experiences of students of color, Ackerman-Barger and Hummel (2015) found that participants experienced exclusion in the classroom and lab space by both instructors and fellow classmates. Black students at PWIs can sometimes feel like an outsider in the classroom, are sometimes the only Black student in a class, and sometimes have difficulty sharing experiences with other learners (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Luedke, 2017; McClain, 2014).

Regardless of how a student feels about a course, their level of engagement and participation is central to their experience in the classroom. In a study on the experiences of students of color in relation to classroom participation, Seward and Guiffrida (2012) found that the decision making process for Black students to participate in class is complex and can be a barrier to a positive classroom experience. Some of the issues that can be barriers for Black students to participate in class discussions include the concern about being viewed as an authoritative voice to represent their race, the fear of reinforcing negative stereotypes with a poor comment or answer, or coming across as angry or uninformed (Larnell, 2016; Seward & Guiffrida, 2012; Smith et al. 2007). Understanding this aspect of the Black student experience is critical as Black students who succeed academically are able to manage the stress perceived challenges that are present in the classroom at PWIs (Brooks, 2012; McClain, 2014).

Faculty role. Faculty members also play a key role in the way Black students experience academics at PWIs (Domingue, 2015; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Pelzer, 2016; Troutman, 2017). White, male, heterosexual perspectives are more prevalent than other perspectives in American higher education (Simmons et al., 2013). As such, approaches to teaching can be non-inclusive which may contribute to continued negative academic experiences of Black students (Simmons et al., 2013). In addition to inclusive approaches to teaching, faculty expectations are important to the academic experience of Black students as well. Low academic expectations from faculty can be particularly harmful to Black students that might already be struggling with low self-expectations (Pelzer, 2016).

Central to the Black student experience with faculty members at PWIs are personal relationships. In their 2015 study on Black student athlete success, Carter-Francique, Hart, and Cheeks found that Black students' positive and negative academic experiences were in large part dependent upon their interactions and relationships with faculty. However, Black students at PWIs oftentimes have difficulty developing those relationships (Domingue, 2015; Pelzer, 2016). For example, in a 2013 study on the ways Black students navigate PWI environments, Harper found that Black students were among the least likely to be invited by professors to collaborate on research projects.

Remedial education. Another noteworthy issue for the academic experience for Black students at PWIs is non-credit-bearing remedial (NCBR) education. Black student are much less likely to take advanced placement exams than White students in high school. Only 7.4% of Black graduating high school seniors took advanced placements exams as compared to more than 60% of White students (Henfield & Byrd, 2014). Consequently, Black students often enter college needing additional preparation for academic success (Williams, 2013). Black students are

disproportionately placed in remedial courses, these courses are not degree applicable, and can result in financial debt with no academic progress (Barh, 2010; Larnell, 2016). In a 2016 study on the learning experiences of Black students enrolled in remedial college courses, Larnell found that participating in a NCBR course was negatively related to Black students maintaining high-achieving academic identities. On the other hand, if the learning environment is positive and inclusive, remedial academic programs can contribute positively to academic performance for Black students at PWIs (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Williams, 2013).

If not successfully navigated, NCBR courses can serve as a barrier for Black students across disciplines. Remedial math courses frequently serve as gatekeepers toward majors and careers that involve math, such as business and engineering (Larnell, 2016). Students that get bogged down in remedial courses are never able to access those majors. In a study detailing factors related to the relatively low numbers of Black students majoring in STEM disciplines, Henfield and Bird (2014) indicated that Black students are more likely than Whites to be placed in developmental reading coursework (Williams, 2013). Reading ability strongly corresponded to performance in other academic tasks and subjects (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Williams, 2013). As such, NCBR reading courses can equip Black students for success across majors and disciplines.

Social Experience

Involvement. The way Black students experience college is also shaped by non-academic factors such as involvement on campus. For Black students, the literature highlighted few specific concerns regarding their experience at PWI campuses. The primary issues are that Black students can isolate themselves and become too involved (especially with Black student organizations), as well as the value of campus leadership opportunities. While involvement on campus is important for all students, Black students can separate themselves from other students

if the involvement is not broad-based. The minority status of Black students at PWIs can foster a campus culture in which Black students are more likely to spend their free time with same-race peers (Park, 2012). The lack of integration into the larger campus environment can increase the likelihood of personal withdrawal (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). Guiffrida (2004) conducted a study to qualitatively analyze the conditions under which Black student organizations promoted or hindered positive academic outcomes for Black students at a PWI in the northeastern United States. The author noted that Black student involvement with Black student organizations at PWIs was not necessarily related to student retention and might be negatively related to academic achievement. Black students can potentially isolate themselves from the larger student population by participating in Black student organizations (Bowman & Park, 2014; Hotchkins, 2014).

While socializing exclusively with same-race peers and over involvement in Black student organizations may be a concern for Black students, involvement with peers across racial lines in student organizations may be positively related to student academic achievement (Lundberg, 2010). In a 2010 study on how Black social capital influences academic achievement, Strayhorn found that Black students seemed to benefit significantly from participation in campus activities such as student government and community service (Strayhorn, 2010). While being a part of campus organizations is important for Black students, leadership opportunities for Black students come with their own set of benefits and challenges. Hotchkins (2014) explored Black students' leadership experiences at a PWI when leading organizations that were comprised of mostly White students. Participating in these organizations was generally beneficial for Black students, and successful Black student leaders were able to find small communities within their institutions that supported and nurtured their engagement in ways Black students might

traditionally find at HBCUs (Hotchkins, 2014; Strayhorn, 2011). A positive experience for

Black students at PWIs require academic success as well as finding ways to fit in by building

relationships through involvement and gaining the social experiences such as leadership needed

for life after college (Wilkins, 2014).

        Residence halls. For many college students the residence halls are a place for them to

retreat, relax, and build lifelong relationships. However, in some cases, Black students encounter

some of the same difficulties around race they experience elsewhere on campus. While there

were very few articles that dealt with this aspect of Black students and their experience, I

nonetheless thought it would be helpful to include findings from research that addressed this

issue. This section will begin with a focus on two studies by Iverson and Jaggers (2012) with an

emphasis on the experience Black students as residents. I will follow that with a study by Harper

et al. (2011) and the experience of Black students that served as resident assistants (RA) at PWIs.

        Jaggers and Iverson (2012) conducted a qualitative study to better understand the

experience of Black students at a PWI in the Midwest. Respondents reported feelings of

persistent isolation and racial tensions with other residents. Participants also expressed interracial

challenges with roommates and sometimes feeling the need to prove themselves as worthy to be

at the institution. Another challenge in residence halls can be frustrations for Black students

associated with living in the residence halls with White residents who had never interacted with a

Black person. This is compounded by the fact that in many cases the Black student has had

limited interaction with students that are White. Students in the Jaggers and Iverson study also

acknowledged that negotiating these relationships and interactions and that trying to do so in a

positive way can be emotionally taxing.

In 2011, Haper et al. conducted a study of the experience of Black RAs at six large PWIs from different regions of the United States. Participants shared concerns related to dealing with stereotypes, interacting with supervisors, and the desire for more role-models. Black RAs in the study revealed having to resist and respond to the same racist stereotypes other Black students dealt with. They also indicated a desire to respond in ways that were positive and constructive as they felt the desire to serve as positive representatives of their racial group. In some cases Black RAs indicated they carefully thought about how they talked and dressed, out of concern for confirming stereotypes such as being perceived as "angry Black men" (Harper et al., 2011, p. 193).

Another concern expressed by Black RAs in the Harper study related to supervisors and the need for more role-models. Participants reported that supervisors sometimes expected Black RAs to be spokespersons for other Black students which some of them had no desire to be. Black RAs expressed feelings that they were subjected to harsher standards than White counterparts and offered examples of having to work harder. Individuals in the study also experienced difficulty identifying same-race role models and professionals in the residence life field that could guide and help them. In light of the challenges with residents, supervisors, and lack of role-models, some participants in the study considered not continuing in their positions the following semester because of negative encounters around race.

Faith and Religion

Religion and well-being. Research pertaining to the role of faith and religion in the lives of Black college students revealed several important themes. The first theme is that religion is important to many Black students. Second, it can play a significant role in shaping their experience. In regards to the importance of religion for Black students, the Higher Education

Research Institute (HERI) conducted a seven-year-long (2003-2010) national study led by Astin on religion and how college students search for meaning and find purpose (Astin et al., 2011). The researchers found that religious beliefs varied by race with 95% of Black students reporting belief in God. By comparison, 78% of White students reported belief in God. The study also reported that Black students were more likely to frequently attend religious services than White students.

Religion can represent an essential component of identity development for Black college students and can help them cope and adjust to negative experiences they might have on campus (Mincey et al., 2015; Stewart, 2002, 2009; Walker & Dixon, 2002; Weddle-West, 2013). Religious activities such as reading scriptures, praying, and meditating can help equip Black students to respond positively to environmental and academic stressors (Davis & McClure, 2009). In a study of undergraduate Black males and the influence of masculinity on coping, Mincey et al. (2015) found that religion was one of the top coping mechanisms for participants. Additionally, in a quantitative study that looked at the relationship between religion and academic performance, Walker and Dixon (2002) found that Black students who reported higher levels of religious behaviors performed better academically and had higher GPAs than Black students who reported lower levels of religious behaviors.

Religion on campus. The literature shows how important religion is for many Black students and the profound influence it can have on their well-being and personal experience. The literature also reveals characteristics on some CCCU campuses that can either serve as negative or positive influencers regarding the religious experience of Black students at PWIs. Religion can serve to create and strengthen positive relationships as it directly addresses the sense of community for individuals on a college campus (Astin, 2004). Nevertheless, students who attend

Christian-affiliated institutions are more likely to struggle with religion than students who attend private non-religious institutions (Bryant & Astin, 2008). This is likely due to the fact that religious organizations are a prominent part of campus life at CCCU institutions, and if the faith values at CCCU institutions do not align with religious beliefs and values of Black students, conflict can occur (Longman & Schreiner, 2010).

In a 2010 study on the relationship between Black graduation rates and evangelical religious affiliation, Smith conducted a quantitative analysis of 917 private institutions. The institutions were classified as either CCCU members, other Protestant institutions, or other private non-Protestant institutions. The author found that CCCU and Protestant affiliation were significantly negatively related to Black graduation rates. Additionally, Smith noted that the negative relationship was stronger for CCCU schools and suggested there may be something about the evangelical culture of CCCU campuses that is a barrier for Black students.

In another study on CCCU institutions, Young (2013) conducted focus groups using a qualitative case study methodology at three CCCU institutions situated in the western part of the United States. The author explored the experience of Black students with a focus on the unique religious context present at CCCU institutions. Young found that experiences for Black students at CCCU institutions were similar to other predominantly White contexts. The religious environment did nothing to promote Black student success and did not align with their expectations. Religious fit is a strong retention predictor at CCCU colleges and universities which may play into the recruitment, retention, and graduation challenges CCCU institutions are faced with concerning Black students (Longman & Schreiner, 2010; Young, 2013).

Racial Microaggressions and Stereotype Threat

Background. Studies on Black college student experiences frequently highlighted the issue of racial microaggression and racism. Racial microaggressions can range from racial slights, unfair treatment because of race, surveillance based on race, and hurtful classroom interaction (Smith et al., 2007). While microaggressive behavior directed at Black students is often subtle and unintentional, Black students report experiencing racism as a regular occurrence at PWIs (Bimper, 2017; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Lee & Barnes, 2015; Swim et al., 2003). In spite of the fact that Black students come from a variety of backgrounds, they are often viewed in ways that are narrow regarding race and class (Domingue, 2015; Larnell, 2016 Morales, 2014). For example, in a qualitative study using in-depth interviews to analyze racial microaggressions and the experience of 62 Black students at a PWI in a western region of the United States, Morales (2014) was able to identify specific stereotypes that were encountered. Those stereotypes included that Black students can be perceived by non-Black students they encounter as low-income regardless of their actual socio-economic status, hypersexual, and aggressive.

In that same study, Morales cited the "Compton Cookout" as an example of a campus event that demonstrates what microaggression and stereotyping looks like when it occurs at the institutional level. The "Compton Cookout" was an event hosted by a White fraternity during Black History Month in 2010 at a PWI in California. Fraternity members were instructed to wear sports jerseys, chains, and tattoos. Females invited to the event dressed as "ghetto chicks" (p. 49). While perhaps unintended, the messages conveyed out of the "Compton Cookout" were racially insensitive, disrespectful, and epitomized the idea of racial microaggression. Racial incidents and microaggressions such as the "Compton Cookout" can take an emotional toll on

Black students, with anger, discomfort, and feeling threatened being common emotional responses (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Swim et al., 2003; Troutman, 2017).

From faculty and administration. As reported in the literature, Black students at PWIs can also encounter racism from faculty and administrators. On the faculty side, Black students report facing stereotypes and questions which challenge their academic abilities, framing them as less likely to be scholars than other students (Griffin et al., 2016). According to results of the National Black Male College Achievement Study conducted by Harper (2012c), some faculty members are surprised when Black students communicate well in class and can be suspicious when they demonstrate strong performance on papers. When Black students perceive expectations of low academic readiness from faculty members it can lead to anxiety about performing poorly, harm their learning process, and damage trust between Black students and faculty members (Fitzgibbon, 2007; Massey & Owens, 2014).

There is a very specific racial microaggression more related to the administration than faculty that surfaced in the literature. The microaggression Black students experience regularly at PWIs is racial profiling that comes from stereotyping. The profiling leads to surveillance, which is a common experience for Black students (Engle et al., 2002; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Solórzano et al., 2002). Surveillance is an especially frequent occurrence for Black males who are sometimes stereotyped as aggressive and brutish (Wingfield, 2007). Iverson and Jaggers shed light on this issue in their 2015 qualitative focus group study on racial profiling at a PWI in the Midwest. They found that Black males were subject to surveillance, primarily by campus safety and residence life employees. The surveillance was present through interactions with residence life staff and through increased presence of campus safety at university sponsored social events.

Effects of microaggression and stereotype threat. Racial microaggressions experienced by Black students at PWIs can be harmful to the minorities they target in several ways including emotionally, physically, and academically, and they and can be exhausting. For example, Black students are more likely than Whites students to experience racism that is direct, personal, and persistent which can be mentally and emotionally draining (Lee & Barnes, 2015; Pelzer, 2016; Troutman, 2017; Williams, 2013). Black students regularly expend mental and emotional energy toward confronting microaggressions and in some cases dealing with the "prove-them-wrong syndrome" which is the need to disprove negative stereotypes (Harper, 2013, p. 195; Smith et al., 2007). Having to constantly prove themselves and respond to racial stereotypes can lead to psychological stress and "racial battle fatigue" (Harper, 2013, p. 195).

In addition to causing fatigue, dealing with stereotypes and racial microaggressions can influence Black students emotionally and academically. Internalizing these stereotypes and microaggressions can result in low self-concept, which can negatively shape how Black students interact with the larger campus environment (Barker & Avery, 2012; Toby, 2006). Encounters that are perceived as racist can produce painful psychological stress for Black students and harm academic performance (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Steele, 1999). Using data from the multi-year National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, Massey and Owens (2014) found that negative stereotypes can lead to Black students not valuing grade achievement as personally important. Furthermore, the internalization of those negative stereotypes can lead to a reduction in academic effort and lower grades (Massey & Owens, 2014).

Microaggressions, stereotypes, and gender. The literature also revealed aspects of dealing with microaggressions and stereotypes that were gender specific. According to a 2007 study on racial microaggressions towards Black males at elite PWIs, Smith et al. found that the

problem can be more pronounced for Black males considering they are less likely than Black females to respond to or report incidents perceived as racist. As such, Black male college students expressed higher levels of repressed emotions than Black females, higher dropout rates, and poor academic performance related to the racial stressors they were confronted with on their respective campus.

While experiencing microaggressions can impact Black men in unique ways, the literature also revealed particular components of this topic relative to Black women. Some of the aspects that are unique to Black women include hurtful language, stereotypes connected to both race and gender, and the way Black women respond to microaggressive behavior. Some of the language in the literature specific to Black women included "Angry Black Woman", "Black Mama", and the "Jezebel" (Domingue, 2015; Morales, 2014; Swim et al., 2003). Those three stereotypes in particular are targeted at presumed anger or frustration, presumed maternal instincts, and presumed sexual promiscuity. Black women undergraduates at PWIs have also reported being stereotyped as loud, angry, intimidating, and not taken as seriously by peers when they find themselves in campus leadership roles (Collings, 2005; Domingue, 2015; Ispa-Landa, 2012; Wilkins, 2012). While there is little difference in the number of racial experiences by Black women and men, Black women do report more incidents than men, are more likely to discuss them with trusted friends, and more likely to respond directly to offenders (Swim et al., 2003).

Coping Strategies

Individual coping strategies. The literature points to at least three ways Black students at PWIs cope with their experiences on campus. Coping strategies can play an important role in how Black students respond to perceived discrimination and in many instances a lack of

structural diversity (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Yeager et al., 2014). Those ways include strategies that are individual, involve the campus and larger community, and through mentor relationships. The individual strategies include developing planning strategies, learning to manage time, and reframing perceived negative encounters in positive ways. (Hotchkins, 2015; Mincey et al., 2015). Participating in religious activities and prayer can also help Black students deal with personal stress they are experiencing (Weddle et al., 2013). As Black students develop these individual strategies, they can be a positive contributor to overall personal success which is also connected to health and well-being (Brooks, 2012; Ebony & Danny, 2011).

Community coping strategies. A connection to community is another way for Black students help manage their experiences in positive ways at PWIs. A sense of community can positively contribute to persistence and academic performance (Lee & Barnes, 2015; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). Community support for Black students can include fellow students, faculty and staff, the local off-campus community, and family. Peer relationships on campus can contribute to building social networks, provide informal mentoring, and serve as outlets to safely share feelings (Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Quaye & Harper, 2007). Another way Black students can use community to enhance their experience is through service and outreach to the larger local community (Ebony & Danny, 2011). Some Black students feel a sense of responsibility to give back to their cultural community and doing so through service can be mutually beneficial (Quaye & Harper, 2007). It can also be helpful for Black students maintain ties with their home communities as parents and family members serve as important sources of social and emotional support (Barker & Avery, 2012; Carter-Francique et al., 2015). In some cases, encouragement from family members can even outweigh the effect of college academic performance in the persistence behavior of Black students (Cabrera et al., 1999).

Mentoring. A third way Black students at PWIs positively cope with their experiences is through the guidance of formal mentors and role models. The obvious challenge in this area is simply the lack of Black faculty and administrators to serve in those roles. (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper et al., 2011; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). When there are opportunities, mentoring can serve as a way for Black students to build community, become more comfortable in social settings, and can help create space for students to ask questions and get advice (Bimper, 2017). Mentoring relationships can also allow for students of color to be more comfortable sharing information they might not share with others on campus (Luedke, 2017). Much like individual and community coping strategies, participating in mentoring programs can contribute positively to the academic and social experience of Black students (Bimper, 2017; Domingue, 2015; Luedke, 2017; Troutman, 2017).

Structural Diversity on Campus

Importance of structural diversity. Structural diversity deals with the numerical representation of various groups along the lines of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age. The literature has shown that structural diversity can serve as a positive force in the experience of all students on college campuses or as a negative influence when not present. On the positive side, structural diversity can serve the campus in beneficial ways including a healthier learning environment, opportunities for relationships, and by creating safe space for students to express themselves (Bowman & Park, 2014; Park, 2012; Pelzer 2016). Diversity among faculty, staff, and students can be an important factor to creating an environment that is more likely to contribute to academic success for Black students (Carey, 2008; Griffin et al., 2016).

Structural diversity can also increase the opportunity for students to interact with individuals who are racially or ethnically different from themselves (Nicholas, 2012). Those opportunities help create space for cross-racial interaction and friendships that are not possible without the availability of other race/ethnicities to have relationships with (Mary, 2008; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010; Park, 2012). A campus that is diverse can help create opportunities for relationships above and beyond individual characteristics such as race and ethnicity (Mary, 2008). Structural diversity can also serve as a way to create spaces for Black students to express themselves in formal ways through campus organizations or informally in a climate in which they feel valued and respected (Pelzer, 2016).

Structural diversity concerns. The concerns for when structural diversity is not present mirror the positive aspects of when it is present. One is that Black students tend to be less satisfied with the diversity status of PWIs than other racial/ethnic groups (Park, 2012; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Strayhorn, 2010). In many instances, the dissatisfaction is warranted as structural diversity in higher education is lacking (Park, 2012; Solórzano et al., 2000). Low levels of diversity at PWIs can increase the chances that Black students will experience stereotypes and other types of racial microaggressions (Griffin et al., 2016). Black students in less diverse environments can also struggle to find socially comfortable spaces to interact with peers (Kartouki, 2016; Wilkins, 2014). Lower levels of structural diversity result in less cross-racial interaction and friendships for all students (Mary, 2008; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010; Park, 2012). A lack of structural diversity can also limit opportunities for positive initiatives such as mentorship programs that include minority mentors (Pelzer, 2016).

Institutional Strategies to Provide Support and Resources to Black Students

Introduction

It is common for studies on the experience of Black students at PWIs to include recommendations, best practices, or strategies for campus administrators and practitioners to consider. The literature on the experience of Black students highlights five strategies frequently recommended to respond to their needs. The first strategy focuses on education and training directed at campus employees. The second strategy addresses education and training for students. How institutions manage the curriculum and create safe learning environments is the focus of the third strategy. Campus life, to include student organizations and ethnic programming, is the fourth strategy discussed. The final strategy campuses use to enhance the experience for Black students includes transition and summer bridge programs.

Strategies and Approaches to Support and Serve Black Students

Education and training for campus employees. There are specific strategies that have been recommended or implemented at various schools to improve racial climate and academic outcomes for Black students. One of those ways found in the literature is to provide education and training opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators around issues of race and diversity. Whether it be in the form of required online training, workshops, or retreats there are a few common issues that sensitivity/awareness training could address (Carter et al., 2015; Luedke, 2017). One issue that could be addressed in education directed toward employees is stereotypes. Interactions with Black students can sometimes be shaped by negative academic assumptions about Black students and could be addressed through education (McCoy et al., 2015). Another issue that can be addressed through education is better understanding Black student identity, social experiences, and academic experiences (Harper, 2009). Finally, training

that addresses cultural attitudes and individual prejudice is essential to dealing with issues around race at the individual level, in the classroom, and on campus (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015).

Education and training for students. While education and training on issues related to diversity and race are important for educators, there are also opportunities for students to grow in these areas as well. The significance of education and training goes beyond only making things better for Black students and should be targeted to all students. There are at least a few ways campuses can create opportunities for all students to learn more about these issues. One way to nurture a better understanding of racial awareness is to create opportunities for students to discuss race in informal settings and provide formal opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular activities that are more inclusive (Hurtado et al., 2015). Campuses can use those types of opportunities to introduce all students to concepts that might be unfamiliar (e.g., racial microaggressions, stereotype threat) and promote healthy ways to address and manage individual experiences (Lee & Barnes, 2015). Another approach campuses can use to educate all students around racial issues is through service learning and related projects. Engaging students in positive diversity projects and opportunities while in college can help all students develop new perspectives (Bowman & Park, 2014; Griffin et al., 2016; Brooks, 2012; Milem et al., 2004).

Classroom and curriculum. The third way recommended in the literature to address challenges for Black students is in the classroom and through the curriculum. With regard to the classroom, one thing faculty members can do is work toward creating learning spaces that are safe, open, respectful of cultural differences, and inclusive are each factors that can help enrich the experience of Black students (Gregory, 2000; Lee & Barnes, 2015). Additionally, faculty members that are approachable, care for students, and supportive can be more likely to contribute to the success of students of color (Ackerman-Barger & Hummel, 2015; Karkouti, 2016). While

a healthy classroom environment can enhance the experience for Black students, the curriculum

is also an area that has opportunities to engage race related issues. In many instances, the

curriculum at PWIs does not reflect diverse perspectives and is an area of opportunity that can be

beneficial for all students (Carey, 2008; Masocha, 2014; Smith et al., 2007). Related to

curriculum, pedagogy that is more inclusive is also a factor that should be given consideration by

faculty and administrators (Quaye & Harper, 2007; Pelzer, 2016; Seward & Guiffrida, 2012;

Simmons et al., 2013).

Campus life, organizations, and ethnic programming. Co-curricular opportunities

provided through campus/social life, student organizations, and ethnic programming can also be

utilized by colleges to influence the experience of Black students. With regard to social life,

events that are inclusive and bring students from different backgrounds together can promote

social engagement and a sense of belonging for Black students (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper,

2006; Strayhorn, 2008). Social support from both same-race peers and students from different

ethnic groups may be positive contributors to persistence and academic success (Harper, 2006;

Strayhorn, 2008).

Student organizations can also provide opportunities for Black students to develop

interpersonal skills, express themselves, and contribute to their community (Harper & Quaye,

2007; Strayhorn, 2011). Campus sponsored student organizations can allow for Black students to

build positive relationships, form networks, and interact with faculty and staff (Baker & Avery,

2012). Leadership in student organizations that can also serve as beneficial places for Black

student leadership development, building self-confidence, and becoming more secure about their

culture (Hotchkins, 2014). The personal connections, engagement activities, and greater

exposure to faculty through involvement in student organizations can also enhance persistence

for Black students (Barker & Avery, 2012).

In addition to social life and student organizations, programming that takes race and

ethnicity into account can also contribute to the experience of Black students in positive ways.

Examples of programming in the literature include social events, discussion groups that address

race and racial issues, workshops focused on diversity, and visiting speakers with expertise on

these issues (Ash & Schreiner, 2016; Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper, 2006). Another approach to

use diverse programming to create positive interactions for Black students is through mentoring

groups that are reflective of diverse perspectives. Mentoring groups can include peer-to-peer

relationships or can be faculty led (Pelzer, 2016). While not exactly programming, the physical

presence of cultural centers can also help create provide opportunities for positive interactions

(Davis, 2006). The experiences that can come out of inclusive campus life, student organizations,

programming can encourage interracial relationships and other benefits for all students (Bowman

& Park, 2014).

Transition and summer bridge programs. Summer bridge programs are among the

most common transition programs cited in the literature that can help prepare Black students

academically and socially for college life. They can be used to minimize surprises for incoming

students, build relationships, address potential pitfalls, and to better equip students for academic

success. Black students who participate in summer bridge programs are less surprised during the

first full semester, and have a better understanding of and become familiar with campus

resources in advance of their first full-time term (Harper, 2016). The programs also create

opportunities for Black students to establish relationships that can evolve into academic

partnerships, friendships, and help build social support networks (Harper, 2016; Lee & Barnes,

2015). Additionally, summer bridge programs can provide opportunities to address challenges that underrepresented students might encounter at PWIs. For example, the programs can be used to openly address issues like racism and discrimination that might be experienced while in college (Lee & Barnes, 2015). Finally, student participation in transition programs and becoming acclimated with the university environment is positively associated with academic performance, persistence, and graduation (Greenfield, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Theoretical Frameworks Reviewed

The literature on Black student experience at PWIs reveals a variety of approaches to gathering data, framing studies, and using established theories to make sense of findings. While various methods of qualitative inquiry are represented in the literature, the most common was some form of case study that included interviews with participants. The theoretical framework that appears most frequently in the literature on Black student experience is Critical Race Theory (CRT). As such, this section will highlight CRT by providing background of the model and how it is represented in the literature on Black student experience. Additionally, researchers used student development models such as Tinto's Student Integration Model or Astin's Theory of Student Involvement. However, neither of those frameworks explicitly recognizes cultural variables that can be helpful in understanding the experience of students from underrepresented groups. Guiffrida (2006) developed and an adaptation of Tinto's Student Integration Model (SIM) that does account for cultural issues. Accordingly, I will highlight Guiffrida's adaptation of Tinto's model.

Critical Race Theory

Background. Researchers use critical theories such as CRT to understand the experiences of Black students (Lee & Barnes, 2015). As a framework, CRT can serve as a

perspective to help researchers address the ongoing realities of discrimination and racism that Black students encounter at PWIs (Davis, 2006). It provides a way for members of an ethnic minority to create counter-narratives, highlights inequity and injustice, and directly deals with racism. Counter-narratives allows for the authentic voices of participants to be expressed and heard through personal stories, sharing other people's stories, and composite stories (Pelzer, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These authentic narratives create space for members to share their experience from their own cultural perspective (Pelzer, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT as a framework also allows for inequity and injustice to be better understood by shedding light on experiences around those issues for Black students at PWIs (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). The CRT framework also describes racism as common, embedded in American culture, and also suggests that racism regularly finds its way into the everyday lives of citizens (Giles & Hughes, 2009). CRT rejects the notion of a society that is color-blind or that racism is a thing of the distant past but is instead an issue that is real and can only be addressed if dealt with in open and honest ways (Giles & Hughes, 2009; Worthington et al., 2008). CRT can also be used to frame a very specific form of racism described in the literature as racial microaggressions, which are defined as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of Blacks by offenders" (Ebony & Danny, 2011, p. 1352). In addition to being useful in highlighting inequity and addressing racism within the educational environment, CRT can also be helpful for working to transform institutional policies (Carter-Francique et al., 2015)

CRT tenets. There are five tenets of CRT that are intended to study, understand, and transform the relationships among race, racism, and power (Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). The first tenet is the intercentricity of race and racism (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano,

1997). Race and racism are embedded in a way that is permanent within American culture and its institutions. Essentially, racism in the United States is normal and serves a permanent role in the function of society (Bimper, 2017; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997).

The second tenet of CRT is to challenge dominant ideology (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). This tenet calls into question traditional cultural claims of the neutrality of race, that opportunities are equal, and that society is color-blind. (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). These claims promote and protect the dominant cultural narratives and the interests of the group in power (Bimper, 2017; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). The third tenet of CRT is the centrality of experiential knowledge (Bimper, 2017; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2002). This tenet addresses marginalization, silencing, and distortion of the stories of persons of color (Bimper, 2017; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2002). As such, CRT can help ensure that accounts of individual and shared experiences are not distorted and reported in ways that are more complete (Bimper, 2017; Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2002).

Interdisciplinary perspective is the fourth tenet of CRT. The idea with this tenet is to develop better understandings of how society relates to the experiences of racial minorities by incorporating multiple disciplinary perspectives (Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2002). The final tenet is commitment to social justice which includes an intentional agenda to eliminate racism and a desire to reduce racial gaps (Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2002). Thus, CRT can be useful in shedding light on inequity as well as shaping policies within the higher education context (Carter-Francique et al., 2015).

CRT in the literature on Black college student experience. Higher education researchers have used CRT to study the experiences of students of color (Pelzer, 2016). In recent years, CRT has become more popular among researchers as a way to understand racial inequity,

41

mistreatment of persons of color, and to make meaning of racial experiences (Delgado, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). The literature reveals two prominent ways researchers use CRT to frame studies on Black student experience at PWIs. Researchers use CRT to better understand academic experiences and also to better understand social experiences of Black students.

CRT has been used by researchers to better understand the classroom and academic experience of Black college students. Masocha (2015) used CRT to highlight how race and racism play a role in how Black students experience the college learning environment. The CRT perspective helped Masocha (2015) shed light on the persistence of academic achievement gaps between different racial groups. By utilizing CRT as a framework, Williams (2013) found that it was problematic for Black college students to use developmental reading material that excluded selections related to their culture. Mosacha (2015) was able to show the differences between racial groups in how they accessed and experienced what happens in the classroom by applying CRT. Ackerman-Barger and Hummel (2015) were able to highlight the importance of faculty members in providing positive learning environments for Black students by framing their study of inclusion and equity in nursing education with CRT.

CRT has also been used by researchers to better understand the social and campus experience of Black college students. Bimper (2017) used CRT to investigate a mentoring program for Black student athletes at a higher education institution and how the students made sense of the role of race and racism in their lived experiences. Pelzer (2016) challenged and reframed perceptions of Black masculinity by using CRT in a study of Black college males to highlight the importance of inclusive programming, diversity, and mentorship. In a qualitative case study to better understand the importance of social support for Black students, Carter et al. (2015) used CRT to demonstrate the challenges Black students have interacting with faculty and

how healthy interactions can have a positive influence on academic performance. Ebony and Danny (2011) framed their study on stereotype management with CRT and found that while stereotypes are powerful they are not necessarily deterministic with regard to social experience and academic outcomes for Black students.

Student Involvement Model

In addition to CRT, Tinto's Student Involvement Model (SIM) has also been used in the research of Black student experiences. Tinto (1993) asserted that students need to disconnect from past associations and traditions to integrate into the campus academic and social community. Critics of Tinto's theory have argued that it does not recognize cultural variables, which can be limiting when applied to students from underrepresented groups (Guiffrida, 2005; Tierney, 1999). For example, separation from cultural traditions and relationships that are supportive can potentially be harmful to minority students (Tierney, 1992). There is a need for minority students to maintain and nurture connections to their home communities and to draw support from members of their culture (Guiffrida, 2006). As such, it would be helpful to modify Tinto's theory in order to recognize cultural, home community, and family connections more prominently (Guiffrida, 2006).

The revision to SIM highlights concepts such as collectivism, community, and connections. One of the most significant distinctions observed among various cultures of the world is the differences between collectivism and individualism (Guiffrida, 2006; Triandis et al., 1998). Minority Americans tend to embrace collectivist values, and a model that focuses too heavily motivators that emphasize individualism may not best reflect their perspectives (Guiffrida, 2006; Merriweather Hunn, 2008). When evaluating student motivation it can be helpful to consider both individual and collective cultural norms (Guiffrida, 2006). Accounting

43

for individualism and collectivism can contribute to a more multicultural understanding of student commitment and moves the theory toward greater cultural sensitivity (Guiffrida, 2006; Merriweather Hunn, 2008). Another adaptation is that the revised model includes language like "connected" to their university as a predictor of persistence rather than language like "integrated" (Guiffrida, 2006). Connections suggest students' affiliation to the campus community while maintaining ties to their home community, which can be an important distinction when seeking to understand the experience of Black college students (Guiffrida, 2006; Merriweather Hunn, 2008). Guiffrida recommended modifications to Tinto's theory to allow for recognition of diverse social and cultural experiences and how they relate to motivation toward persistence and academic performance.

Guiffrida's recommended revision to Tinto's model has been used by researchers to affirm the importance of family and community for Black college students. Barker and Avery (2012) drew upon Guiffrida's adaptation of Tinto's SIM as a theoretical framework in their qualitative case study engagement and persistence of Black males involved in a leadership initiative. The adapted model allowed for better understanding of how a leadership program can aid in relationship building, engaging in the campus community, and contribute positively to student persistence. Merriweather Hunn (2008) applied Guiffrida's adaptation to a study on the persistence of Black graduate students. The author found that the adaptation to Tinto's SIM did help better capture the experiences of the students of color included in the study. Palmer et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative case study of Black males at an HBCU to look at the importance of family support with regard to academic performance and persistence. Guiffrida's revision of SIM helped the researchers demonstrate the ways in which family support promoted positive academic outcomes for Black male students.

The fact that SIM does not necessarily generalize to minority students can be problematic as researchers may exclude important cultural attributes that can be beneficial in analyzing and understanding collected data (Guiffrida, 2006; Merriweather Hunn, 2008). It seems that a student development model such as Tinto's SIM is an important tool in understanding student experience. The SIM framework revised to account for the unique ways Black students view family, community, and becoming connected was an ideal approach to this study.

Summary and Gap in the Literature

The literature on Black students at PWIs is extensive and provides insights into concerns about the lack of representation in higher education, achievement gaps, social and academic experiences, and ways they cope with challenges. Blacks comprise only 14% of total undergraduate students enrolled in college in the United States while the number for White students is 57% and 18% for Hispanics (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). The concern around representation is compounded as Blacks persist and graduate at lower rates than other racial and ethnic groups (Goings, 2017; Miller, 2016; New, 2017). The literature also reveals that Black students at PWIs can experience racism in both social contexts and academically (Domingue, 2015; Lee & Barnes, 2015; Morales, 2014). While Black students use individual and community approaches to cope with stressors, the effects of experienced racism can be damaging emotionally, mentally, and academically (Lee & Barnes, 2015; Pelzer, 2016; Troutman, 2017).

What is missing from the literature is research related to the experience of Black students at predominantly White CCCU institutions. Information about the experience of Black students will add valuable knowledge toward understanding why Black students at Protestant institutions have lower graduation rates than at other types of private institutions. Scholarly research on issues related to diversity in Evangelical Christian higher education is limited (Kratt, 2004;

Smith, 2010). As such, there is a need for more research that addresses diversity and inclusion at CCCU institutions. This study will contribute to that need by ringexpo the social and academic experience of Black students at a CCCU institution. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology, method, and framework that I used to conduct this study

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Overall Approach

The research question for this study is how do Black undergraduate students experience a Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) institution?

The overall research approach I used to address this question was a qualitative descriptive case study. My primary objective was to explore how Black students experience a CCCU institution. This chapter begins with a discussion of overall rationale, the research approach, design, and research questions. The following section includes an outline of my delimitations which include site selection and rationale, participant selection and rationale, and data collections procedures. The chapter concludes with data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, limitations, and quality assurance steps.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate methodology for this research study for several reasons. First, qualitative inquiry allows for exploration and provides a strategy to make meaning of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Savin-Biden & Major, 2013). Second, it provides a way for the researcher to grow and develop in detail an understanding about an individual or place (Creswell, 2013). The third reason is that qualitative research seeks to describe how people understand experiences, their environment, and the meaning connected to experiences in those environments (Merriam, 2009). This is exactly what I intended to do in this study: better understand the experience of Black students.

Additionally, qualitative research aims to: "understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures. Researchers use qualitative approaches to explore behavior, perspectives and experiences of the people they study" (Holloway, 1997, cited in Savin-Biden & Major, 2013, p. 11). Qualitative research also includes the researcher as the key instrument and utilizes the use of a theoretical lens to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach was appropriate and ideal for this study as I served as an instrument in my role as interviewer and used the modified SIM as a lens to help understand the data.

Issues around race, racism, and personal experiences are complex. A qualitative approach was ideal as it provided a way to establish an understanding of a complex issue or situation and added data to knowledge that exists from prior research (Creswell, 2013). Finally, qualitative research allows for an in-depth analysis of a particular circumstance under study (Creswell, 2013; Savin-Biden & Major, 2013). For this study, I used interviews with individual Black undergraduate students, observation, relevant documents, and data from a review of the literature to help me to understand the perceptions of study participants and their experience at the selected CCCU institution through an in-depth analysis of their circumstances.

Descriptive Case Study Method

A descriptive case study was an appropriate approach for this study given the focus on understanding and describing the experiences of Black students. Yin (2014) highlighted three important criteria that distinguish case study research:

1. The research question is a "how" question;

2. Control of behavioral events is not required; and

3. Focus is on contemporary events (p. 9).

The research question for my study is a "how" question. I wanted to better understand how Black students experience a CCCU member institution and then explain the findings. My study also did not attempt to control or manipulate behavior. My research focused on participants' reflections of contemporary experiences at their institution.

Interviews, observation, and documents are commonly used in case study research to gather data (Creswell, 2013). In order to allow participants to reflect on their experiences, I conducted one-on-one interviews to gather data that was used to answer my research question. My interviews resembled guided conversations and their fluid nature allowed for participants to provide in-depth responses to open-ended questions (Yin, 2014). I also used direct observation of students in formal and informal settings. Those settings included the dining hall, outdoor social space, and campus religious events. Documents were also used to provide contextual information about the institution and students. Documents used included the university's website, data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, marketing material, the university magazine, and relevant historical documents from the library archives.

The case study approach also bounds the data collection by defining the context in terms of time, scope, and place (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). I bound my study in time by gathering data through interviews within one academic semester. The scope and place was a group of 22 Black students and their individual experiences at the institution I studied. Binding the study also allowed me to identify and distinguish individuals who were in the group from those who were outside of the group. Binding was necessary in a study like this because understanding a real-life phenomenon required "concrete manifestation" (Yin, 2014, p. 34).

Additionally, a case study is considered holistic in nature, allowing the phenomena to be described from beginning to end, in a way that is specific (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Other

advantages to case study approach for this study pertain to its flexibility, depth, thoroughness, and responsiveness (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Flexibility was needed as I was interested in allowing for each participant to describe their personal experience in their voice. A rigid research approach would not have allowed for the type of response that was needed to answer my research question. In-depth responses from participants in the study were needed to provide the insight necessary to understand personal experience. The thoroughness that is possible through a case study approach was also ideal as participants were able to elaborate on points that were important to them. Both the participant and I were able to be responsive. Participants were responsive to questions with the freedom to elaborate and explore where they saw fit. I also had the freedom to respond when there were opportunities to ask follow-up questions or ask for clarification.

In using a descriptive case study approach to examine how Black students experience a CCCU institution, I focused on understanding the experiences and perceptions Black students in a real-world context. I sought to present the in-depth and rich data that are necessary to better understand Black student experience at a CCCU institution (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). A case study approach lent itself well to the description of a case that is both detailed and rich (Creswell, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The in-depth description that is possible in case studies was ideal for providing in-depth understanding of this case (Merriam, 2009). A deeper understanding of the Black student experience at a CCCU institution was my objective.

This approach is also "best suited for providing the descriptive information that can inform professional practice" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 171). As a practitioner, this was particularly appealing to me; conducting a study with findings that can be applied to my field is optimal. The rich description from this case study was instrumental for understanding the

individual experiences of Black students and providing insight that might inform practitioner approaches to better supporting Black students.

Research Questions

Questions asked through qualitative research seek to understand individuals and the situations under evaluation (Creswell, 2013). Questions typically start with "what" or "how" and restate the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) recommended a broad central question that is overarching and several sub-questions. Research questions in a qualitative case study are non-directional and open-ended in the way they are asked (Creswell, 2013). The questions should also be specific in order to keep the study within limits that are feasible (Yin, 2014).

Primary Research Question

1. What is the experience of Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution?

Research Sub-questions

1. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience academics?
2. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support services?
3. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social life?
4. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities?

Site Selection and Rationale

The site selected for this research is a university that is a Council of Christian Colleges and Universities member institution. For purposes of this study, the site was referred to as Private Christian University (PCU). PCU was selected because Council of Christian Colleges

and Universities are graduating Black students at lower rates than other private schools; there is a need to better understand the experiences of these students at this type of institution (Smith, 2010). PCU has also stated clear objectives for increasing diversity in its strategic plan. CCCU diversity numbers for both tenured faculty and students are low in the Southeast (Reyes & Case, 2011). Therefore, a CCCU institution situated in the Southeast was ideal for this inquiry. The only other related study on the experience of Black students at CCCU institutions was conducted in the western region of the United States (Young, 2012).

There is a specific need for additional research in other regions of the United States on the experience of Black students at CCCU institutions. The institution selected for this study has a student composition that includes 3,341 total undergraduates. White students comprise 80% of the student body, and 9% of the students at PCU are Black. This percentage was sufficient to sample in the context of a CCCU institution. Based on data from 2007-2017, Black students enter PCU with an average high school GPA of 3.29 while the average for White students is 3.68. Average SAT scores during that same time period are 1009 for Black students and 1152 for White students. Additionally, average household income for entering freshmen is $78,007 for Black students and $173,844 for White students. Six-year graduation rates at the selected institution also reflect the concern of the academic achievement between Black students (63%) and White students (77%) as there is a 14% gap in graduation rates. The following table illustrates the preceding data.

Table 3.1

10-Year (2007-2017) Averages Based on Race

Race	High School GPA	SAT Score	Household Income
Black	3.29	1009	78,007
American Indian	3.46	1065	127,418
Hispanic	3.58	1144	155,109
Asian	3.67	1130	136,384
White	3.68	1152	171,863

Participant Selection and Rationale

The student body at the selected institution is 3,341 undergraduate students. Black students comprise 9% (300) of the total student population. The sample included 22 undergraduate Black students who were currently enrolled at the institution and had completed at least one full-time semester. The sample included both Black male and Black female undergraduate students. The sample also included Black students with a variety of attributes such as student athletes, non-student athletes, high academic performers, low academic performers, and varying majors.

There is a great deal of diversity within the Black community, and I gathered data from a variety of perspectives using a maximum variation sampling. I worked with organizations, staff, faculty, and administrators on the campus that assisted with informing Black students that met the criteria about this research project and the opportunity they might have to participate in it. Students that participated in the study also self-identified as "Black" in student demographic data generated through the admissions process. Once I had a list of 55 potential participants I reached out to them directly with a personal email invitation (Appendix B). The list included students

that were both student athletes and non-student athletes, males and females, and a range of majors. From that original pool of 55 individuals that were sent invitations, 22 responded and agreed to participate in the study. I offered a $20 Amazon gift card as an incentive for all participants in order to convey the importance and value of their time.

Of the 22 students, one was a freshmen, six were sophomores, five were juniors, and 10 were seniors. Fourteen of the participants were female and eight were male. Student athletes comprised 13 of the participants.

Table 3.2
Study Participants

Participant	Background
Nadine	Nadine is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Jeff	Jeff is in his third year in the college of arts and sciences.
Jamie	Jamie is a newcomer in the school of the arts.
Andy	Andy is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Charlene	Charlene is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Kelly	Kelly is a newcomer in the college of arts and sciences.
Emory	Emory is an upperclassmen in the business school.
Roy	Roy is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Tammie	Tammie is a newcomer in the college of arts and sciences.
Cathy	Cathy is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Albert	Albert is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Sherry	Sherry is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Megan	Megan is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Joann	Joann is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Jerry	Jerry is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Patty	Patty is an upperclassmen in the college of arts and sciences.
Erica	Erica is a newcomer in the health sciences college.
Allie	Allie is a newcomer in the business school.
Edward	Edward is an upperclassmen in the business school.
Terry	Terry is an upperclassmen in the school of education.
Beth	Beth is an upperclassmen in the health sciences college.
Harry	Harry is a newcomer in the college of arts and sciences.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection included formal in-person interviews with 22 participants, informal follow-up phone conversations with each participant, and field observations. Interviews were necessary to obtain the descriptive perceptions that are fundamental to qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2013). This approach resulted in rich data collection and authentic participant reflection (Creswell, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed participants to tell personal stories from their own perspective, which is a primary way for marginalized groups to create counter-narratives (Pelzer, 2016).

A semi-structured interview was appropriate for this study because it permitted flexibility in the interview protocol by allowing for relevant follow-up questions to be asked (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions also created space for interviewees to share information from their unique perspective (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Interviews and a semi-structured interview protocol permitted interviewees to provide a deep reflection of their experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Data collection was done through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Participants were given options for scheduling the interview, and I reserved a conference room in an academic building on campus that was private and convenient for participants. I conducted all interviews since I was the primary gatherer and analyst of the data (Creswell, 2013). Interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Following each interview, I entered noteworthy observations, body language, tone, and potential follow-up questions in a journal. Interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were provided via email for each participant to review and ensure accuracy.

The data collection instrument for this study was an interview protocol that I designed to address the study question and sub-questions (Appendix A). The interview protocol included questions that were open-ended and primarily related to students' experiences on campus (e.g., academic, social, religious, housing, employment, services, organizations, academics). Follow-up interviews with participants occurred via phone with each participant. During those discussions I again thanked each participant, asked them to clarify any comments I needed additional thoughts on, and allowed them to provide any additional information they thought might be helpful.

I also observed students on multiple occasions in social settings on campus. I observed students on five occasions in the cafeteria at various meal times. I attended chapel services on three occasions. I also observed students in the social outdoor space on campus between class periods three separate times. During each field observation I jotted down my thoughts that I later wrote as field notes. I then coded those field notes in the same manner as the interview transcripts.

Data Analysis Techniques

Coding

Data analysis was performed using an analytical approach appropriate for a case study. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), two common data analysis techniques for case studies are constant comparison and thematic analysis. The data collected were transcribed and initially coded manually with the In Vivo Coding method. In Vivo Coding was particularly appropriate for this study as honoring the participant's voice was priority (Saldaña, 2013). Codes were then organized using constant comparison and thematic analysis.

Constant comparison is an analytical method used to develop themes; it is "one of the most frequently used analytical methods of qualitative data analysis" (Savin-Baden & Major,

2013, p. 437). I followed the six basic steps of the constant comparison process identified by

Savin-Baden and Major (2013):

1. Identify categories in events and behavior;

2. Name indicators in passage and code them;

3. Continually compare codes and passages to those already coded to find consistencies and

   differences;

4. Examine consistencies or patterns between codes to reveal categories;

5. Continue the process until the category "saturates" and no new codes related to it are

   identified; and

6. Determine which categories are the central focus (axial categories) and, thus, form the

   core category. (p. 437)

   Thematic analysis was the third data analysis technique I used for "identifying,

analyzing, and reporting patterns in the data" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 439). The

following steps as recommended by Braun and Clarke were used to execute thematic analysis:

1. Familiarize yourself with the data

2. Generate initial codes

3. Search for themes

4. Review themes

5. Define and name themes

6. Produce the report. (as cited in Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 440)

   Findings from In Vivo Coding, constant comparison, and thematic analysis comprise the

study's themes. Applying constant comparison and thematic analysis to the collected data

allowed transcripts to be organized and classified systematically into words, phrases, and

perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This led to the identification of patterns that emerged and trends that became apparent (Creswell, 2013). This comprehensive approach contributed to a better understanding of Black undergraduate student experiences in the context of a CCCU member institution.

Theoretical Lens

Modified Student Integration Model (SIM)

I used Giuffrida's (2006) adaptation of Tinto's Student Integration Model (SIM) as a theoretical perspective to help interpret my findings and describe the experience of Black students in this study. The inability to generalize SIM to Black students and the cultural indifference is caused by the term "integration" (Giuffrida, 2006, p. 456). Giuffrida's adaptation of the theory includes social and cross-cultural influences and describes how well students "connected" to their university as a predictor of success as opposed to how well they "integrated" (Barker & Avery, 2012). This model was especially helpful as one of the prominent themes that emerged was the importance of feeling connected, developing relationships, and having a sense of community.

Ethical Considerations

The principles of the University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for Research Involving Human Subjects were followed. Compliance with IRB policies ensured safety and well-being of all study participants. IRB compliance also ensured ethical gathering and reporting of data. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board granted approval for my research (Appendix D).

Confidentiality was vital as issues around race and diversity are personal and can be sensitive. The identity of all participants is protected and pseudonyms were used in my findings.

59

Data are stored in a secure location and accessible to no one other than me. All digital files are password protected. Any electronic documents including emails and informed consent forms are being kept on my personal computer and only accessible by me. Hardcopy files are locked in a secure location.

Participation in the research was voluntary and all participants had the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants had the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate in this study without penalty. Standard guidelines of informed consent were provided (Appendix C) for each participant to ensure that he or she understood the purpose of the study and his or her rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Interviews were conducted in a setting that was safe and private.

Positionality

As the researcher in this study, I served as the key data collection instrument. Therefore, it is necessary that I disclose values, experiences, and biases that might shape how I engaged in this study (Creswell, 2013). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) recommended "locating the researcher in relation to the subject, participants, and research context and process" (p. 71).

As a Black male I have experienced many of the same microaggressions and stereotypes that have been reported in the literature review. For me, these experiences have occurred as both a student and now as an athletics administrator at a CCCU member institution. In my current administrative role within the athletics department, I interact daily with a significant portion of the institution's Black students as many Black undergraduates at the institution are student athletes. I have been able to serve on diversity committees and participate in diversity initiatives. Additionally, I served on the committee that created and hired the Director of Diversity and

Intercultural Initiatives. Because of these experiences I am keenly aware of the challenges my institution deals with in terms of race.

I am also a Christian employed at the faith-based higher education institution being studied. As such, when I introduced myself to participants I was dressed casually and emphasized my role as a graduate student as opposed to an employee. Understanding the stated values of the institution and being familiar with Biblical principles regarding justice and equality makes it difficult for me to hear and observe what Black students, faculty, and staff experience. It is my desire to use this research as a mechanism to give voice to Black students, a voice that is frequently unheard. Dealing with race is difficult, and an honest assessment of what is happening in the lives of students is a necessary starting point. I will focus on presenting data that emphasize the perspective of participants in the study to minimize my own personal bias.

Limitations

At the time of this research, I was employed by the same institution where the participants attended and where the study was conducted. I served as an administrator in the athletics department at this university. While I did not emphasize my professional position during interviews, participants were aware of my role at the institution. In full disclosure, there is a degree of bias and subjectivity on my part as a result of my affiliation with the university as well as my own professional and personal background in higher education.

Quality Assurance

The first thing I did is to work with my dissertation chair to ensure my research approach was well-suited to conduct the study. Trustworthiness was established by clarifying my own biases, conducting peer evaluation throughout the research process, and triangulating collected data when coding and identifying themes (Creswell, 2013).

Acknowledgement of my biases as a researcher has been accomplished through my positionality statement in this chapter. I disclosed my assumptions, administrative role, and relationship to students at the institution that was studied. Peer evaluation occurred at multiple intervals throughout the research process through a five-member faculty committee. Triangulation was included as an ongoing component of data analysis.

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) noted that criticality, reflexivity, honesties, integrity, and verisimilitude guide researchers to ensure quality. Criticality, or critical analysis, came from adhering to my data collection and analysis procedures. Feedback from faculty dissertation committee members also ensured criticality. Reflexivity affected my desire to study this topic and may have shaped my analysis and communication of study findings

Honesties, integrity, and verisimilitude must work together. Honesties started with true data from participants. I provided copies of transcripts to participants prior to any analysis so that they could provide feedback. Integrity came from "ensuring that interpretations are grounded within the data and reflected in the text" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 475). Verisimilitude occurred through adhering to each step outlined in this chapter as the whole process was designed to seek participants' truths.

Finally, I developed and maintained an audit trail to ensure that data collected throughout the study were maintained in a way that was systematic and retrievable if needed. Documents are accessible in a way that is secure and ensures confidentiality.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of my descriptive case study pertaining to Black students at a CCCU member institution. The following research question and sub-questions guided the research conducted:

Research Question

1. What is the experience of Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution?

Research Sub-questions

a. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience academics?

b. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support services?

c. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social life?

d. How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities?

These research questions served as a guide and provided structure to my study and my interviews with participants. I conducted all my interviews during the spring semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. What follows in this chapter is a description of study participants and a presentation of the identified themes.

Summary of Methods

The descriptive case study started in May 2018 at Private Christian University (PCU). There was a total of 22 participants in this study. I interviewed each participant on two occasions. The first interview was a semi structured in-depth interview that lasted 45-60 minutes. I also observed students on multiple occasions in social settings on campus. I observed students on five occasions in the cafeteria at various meal times. I attended chapel services on three occasions. I also observed students in the social outdoor space on campus between class periods three separate times. During each field observation, I jotted down my thoughts that I later wrote as field notes. I conducted my coding in three phases: In Vivo Coding, constant comparison, and thematic analysis. What follows in this chapter are the findings from my interviews and observations presented based on themes that emerged from my coding.

Themes

As I addressed research questions with my interview protocol and reviewed interview transcripts, I began to identify codes. After identifying codes and using the constant comparison method, I identified broad themes. The themes that emerged were related to relationships, isolation, faith, microaggressions, and positive experiences.

As a result of detailed coding and data analysis, the following five themes emerged. In the discussion that follows each one is further divided into subthemes and explored in detail:

1. Importance of relationships and community to the student experience.

2. Challenges associated with isolation and loneliness.

3. Perceptions related to the way the institution practices faith.

4. Perceived experiences with microaggressions.

5. Positive experiences that have led to personal growth.

Importance of Relationships and Community to the Student Experience

The first theme that came through as I reviewed transcripts and began to code was the importance of relationships to the experience of students. The majority of the students mentioned relationships as one of the primary reasons for persisting at Private Christian University (PCU) and for having a positive experience. Within this theme there were subthemes that emerged to help specify particular types of relationships. The subthemes are the role of family and community support, relationships with peers, and the influence of faculty and staff. This theme affirms the revised SIM framework.

Family and community support. Several students mentioned how important support from family members or the community was to their college choice and experience. Jerry decided to attend PCU in part because he had family members nearby. He also touched on how the campus had a family environment that was attractive to him:

> So I knew, going in to college, that I wanted to go somewhere close to home because like my family's that really important to me. So I know I wanted to do that. I mean, basketball was what got me here. But it was just like the combination of I was recruited by a coach who was close to where I'm from. Really, family-oriented. And then it was really close to home so I was— I ended up like an hour-fifteen from my parents, or my grandparents, or my aunties, or my uncles. So yeah, that's basically how I came here. It's really just like that family environment, you know. We really got hooked on like the small school atmosphere of like the-- because my parents are always focused on like "Basketball's not going to bounce forever".

There were also instances in which members of the local community played a prominent role in the way students experienced PCU. One student, Edward, attributed being here to a member of the local community. A local businessman took a liking to him as he was graduating

65

from high school. As he shared the story, he became quite emotional as he reflected on how much this gentlemen helped make his experience possible. He said the gentleman

> [b]asically offered me, as long as I kept my grades up to a certain degree and went for like a science or business degree, that he would pay for me to go to school and like be completely free. He paid for housing.

He acknowledged his good fortune and attributed it his mother's faith in God. As he continued to talk about this man's generosity he said "I cried so much because I was just like, this is not happening". Edward also talked about how he and the local businessman have talked regularly throughout his time at PCU. Additionally, the gentleman has agreed to also pay for Edward's graduate school. He plans to attend graduate school at PCU.

Peer relationships. Nearly all the students discussed relationships with peers when asked to describe their experience. Relationships with students was frequently cited as a key aspect of having a positive experience. One type of peer relationship that was very powerful in terms of creating a sense of community was expressed by student athletes and the bond with their teammates. Charlene captured the sentiment expressed by others very well when she said:

> My overall experience(s) have been good. I mean, because I'm on the basketball team I feel like that helps a lot. If I wasn't on the basketball team, I don't really know how I would fit in here at PCU. But since I do have like a team that I can confide in and then like meet other athletes throughout. Being on a team, it's kind of – it's been good and it's been easy to like make relationships with people but if I wasn't— like I said, if I wasn't on the team, I don't really know how I would fit in here at PCU just because it's like so different than other schools like I know there's not many Black people obviously but it's like my high school was pretty mixed.

Other participants that happened to be student athletes also expressed the closeness with teammates. Terry, who is a member of the women's basketball team, discussed her connection with teammates as a family. She talked about how well they all get along and said "my teammates all are like really like my sisters. I'm also talking about the White girls. I'm talking about all of us like together". A member of the Women's Track Team, Cathy, cited relationships

66

with peers as a primary reason for having a positive experience at PCU. She also made it clear in the interview that she struggled academically and considered transferring on more than one occasion and said, "my friends have kept me here".

Formal campus organizations was also mentioned by several students in the study as a way to form meaningful relationships. For example, Greek life was cited by Jerry as instrumental in making connections with peers outside of athletics. He said, "joining my fraternity was a really, really great experience because, you know, I just got a lot closer to other people outside of the team". He went on to point out how those relationships broadened his social network by saying "I think just like becoming more involved on campus really was like really, really great experience because through that I just met a lot of people and made a lot of connections, you know"? Edward also made an important connection through a formal campus program. He met a young man that would become his best friend at a freshmen retreat. In fact, Edward was in his best friend's wedding this summer. He also talked about forming additional relationships through that friendship. He described his friend group as "the most diverse group in the entire school". Nadine described a relationship that started out as a mentoring relationship initiated in a peer mentoring program for freshmen. The relationship evolved as her mentor helped her navigate the first year and a challenging roommate situation. Nadine said her mentor accomplished this by simply spending time together and becoming friends.

Allie made the point that a sense of community has been the most important factor in shaping her experience and how she hopes to be a resource for others in the future. She benefited from older students investing time into her. She talked about how that was a pleasant surprise and how grateful she was. She stated "and like I can't wait until next year when I can pour into someone else".

Faculty and staff relationships. The final subtheme and perhaps the most powerful was the expressed significance of connecting to faculty and staff. Based on feedback from the majority of study participants, it appears that faculty and staff can play a prominent role in how students experience college. Several students recounted stories of various ways faculty and staff members proactively sought ways to connect with them and how profound those relationships became.

Emory talked about the importance of faculty availability and how much that has meant to him by saying, "that's the coolest thing about PCU is even as an African-American student I'm able to just interact with any of my professors at any time. And I've never felt any sense of neglect". He went on to talk about how important that has been to him academically by saying, "when you're able to have these good relationships with your professors, you're really able to maximize your learning and enjoy the experience even better. And that's what's been— that's been awesome". Jeff described himself as an introvert and closed off socially. In a powerful statement regarding how a professor can influence the experience of a student who is less social than others he said:

> Well, in my class, last semester I had Dr. White. He's a sports-minded professor and—
> well, sports writing class. And I was able to see just like how he has hundreds of
> thousands of connections and like literally, if you just get on Twitter and just tweet a
> couple of tweets, you can get jobs over a couple of tweets….Probably, if any professor
> has made me want to stay at PCU, it's probably Dr. White.

Megan described her relationship with one of her major professors. They have developed a close relationship that has created a dynamic where she feels comfortable talking to him outside of class on any issue for which she needs advice. She also talked about how instrumental he has been in shaping her faith. Megan said:

Dr. Patrick is a big help with my spiritual life, honestly. Like he's been a really big help so. I mean, like I always believe in God but I had never knew how to like be open about it or like talk to Him or like– I didn't know like if I would be judged if I don't know the Bible.

Jerry selected his major and likely future career because of a relationship with a professor. He went on later in the interview to say they talk all the time and have developed a friendship. He became very animated when describing their relationship and what it has meant to him. They developed a relationship because the professor came to his games, talked with him about non-academic things outside of class, and gently informed him about major and career options. When asked about the primary factors that contributed to her experience, Sherry immediately mentioned her professors and also touched on her network of friendships through athletics. She started with professors by stating "they've made it so special. And my classmates are so great that I can't imagine leaving or going to a different program". Patty also addressed the role of her professors in making her experience a positive one, stating:

> [t]he professors have been, overall, really supportive and helpful. Even like in classes where I'm like struggling like I don't really understand what's like going on. Like a lot of them have been willing to like, you know, help me out and in terms of like understanding the material.

Patty was especially appreciative of unsolicited contact outside of class. She stated:

> And even after like being in their class and stuff like still reaching out and being like, "Oh, hey. How are you doing?" So just to have like professors and stuff like really care about like how you're doing. And even after you graduate like help you out with that too has been really encouraging.

She went on to talk about one professor in particular who has really gone out of his way to encourage her and be available as a resource. She stated, "and just like having somebody to talk to like if you're just dealing with something like personally and— or like with like school and stuff, it really means a lot so I'm glad I've had professors like that". Tammie shared a similar experience in terms of a professor investing time into her life and enriching her experience. She

said Dr. Blue introduced her to opportunities to get involved on campus and that their relationship is very meaningful to her.

There were a couple professors that came up by name several times that students identified as instrumental in their experience. One of those was Dr. Green. She serves the campus in an administrative role and also teaches freshmen writing courses. In speaking about Dr. Green, Harry said he appreciates how much she has helped him, encouraged him to try new experiences, and helped guide him toward his future. Another professor who was frequently mentioned was Dr. Smith. According to study participants, Dr. Smith is passionate about teaching, supportive of his students, and always available. Describing Dr. Smith, Edward stated:

> [h]e goes way beyond what any other teacher. And like-- I feel like if we had more people that was like love their job, like then, this. Like— like a lot more schools would be better off than just people just going to get a paycheck. Like you can tell when someone's just at work to get their paycheck. And then you can tell when it's like, this is their passion and that they're actually trying to like change somebody life.

In addition to faculty members, several students talked about the importance of relationships with other campus employees. Albert was considering transferring and a relationship with a staff member played a significant role his decision to stay at PCU. Albert is a member of the football team and recounted the role his strength coach had in deciding not to transfer. He said, "the coach I'm probably close to on the staff right now is our strength coach. He's definitely played a big role in my life just as far as, you know, advice, helping me through different situations that I've faced". Albert noted that he was about to leave PCU when the strength coach stepped in. He stated, "I was actually about to transfer, it was about a semester ago". The coach encouraged him, pointed out the positives, reminded him of his accomplishments, and Albert decided to stay.

Students also discussed how important it is to have space to feel comfortable and how important the faculty and staff members that work in that space can be. The Diversity Office was specifically mentioned by students as one of those places. The office is run by a faculty member and one full-time staff member. In talking about them Joann stated:

> Yeah. So it's like a nice, calming environment like where I can study but like if I want to take a break and like talk with the people that work there, like they're there for like advice academically or personally, which I think is a really like positive thing like for me because it's really hard for me to like make decisions without overthinking. And when I have multiple opinions; that helps me make a final decision. I mean, they both help me out in different ways because like Ms. Jonah is like – like, I don't know. Like positive like light. And Dr. Brady is like right, straight to you, like, "Hey, this is like" – she's like the – I mean, Hmm, Dr. Brady's like the real one. Like she's going to tell you like what it is like positive or negative.

Dr. Brady and Ms. Jonah were also mentioned by Allie as a trusted resource and individuals could confide in when they had any type of academic or personal issue. Dr. Brady also came up in my interview with Harry. Harry was the only participant that indicated he was actively considering leaving the institution. He said Dr. Brady was one of a few people on campus that have made him feel like he could actually make something of the experience at PCU.

Challenges Associated with Isolation and Loneliness

A second theme that emerged as students answered questions about their experience at PCU was challenges connected to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The first subtheme came out of students discussing being the only Black person in a class or in various settings on campus. The second subtheme students described was being the only Black person in a major and how that shaped their experience. Several students commented on a desire to see more Black students in their classes and majors. The final subtheme was a feeling that several students in the study described as being the "spokesperson" or having to "prove yourself". This would happen

71

in classes when students would be singled out to address questions from a professor or contribute to a discussion.

   Only Black student in class and on campus. Participants described being the only Black person in their classes and how that shaped their experience. For example, Patty recalled an academic experience during her freshman year and talked about the intimate size of her classes, which was viewed as a positive, but she noticed that she was the only Black student. She said:

> [e]verything was like close knit and then like you could really communicate better with your professors and stuff and with the students. But it was really weird for me because it was like the first time I was like in a setting where I was literally like the only African-American student in the class.

When asked about her academic experience Charlene discussed being the only Black person at times in her classes. She also recounted a situation in which a professor told a joke that made her uncomfortable. She could not recall specifically what the joke was but remembered being offended. She said, "I'm the only Black person in the class. And so, I can't remember, the teacher was talking about something and I kind of was like 'That's a little too much. You can't be saying that'".

   I observed instances where there was only one Black student present. This occurred in campus social space as there could be dozens of students socializing and only one Black student present. Students also described being the only Black student in other settings on campus. For example, Kelly, who is very involved in several organizations on campus, described her experience attending a weekly worship service that is optional for students. She talked about being the only Black female in various contexts as a regular occurrence. Jamie described her feelings in a way that indicated being the only Black student in certain situations caused a great

deal of anxiety. She also talked about how ultimately she turned it into a positive and used it as a

motivating factor:

> I mean, I think this is just like my opinion. One thing that really scared me, the first day coming here, was like being that only one person in that class. And just like a fear of like, "Oh my goodness, like why is that person in the class?" Like, that's just how my mind thinks or whatever. How I adjusted is are they going to like treat me different because I'm the only one in this class or whatever. And then it challenges me to be like, "Hey, let me show them." Like just because I'm the only one in this class, you're already like – they might already be looking down on me like "Oh, there's more of us and one of her." So that challenged me to work harder, to show them that I'm just as good as they are to be in this class.

Only Black student in a major. Emory was a member of the football team when he first

arrived to PCU. After his freshman season he decided to focus on his academics and left the

team. He described the difference between being on the football team and in his major in terms

of diversity by pointing out that it was easier for him to spend time with his team than being

around peers in his major. He was at a gathering of students in his major last spring and noticed

there were no other Black students in the group. Cathy is also in a major that has very few Black

students and talked about her classroom experience and the discomfort she experiences when

certain topics are discussed. For example in the following quote she is referencing a class

discussion about interracial dating:

> And so, today I had a speech and, you know, I had to talk about, you know, the racial things. And I just felt a little uncomfortable because I don't really know where everyone's heads are or I've heard people talk and, you know, they're not really fond of that or they just see things differently. And because I'm, you know. There's only… sometimes, I think there's only about two people – two Black people in my classes like. So we're the only one like sitting there. You know, sometimes it gets a little awkward. I just don't feel like I'm overstepping, even though I do have, you know, my own opinion and I have the freedom of speech. But just sometimes it's uncomfortable.

Spokesperson or "proving yourself". The idea of feeling like a spokesperson came up

in several interviews, this came out of being the only Black student in either a class or other

setting on campus. Nadine talked about being the only Black person in several of her classes. She pointed out that some of her classes have been challenging academically to begin with. She is in a science major and wants to go into the medical field. As such, several of the courses in her course of study are difficult. She described situations in which she felt singled out. Nadine had experienced several instances of feeling singled out when certain subjects came up in discussions. When that happens she feels like she "can't speak on behalf of all Black people" but is expected to do so.

When I asked Allie about her academic experience she talked about what it is like to be the only Black person in several of her classes. She specifically shared feelings she had of being a spokesperson for her race and for proving herself. In three of her classes the previous semester she was the on Black person in the class. She expressed feeling pressure to behave in a certain way and to perform well in the class so that peers and professors would think well of her and Black students in general. She said that she also felt obligated to speak when issues of race or diversity were part of any class discussion. Allie said that she reminds herself frequently that she does not have to prove herself or speak for everyone in her race.

Terry and I had an in-depth exchange about the challenge of being a spokesperson in the classroom and how that makes her feel. She started by stating, "I would say it's kind of uncomfortable sometimes. It's like sometimes I feel targeted. Like, I know last semester, for sure, by a professor". She suggested that there were times in which she felt she was singled out because of her race by the professor to get her thoughts on an issue. She acknowledged that she may be more sensitive to it "because of everything that's going on today with, you know, the whole racial things that's going on in the media, in the news, of course, I would think that way".

74

Perceptions Related to the Way the Institution Practices Faith.

The next theme that emerged from discussions with study participants was their perceptions of how the institution practices faith and how it has shaped their experience. The first subtheme was reported dissatisfaction with the formal mechanisms the institution has in place to nurture their faith. The second subtheme was alternative ways Black students have been able to practice faith in a way that is more comfortable or familiar to them. Another subtheme in this area was reports of personal growth. Students talked about how they had grown in their faith during their time at PCU. A final subtheme was the expressed desire for PCU to create formal ways to practice faith that are more inclusive.

This section includes the terms "chapel", "worship", and "convocation/convo". The terms were used by students interchangeably to describe the formal religious service in which students are required to participate. All students have to earn a certain number of "convocation/convo" credits prior to graduating from PCU. One of the ways they earn credits is to attend these religious services on campus. The students called the services "chapel", "worship", or "convocation/convo".

Dissatisfaction with weekly convocation. When asked about their experience with how PCU creates opportunities to practice faith, several students were critical. The majority of participants reported being dissatisfied and in some cases expressed very strong negative feelings. For example, Jeff expressed concern that religious life on campus is positive in some ways but is also segregated. I observed the students segregating themselves in chapel services. The services were attended by mostly White students and in several instances Black students present would sit together. In another example, Nadine was candid with her feeling about the campus convocation services:

Whereas, you have Convo. I've received all of my convo credits without stepping foot inside Campus Chapel. I've like— for the most part, I've probably went a handful of times. And that's probably because there was someone there I wanted to hear speak actually or, you know, someone was, you know, performing and that was a friend, and that's why I went, or, you know, there was going to be this award or something given out that day type of thing. I never went like willingly. Which is hard to say because it's supposed to be something that, you know, kind of wants to draw you in but it's not for me. I just— I don't like it. I don't really know what about it is that I don't like but I just know I don't like it.

Jerry talked about his personal growth from a faith standpoint and attributed it primarily to his own journey that was not connected to his experience at PCU. When he talked about his feelings related to chapel services offered on campus, he was critical. He said he "hated Convo". Sherry also talked about the benefits to her own personal journey of being at a school that integrates academics and faith. She was also appreciative of community members that have contributed to her personal growth. However, when I asked her directly about formal programming on campus she voiced concerns. She stated, "convo at first was a hassle just especially because as a freshman you have all these classes you have to take. And so, you're trying to get all your credits". She further stated that the campus services are boring and dry. She finished her thoughts by expressing a desire to improve convo by saying:

I think it would've been a lot more beneficial if they had alternated types of worship by having a more traditional service on Tuesday and then more contemporary service on Thursday. Because a lot of students only go to one a week anyway…. But it can be really hard to get yourself to go if that's just not how you worship the Lord.

In responding to questions about her experience with the weekly chapel services on campus Allie indicated that she was turned off by the monotony of the programming. Listening to the same songs every week is a turnoff. The fact that convocation is required and feels forced was a turnoff for some students as well. Cathy, for example, talked about the fact that the style of worship is not what she is used to and sometimes feels like the service is "forced down our throats". She further described services as harmful by indicating some of her friends are required

76

to listen to things they do not believe in. Regarding the music and style of worship I observed

programming that used the same songs on multiple occasions.

Harry described several aspects of the way faith is practiced at PCU that were concerning

to him. He also expressed a dislike for forced religion, rehearsed religion, and called for more

engagement:

> I think— I don't— to me personally, I'm not a fan of rehearsed religion. And I do feel that
> here at PCU, I feel like they promote like this form of rehearsed religion. Like it's always
> prepared months in advance. They know what they're going to sing. They know what
> they're going to do. And I don't feel it's really connecting with student issues or the
> student body as much as it could be because it's so rehearsed. It's so much on a strict
> schedule that they don't open the door or opportunity for students to actually engage
> within the convocation lectures that they have on Tuesday and Thursday.

Alternatives to convocation. Many of the students who voiced dissatisfaction with

weekly convocation found other ways to practice their faith. In some cases, they identified

outlets on campus with like-minded students. In other cases, they found churches or other groups

off campus that met their needs. Emory talked about coming to PCU with the expectation that it

would be a great place to grow in his faith. He spoke about his faith growing in part because of

the people and relationships in the community:

> But when you get to college, I mean, into an institution like PCU, you're blessed to be
> with people that are seeking faith for the first time on their own. And then you're able to
> link with some of the people like that. And that's really how you can grow. And seeing
> what other people came from and how other people were raised spiritually and that kind
> of thing is really the coolest thing. And it kind of ebbs everything together because at the
> end of the day, if you run out of something to talk about, I mean, you know, you can talk
> about faith—

When asked specifically about the religious life on campus and opportunities to grow in his faith

Emory responded by focusing on relationships and his own study of the Bible. He stated that

PCU has provided him with spiritual mentors and equipped him to learn more about his personal

faith. Kelly talked about her faith journey on campus more in terms of relationships outside the

formal programs on campus. She also expressed an appreciation for an institution that merges both academics and faith.

When I asked Albert about religious life and his experience with his faith as it related to PCU, he immediately started talking about Ransom and how great that has been. Ransom is a student led religious service that is organized and conducted outside of any formal campus process. It is voluntary and students do not receive any "convo credits" for participating. He mentioned his involvement as an underclassmen and now as someone in a leadership role. When I asked him specifically about his experience with chapel services available on campus he was much less enthusiastic. He stated, "convo, I really don't like convo. I guess, just the style of it. It reminds me of the old tradition of church that I used to go with my grandma which puts me to sleep". Patty also credited Ransom with creating a space in which she could comfortably practice her faith. She said she appreciated the diversity and openness of the group.

Beth did not find the chapel services on campus appealing. She indicated they are not what she was accustomed to. She has however been able to find outlets off-campus to practice her faith. She has relatives close to campus and initially attended church with them. Through friends on campus she found a local off-campus church she attends with peers from PCU. Tammie found an off-campus outlet as well. She is a part of a home group and has enjoyed it. A home group is a small group that is led by a PCU employee. They meet off-campus in the employee's home weekly and pray, do Bible study, and get to know one another. She indicated that she has developed a very close bond with the family that hosts the group and with fellow students.

Personal growth. A majority of participants also expressed personal growth related to their faith. Occasionally, this growth came from dealing with challenges or overcoming

obstacles. Students also reported religious growth being nurtured through relationships with professors, peers, and other members of the campus community. In other cases, growth came from finding alternative ways to practice faith. Andy serves as an example of one student who was critical of the formal religious activities on campus but also credited his experience at PCU with contributing to his personal growth:

> PCU's kind of actually motivated me to like get back more into my faith because I mean sometimes I slip off and I was like, "Man, I need to pray more or I need to go to church more." And PCU's honestly kind of like a good reminder for me like because everybody here is like probably Christian and like--So it's kind of hard for you not to forget to do something. So I will say PCU has been a good reminder of like staying strong in my faith especially with everything that's going on in the world right now. Like I need to pray more like I want to get more involved. And I feel like PCU just motivates me or like keeps it on my mind so I don't forget it.

When asked about the religious life on campus, Charlene focused on the classroom. She talked about how some of her professors had incorporated religion into the curriculum and how this has shaped her experience in a positive way. She indicated that PCU does a good job with incorporating religion and faith into the overall campus experience noting that some professors "pray before each class and like we'd have a Scripture before each class so it's like that side of it is really good. The spiritual side is really good". She also said, "I don't feel like it gets me away from my own beliefs. I feel like it just strengthens it, if anything….It's been positive".

Tammie also talked about her personal growth regarding her faith and credited one of her professors with encouraging and mentoring her in that area of her experience. Through a relationship with one of her professors she said she has become more familiar with the Bible, has had regular discussions about her faith, and has become more confident in her beliefs. As she talked about their relationship she said, "everything was a big help… it made me more comfortable like with my spiritual life with God like with myself. And so, you know, I started praying more, talking you know, speaking with God more".

79

More inclusive and varied programming. Several students expressed a desire to have

formal campus worship services that are more inclusive. In particular, students frequently

commented on the style of worship music and how off-putting it could be. Kelly identified

concerns about the weekly convos not being as diverse as she would like and offered some

suggestions:

> I think whenever we're in a situation, the things that we are kind of required to do
> whether like convo – it's a great example. I think having more speakers of color or
> having someone that's Black on the worship team can be a brilliant invitation because
> some people don't like being there. And they don't feel like they're included to be there at
> all either because the culture can—Church is the most segregated day— time of our
> normal society. And that's normal. And so, this operates a lot like a White church type
> thing in life. Not as much me but— so I met a lot of people that have been— they're just
> not used to it. And then when you go and you don't see anyone that looks like you on
> stage and you're required to be there every week, it makes it that hard— that much harder
> to like be in a new environment, I think. So like the required stuff having more of like
> snippets of presents to invite people that won't normally be in that situation. Make them
> feel more– not at home but like invite them into a new culture, if that makes sense?

Patty also recommended more diverse programming. In particular she recommended

more variety in the style of music and type of speaker. She said that she would also prefer more

people speak about their spiritual journey and experience as opposed to being talked to in a way

that feels like a lecture. Harry was also not a fan of the weekly campus chapel services. He

thought it might be a good idea to shift the focus to *doing* rather than *listening* by giving students

credit for doing meaningful work in the community.

Experiences with Microaggressions

In response to questions about their experiences on campus several students shared

stories in which they perceived or felt behavior was racist. The incidents were typically subtle

and perhaps unintentional, which are typical of the types of incidents that are described in the

literature as microaggressions. Study participants described incidents that happened in the

classroom either with a professor or with other students. In other cases, behaviors occurred in social settings or other contexts on campus.

Microaggressions in the classroom. Several students identified situations in which they felt like people treated them in ways that were both racist and subtle. Charlene shared a story about a professor making a joke in class. She could not recall exactly what the professor said but she remembered being offended:

> I can't remember like when I went and told my roommate. I was like, I can't even remember. But I just remembered in that moment, I was like, "What?" and I can kind of see like some of the people in the class like looking at me to see like, "Why would he say that? Like there's a Black student in his class right now." And so, I was just like, "That's kind of weird" and, you know, kind of just like shed off from the class. I wasn't like really participating. I was like, "This dude, like he just messed up the whole class." I mean, now I'm not even paying attention. But I don't think he meant it that way because he's just that type of teacher that he was just like— he would just like say things and— I mean, that's how he's been since the beginning so I was like— and I'm not even the type to take stuff and like twist it but I would– at that moment, I kind of was like, "Wow, this-- I don't know about that" like I just "I wish I would remember." And like after the joke, he was like, he went into like talking about other stuff but it was kind of dealing with racial issues. So I can't remember.

An important part of any relationship is knowing someone's name. Nadine talked about having a professor who would not even attempt to say her first name and it was hurtful. She said, "I had one professor who literally just like— he didn't even care to learn my name, granted, I have a hard name. But you didn't even— you didn't try". Nadine also talked about her experience with group projects and why she does not like them. She said, "I hate group projects. But when we're working on them, I'll get overlooked. And it's like, 'I know what I'm talking about if you just listen to me and let me speak, you know. I'll eventually get there'". She elaborated on feeling somewhat left out by talking about an incident with two fellow students. She recalled:

> [t]hen all of a sudden, at one point, the laptop just turned so those two can see it. So I'm just sitting here on the outside like— so, I don't have to do any work like you guys don't

want my input. And it turns out we actually got it wrong. And I actually knew what was going on.

She finished by indicating that behavior like that makes her feel inferior. She said, "it sets me off….but you know, can't go off too much or else, you know, 'angry black woman' so".

Another concern identified by Harry was lack of awareness of the facts with regard to Black people in America. He described the attitudes and comments of some professors troubling:

> But even still, I do find professors say problematic things like that's racially charged here on PCU's campus. For instance, I had an incident where the professor, where she said that, "Everyone is provided equal access to education"— it was just an average class discussion. And she made the comment that, "Yes, everyone is provided equal access but most people just choose not to purse that access to education." And I had to literally– and I got defensive because that's solely not true because when you refer to like urban communities, you can see like the despair between the educational gap that Latinos, Blacks, and persons of color experience within the educations system. And I just feel like a lot of professors here at PCU aren't aware of the hurdles that person of colors or Black people go through when achieving education. It's not so blatantly easy versus for a White person. I think that's one thing that has been misrepresented here at PCU, specifically in the classroom and with engagement with other students.

Microaggressions on campus and socially. Emory noted that sometimes people act differently toward Black students, especially athletes, because they are intimidated, which can prevent interactions that could be constructive. He talked about how some people respond to him and other athletes in ways that make it difficult to build relationships. Emory said, "people are intimidated by some of the athletes". Emory suggested that some people think "he's scary and they're intimidated by him. And then he's just maybe shy or not confident so they never have a conversation". This results in Emory feeling like people avoid him or are not interested in forming relationships.

Jeff also talked about his experience with being ignored and how prevalent it was in his experience. He said, "a lot of times, when you do talk to somebody, well, particularly with me being Black and a lot of people on this campus being White, they'll just keep walking past you, a

lot of the times". He gave a specific example when he stated "one day, I was going to the caf (cafeteria) and this girl, she was walking, I said, 'Hey, how are you doing?' And she's looking at me and kept walking. I was like, 'oh, okay'". Jeff concluded his comment by stating that this was a very common scenario in his experience.

Kelly shared a story about an incident with a fellow student she developed a relationship with at the beginning of the school year. They had enjoyed several previous conversations, but Kelly recalled one conversation they had that made her uncomfortable:

> Yeah, she was sad about her professor because her professor said like something along the lines of like, "Black people are disadvantaged in American society" or something along that. And she was just like, "That wasn't true" or something like that. It made her sad. And so, I was just like, "Okay. Well, what do you think God's trying to teach from having you be in this class?" And she was like, "I don't know." And she started going out on like every type of right – abortion rights, Black people, Black rights - everything. She went– she just talked, and talked, and talked. I was just sitting there. And I— one of those situations where you don't really have to say anything because people aren't going to hear you. She wasn't going to hear me if I said— like if I said "Hi" she would— she's like talk, she's not going to. So I was just like, "Hey, well, this is nice. Do you want to pray about it or something? Like you're having— you seem quite distressed." And she said some hurtful stuff. Yeah, about like all kinds of things. The hurt wasn't going to— I didn't—I just moved on and I'd never talk to her again. I don't even see here anymore.

When asked about his academic experience Albert talked about his struggles academically and how other students has been willing to help. However, he also described how some students and professors have reacted to him. In particular, he had experienced people looking at him in way he described as 'weird' and being intentionally ignored when people walk by him in passing. Students also reported encountering people on campus that made assumptions about them based on skin color. Andy talked about how some individuals on campus presumed that all Black students are at the school to play a sport. He said:

> [o]ne of the big things for me is like a lot of people just kind of perceive like Black students as only being here useful for like sports because like there have been times like a lot of times last semester, and maybe even to the beginning of this semester, people always asked me if I did a sport.

This topic also came up when I asked Erica a general question about her overall experience. She voiced concern about other students on campus presuming Black students are here for sports. She said, "I feel as if when the Whites see the Blacks on campus, they're more so like, 'oh, they play a sport here. Like, they're not here on an educational type thing'".

Tammie identified situations that occurred even with students she considered to be friends. She indicated that sometimes a friend can say something that might not be intended to be offensive but can be hurtful:

> Like, for example, it was me and my two other friends. And they're both White. And we were talking. And then me and my friend were talking and we were like just messing around like, "Oh, like who would win in a fight?" And then the other friend says, "Well, Tammie because she's Black." I'm like, "That means nothing." You know? And she really is not a malicious person at all. She just like literally does not know that that's not okay to say. And that's stereotyping like in the worst way. So I think just like from that standpoint, just like educating— and like I can only speak from like a Black experience, so I'm sure that Hispanics and Asians, like I'm sure that that me or my White friends are like my other Black friends are just— I'm sure that we say things that offend them too and we wouldn't know it just because we don't know that-- or like it's so like these stereotypes are so ingrained in our brains that we don't realize that they're like super hurtful and that they're not okay to say. So I would say education is huge; just like on topics like that. Just relating to people of different races, of different cultures, of different backgrounds just like in a better way.

Reports of Positive Experiences

In every conversation, students talked about aspects of their experiences at PCU that were positive for them. While students discussed challenges related to the way faith is practiced or having experienced various microaggressions on campus, all of the participants mentioned things about their time at PCU that had enriched them in some way. Several students discussed how their experience, as they looked back at it, had been positive overall. Many students reported being introduced to new ideas and new experiences; they described these experiences as avenues to learning and picking up different perspectives. Students also talked about how they had grown

as individuals from their experience at PCU. The final subtheme in this area includes the important role of relationships. In some cases, students talked about an expectation that some of their relationships with peers and faculty would last a lifetime.

Overall. Early on in each interview, I asked students to describe their overall experience as a student at PCU. Several students responded to the prompt in very positive ways. For example, Emory talked about his overall experience being shaped in positive ways by people he had encountered:

> Phenomenal. I've enjoyed it here. Enjoyed the people. I never would've imagined that I would've met the people that I have… To be able to get involved with people in the business school, people in admission. I've just really been able to see and meet a lot of new people.

Joann responded to the question about overall experience in a positive way. She talked about being comfortable at PCU and shared reflections about her roommates and sorority. She stated that while she has experienced social and academic challenges, she has also had many positive experiences with peers in her major and in the larger campus community. When reflecting on her overall experience Kelly described how simply coming on campus makes her feel. She talked about how peaceful her experience has been. She said:

> I just feel like all the problems— like from the area kind of, and I know people in the area, and have a lot of responsibilities in the different parts of the city. But like when I come through the gate, it's like they all vanish. And so, I just love how it's like a little community.

Students also talked about pride in being at such a strong academic institution and the plentiful opportunities to get involved. Nadine expressed appreciation for the prestige of the institution and the variety of opportunities she has been offered. She said, "you tell somebody you go to PCU and they're like, 'What?' Like, Yeah, I can cope in this prestigious school and, you know, succeed. So it's been pretty good". She also talked about the opportunities to get

85

involved by saying that meeting so many new people have left her feeling happy about her overall experience. Similarly, Joann reported:

> PCU gives us so many like great opportunities. Like study abroad and like the International Affairs Committee and stuff like that. And there's like so many different things that we can get involved in that doesn't involve money. And I think that's positive for me and that helps me to get out of my like quiet, shy self to again be more social.

Growth as a person from being a student. Participants reported personal growth in a host of different ways. Some said they became more social, others developed confidence and broadened their interests. When I asked Jeff about his interactions with faculty he talked about going from being disengaged his first couple of years to becoming more comfortable with those relationships. He talked about being disengaged his first couple semesters and making no effort to get to know his professors. He said that he approaches professors much differently now "I've started to like make more connections with my teachers where I can email them on a— like if I needed anything or something like that to help with class. But before, I wasn't trying to do that".

Albert was candid about where he started as a student when he arrived at PCU. He talked about how instrumental the academic support he received was in helping him grow as a student:

> I've struggled academically. It's like crazy hard compared to my high school. You know, I really wasn't expected to go to class in high school so— I mean, I still struggle with going to class. Like it's a struggle. It's a daily thing. I really didn't how to study when I got here…. My academic advisor for athletics, well, she did a great job of helping me get organized. They help me out a lot, too. She helped me, towards the end of my sophomore year, with just, you know, keeping my folder organized. Starting a planner, you know, writing everything out. And then I have to do— that played a big role, too. I noticed a dramatic like improvement in my grades on assignments.

Jerry talked about turning an adverse situation into ultimately a positive thing. He suffered two serious injuries that limited his ability to play basketball. As a result of these injuries, he learned to look at his academic opportunity at PCU differently. He started out as a "C" student. Through his injury and experience at PCU he said:

[t]hat's how I really got focused on school to get me to where I'm like a 3.1, pushing to 3.2 right now… And then, after the two reality checks, I was like, Uh, I'll focus on school then. Forget basketball. And that's why I say it's a blessing and a curse because, you know, I had that reality check to bless me to know that, you know, there's a real world out there. But it's a curse, it's because I had to sit out two years over injury which sucked but it's really helped me a lot.

Patty noted that she was uncertain initially about having a good experience and PCU being a place where she would be comfortable. As she reflected, she said she felt like her time at the institution had been positive and helped her grow as a person. She said her experience has been positive and contributed to her growth as a person. She acknowledged that it has not always been easy stating:

[t]here have been points where it was like difficult but I haven't really felt like any of my experiences here have been bad. I feel like they've all just like helped me grow as a person so. I would say, overall, it's been more—it's been a lot better than I like thought it would be.

Edward talked about making friends at PCU who accepted him for who he is, becoming very close with some of them, and how they have encouraged him to grow. He had people initiate friendships and then he began reaching out to others through those initial relationships. He mentioned becoming best friends with a student who happens to be White. In fact, he had recently returned from this friend's wedding. Edward gave a simple example that really captured how the institution had been a space for him to grow as a person. He said, "when I came to this school, I only liked R&B and Gospel music. Only like all I listened to. And then right now, you can ask me any— I listen to all music now".

Relationships and interactions with professors. Every student reported some type of relationship that contributed to making their experience at PCU a good one. Personal relationships with faculty contributed to Edward's experience in a very positive way. He talked about how much it meant that a professor from his freshman year remembered him:

I went and saw one of my freshman professors a couple of weeks ago and he remembered me. He remembered what we talked about. I caught up with him. That's the coolest thing about PCU is even as an African-American student I'm able to just interact with any of my professors at any time.

Edward also commented on how those relationships positively impacted him stating, "when you're able to have these good relationships with your professors, you're really able to maximize your learning and enjoy the experience even better. And that's what's been— that's been awesome".

Roy's perspective was that some of the relationship's quality with professors was the student's responsibility. He suggested that if students did their part professors were more than willing to meet them halfway. He stated, "I've seen equal treatment from all of my professors. And wanting to work with me, willing to work with me, and— I really don't have any complaints with the faculty".   Joann talked about her overall experience with professors by mentioning the willingness of professors to invest time with her outside of class. Tammie also talked at length about her relationship with faculty. Their willingness to make her a priority and the small classroom size contributed to her positive experience. She stated:

[b]eing here in a small class with like less than 20 people and being able to just have a conversation with my professor who knows my name, who knows me and want to be my mentor, that's like a plus. Like, that's good so. I love it.

Sherry indicated that sometimes in class she was reluctant to speak up but appreciated that some faculty members encouraged her at times to do so. She said, "they're all just so great. And I love my professors". Beth also talked specifically about academics and acknowledged that it was challenging for her, but she appreciated support from her professors. She said "I do appreciate my professors. They're all very open to, you know, office hours. And they're willing to help me when I do need it so I can't complain about my professors at all". Patty noted how professors had taken the time to give her advice, positive feedback, and encouragement:

Because I've had some professors, they're like, "Oh, yeah. You should minor in this because you've been so well." Like I used to have— I've never really had that before but a lot of my professors have literally like wrote notes on like my assignment and stuff, like encouraging me. Like, "Oh, you're really good at writing. Like you should continue doing that. Or you're really good at Spanish, like you should continue to do like a minor and stuff." And I just never really had like that kind of support. It was just like, you know, you get stuff graded and then that's it. And then you move on to the next class. But that was one thing I really liked about PCU that still continues on. Like I didn't do so well on a test like last week and my professor literally wrote on there like, "I know you understand this stuff. Don't be like discouraged by, you know, any low grades and stuff." And so, just to have that, it's been really nice.

One of the more critical students I interviewed was Harry. He pointed out several things about his experience that were concerning. He also described the importance of professors who were available and engaging. He talked about his first semester when he started to develop a relationship with his political science professor, "She was very welcoming. We had some of the same ideas. She would like— she would pull my thoughts from deep within and like help me put them on paper. So like we developed like that personal communication basis". Harry later mentioned how instrumental that this professor was in shaping his future plans. He said that he had recently spoken with her about furthering his education and seeing what he wanted to do:

So she's very open and welcoming about me just coming to her office hours and just to talk about my current experience here at PCU or what I'm trying to pursue as a student in higher education and what route should I take as a student.

Edward shared his thoughts on his professors in general. He suggested that PCU took great care in hiring professors who cared about the students beyond the classroom. He voiced appreciation for having teachers that PCU chose very wisely. He said, "like to have teachers that like grow and like encourage students to like offer them opportunities or like go out of their way" has been instrumental is his experience in a positive way. Edward also talked about professors in his major, plans for graduate school at PCU, and how he had become very close to

89

some of his faculty members. He finished by indicating he had become so close to one of his professors that they had made plans to attend a NASCAR event together.

Summary of Results

In summary, this chapter presented the results of this study. Five themes emerged and were reported. Themes included importance of relationships and community to the student experience, challenges associated with isolation and loneliness, perceptions related to the way the institution practices faith, perceived experiences with microaggressions, and positive experiences that have led to personal growth. Each of the themes included subthemes that further informed each broad theme. The next chapter includes a discussion of how the results address my research questions, implications this study has for higher education practitioners, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first purpose of this chapter is to discuss how my findings address the research question and four research sub-questions: (1) How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience academics? (2) How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support services? (3) How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social life? (4) How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities? This chapter also includes implications for higher education professionals. I conclude this chapter by making recommendations for further research.

Research Question 1: How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience academics?

There were three areas in the data that addressed this research question. The first subtheme deals with relationships and interactions with professors. Each study participant reported relationships with faculty members that contributed to his or her academic experience. The second subtheme that addresses this research question deals with participants discussing being the only Black student in theirs classes at times. The third subtheme that addresses this question is microaggressions that participants reported experiencing in the classroom. Several students identified situations in which they felt like people treated them in ways that were racist albeit subtle.

Relationships and Interactions with Professors

Relationships and interactions with professors is a subtheme that emerged from the data and helps to answer the first research sub-question. Students all discussed relationships with faculty members and how those relationships shaped their academic experiences. This finding affirms Guiffrida's (2006) position on the importance of community and relationships for Black students. Based on student responses, it was very clear that faculty can play a prominent role in how students experience academics. Several students shared stories of various ways faculty members were proactive in creating relationships with them and how these relationships created pathways for healthy dialogue. Not only can relationships with faculty members help in specific classes, they can also help students when making important decisions such as academic major selection or career path.

Students talked about the importance of faculty availability and its relationship to academic success. Positive relationships with professors helped students maximize the learning experience and enjoy the process. Participants also described most professors at PCU as supportive and helpful. Participants indicated that when a class was difficult for them professors were willing to spend time with them outside of class and in some cases even outside of standard office hours. Similarly, participants discussed the value of receiving unsolicited contact from professors. Students said they appreciated this level of effort on the part of faculty members because it showed faculty members' concern for students. Having professors that really cared about them was encouraging and gave them confidence. Participants also talked about the importance of professors getting to know them personally as a way to enhance the academic experience.

Being the Only Black Student

When asked about academic experiences, several students discussed occasionally being the only Black person in their classes. In some instances, participants reported being the only Black student in every class for a given semester. For many, this situation created situations that made Black students feel uncomfortable. For example, participants reported being uncomfortable when certain topics were discussed such as politics, history, and race. Oftentimes, Black students did not want to respond to questions because they were concerned of the perceptions of other students or concerned that classmates might disagree and make judgements about them. According to participants, being asked about race made them uncomfortable particularly when they did not have close relationships with classmates or know them well.

This dynamic resulted in students feeling like they had to be a spokesperson for their race and to prove themselves. Black students also said that they felt targeted or singled out when professors sought their thoughts on an issue or topic. This finding is consistent with the literature related to issues of Black students at PWIs feeling like outsiders in the classroom, being the only Black students in class, and having difficulty sharing experiences with other learners (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Luedke, 2017; McClain, 2014). Moreover, it is also not uncommon for Black students to feel a sense of alienation in the classroom because of their race (Gregory, 2000). Some of the barriers to participating in class discussions among Black students included the concern about being viewed as an authoritative voice to represent their race, the fear of reinforcing negative stereotypes with a poor comment or answer, or coming across as angry or uninformed (Larnell, 2016; Smith et al., 2007; Seward & Guiffrida, 2012). Being the only Black student in the classroom created challenges for study participants that were consistent with the research literature.

Microaggressions in the Classroom

The final area in the data that addresses the first research question is responses related to microaggressions in the classroom. Participants reported facing stereotypes such as other students presuming they were athletes and not being at PCU for academics. Several participants talked about instances in which faculty members or fellow classmates attempted to be humorous but made comments that they found to be insensitive or hurtful. Participants also expressed frustration that faculty members had difficulty learning and saying their names. In one instance, the professor simply addressed the student by her last name. This participant regarded this behavior as hurtful and suggested that it damaged any potential relationship that she and the professor might have had. Another concern identified was lack of awareness of the facts regarding Black people in America. For instance, Harry reported an incident in which a professor said, "everyone is provided equal access but most people just choose not to purse that access to education". To Harry, this comment was highly offensive and eroded his trust and respect for that professor.

In the research literature, previous authors have suggested that some faculty members are surprised when Black students communicate well in class. Additionally, faculty members can be suspicious when Black students demonstrate strong academic performance (Harper, 2012c). While that sentiment was not explicitly stated by participants, participants reported presumptions by peers that they were not as academically prepared as their White counterparts. Participants also talked about experiences with group projects and how they are not included in the same way as other students; Black students reported feeling left out or overlooked. Participants expressed frustration with not being able to share ideas and input that would be helpful and excluded from decision-making.

Research Question 2: How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support services?

Two areas of the data addressed the second research question. While not necessarily located in one of the themes reported in Chapter 4, several participants mentioned specific services and staff members on campus that contributed to their experience. Within faculty and staff relationships, participants discussed how staff members can play a prominent role in their experience. Several students recounted stories of ways in which staff members connected with them and how important those relationships became to them in shaping their experience.

Services and Staff on Campus

Students reported positive experiences with a range of support services on campus. Several students talked about the atmosphere, quality staff, and resources available in the library. Roy even noted that the library was more welcoming than other spaces on campus. Students were also complimentary of the Financial Aid Office and their staff. The Communication Resource Center (CRC) is a service on campus that provides assistance with writing and speeches. Several participants mentioned the CRC as an excellent resource especially during their freshmen year when they were adjusting to college-level writing. Student athletes also complimented the academic support they received.

PCU also offers free tutoring through the Academic Success Center. Several participants talked about the importance of tutoring services. They reported that tutoring sessions helped them learn, pass their courses, and in some cases meet other students. Another popular service that students spoke highly of was the Career Development Center (CDC). In some cases, the CDC helped students identify their major and locate internships. In other cases, the CDC helped students write their resume, practice interviews, and secure jobs. The Office of Diversity was

also popular among participants as an important service center on campus. The Office of Diversity provides students with a welcoming environment and space to seek advice, share concerns, and interact the staff. Regardless of whether they used specific services, participants acknowledged that PCU had adequate support services to meet their needs.

Staff Relationships

With regard to questions about their experience with support services on campus several students talked about specific staff members. While the services themselves were important, the individuals providing the services were what made the most difference for several participants. What mattered to students was the way staff members engaged with, related to, and communicated with them.

In some cases, staff members made students feel welcomed, appreciated, and special. In other cases, students and staff members developed close relationships that became instrumental to their experience. These relationships played a role in creating a well-balanced experience for students. For several participants, these relationships also contributed to retention and persistence.

One example of a staff member making a student feel welcomed came from Tammie. She identified an admissions counselor who made her feel particularly special when he reached out to her and wrote her a personal letter. His letter conveyed to her that she was really wanted at PCU because she is an amazing person, and the letter articulated specific things about Tammie that this person found amazing. The admission counselor made it clear to Tammie that she was wanted at PCU for what she could offer to the university. Several student athletes also talked about the role of coaches in recruiting them, building relationships with them, and contributing to their experience in a positive way. For example, Albert said that he would have transferred had it

not been for a close relationship with his strength coach. Another support area that emerged among participants was the Office of Diversity. The office is operated by one faculty member and one professional staff member. Both of these individuals were repeatedly praised by participants as contributing to their experience in a positive way.

Research Question 3: How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social life?

Research question 3 was addressed by three subthemes in the data. The first subtheme dealt with peer relationships. Nearly all of the participants discussed relationships with peers in describing their social experience. The second subtheme was being the only Black student in various settings on campus. Whether in formal organizations or at informal gatherings on campus, participants frequently found themselves to be the only Black student present. The final subtheme that addressed this question was microaggressions on campus and in social settings. Several students talked about various comments and behaviors they perceived to be racist that adversely impacted their experience.

Peer Relationships

Relationships with other students was frequently cited as a key aspect of having a positive experience at PCU. This finding is congruent with the research literature regarding Black students and the importance of peer relationships. Peer relationships on campus can contribute to building social networks, providing informal mentoring, and serving as outlets to safely share feelings (Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Quaye & Harper, 2007). One type of peer relationship that student athletes expressed as very powerful in terms of creating a sense of community was the bond they developed with their teammates. Several participants reported that teammates were extremely important to their experience and they likely would not have stayed at PCU without those relationships. Student athletes also used "family" terms to describe

97

teammates, such as "brothers" and "sisters". Student athletes said that they leaned heavily on one another for support, friendship, and encouragement.

Several participants cited peer relationships as the most important part of their positive experience at PCU One formal way that participants developed relationships with peers was through mentoring. In some cases, mentoring relationships were initiated through formal programs directed at assisting freshmen during their first year. Several students described how these relationships evolved over time into close friendships. Whether relationships resulted from formal programs or happened organically, participants talked about how important they were to their experiences. Meaningful peer relationships created a sense of community that helped Black students feel connected to the campus.

Being the Only Black Student in Various Settings

Black students at PCU were frequently the only Black student or one of very few in various settings on campus. Several participants described being the only Black student in formal and informal social settings on campus. This was especially noticeable for students who were involved and participated in multiple programs and organizations on campus. Students indicated that unless it was an organization designed for minorities, attendance was almost exclusively White. Students acknowledged that this situation was not necessarily a bad thing as it presented them with opportunities to create relationships with White students and students of other races and ethnicities. It also provided them opportunities to grow in other ways such as being exposed to how others think, communicate, and socialize.

Some participants discussed feelings of anxiety or a lack of confidence when they were in those situations. Consequently, they were not as willing to speak in some social settings, which they said could be interpreted by others as disinterest. To offset this, Black students at PCU

tended to congregate when they had the opportunity. I observed this behavior in settings such as the cafeteria and worship services and in the social space at the center of the campus. When discussing the issue of being the only Black student in certain settings, a few student athletes identified the importance of their sport as a place they felt most comfortable and confident. Albert even referred to practice as "recess". He talked about how practice was a time for him to let loose and be himself. This type of outlet was central for him having a healthy social experience.

Microaggressions on Campus and in Social Settings

Participants suggested that other students on campus occasionally behaved differently toward them because of their race. A few student athletes also observed that other students were sometimes intimidated by them because of their color and size. Responses to them ranged from other students avoiding them in informal settings to not including them in social outings. Participants suggested that this type of behavior can make building relationships across racial lines challenging in some cases. Another finding related to student athletes was the stereotype that Black students were at PCU to play sports. Several students in the study who were not athletes reported that people presumed they were athletes and not at PCU primarily for academics.

Participants also noted that fellow students occasionally made comments that were likely not intentionally offensive, but hurtful nonetheless. One example of this was students rejecting the notion that Blacks are disadvantaged in the United States and ignoring facts to argue this point with Black students. Several students recounted similar conversations that resulted in White students debating in ways that were offensive. Participants also recalled social situations that resulted in a peer making comments based on stereotypes.

Other specific examples of microaggressive behavior that came up in several interviews was the response of White students to the election of Donald J. Trump. Participants shared that students from all races decided to come together in solidarity to pray in a large social space on campus. The group included Black, White, and international students, as well as others. Their objective was to pray for the new president and the country. The large prayer circle was physically disrupted, and White students made remarks that were hurtful. Comments included but were not limited to "y'all just mad because Trump got elected", "don't be trying to pray now because he's going to send you back to where you came from", and "he don't care about y'all Black people so y'all shouldn't even be here".

Research Question 4: How do Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities?

The final research question was addressed by three sections in the data.

Dissatisfaction with Weekly Convocation

When asked about their experience with how PCU creates opportunities to practice faith, almost every participant was critical. The majority of participants reported feeling dissatisfied and in some cases expressed very strong negative feelings. Participants voiced several reasons about why they did not like the formal weekly chapel service. Some students indicated that they did not like chapel service because it was required and felt "forced" to them. In many instances, Black students attended worship services unwillingly to earn "convo credits". Students also described the services as feeling segregated. This statement was confirmed through my own observation of five separate chapel services. The majority of students in attendance were White. Non-White students tended to group themselves together based on race or ethnicity.

Another concern that participants voiced was the style of worship, including the style of music. Students mentioned not liking the music and also hearing the same songs presented in the

same way over and over. A majority of participants talked about coming from Christian homes and attending church as a regular part of growing up. The music they were accustomed to was not a part of the services at PCU. Participants also called the services at PCU "dry" and "boring". Several of them said they preferred religious services that were less formal and more energetic. A few students even mentioned falling asleep or doing other activities during chapel services. There were several strong opinions voiced about the weekly chapel services on campus. One of the strongest opinions was from Jerry who said, "I hated Convo. I hated it. I hated it with passion".

Alternatives to Convocation

Many of the students who voiced dissatisfaction with weekly convocation found other ways to practice their faith. In some cases, they identified outlets on campus to worship with like-minded students. Several participants mentioned Ransom, a student led group that meets weekly in the evenings. Students described these worship services as energetic with a variety of music styles and speakers who were engaging and dynamic. Another alternative mentioned by several participants was Reign. Reign is another student-led campus ministry that focuses on providing space for students to freely worship in whatever way is most comfortable to them. Participants said that they enjoyed Reign because of its informality as well as the variety of music and speakers, especially as compared to weekly convocation services.

In other cases, participants found churches or other groups off campus that met their needs. Several participants attended local churches that have services more consistent with their previous experiences. Off-campus services allowed these students to practice their faith in a way that was both familiar and comfortable. Several participants had also become involved with small groups that meet off campus for Bible study and prayer. Participants talked about enjoying

the small groups as they provide a setting for close relationships to form, a safe space to ask questions, and an environment where different ideas about religion can be expressed without fear.

Personal Growth

The majority of participants expressed personal growth related to their faith. In some cases, personal growth resulted from dealing with personal challenges or overcoming some type of adversity. Personal challenges included injuries, missing home, lacking confidence, feeling unprepared academically, and wanting to quit. Several students talked about the role of their faith in working through these challenges. While the way faith is practiced at PCU was unappealing for many Black students, participants viewed the prominence of religion as a positive. Several students talked about how the environment reminded them that faith is important. Even though it may not be practiced in a preferred way, the environment challenged them to keep faith as a priority in their life. Students suggested that it was difficult for them to forget about that part of their life at a place like PCU.

Participants also talked about religious growth being nurtured through a variety of relationships with professors, peers, or other members of the campus community. Professors nourished faith by modeling it in their classrooms. Several study participants had experienced professors incorporating religion into their courses in positive ways. Others mentioned appreciating it when professors prayed before or during class. It was also a common experience for professors to include biblical passages in lectures and class discussions. In other cases personal growth came from finding alternative ways to practice faith through student led groups or off-campus.

Implications for Practice

There are at least four implications from the results that are important for PCU and higher education professionals that work there. Implications are connected to research findings. The first two implications are congruent with the Guiffrida's (2016) modified SIM model. The first implication is connected to findings regarding the importance of peer relationships and their critical role in creating a positive experience for Black students at CCCU member institutions. The second implication is that relationships with faculty and staff are powerful and can shape a student's experience in profound ways. The third implication for practice is related to participants being the only Black student in a class or in an academic major. The final implication is connected to the religious component of campus life at PCU and findings regarding dissatisfaction with convocation. Black students were not satisfied, and practitioners at CCCU institutions should take note. I further describe each of these implications in the following section.

First, the majority of participants in this study talked about the importance of relationships in shaping their experience. There are several ways practitioners can work help Black students at CCCU schools build relationships and make connections. Schools that already have peer mentoring programs in place might continue to find ways to make these connections stronger. Finding mentors who are open to developing personal relationships with Black students beyond what is required is key. Colleges could also continue to find ways to create space for students to foster friendships across color lines. Instead of mandatory chapel services, students could earn credits for long-term service projects where they work together and get to know one-another. Schools like PCU could also consider incorporating a broader style of music and food at

campus social gatherings. This might result in more Black students feeling welcomed to attend events targeted at the whole student body.

Second, and perhaps even more powerful than peer relationships, is the influence of faculty and staff on Black students at a school like PCU. Participants indicated that race, gender, and age were not as important to them as finding someone who conveyed a sincere interest in them. Interest was demonstrated by faculty and staff by getting to know students, making time for them, reaching out unexpectedly, and showing up at events in which the student was participating. This type of investment built trust and respect. Students sought out those faculty and staff when they needed advice or counsel on a range of issues. For some students, these relationships made the difference in the student withdrawing or persisting. It is critical for practitioners to educate other professionals on their campuses regarding the power of these relationships.

Third, it is critical that practitioners better understand the perspective of students being the only person from their race in a class or academic major. There are several things that can be done to address this issue. The first is to recruit for more diversity so that Black students do not feel alone or isolated in academic settings. Practitioners might also recruit a diverse faculty so that students are able to engage with both peers and professors who come from varied backgrounds. Another important component to this issue is education. Practitioners could be intentional about educating faculty members regarding challenges for students who are the only person from their race in a classroom or academic major. For example, if a class has one Black student, professors could be mindful that calling on that student to address certain issues like diversity or race can make the student feel uncomfortable.

The final implication for practitioners at CCCU institutions is to understand that Black students want to practice their faith in ways that are familiar. Issues related to religion can be more challenging at institutions like PCU as compared to public institutions where students can chose whether or not to participate in campus sponsored religious activities. Ignoring preferences and forcing Black students to participate in gatherings they do not enjoy can actually push them away. There are several things Christian colleges can do. If students are required to earn a certain number of credits related to participating in religious activities, institutions could broaden the range of options that can be counted such as service projects. Attendance and engagement in local churches could also be included in meeting institutional requirements. It is also important for leaders at CCCU institutions to create ways for students to openly discuss how they are experiencing religious activities on campus. This open dialogue would allow Black students to provide suggestions regarding their preferences that could be incorporated to make religious experiences more enjoyable. CCCU colleges and universities need to address faith preferences so that what is intended to nurture students does not instead cause frustration and resentment.

Further Research

This topic could be understood further through additional research related to the four articulated implications for practice. The first implication regarding the role of peer relationships in shaping the experience of Black students warrants further study. More research on the effectiveness of formal programs such as peer mentoring and first-year experiences could be helpful for practitioners. Researchers could especially investigate different approaches to build lasting relationships that persist beyond the boundaries of formal programs. It might also be

helpful for researchers to incorporate specific contemporary issues such as social media and technology and their role in shaping relationships for modern students.

The second implication regarding the role of relationships between members of the campus faculty and Black students seems to be a critical component in shaping student experiences and needs to be better understood. A study that identifies faculty members who have had success creating relationships and seeking to understand how they do so would make an important contribution to the literature. Another way to approach understanding this better would be to study successful Black students and incorporate the perspectives of faculty members.

The third implication researchers need to better understand is the perspective of students being the only person from their race in a class or academic major. Future researchers could approach this topic in a variety of ways. The first would be to investigate how to encourage Black students who are isolated in classroom settings feel more included. Researchers could also seek to better understand from the perspective of Black students particular instances and circumstances that made them feel excluded or singled-out. It might also be helpful to include roundtable or group discussion to supplement one-on-one interviews.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to study how Black students want to practice their faith at CCCU institutions. More qualitative research on the religious aspect of Black student experiences at Christian colleges needs to be done. This topic was only one aspect of the current study. It was also the topic that elicited the strongest and most consistent negative feedback. A study that further explores the student religious experience, includes the perspective of campus practitioners, and incorporates feedback from administrators, would be a significant contribution to the extant literature. It would be helpful for practitioners to know if the concerns voiced by students in this study are shared by Black students at other private Christian colleges.

Future studies might also include questions focused on how students choose to attend Christian colleges and whether they fully understand what institutional religious practices will be like.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to better understand how Black students experienced a CCCU member institution. I accomplished this objective through a descriptive case study that included in depth interviews with 22 Black students, short follow-up interviews with each participant, and field observations of students in various settings on campus. Study findings indicated that Black students at PCU faced a number of academic and social challenges. They relied on relationships with peers, faculty, and staff to help navigate these challenges. In many cases, participants were able to look back on their challenges in constructive and positive ways.

Findings also showed that Black students at PCU were turned off by weekly convocation services. The formal religious activities that are required and presumed by the institution to be nurturing had the opposite effect for many Black students. Black students were turned off by the style of worship and in particular the type of music that was central to the services. Many of them coped with campus convocations by seeking other religious outlets on campus and in the local community. Most study participants reported being Christian but not growing up experiencing religion in the formal way practiced at PCU.

A better understanding of how Black students experienced this CCCU institution can help practitioners create programs and initiatives that improve student experiences. Educating faculty and staff regarding the importance of relationships with Black students should be a priority. Regardless of race, gender, or age, faculty and staff who are informed and caring can make a significant difference in the experiences of Black students. This study also identified opportunities for CCCU institutions to reconsider how religious services on campus are

presented. Mandatory religious services that students have to attend on a regular basis should consider students' varied expectations from different faith traditions. Planning services that are more inclusive can be more welcoming to Black students but could also enrich the religious experiences of all students.

REFERENCES

Ackerman-Barger, K., & Hummel, F. (2015). Critical race theory as a lens for exploring inclusion and equity in nursing education. *Journal of Theory Construction & Testing, 19*(2), 39-46.

Allen, J., & Nichols, C. (2017). Do you hear me? Student voice, academic success and retention. *Student Success*, *8*(2), 123. doi:10.5204/ssj.v8i2.387

Allen, W., Epps, E., & Haniff, N. (1991). *College in black and white: African American students in predominantly white and in historically black public universities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2015). *Enhancing diversity in nursing.* Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Ancis, J., Sedlacek, W., & Mohr, J. (2000). Student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*(2), 180-185.

Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Armstrong, C. (2015). *Measuring the educational outcomes of Southern Baptist universities: A comparison to other CCCU institutions, catholic institutions, and nonsectarian institutions* (Doctoral dissertation). Azusa, CA: Azusa Pacific University.

Ash, A., & Schreiner, L. (2016). Pathways to success for students of color in Christian colleges: The role of institutional integrity and sense of community. *Christian Higher Education, 15*(1-2), 38-61.

Asplund, L. (2009). Understanding the role of faith in decisions to persist in college for first-generation black male students. *Christian Perspectives in Education, 3*(1), 1-14.

Astin, A. (1985). Involvement: The cornerstone of excellence. *Change, 17*, 34-39.

Astin, A. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), 518-529.

Astin, A. (2016). 'Spirituality' and 'religiousness' among American college students. *About Campus, 20*(6), 16-22.

Astin, A., Astin, H., & Lindholm, J. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A., & Oseguera, L. (2004). The declining "equity" of American higher education. *Review of Higher Education, 27*(3), 321-341.

Astin, A. W. (2004). Why spirituality deserves a central place in liberal education. *Liberal Education, 90*(2), 34-41.

Astin, A. W., & Schroeder, C. (2003). *What matters to Alexander Astin?* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bahr, P. (2010). Preparing the underprepared: An analysis of racial disparities in postsecondary mathematics remediation. *The Journal of Higher Education, 81*(2), 209-237. doi:10.1353/jhe.0.0086

Barker, M., & Avery, J. (2012). The impact of an institutional black male leadership initiative on engagement and persistence; *College Student Affairs Journal, 30*(2), 73-87.

Bartlett, T. (2005). Religious views vary by race, survey finds. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 52*(8), A38.

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bimper, A. (2015). Lifting the veil: Exploring colorblind racism in black student athlete experiences. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 39*(3), 225-243. doi:10.1177/0193723513520013

Bimper, A. (2017). Mentorship of black student-athletes at a predominantly white American university: Critical race theory perspective on student-athlete development. *Sport, Education and Society, 22*(2), 175-193. doi:10.1080/13573322.2015.1022524

Boatman, A., & Long, B. T. (2016). Does financial aid impact college student engagement? *Research in Higher Education, 57*(6), 653-681. doi:10.1007/s11162-015-9402-y

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2002). The linguistics of color blind racism: How to talk nasty about blacks without sounding "racist". *Critical Sociology, 28*(1), 41-64. doi:10.1163/156916302320277592

Bourke, B. (2016). Meaning and implications of being labeled a predominantly white institution. *College & University, 9*(13), 12-18.

Bowman, N. (2012). Structural diversity and close interracial relationships in college. *Educational Researcher, 41*(4), 133-135. doi:10.3102/0013189X12439934

Bowman, N., & Park, J. (2014). Interracial contact on college campuses: Comparing and contrasting predictors of cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship. *The Journal of Higher Education, 85*(5), 660-690. doi:10.1353/jhe.2014.0029

Brooks, C. (2012). Retrospective understandings: Individual-collective influences on high achieving black students at a predominantly white institution of higher education. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research, 6*(3), 123-144.

Bryant, A. N., & Astin, H. S. (2008). The correlates of spiritual struggle during the college years. *Journal of Higher Education, 79*(1), 1-27.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015a). Educational attainment, employment, and unemployment among African Americans. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/educational-attainment-employment-and-unemployment-among-african-americans.htm

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015b). Median weekly earnings by educational attainment in 2014. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/median-weekly-earnings-by-education-gender-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm

Cabrera, A., Nora, A., Terenzini, P., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between white students and African-American students. *The Journal of Higher Education, 70*(2), 134-160.

Cannon, M., & Morton, C. (2015). God consciousness enacted: Living, moving, and having my being in Him. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 39*(2), 147-156.

Carey, K. (2008). *Graduation rate watch: Making minority student success a priority.* Washington, DC: Education Sector.

Carter-Francique, A., Hart, A., & Cheeks, G. (2015). Examining the value of social capital and social support for black student-athletes' academic success. *Journal of African American Studies, 19*(2), 157-177. doi:10.1007/s12111-015-9295-z

Castellanos, J., & Jones, L. (2003). *The majority in the minority: Expanding the representation of Latina/o faculty, administrators and students in higher education* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

CCCU. (2004). *A significant initiative: Advancing intercultural competencies.* Retrieved from http://beta.cccu.org/professional_development/resource_library/2002/a_significant_initiative_advancing_intercultural_competencies2004

Clarke, C., & Antonio, A. (2012). Rethinking research on the impact of racial diversity in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(1), 25-50. doi:10.1353/rhe.2012.0060

Cohen, G., & Garcia, J. (2008). Identity, belonging, and achievement: A model, interventions, implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17*(6), 365-369. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00607.x

Coleman, M., Chapman, S., & Wang, D. (2013). An examination of color-blind racism and race-related stress among African American undergraduate students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 39*(5), 486-504. doi:10.1177/0095798412469226

Collins, P. (2005). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. New York: Routledge.

Constantine, M., Miville, M., Warren, A., Gainor, K., & Lewis-Coles, M. (2006). Religion, spirituality, and career development in African American college students: A qualitative inquiry. *The Career Development Quarterly, 54*(3), 227-241. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2006.tb00154.x

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five traditions* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Dancy, T. (2011). Colleges in the making of manhood and masculinity: Gendered perspectives on African American males. *Gender and Education, 23*(4), 477-495. doi:10.1080/09540253.2010.508454

Dancy, T. (2012). *Brother code: Manhood and masculinity among African American men in college*. Charlotte, NC: IAP - Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Davis, J. (1998). Cultural capital and the role of historically black colleges and universities in educational reproduction. In K. Freeman (Ed.), *African American culture and heritage in higher education research and practice* (pp. 143-153). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Delgado, R., Stefancic, J., & Harris, A. (2016). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York: NYU Press.

Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: NYU Press.

DiCicco Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education, 40*(4), 314-321. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x

Dougherty, K., & Huyser, K. (2008). Racially diverse congregations: Organizational identity and the accommodation of differences. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*(1), 23-43. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00390.x

Eberle-Sudre, K., Welch, M., Nichols, A. H., & Trust, E. (2015). *Rising tide: Do college grad rate gains benefit all students?* Washington, DC: Education Trust.

Eckersley, R. (2007). Culture, spirituality, religion and health: Looking at the big picture. *Medical Journal of Australia, 186*(10 Suppl.), S56.

Edwards, A. (2000). Community mothering: The relationship between mothering and the community work of black women. *Journal of Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, 2*(2), 87-100.

Emerson, M., & Chai Kim, K. (2003). Multiracial congregations: An analysis of their development and a typology. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 42*(2), 217-227. doi:10.1111/1468-5906.00174

Emerson, M., & Smith, C. (2000). *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ensign, J., & Woods, A. M. (2014). Strategies for increasing academic achievement in higher education. *JOPERD: The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, *85*(6), 17-22.

Fitzgibbon, W. (2007). Institutional racism, pre-emptive criminalisation and risk analysis, *46*(2), 128-144. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2311.2007.00461.x

Fletcher, A., Williams, P., Beacham, T., Elliott, R., Northington, L., Calvin, R., Davis, S. (2003). Recruitment, retention and matriculation of ethnic minority nursing students: A University of Mississippi school of nursing approach. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 10*(4), 128-133.

Flowers, L. (2004). Examining the effects of student involvement on African American college student development. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(6), 633-654. doi:10.1353/csd.2004.0067

Ford, K., & Malaney, V. (2012a). "I now harbor more pride in my race": The educational benefits of inter- and intraracial dialogues on the experiences of students of color and multiracial students. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(1), 14-35.

Fries-Britt, S., & Griffin, K. (2007). The black box: How high-achieving Blacks resist stereotypes about Black Americans. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(5), 509-524.

Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2001). Facing stereotypes: A case study of black students on a white campus. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(5), 420-429.

Giles, M., & Hughes, R. (2009). CRiT walking race, place, and space in the academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(6), 687-696. doi:10.1080/09518390903333939

Goings, R. (2017, Nontraditional black male undergraduates: A call to action. *Adult Learning, 28*, 121-124. doi:10.1177/1045159515595045

Greenfield, G., Keup, J., & Gardner, J. (2013). *Developing and sustaining successful first-year programs: A guide for practitioners* (1st ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Greenstone, M., Looney, A., Patashnik, J., & Yu, M. (2013). *Thirteen economic facts about social mobility and the role of education.* Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/THP_13EconFacts_FINAL pdf

Gregory, S. (2000). Selected innovations in higher education designed to enhance the racial climate for students of color in predominately white colleges and universities. Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association;* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED442441.pdf

Griffin, K., Cunningham, E., & Mwangi, C. (2016). Defining diversity: Ethnic differences in Black students' perceptions of racial climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9*(1), 34-49. doi:10.1037/a0039255

Guiffrida, D. (2004). How involvement in African American student organizations supports and hinders academic achievement. *NACADA Journal, 24*(1-2), 88-98.

Guiffrida, D. (2005). To break away or strengthen ties to home: A complex issue for African American college students attending a predominantly white institution. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*(1), 49-60. doi:10.1080/10665680590907864

Guiffrida, D. (2006). Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory. *The Review of Higher Education, 29*(4), 451-472. doi:10.1353/rhe.2006.0031

Harper, S. (2012a). *Black male students in public colleges and universities.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved from https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu.equity/files/publications/bmss.pdf

Harper, S. (2012b). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(1), 9-29. doi:10.1353/rhe.2012.0047

Harper, S. R. (2012c). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania , Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Harper, S. (2013). Am I my brother's teacher? Black undergraduates, racial socialization, and peer pedagogies in predominantly white postsecondary contexts. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 183-211.

Harper, S. (2014). (Re)setting the agenda for college men of color: Lessons learned from a 15-year movement to improve black male student success. In R. Williams, R. Teranishi & F. Hrabowski (Eds.), *Men of color in higher education: New foundations for developing models for success* (pp. 116-143). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Harper, S., & Davis, C. H. F., III. (2012). They (don't) care about education: A counternarrative on black male students' responses to inequitable schooling. *Educational Foundations, 26*(1-2), 103-120.

Harper, S., Davis, R., Jones, D., McGowan, B., Ingram, T., & Platt, C. (2011). Race and racism in the experiences of black male resident assistants at predominantly white universities. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*(2), 180-200. doi:10.1353/csd.2011.0025

Harper, S. (2009). Niggers no more: A critical race counternarrative on black male student achievement at predominantly white colleges and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(6), 697-712. doi:10.1080/09518390903333889

Harper, S., & Newman, C. (2016). Surprise, sensemaking, and success in the first college year: Black undergraduate men's academic adjustment experiences. *Teachers College Record, 118*(6), 1-31.

Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student Organizations as Venues for Black Identity Expression and Development among African American Male Student Leaders. *Journal of College Student Development* 48(2), 127-144.

Harris, D. (2002). *Profiles in injustice: Why racial profiling cannot work*. New York, NY: New Press.

Harris, F., Palmer, R., & Struve, L. (2011). "Cool posing" on campus: A qualitative study of masculinities and gender expression among black men at a private research institution. *The Journal of Negro Education, 80*(1), 47-62.

Harris, W. (2006). Progressive black masculinities and a Christian experience: An autobiographical perspective. In A. Mutua (Ed.), *Progressive black masculinities* (pp. 121-134). New York: Routledge.

Harvey-Smith, A. (2002). *An examination of the retention literature and application in student success.* Center for Community College Student Engagement. Retrieved from https://www.ccsse.org/center/resources/docs/research/harvey-smith.pdf

Henfield, M., & Byrd, J. (2014). Recruiting and retaining gifted black students in STEM majors: Implications for college counselors. *Advances in Special Education, 26*(1), 211-221. doi:10.1108/S0270-4013(2014)0000026010

Hinton, I., Howell, J., Merwin, E., Stern, S., Turner, S., Williams, I., & Wilson, M. (2010). The educational pipeline for health care professionals: Understanding the source of racial differences. *The Journal of Human Resources, 45*, 116-156.

Hotchkins, B. (2014). Guess who's coming to the meeting? African American student leadership experiences unpacked. *College Student Affairs Journal, 32*(1), 171-188.

Hotchkins, B., & Dancy, E. (2015). Rethinking excellence: Black male success and academic values in higher education. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men, 4*(1), 73-98. doi:10.2979/spectrum.4.1.05

Hubbard, D. (2006). The color of our classroom, the color of our future. *Academe, 92*, 27-29.

Hughes, R., & Giles, M. (2010). CRiT walking in higher education: Activating critical race theory in the academy. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(1), 41-57. doi:10.1080/13613320903549685

Hurtado, S., Alvarado, A., & Guillermo-Wann, C. (2015). Thinking about race: The salience of racial identity at two- and four-year colleges and the climate for diversity. *The Journal of Higher Education, 86*(1), 127-155. doi:10.1353/jhe.2015.0000

Ispa-Landa, S. (2013). Gender, race, and justifications for group exclusion: Urban black students bussed to affluent suburban schools. *Sociology of Education, 86*(3), 218-233. doi:10.1177/0038040712472912

Iverson, S., & Jaggers, D. (2015). Racial profiling as institutional practice: Theorizing the experiences of black male undergraduates. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 52*(1), 38-49. doi:10.1080/19496591.2015.995578

Jaggers, D., & Iverson, S. (2012). "Are you as hard as 50 cent?": Negotiating race and masculinity in the residence halls. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing, 39*(1), 186-199.

Janes, S. (1997). *Experiences of African-American baccalaureate nursing students examined through the lenses of Tinto's student retention theory and Astin's student involvement theory*. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED415817.pdf

Jenkins, T. (2006). Mr. Nigger: The challenges of educating black males within American society. *Journal of Black Studies, 37*(1), 127-155. doi:10.1177/0021934704273931

Johnson-Ahorlu, R. (2012). The academic opportunity gap: How racism and stereotypes disrupt the education of African American undergraduates. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 15*(5), 633-652.

Karkouti, I. (2016). Black students' educational experiences in predominantly white universities: A review of the related literature. *College Student Journal, 50*(1), 59-70.

Kinoshita, G. (2006). *Diversity in evangelical higher education: An interview with Will Kratt.* Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from https://www.cccu.org/filefolder/Will_Kratt.pdf

Kratt, W. (2004). *Diversity in evangelical Christian higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Claremont, CA: The Claremont Graduate University.

Larnell, G. (2016). More than just skill: Examining mathematics identities, racialized narratives, and remediation among black undergraduates. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education, 47*(3), 233-269. doi:10.5951/jresematheduc.47.3.0233

Lee, J., & Barnes, A. (2015). Predominately white institutions: Transition programs to address academic underpreparedness and experiences of discrimination. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science, 1*(4), 401-410. doi:10.1037/tps0000043

Littleton, R. (2002). Campus involvement among African American students at small, predominantly white colleges. *College Student Affairs Journal, 21*(2), 53-67.

Longman, K., & Schreiner, L. (2010). Helping more students stay and succeed in college: The role of spiritual fit. Paper presented at the *John C. Dalton Institute on College Student Values.* Retrieved from https://characterclearinghouse.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Helping-More-Students-Stay-and-Succeed-in-College-The-Role-of-Spiritual-Fit.pdf

Luedke, C. (2017). Person first, student second: Staff and administrators of color supporting students of color authentically in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(1), 37-52. doi:10.1353/csd.2017.0002

Lundberg, C. (2010). Institutional commitment to diversity, college involvement, and faculty relationships as predictors of learning for students of color. *Journal of the Professoriate, 3*(2), 50-74.

Lynch, M., & Engle, J. (2010). *Big gaps, small gaps: Some colleges and universities do better than others in graduating African-American students.* Washington, DC: Education Trust. Retrieved from https://edtrust.org/resource/big-gaps-small-gaps-in-serving-african-american-students/

Mary J., F. (2008). Does Campus Diversity Promote Friendship Diversity? A Look at Interracial Friendships in College. *Social Science Quarterly, 89*(3), 631-655.

Maestas, R., Vaquera, G., & Zehr, L. (2007). Factors impacting sense of belonging at a Hispanic-serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 6*(3), 237-256.

Masocha, S. (2015). Reframing black social work students' experiences of teaching and learning. *Social Work Education, 34*(6), 636-649. doi:10.1080/02615479.2015.1046429

Massey, D., & Owens, J. (2014). Mediators of stereotype threat among black college students. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(3), 557-575. doi:10.1080/01419870.2013.786110

Mattis, J. (2000). African American women's definitions of spirituality and religiosity. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*(1), 101-122. doi:10.1177/0095798400026001006

Mattis, J., Beckham, W., Saunders, B., Williams, J., McAllister, D., Myers, V., Dixon, C. (2004). Who will volunteer? Religiosity, everyday racism, and social participation among African American men. *Journal of Adult Development, 11*(4), 261-272. doi:JADE.0000044529.92580.6d

Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Mayrl, D., & Oeur, F. (2009). Religion and higher education: Current knowledge and directions for future research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*(2), 260-275.

McClain, O. (2014). Negotiating identity: A look at the educational experiences of black undergraduates in STEM disciplines. *Peabody Journal of Education, 89*(3), 380-392. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2014.913451

McClain, S., & Cokley, K. (2017). Academic disidentification in Black college students: The role of teacher trust and gender. *Cultural Diversity And Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *23*(1), 125-133. doi:10.1037/cdp0000094

McCoy, D., Winkle-Wagner, R., & Luedke, C. (2015a). Colorblind mentoring? Exploring white faculty mentoring of students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 8*(4), 225-242. doi:10.1037/a0038676

McGee, E., & Martin, D. (2011). "You would not believe what I have to go through to prove my intellectual value!" Stereotype management among academically successful black mathematics and engineering students. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(6), 1347-1389. doi:10.3102/0002831211423972

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology, 27*(1), 415-444. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education : a qualitative approach*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 1988.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriweather Hunn, L. (2008). Proof in the pudding: Does Guiffrida's cultural advancement of Tinto's theory apply to African American graduate students? *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, *2*(4), 255-263.

Miller, B., & Sujitparapitaya, S. (2010). Campus climate in the twenty-first century: Estimating perceptions of discrimination at a racially mixed institution, 1994-2006. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2010*(145), 29-52.

Miller, L. (2016). *The degree attainment of black students: A qualitative study* (Doctoral dissertation). Toledo, OH: University of Toledo.

Mincey, K., Alfonso, M., Hackney, A., & Luque, J. (2015). The influence of masculinity on coping in undergraduate black men. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 23*(3), 315-330. doi:10.1177/1060826515605022

Morales, E. (2014). Intersectional impact: Black students and race, gender, and class microaggressions in higher education. *Race, Gender & Class, 21*(3-4), 48-66.

Morales, E. (2008). Exceptional female students of color: Academic resilience and gender in higher education. *Innovative Higher Education, 33*(3), 197-213.

Museus, S. (2011). Generating ethnic minority student success (GEMS): A qualitative analysis of high-performing institutions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 4*(3), 147-162. doi:10.1037/a0022355

Museus, S., & Quaye, S. (2009). Toward an intercultural perspective of racial and ethnic minority college student persistence. *Review of Higher Education, 33*(1), 67-94.

Musu-Gillette, L., de Brey, C., McFarland, J., Hussar, W., & Sonnenberg, W. (2017). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2017.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2015). *Digest of education statistics.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_326.10.asp

NCES. (2016). *Digest of education statistics.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Noble, K., Flynn, N., Lee, J., & Hilton, D. (2007). Predicting successful college experiences: Evidence from a first year retention program. *Journal of College Student Retention, 9*(1), 39-60. doi:10.2190/6841-42JX-X170-8177

Okahana, H., & Zhou, E. (2017). *Graduate enrollment and degrees: 2006 to 2016.* Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.

Oseguera, L. (2005). Four and six-year baccalaureate degree completion by institutional characteristics and racial/ethnic groups. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 7*(1), 19-59.

Owens, J., & Massey, D. (2010). Stereotype threat and college academic performance: A latent variables approach. *Social Science Research, 40*(1), 150-166. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.09.010

Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., & Maramba, D. C. (2011). The impact of family support on the success of Black men at a Historically Black University: Affirming the revision of Tinto's theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, *52*(5), 577.

Park, J. (2009). Are we satisfied? A look at student satisfaction with diversity at traditionally white institutions. *The Review of Higher Education, 32*(3), 291-320.

Park, J. (2012a). "Man, this is hard": A case study of how race and religion affect cross-racial interaction for black students. *The Review of Higher Education, 35*(4), 567-593.

Park, J. (2012b). When race and religion collide: The effect of religion on interracial friendship during college. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 5*(1), 8-21. doi:10.1037/a0026960

Park, J., & Kim, Y. (2013). Interracial friendship and structural diversity: Trends for Greek, religious, and ethnic student organizations. *The Review of Higher Education, 37*(1), 1-24. doi:10.1353/rhe.2013.0061

Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Davis, L. (2006a). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of black student perceptions of black culture centers. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(6), 628-646.

Davis, L. (2006b). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of black student perceptions of black culture centers. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(6), 628-646. doi:10.1353/csd.2006.0068

Davis, L., & McClure, M. (2009). Strength in the spirit: A qualitative examination of African American college women and the role of spirituality during college. *The Journal of Negro Education, 78*(1), 42-54.

Pelzer, D. (2016). Creating a new narrative: Reframing black masculinity for college men. *The Journal of Negro Education, 85*(1), 16-27. doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.1.0016

Perna, L. (2000). Differences in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and whites. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(2), 117-141.

Pew Research Center. (2009). *A religious portrait of African-Americans.* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Phelps-Ward, R., & DeAngelo, L. (2016). Feeding the pipeline toward the doctorate: examining the formal mentoring experiences of Black undergraduate students. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, (2), 111.

Quaye, S., & Harper, S. (2007). Faculty Accountability for a Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy and Curricula. *Liberal Education*, *93*(3), 32-39.

Ramirez, O., Ashley, G., & Cort, M. (2014). What does it mean to be a Christian? Exploring the religious identity of intrinsically and extrinsically religious black Seventh-day Adventist university students. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 23*(1), 56-69. doi:10.1080/10656219.2013.810558

Reyes, R., & Case, K. (2011). National profile on ethnic/racial diversity of enrollment, graduation rates, faculty, and administrators among the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities; *35th Annual CCCU Presidents Conference.*

Rodgers, K., & Summers, J. (2008). African American students at predominantly white institutions: A motivational and self-systems approach to understanding retention. *Educational Psychology Review, 20*(2), 171-190.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.

Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. H. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. London: Routledge.

Schott Foundation. (2010). *Yes we can: The Schott 50 state report on public education and black males.* Cambridge, MA: Schott Foundation for Public Education. Retrieved from http://saabnational.org/sites/all/themes/corporateclean/pdf/50StateReport.pdf

Seward, D., & Guiffrida, D. (2012). Deciding how much to share in class: A study of the experiences of students of color enrolled in multicultural counseling courses. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 34*(4), 286-296.

Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P., Yuan, X., Nathan, A & Hwang, Y., A. (2017). *Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates by Race and Ethnicity – Fall 2010 Cohort.* Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Simmons, J., Lowery-Hart, R., Wahl, S., & McBride, M. (2013). Understanding the African-American student experience in higher education through a relational dialectics perspective. *Communication Education, 62*(4), 376-394. doi:10.1080/03634523.2013.813631

Small, M., & Winship, C. (2007). Black students' graduation from elite colleges: Institutional characteristics and between-institution differences. *Social Science Research, 36*(3), 1257-1275.

Smith, M. (2010). *Race, rates, and religion: The relationship between black graduation rates and evangelical religious affiliation at private colleges and universities* (Doctoral dissertation). Los Angeles, CA: University of California Los Angeles.

Smith, S., & Moore, M. (2000). Intraracial diversity and relations among African Americans: Closeness among black students at a predominantly white university. *American Journal of Sociology, 106*(1), 1-39. doi:10.1086/303112

Smith, W., Allen, W., & Danley, L. (2007). Assume the position . . . you fit the description: Psychological experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(4), 551-578. doi:10.1177/0002764207307742

Smith, W., Yosso, T., & Solórzano, D. (2007). Racial primes and black misandry on historically white campuses: Toward critical race accountability in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(5), 559-585. doi:10.1177/0013161X07307793

Solórzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 24*(3), 5-19.

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60-73.

Solórzano, D., Allen, W., & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: Racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California, Berkeley. *Chicano Latino Law Review, 23*(2002), 15-112.

Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 23-44. doi:10.1177/1077800402008001003

Soria, K., & Taylor, L. (2016). Strengths-based approaches in college and university student housing: Implications for first- year students' retention and engagement. *Journal of College & University Student Housing*, *42*(2), 60-75.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications.

Steele, C. (1999). Thin ice: "Stereotype threat" and black college students. *The Atlantic, 284*, 44-54.

Stewart, D. (2002). The role of faith in the development of an integrated identity: A qualitative study of black students at a white college. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(4), 579-596.

Stewart, D. (2009a). Perceptions of multiple identities among black college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(3), 253-270.

Strayhorn, T. (2008). Fittin' in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging for black men at predominantly white institutions? *NASPA Journal, 45*(4), 501-527. doi:10.2202/1949-6605.2009

Strayhorn, T. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *Review of Higher Education, 33*(3), 307-332.

Strayhorn, T. (2011). Singing in a foreign land: An exploratory study of gospel choir participation among African American undergraduates at a predominantly white institution. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*(2), 137-153. doi:10.1353/csd.2011.0030

Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Orellana-Damacela, L., Portillo, N., Rowan, J., & Andrews-Guillen, C. (2003). Experiences of differential treatment among college students of color. *The Journal of Higher Education, 74*, 428-444.

Sue, D., Capodilupo, C., Torino, G., Bucerri, J., Holder, A., Nadal, K., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271-286. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Swim, J., Hyers, L., Cohen, L., Fitzgerald, D., & Bylsma, W. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology, 29*(1), 38-67. doi:10.1177/0095798402239228

Tierney, W. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college. *The Journal of Higher Education, 63*(6), 603-618.

Tierney, W. (1999). Models of minority college-going and retention: Cultural integrity versus cultural suicide. *The Journal of Negro Education, 68*(1), 80-91.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Triandis, H., Chen, X., & Chan, D. (1998). Scenarios for the measurement of collectivism and individualism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*(2), 275-289. doi:10.1177/0022022198292001

Troutman, S. (2017). Fabulachia: Urban, black female experiences and higher education in Appalachia. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 20*(2), 252-263. doi:10.1080/13613324.2015.1110340

Upright, P., Esslinger, T., & Hays, W. (2014). Health Issues Affecting College Student's Academic Performance. *KAHPERD Journal*, *51*(2), 30-36.

Walker, K., & Dixon, V. (2002). Spirituality and academic performance among African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 28*(2), 107-121. doi:10.1177/0095798402028002003

Watt, S. (2003). Come to the river: Using spirituality to cope, resist, and develop identity. In M. Howard-Hamilton (Ed.), *Meeting the needs of African American women* (pp. 29-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weddle-West, K., Hagan, W., & Norwood, K. (2013). Impact of college environments on the spiritual development of African American students. *Journal of College Student Development, 54*(3), 299-314.

Wilkins, A. (2012). Becoming black women: Intimate stories and intersectional identities. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 75*(2), 173-196. doi:10.1177/0190272512440106

Wilkins, A. (2014). Race, age, and identity transformations in the transition from high school to college for black and first-generation white men. *Sociology of Education, 87*(3), 171-187. doi:10.1177/0038040714537901

Williams, J. (2013). Representations of the racialized experiences of African Americans in developmental reading textbooks. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 43*(2), 39-69. doi:10.1080/10790195.2013.10850366

Williams, R., Irby, C., & Warner, R. (2016). "Church" in black and white: The organizational lives of young adults. *Religions, 7*(7), 1-19. doi:10.3390/rel7070090

Wingfield, A. H. (2007). The modern mammy and the angry black man: African American professionals' experiences with gendered racism in the workplace. *Race, Gender & Class, 14*(1/2), 196-212.

Worthington, R., Navarro, R., Loewy, M., & Hart, J. (2008). Color-blind racial attitudes, social dominance orientation, racial-ethnic group membership and college students' perceptions of campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(1), 8-19. doi:10.1037/1938-8926.1.1.8

Yeager, D., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., Cohen, G. (2014). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143*(2), 804-824. doi:10.1037/a0033906

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE

Yosso, T. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 93-107. doi:10.1080/713845283

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(4), 659-691.

Young, T. (2013). *The invisible wall: Exploring the experiences of African-American students at CCCU institutions* (Doctoral dissertation). Los Angeles, CA: University of California Los Angeles.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date:

Online location:

Interviewer:

Participant:

Script

You are being asked to participate in a research study on how Black students experience this institution. The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of Black undergraduates who have completed at least two semesters. This will be the only in-person interview you will be asked to participate in for this study. Should I need clarification on any of your thoughts we will set up a time for a short phone conversation.

I will record the audio of our conversation so that all your thoughts are documented. The recordings will be transcribed and you will be given an opportunity to review them for accuracy before they are included in the study. Your participation is totally voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point. You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions.

I will give you a pseudonym in my study so that your privacy will be protected. Also, I will not include the name of your institution. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

Question set:

1. Please share a little about your background and how you came to choose PCU?
2. Please describe your overall experience at the institution.
3. Please describe your experience in the classroom.
4. What have your interactions with faculty been like?
5. What have your interactions with other students in the classroom been like?

6. Have you utilized any academic support services on campus? For example - The university library, the Academic Success Center, Campus tutors, or the Communication Resource Center. If so, please describe any of those experiences.
7. Have you used any other services on campus? For example - Career Development, Financial Aid, Office of Diversity, Registrar, or Health Services. If so, please describe any of those experiences.
8. What are your social outlets and how would you describe your social experience?
9. Are you involved in any campus organizations? If so, in what capacity and what has that experience been like?
10. What do you think about religious life on campus and the opportunities to practice your faith?
11. In closing, is there anything about your experience we have not discussed you think is important to mention?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I plan to contact you to set up a time to follow-up on the phone if needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at haroldgoss@gmail.com or 205-370-5307. Thank you for your participation.

(Adapted from Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice, Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C., 2013)

APPENDIX B

RECRUITING EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear Student,

As a Black student that has completed at least one semester at this institution, you have been selected as a possible candidate to participate in a project to gather information about Black student experiences at Private Christian University.

- Participation is voluntary, confidential, and will only take approximately 60 minutes of your time
- You will be compensated after your interview with a $20.00 Amazon gift card
- All interviews will take place April 23-28

Sign up for your interview time here: http://www.signupgenius.com

Sincerely,

Harold Goss

205-370-5307 | mobile
haroldgoss@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A Case Study of the Experiences of Black Students at a Council for Christian Colleges and

Universities Member Institution

Harold Goss, The University of Alabama

Graduate Student, Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration

c/o 5752 Park Side Road

Hoover, AL 35244

haroldgoss@gmail.com

       This study is being conducted by Harold Goss, a graduate student in the University of

Alabama's Doctor of Education degree program and under the supervision of Dr. Claire Major.

You are being asked to take part in this qualitative research study. The study is called <u>A Case</u>

<u>Study of the Experiences of Black Students at a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities</u>

<u>Member Institution</u>.

What this study is about:

       This study is being conducted to explore the experience of Black undergraduate students

at a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) member institution. Specifically,

this study will explore: (1) how Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience

academics, (2) how Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience support

services, (3) how Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience campus social

129

life, and (4) how Black undergraduate students at a CCCU institution experience spiritual and religious activities Approximately 25 individuals from the institution will participate in this study which employs a qualitative design. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have completed at least one semester and therefore your understanding and experience in at the institutions is significant to this research.

What you will be asked to do:

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

(1) Attend an in-person interview and participate in a recorded interview lasting between 30 minutes to one hour. The researcher would like to audio-record the interview.

(2) Participate in a second interview if needed that will be conducted either by phone. It will be recorded and will last less than 30 minutes.

(3) Review and provide feedback regarding the transcription of interviews. The estimated time for providing feedback from the participant is approximately 30-45 minutes.

(4) The total time for participation in this study, which includes two interviews and reviewing the transcripts, will take between two to three hours, and will be spread out from April through May 2018.

Risks and benefits:

There are no known risks to you, so risks for participating in this study would be minimal. Please note that monetary incentives are not considered a benefit of research participation per the University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board.

Incentives:

You will receive a $20.00 Amazon gift card for your time to participate in this study.

Your participation is voluntary:

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer questions and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Not participating in the study will not result in any penalty to you. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this research study will have no effect on your relations with the research investigator or Private Christian University.

Your answers to questions will be confidential:

Interviews will be conducted in a private setting to maintain privacy and confidentiality. All interviews and transcripts will be maintained on the researcher's private computer. Confidentially of participants will be protected as much as possible. Reports of the research will not name or identify participants (pseudonyms will be used).

Contact Information:

If you have questions about the research study, please ask by contacting the researcher, Harold Goss, using the contact information at the top of the page, or Dr. Claire Major at 205-348- 1152. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a participant in the research study, you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Officer at The University of Alabama at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu. After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants online at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Survery.html or you may ask the researcher for a copy of it and mail it to UA Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form. The study has been explained to me and I understand what I will be asked to do. I agree to freely take part in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

I understand the researcher would like to audio record my interviews.

___ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____   _____

Signature of Research Participant   Date

 _____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CERTIFICATION

March 30, 2018

Re: IRB # 18-OR-132 "A Case Study of the Experiences of Black Students at a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities Member Institution"

Dear Mr. Goss:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on March 29, 2019. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure From. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed stamped consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck
with your
research.
Sincerely

Carpantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance

133