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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN A CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL CONGRUITY AND ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT
WITHIN A BLACK CULTURE CENTER

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Tenisha Celita James

September, 2017

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Tenisha Celita James

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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VITA

EDUCATION

Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA Ed.D. in Education, Leadership, Administration and Policy	2017
California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA Master of Arts in Education Counseling Pupil Personnel Credential in School Counseling & Child Welfare and Attendance	2005
University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Social Behavior Minors in Education and African American Studies	2002

HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Riverside City College, CA February 2011-Present
Program Director

- *Management:*
 - Responsible for the overall management, coordination, and day-to-day project activities of three federally funded Trio Student Support Services (SSS) Programs; a Regular, Disabilities, and Veterans, including supervision of classified staff members and adjunct faculty.
 - Developed policies and procedures that have ensured compliance with all state and federal grant guidelines, in addition to maintaining accurate student and fiscal documentation. Serves as the primary liaison between RCC and the U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs.
- *Grant Writing:*
 - Assisted in the data collection and analysis, research, planning, writing and successful submission of each of the funded grants, which included one renewal grant (Regular) and two newly funded grants (Veterans and Disabilities).
- *Coordination/Grant Compliance:*
 - Coordination of services through collaborative efforts and cross training of staff through the Disability Resource Center and Veterans Resource Center.
 - Coaching and mentoring of program participants to facilitate increased academic achievement and completion for low-income, first generation students, Veterans and students with disabilities.
 - Implementation of comprehensive academic support services to increase the retention, good academic standing, and graduation/transfer rate of educationally disadvantaged students.
- *Budget/Reporting:*
 - Monitors an overall budget of over \$3 million dollars and approves all grant expenditures while ensuring fiscal compliance. Extensive experience allocating and budgeting funds appropriately.

- Responsible for the timely submission of various reports, including the Annual Performance Report, budget, mid-year report, and Unit Plan.
- Facilitates student data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, for evaluation and program improvement.

Riverside City College, Riverside, CA

Student Equity Coordination

January 2015-Present

- Participated in the writing and submission of components of the equity report to the state.
- Assisted with the coordination of qualitative research efforts aimed at exploring the experiences of minority men on campus
- Lead role in the implementation of the Cultural Proficiency Training workshop series offered through student equity to institutional faculty, staff and administrators. On-going collaboration with Equity Chair and Dean of Institutional Research to address equity gaps.
- Assisting in the coordination and data collection of the college's first summer bridge program, featuring English and math preparation, enrichment activities, and counseling. Will gather qualitative and quantitative data for program analysis and evaluation.
- Lead organizer of a week-long Historical Black College tour in conjunction with Moreno Valley and Norco College for 90 students in the summer of 2015, in addition to a STEM focused tour to Xavier University in fall 2016.
- Chaired the Student Leadership Conference committee. The conference addressed student equity through skills for building the leadership capacity of under-served students. Over 300 students attended from community colleges throughout Southern CA for a full day conference featuring 3 keynote speakers, over 20 workshops, and a student success summit.

Riverside City College, CA

March 2017-Present

Adjunct Counselor/Coordinator

Plans, coordinates, and evaluates all program activities in the Umoja Community Education Ujima program serving African American students and other underserved students. Works closely with assigned faculty to assist in the coordination of program components designed to support the retention and success of participants through increased academic engagement. Completed the Umoja Community Education training/certificate at the 2017 Summer Learning Institute Experience.

El Camino College Compton Center, Compton, CA

July 2007-January 2011

Program Manager

- Responsible for the overall management, coordination, and day-to-day project activities of the federally funded Upward Bound Program at the El Camino College Compton Center Campus. Program objectives include administering services to assist educationally disadvantaged high school students in their transition to college, and post secondary retention.
- Facilitated outreach and recruitment at local area high schools and community agencies.
- Responsible for budget management, fiscal planning, federal reports, and mandated documentation.

- Responsible for maintaining program guidelines in accordance with EDGAR, which includes, but is not limited to the areas of: student eligibility, budget guidelines, program services, and student outcomes.

Los Angeles Southwest Community College, Los Angeles, CA February 2006-June 2007

Adjunct Instructor

- Instructor for *Personal Development 20* class. The course provides students with information regarding vocational and professional careers, as well as information regarding higher education. Developed syllabus and curriculum that provided personal development through collegiate, vocational, and career research and exploration.

Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA April 2003-July 2007
Crenshaw High School & Manual Arts High School

Counselor

- Provided comprehensive college counseling services to high school students in low performing, inner-city high schools.
- Counseled students in regards to course schedules, college choices, financial aid, scholarships, and personal matters.
- Created and organized workshops and college events throughout the school year to meet student and parent needs, such as Senior Award Night and the annual College & Career Fair, which featured over 100 colleges and companies.
- Maintained collaborative relationships with universities and colleges, as well as college programs recruiting high school students. Assisted students with dual enrollment at local community colleges for remediation and/or enrichment.

PUBLICATION

Measurement Equivalence of the Parental Warmth and Acceptance Scale (2002). Chen, C., Farruggia, S. P., Greenberger, E., & Powers, T. (now James). Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the cultural congruity and academic self-concept of African American students in a community college setting who participated in a Black Culture Center. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept through the following two research questions: what relationship, if any, exists between cultural congruity and academic self-concept, and does cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center in a two-year historically White college setting. The results of this study provide support for both hypotheses: there was a significant positive correlation between cultural congruity and academic self-concept, and cultural congruity was a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept after controlling for gender, college GPA, college units completed, participation type, and student-faculty interactions. There were two conclusions that were supported by the findings of this research study; (a) increasing the cultural congruity of African American students is likely to result in an increase in academic self-concept, and (b) providing strong academic support and increased opportunities for positive faculty interactions is likely to increase the academic self-concept of African American students. Recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of this study include a commitment by institutions of higher education to invest dedicated resources towards the creation, maintenance, and growth of formal ethnic communities for African American students on historically White campuses. Additionally, it is recommended that college campuses provide targeted academic intervention and support to first-year African American students.

Chapter One: The Problem

Background of the Study

The pervasive achievement gap between White and Black students in higher education continues to pose a challenge for educators, policy advocates, and communities of color interested in educational equity for all students. While Black students across the nation have made considerable gains in higher education, they continue to experience inequity compared to their White counterparts (The Education Trust, 2014). Nationwide African American students have seen an increase in overall college enrollment since the 1970's; however, they have experienced a decrease in enrollment at four-year institutions (public or private), and decreased graduation and degree attainment compared to White college students (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). In terms of college access, Black students are overrepresented at open-access two-year community colleges and for-profit colleges at a respective rate of 39% and 18%, compared to 36% and 7% of White students, while being underrepresented at four-year research institutions at a rate of 9%, compared to 19% of White students enrolled nationwide (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011).

College completion rates show evidence of greater inequity for African American students than enrollment rate data. The six-year graduation rate for Black students at four-year institutions is 40%, compared to 63% for White students (The Education Trust, 2014). More alarming is community college completion, which was 13% for Black students in 2013, compared to 24% for White students in the same year (The Education Trust, 2014). The lack of access to four-year institutions, low degree and certificate completion, coupled with a nationwide community college transfer rate of 11% and 22% for Black and White students respectively,

provide evidence of ongoing inequality in access and outcomes for African American students nationwide.

Similar gaps in educational access and outcomes are evident for African Americans in the state of California. California is home to over 2.1 million African Americans/Blacks, which represents 5.7% of the total Black population in the country (12.3%), thereby, making the educational outcomes of Black Californians significant for nationwide trends and data. Currently, fewer young African Americans, ages 25-34, have obtained degrees compared to African Americans between the ages of 35-64 in California (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Similar to national data, Black students are overrepresented at California community colleges (CCC) at a rate of 65.2% and underrepresented at California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems, with respective enrollment rates of 10.8% and 4.0%. Essentially, two-thirds of all Black college students in California are enrolled in a community college, with the second-largest share of enrollment at for-profit institutions at 15% (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Furthermore, Black admission rates into the UC system – the premier research institutions – have declined by 17% points in the last 16 years, with Black students experiencing the lowest admission rate of any racial group to the UC system (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013).

Inequity in postsecondary access is directly linked to inequity in secondary education. Fewer than three in 10 Black students graduating from a California high school have completed the A-G curriculum required for consideration to the CSU and UC system (The Education Trust, 2014). Of those Black students completing A-G curriculum, 5% are able to demonstrate a high level of competitiveness in the college admission process with a passing Advanced Placement

(AP) exam score, compared to 61% of White high school graduates who take and pass the exam (The Education Trust, 2014).

College completion rates for Black students in California paint a similarly depressing picture. According to completion data across all three segments of public education in California, CCC, CSU, and UC, Black students have the lowest completion rate of any racial group. Black students complete community college with an associates degree or certificate at a rate of 39%, compared to 53.5% of White students and 66.7% of Asian students (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). The CSU and UC four-year bachelor degree completion rate for Black students is 7.8% and 45.5% respectively, compared to 23.1% and 67.4% for White students respectively in four years (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). The six-year graduation rate also shows evidence of a large gap between Black and White students in the CSU and UC system, at 34% and 71.3% respectively for Black students, compared to 58.4% and 84.8% for White students at the CSU and UC system (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013).

California data on educational access and completion for Black and White students in higher education provide evidence of a widening equity gap in the past decade. The widening achievement gap has been attributed to the passage of Prop 209 in November of 1996, “which eliminated the use of affirmative action policies” in employment and education practices, forcing institutions to adopt race-blind policies and practices (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013, p. 15). Despite public opinion that race-based policies fail to contribute to educational equity for underrepresented students (Jaschik, 2016), the current state of affairs for Black students in higher education paints a much different picture of the relationship between race and education in the United States. A picture that is incomplete when the historical context of race

and education is not examined as a means of understanding the creation and persistence of the Black achievement gap. The unequal disparities in educational outcomes between Black and White students are understood through an intersectional analysis of race, gender, class, and culture, but fundamentally centered on race and a racialized educational system (Leonardo, 2012). Racialized educational systems have contributed to and maintain educational inequity through the creation of institutions that were initially formed to oppress African Americans, and other racial minorities.

The context for Black educational inequity. Race continues to be salient in American education. It is difficult to examine contemporary educational outcomes of African Americans without understanding the historical context that has shaped the institutions that now serve them. African Americans have a long history of pervasive and intentional oppression and exclusion that extends far beyond the doors of the classroom. Allen (1992) discusses the ambivalent stance that many African American have towards the educational system in light of that history as education represents a path to upward mobility, but also an instrument that has systematically oppressed Blacks in America. Examples in history point to an educational system that has decided what African Americans could learn, where they could learn it, who they could learn it from, and how they would learn it. Those examples include, but are not limited to, the denial of education and literacy to Black slaves, segregation laws during Emancipation that denied Black children access to White public and private schools, the creation of ‘pseudoscience’ to confirm the inferiority of African Americans, displacement of Black teachers, faculty, and administrators for White missionary control of Black schools, the double taxation of Black families who utilized community resources to provide education for Black children denied access to publicly funded White schools, the creation of Black postsecondary institutions focused on industrial or

manual training only, the privatization and control of education for African Americans in the rural South through county training schools which emphasized agriculture and domestic work, the emphasis on European history, culture and values espoused at institutions of higher education, and the financial starvation of the Historical Black Colleges and Universities despite their abilities to effectively support the academic success of Black students (Perkins, 2009). Educational oppression has worked alongside the Black struggle for “full citizenship and participation in society”, first as an “enslaved population, then as rural peasants and later as an urban proletariat – and throughout a discriminated caste group” (Allen, 1992, p. 12).

This racialized system, one that has violently sustained White and Black segregation, was formally confronted in the historic Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. This centrality of the case focused on the issue of race and education, and the impact and consequences of racially segregated educational systems. The integration transition was quite jarring for the American public. There were several stages of resistance to the integration mandate that took the form of absolute defiance until 1959, to token compliance through 1964, and modest forms of integration that took shape through 1968 (Perkins, 2009). Many states and schools violently refused to integrate, White students protested against the admission of Black students, White families fled communities and moved their families to avoid integration, and state politicians denounced integration and some even passed legislation making integration illegal and punishable by law (Perkins, 2009).

This resistance to change focused national efforts on the resisters themselves. Nationwide integration efforts did not occur until over a decade later when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968 (Perkins, 2000). Once institutions were either forcibly integrated or found integration unavoidable, there was an absence of nationwide efforts created or implemented to

address institutional climate. Educational institutions did not critically examine the potentially hostile attitudinal or psychological climate of racism, or institutional policies and procedures that had historically excluded African Americans. As such, Black students arriving on White campuses experienced covert and subtle forms of rejection and discrimination, at the institutional and individual level.

Comprehensive and systematic discrimination and racism have created vastly different educational experiences for White and Black students through structural oppression. These differential schooling experiences were designed to maintain Black disadvantage and White privilege. The system, which was created to ensure race-based inequality, has not been restructured to provide empowerment to all students. Instead, educational inequality is maintained through new regimes facilitated through race-neutral or color-blind policies, which have disproportionately impacted Black access and outcomes in education. Contemporary forms of unequal treatment in a post-Civil Rights era take the form of inequitable funding, housing segregation, Eurocentric curriculum, tracking, forced busing of students of color, discipline and school suspension/expulsion, teacher preparation, and spatial configurations, to name a few (Leonardo, 2012). In an era of color-blindness, these racialized structures are made invisible. When oppression remains hidden from view, the responsibility to overcome societal and educational barriers is given to the oppressed who are left to confront the burden of institutional and individual discrimination and racism in isolation. Black achievement is, therefore, a product of Black student deficit (i.e. poverty, single-parent households, academic devaluation), as opposed to an outcome of structural oppression. Structural oppression provides a context for understanding both the creation and persistence of the achievement gap within a historical and societal context, which recognizes the pervasiveness of racism, which is built into the entire

educational enterprise (Leonardo, 2012). In spite of contemporary efforts to maintain race-neutral policies there have been attempts to provide equity in education for African Americans; however, those attempts have failed to close the equity gap for Black students due to a lack of educational reform aimed at confronting both institutional and individual discrimination and racism. Shortsighted efforts at reducing educational inequality have not addressed the historical, sociopolitical, and economic education debt that has accumulated over time for communities of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Recognition that the current achievement gap is an accumulation of an educational disadvantage created over time through overlapping systems of oppression is required to reduce educational inequity.

Confronting educational inequity. Efforts to address historical discrimination and racism in higher education have taken the form of race-based or holistic admissions policies to support equitable access, campus support for underrepresented students to support equitable outcomes, and the establishment of specific colleges to educate African Americans. Affirmative action policies were race-sensitive admissions guidelines that were created on many college campuses following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The purpose of affirmative action policies aimed at underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities was “compensation, correction, and diversification” (Tierney, 1996, p. 123); compensation for wrongs against ancestors in a preceding time, correction to ensure equity in an unjust system, and diversification as a means to confront implicit systems of power in education and society. These policies served to remedy years of discrimination and racism that had disadvantaged African Americans in education. However, these efforts to address historical discrimination were met with increasing resistance by White students who claimed that it was a form of reverse discrimination by giving preferential treatment to Black students which resulted in Black

advancement at the expense of White students (Perkins, 2009). Affirmative action policies threatened White superiority and dominance as increasing numbers of Black students accessed predominantly White institutions across the country, which ultimately resulted in a multitude of lawsuits challenging the legality of affirmative action admissions policies. Despite the country's long history of de facto and de jure discrimination and racism against African Americans, White students perceived Affirmative Action, and other race-based policies, as an entrenchment on their previously entitled rights. This paradigm is captured in Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* when he describes the response of dominant people when experiencing threats to power or position:

The former oppressors do not feel liberated. On the contrary, they genuinely consider themselves to be oppressed. Conditioned by the experience of oppressing others, any situation other than their former seems to them like oppression. Formerly, they could eat, dress, wear shoes, be educated, travel, and hear Beethoven; while millions did not eat, had no clothes or shoes, neither studied nor traveled, much less listened to Beethoven. Any restriction on this way of life, in the name of the rights of the community, appears to the former oppressors as a profound violation of their individual rights (p. 57).

As a result of White resistance the Supreme Court ruled in 1978 that special admission programs were unconstitutional a mere 10 years after the implementation of affirmative action, and less than 20 years after that sentiment was so strong that the state of California passed Proposition 209 in 1996 that "prohibited any affirmative action or preferential treatment programs in the state" (Perkins, 2009, p. 154). The result was devastating for the large percentage of Black Americans living in California. The Black admission rate to the UC system decreased from 75% before the passage of Proposition 209, to 58%, compared to the White

admission rate of 83%, after affirmative action was made illegal (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). While affirmative action policies seemed to have contributed to improved access for African Americans and assisted in narrowing the equity gap, the threat to White privilege and entitlement, and the disconnect between the contemporary Black condition as related to historical and societal context proved to strong to combat deeply embedded racialized structures, systems, and attitudes.

Postsecondary institutions also attempted to support integration efforts and the increasing numbers of diverse students on campus through targeted support programs for underrepresented students of color. The most popular and widespread programs to support Black students on White campuses were Black-oriented culture centers. The earliest culture centers for African American students were created following directed integration efforts at White colleges and universities in the late 1960s. These centers, aimed at addressing the needs of African American students facing hostility on campus, were created out of student demand for inclusion, as a means to escape racial hostility and tension, and as a mechanism for making sense of their isolated and marginalized status on college campuses. The Black student movement during this time in history was a concentrated effort to create “campus environments conducive to their own survival, learning, and development” (Patton, 2005, p. 94). These ethnic enclaves provided a safe space, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, for Black students on White campuses to support their academic success and as an instrument for confronting racialized institutional barriers. Culture centers have historically provided Black students with a sense of community and belonging, a place that facilitates their academic and social engagement on campuses that African Americans attending Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) experience. There is a highly limited body of work exploring the impact of culture centers on the achievement of Black

students (Patton, 2012). However, the experience of Black students at HBIs provides some insight into how ethnic enclaves support Black educational achievement in higher education.

Data seems to indicate that there are vast differences in educational outcomes for Black students attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) or Historically White Institutions (HBIs) compared to Black students attending HBIs. HBI's are those campuses that were established beginning in the 1850s with the specific purpose of educating African Americans during a time when Blacks had very little control or ownership over their own education (Perkins, 2009), "while PWIs are those institutions with a long history of creating cultural norms, values, and institutional practices that cater specifically to White students" (Chang, 2002, p. 3). PWIs continue to serve a large majority of White students, while HBIs have historically recruited and served White students and maintain contemporary systems and structures that cater to those students, despite a majority of minority students on many campuses. It does not simply refer to the student body, but the practices, attitudes, ideologies, systems that create marginalized status for Black students on campus.

In one of the largest studies of Black students in the U.S. Allen (1992) found differences in the academic achievement and psychological adjustment of Black students based on institution type, PWI versus HBI. The data seems to indicate that Black students attending HBIs are "more disadvantaged in socioeconomic status and academic" achievement than Black or White students at PWIs at entry, yet they "display more positive psychosocial adjustment, higher educational aspirations, significant academic gains, and greater cultural awareness/commitment" (Allen, 1992, p. 6) than their peers on White campuses. Gurin and Epps (1975) found that Black students on Black campuses tend to possess highly developed ethnic identity, positive self-image, and high ambition orientation. The institutional context and the student's perception of it seem to

either promote or prohibit the academic performance of Black students. These data point researchers to the significance of institutional context in influencing student perceptions and experiences and the relationship of student perspectives on educational outcomes. As such, there is a growing body of research dedicated to critically examining how racialized structures, such as the institutional context, impact the achievement of African Americans in higher education.

Relevant research on the Black educational experience. The institutional context, or campus climate, has become an increasingly researched variable for understanding the differential experiences of students on college campuses by race and ethnicity. Beginning in the 1980s, approximately a decade after massive integration efforts began in education, college campuses saw an increase in incidents of racial harassment and violence (Hurtado, 1992). Many researchers have attributed the spike in campus racial tension as a result of the increasing numbers of students of color on college campuses and the perceived threat to White dominance those students created by demanding for space and inclusion at institutions they were previously denied access to (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Patton, 2012;). The campus climate provides a lens for understanding how the campus environment shapes student's perceptions, experiences, and outcomes. Specifically for racial minorities, the campus racial climate captures their perceptions and experiences as marginalized underrepresented students that experience minority status at PWIs. Hurtado et al. (1998) describe the campus racial climate as consisting of four elements:

the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among

groups, and the behavioral climate characterized by intergroup relations on campus. (p. 280)

The elements impact how students perceive the institution and the types of interactions and experiences they are likely to have. Perceptions of campus climate are therefore relative to the student's individual characteristics and past experiences.

Black and White students on the same campuses tend to have different perceptions of the campus racial climate, which are indicative of differential experiences on those campuses. Researchers have found evidence confirming that White students have the most positive perceptions of campus racial climate, while Latino/a and Black students typically perceive the campus racial climate negatively, with Black students reporting the most negative perceptions (Cokley, 2000; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Researchers have found that these differential perceptions based on race are related to the individual experiences of racially coded spaces and racial microaggressions – subtle forms of discrimination – experienced by students of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). African American and Latino students that perceive their institution as racially hostile or unwelcoming have decreased rates of persistence and academic success compared to their counterparts with positive perceptions of the campus racial climate (Castillo et al., 2006; Chang, 2002; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Patton, 2012; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solorzano et al., 2000; Tierney, 1999; Williams & Chung, 2013). The campus racial climate impacts the achievement of students of color through its ability or inability to academically and socially engage underrepresented racial ethnic minority students through the representation of students, staff and faculty of color,

culturally relevant content and pedagogy, support programs aimed at addressing educational barriers, and an institutional mission committed to pluralism in policy and practice.

Students of color who experience hostile or unfriendly campus racial climates seek places that offer safety or refuge as a means of academic and social survival on PWI's. These safe havens take the informal form of racial self-segregation or ethnic enclaves or more formally in the creation of counter-spaces or culture centers. Ethnic enclaves or more formal culture centers can facilitate the success of Black students at PWIs. Culture centers are able to foster their academic success through racial/cultural identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Villalpono, 2003), promotion of greater campus-wide involvement and leadership development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Patton, 2006), through fostering cultural validation (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006;), and nurturing the academic confidence of students (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Patton, 2006). These safe havens provide African American students a space that affirms their cultural identity and nurtures their academic, personal and social development. Tierney (1999) argues that these ethnic enclaves, which foster the retention and success of students of color, assist those students in maintaining their "cultural integrity" (p. 89) on PWIs that have been unable or unwilling to move those students from the margins of campus academically and socially. This form of self-segregation assists underrepresented minority students in finding cultural alignment within institutions they perceive as unwelcoming or hostile. Through participation in a cultural or ethnic community students of color are more likely to perceive and experience cultural congruity, which describes student's perceptions of how their personal and cultural values fit within a larger domain or institutional context (Gloria &

Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). Student perceptions of cultural congruity may assist students of color in mitigating the effects of a negative campus racial climate.

The perceived cultural congruity African American students experience through participation in ethnic communities at PWIs contributes to increased personal development and academic engagement. The connection to ethnic minority peers and academic nurturing provided to students of color through ethnic enclaves is positively correlated to increased academic confidence and achievement (Cerezo & Chang, 2013). Further evidence to support the benefits of ethnic enclaves on PWIs is observed through the outcomes and experiences of African American students attending HBIs versus their counterparts who attend PWIs. African American students attending Black colleges or universities report increased positive experiences on campus and positive perceptions of the campus climate compared to Blacks students attending PWIs (Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002). Black students at HBIs also report higher GPAs than Black students on White campuses (Allen, 1992; Cokley, 2000; Davis, 1994; Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998. Cokley and Chapman (2008) and Cokley and Moore (2007) took this research a step further and found a positive relationship between Black educational outcomes, racial/ethnic identity development, and academic confidence. African American students who had a more developed sense of Black identity exhibited increased academic confidence – referred to as academic self-concept – and increased grade point averages. Engagement with campus culture centers or participation in robust educational ethnic communities effectively assists in developing an ethnic identity for African American students through its focus on cultural knowledge and validation. Thus ethnic enclaves serve as a proxy for promoting the educational success of Blacks students at PWIs by providing a safe space on campus where Black students experience cultural validation and congruity and nurturing of their academic confidence through

ethnic identity development. The academic nurturing students experience in ethnic enclaves is important in understanding how these self-segregated communities facilitate increased academic achievement through increased academic self-concept.

The literature provides support that academic self-concept is positively related to academic outcomes for Black students in a variety of educational settings (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Cokley, Komarraju, King, Cunningham, & Muhammad, 2003). The study of academic self-concept has assisted researchers in predicting academic achievement across racial ethnic groups. Cokley and Chapman (2008) argue that academic self-concept is the “most powerful psychological correlate of academic outcomes as it is defined as the attitudes and feelings that an individual has about her or his academic abilities” (p. 354), and has been found to be positively correlated to academic outcomes (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Cokley et al., 2003; Cokley & Moore, 2007). Academic self-concept, therefore, is an important variable when examining differential educational outcomes as it is influenced by ethnic identity, campus racial climate, past performance, and connection to ethnic minority peers via ethnic enclaves. A review of the literature found that ethnic identity had a positive relationship with academic self-concept (Cokley et al., 2003; Cokley & Chapman, 2008), Black students attending HBIs exhibited increased levels of academic self-concept compared to their counterparts at PWIs (Cokley, 2002; Berger & Milem, 2000), grade point average was the strongest predictor of academic self-concept (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Cokley et al., 2003), and Black students attending HBIs had higher grade point averages than Black students at PWIs (Allen, 1992; Cokley, 2000; Davis, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998). The literature provides evidence that the institutional context shapes the academic confidence of African American students at postsecondary institutions. The

perception of the institutional context is influenced by the campus racial climate, access to ethnic communities, and perceptions of cultural congruity for Black students on White campuses. A study of academic self-concept and perceptions of cultural congruity may therefore be useful for educators interested in creating educational equity for all students of color.

Problem Statement

Currently, African Americans in California experience inequity in educational access and outcomes in higher education. A system of modern day tracking has funneled nearly two-thirds of all Black college students in California into open-access public community colleges; where fewer than four out of 10 complete a degree, certificate, or transfer within six years (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). There is a need to increase the access to four-year institutions as well as degree completion for Black students in California who matriculate to historically White two-year institutions. Black culture centers were established to support the academic and social engagement of Black students on White campuses who experience marginalization, isolation, and tokenism. These ethnic enclaves support the success of Black students by providing a safe haven that affirms their cultural identity and nurtures their academic confidence. However, there is an absence of research that has examined the relationship between culture center participation, perceptions of cultural congruity, and academic self-concept among Black students in a two-year historically White institution as a means for understanding academic performance. Therefore, there is a need to examine student perceptions of cultural congruity in a two-year PWI of higher education and the impact of those perceptions on academic self-concept among African American students engaged in a Black culture center.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students participating in a Black Culture Center in a two-year HWI setting.

In order to achieve this purpose, two surveys and a demographic questionnaire were administered to African Americans students participating in a Black culture center at the study site. Participants were provided a paper copy of the surveys and demographic questionnaire during the spring term of the academic year in the Black Culture and in one of the Black Culture Center learning community courses.

Importance of the Study

An examination of the variables that contribute to the academic achievement of African American community college students might prove useful for institutions of higher education and policy makers interested in addressing inequity in access and outcomes for African American students. Developing a more thorough understanding of what contributes to the success of Black students on White campuses could provide institutions of higher education with greater insight that informs institutional practices, policy, and resource allocation to support all racial minority students. In redirecting the gaze from the “deficits” students bring, to the institution and the agents that create and shape its context, educators may be able to generate the “conditions for empowerment” so the formerly oppressed act on their behalf (Tierney, 1999, p. 8). Redirecting assists in dispelling the perpetuations of pseudoscience that claim the intellectual inferiority or educational disadvantages of African Americans and calls attention to the institutional systems that systematically perpetuate their educational oppression. This study assists in contributing to the increasing research interest aimed at validating the experiences of

the marginalized through new paradigms. It is only through creating new paradigms of knowledge that educational systems can eliminate the discomfort of discussing race in education and begin to recreate systems designed to serve all students equitably. This line of inquiry extends the research and knowledge aimed at closing the Black equity gap by giving a voice and acknowledging the perspectives of students most vulnerable on traditional college campuses.

Definition of Terms

Academic self-concept. Academic self-concept consists of a “mixture of self-beliefs about one’s academic abilities”, and the “attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions held by students about their academic skill sets and performance” (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997, p. 308).

Black culture center. Black Culture Centers (BCC) date back to the late 1960s when African American students demanded representation and support on college campuses where they experienced racial hostility (Patton, 2012). They represent physical spaces on college campuses that provide academic and social engagement and support to African American/Black students to facilitate identity development, cultural validation, increased student engagement, and academic success (Patton, 2006).

Campus racial climate. It is the overall racial environment of the college as experienced by various racial/ethnic groups. Campus racial climate presumes that students are “educated in distinct racial contexts” which are shaped by both external and institutional factors. It consists of four domains: “the institutions historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and the behavioral climate characterized by intergroup relations” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 280).

Critical race theory framework for education. The framework consists of the five elements of Critical Race Theory:

the centrality of race and racism with other forms of subordination, the challenge to dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, centrality of experiential knowledge, and transdisciplinary perspective [but focuses on the] racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of communities of color, and offers a transformative method for examining racial/ethnic, gender, and class discrimination. (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 63)

Cultural congruity. The “match of one’s cultural or personal values with those of the university or college. It encompasses the internal processes that encompass student’s feelings about themselves and their cultural values in relation to the college” (Gloria, Castellanos, & Herrera, 2016, p. 427).

Historically Black institutions. Postsecondary sites established prior to 1965 whose primary mission is, and was, to educate Black Americans. These black serving institutions were first established in the mid-1800s in response to intense racial discrimination experienced by Black students on White college campuses (Perkins, 2009).

Predominantly White institutions. “Sites whose prevailing norms, values, and practices cater to White students, which leads to unfriendly and potentially hostile environments for students of color” (Chang, 2002, p. 3). These institutions have embedded ideologies that maintain inequality and serve the dominant groups interest via “academic colonialism” (Hurtado, 1992, p. 544), which refers to the imposition of dominant ideologies, irrespective of the racial composition of the student body.

Racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions consist of verbal and non-verbal exchanges that are “automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white

superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Davis, 1989, p. 1576). These pervasive forms of racism are unconscious and subtle.

Students/people of color. Persons of African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American ancestry (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Traditional educational paradigms or frameworks are not able to capture the experiences of marginalized students of color and therefore interpret their educational outcomes as indicative of individual deficits related to socioeconomic status. These paradigms fail to capture the historical context of race and education and the voice of students of color attempting to navigate educational systems that have historically excluded them. Critical Race Theory provides a framework for critically examining race in educational settings. It is grounded in the assumption that the permanence of racism is central to understanding the educational context students of color experience, by acknowledging the “centrality of racism, challenging dominant ideology, advancing a social justice research agenda, legitimizing the knowledge and experiences of people of color, and extending beyond the educational context through an interdisciplinary perspective” (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009, p. 663). CRT perceives educational systems within the larger historical and societal context. It’s grounding in the assumption that race and racism are central and permanent is counter to contemporary efforts to approach diversity through a color-blind or race neutral framework. Race-neutral policies and practices effectively dismiss the historical legacy of intentional oppression and subordination of people of color, especially African Americans. Allen, Epps, and Haniff (1991) argue that this history has created an ambivalent and conflictual stance for African Americans to the educational system that has historically denied them access and established the “pseudoscience” (p. 12) to argue the

intellectual deficit of African Americans as a rationale for their subjugation. When perceiving that history through the CRT lens American educational systems have been the most effective instrument in prohibiting the educational advancement and economic mobility of African Americans.

Research Questions

What relationship, if any, exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black culture center at a two-year, historically White public institution?

Does perceived cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black culture center while attending a historically White, two-year public institution?

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that a positive linear relationship exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black culture center while attending a historically White, two-year public institution.

It is hypothesized that cultural congruity is a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black culture center while attending a historically White, two-year public institution after controlling for gender, college GPA, college units completed, participation type, and student-faculty interactions.

Delimitations

The study's sample was delimited to African American students participating in a Black Culture Center (BCC) at a Southern California Community College during the 2016 – 2017 academic year. The researcher has delimited the population of the study in order to focus on the perspective of African American students currently served by the BCC and the institutional climate that has shaped its function and purpose. As such, the study was delimited to a single location to capture the specific context of the study site and community that the targeted population is situated within.

Limitations

There were several limitations of the study that may have impacted the methodology, data, or interpretation of results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The study took place at one site; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to Black community college students. Furthermore, the sample of the study may not be representative of the Black student population at the study site. The researcher delimited the sample to African American students participating in the BCC; therefore, the findings may not represent non-participating Black students at the site, or Black students participating in similar culture centers on different campuses.

Assumptions

This study was based on the assumption that race and racism are central to understanding the experiences of Black students throughout the educational pipeline. The researcher asserts that historical systems of discrimination and racism are deeply embedded in the educational system, which in turn impedes the educational success of students of color. This racialized educational system makes contemporary forms of discrimination and racism invisible in an era of race-neutral policies that continue to disproportionately impact students of color negatively. The

equity gap is, therefore, a result of systematic and structural racism, which continues to disadvantage students of color while privileging White students.

The following additional assumptions were included in this study: (a) Black students participating in the BCC at the study site would be willing to participate in the study and complete the survey, (b) subjects would answer survey questions honestly, and (c) the data and the interpretation of the data would accurately reflect the perceptions of current Black students who participate in the BCC.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One includes the background, problem statement, purpose, importance of study, a definition of terms, a summary of the theoretical framework, hypotheses, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter Two consists of an introduction and organization of the chapter, as well as a literature review of relevant research related to the study's focus. Chapter Three includes an introduction to the methods utilized and rationale, the setting of the study site, population, sample and sampling procedures, human subject considerations, instrumentation reliability and validity, data collection procedures, data management, and data analysis. Chapter Four includes a presentation and summary of the findings, and Chapter Five presents a discussion of the key findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Organization of Chapter

This chapter begins with an explanation of the theoretical framework for this study. The theoretical framework is followed by a historical overview of African American access and equity in education, and specifically in higher education. The historical overview will be followed by a review of the relevant literature on institutional context in relationship to African American achievement in higher education. Finally, the researcher will discuss the literature on ethnic enclaves, cultural congruity, and academic self-concept, as a central focus of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory. The examination and critique of systematic oppression of people of color began in the field of legal studies. Derrick Bell, credited as the symbolic father of Critical Race Theory (CRT), argued that race and racism are deeply embedded in American institutions, structures, and ideology, that Whites benefits from race-based privilege, and Black advancement is only possible when it aligns with White interest, better known as interest convergence (Bell Jr., 1980). His work challenged the notion that racial equality was a viable and realistic option for African Americans, who lacked the power and resources to overcome White superiority and dominance, in a society where racism acts as a permanent and pervasive tool for the subordination of people of color.

CRT was first applied to the field of education by scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV (1995) in an article titled *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) articulated three propositions for making sense of school-based inequity utilizing the CRT framework:

- (a) race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States,

(b) U.S. society is based on property rights, and lastly (c) the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity. (p. 48)

These underlying assumptions provide a lens for understanding how White supremacy and the oppression of people of color have created and maintained an intentional and pervasive disadvantage, socially, economically, and educationally, for communities of color.

Pervasiveness of race and racism. CRT scholars maintain that the intersection of various forms of oppressions, such as gender and class, are important variables for understanding educational inequality, but race and racism are central to understanding the educational experiences of students of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Leonardo, 2012; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Omi & Winant, 1993; Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004). Through a critical examination of American educational history, CRT sheds light on how race and racism define the educational experiences of students of color, and specifically African American students, who have been systematically disadvantaged through the protection of White privilege and entitlement. CRT then acts as a tool for the “intellectual and social deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction of a racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11) through racism that is both normal and natural. Hence, CRT aims to expose deeply embedded racism that has been made invisible through White superiority.

Property rights. Property rights provide clues to systems of entitlement and privilege in the United States. CRT scholars assert that society is based on property rights and the tension that property rights present for the protection of human or civil rights in the Constitution (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The ability to own property has been a prerequisite to

citizenship and an avenue to political power; therefore, it is not difficult to understand how the Constitution had failed to protect the human rights of African Americans when they were declared as property by the American government (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As property, Blacks were not entitled to the human rights protections that White males were afforded as citizens.

Property rights have not been limited to material possession and ownership. Whites not only benefitted from the ability to possess and own, they benefit from the material and social value placed on whiteness as a form of property.

Possession – the act necessary to lay basis for rights in property – was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness – that which Whites alone possess – is valuable and is property. (Harris, 1993, p. 1721)

Contemporary institutional practices in education demonstrate the value placed on whiteness through Eurocentric curriculum, teacher preparation, funding, school racial composition, and assessment, which disproportionality impact students of color negatively (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Educational institutions have attempted to assimilate students of color based on the ideology that racial/ethnic and cultural deficiencies contribute to educational inequity for students of color. This ideology dismisses the historical legacy of educational exclusion and subordination of people of color, the saliency of race and racism in society and education, and the benefits Whites receive by virtue of their race.

Race and property. The intersection of race and property in education is understood through four functions of property: “rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoy, reputation and status property, and absolute right to exclude” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 59). Rights of

disposition and rights of reputation and status are ideological in nature but have real consequences for students of color in educational settings. The natural qualities and characteristics of students of color have been used to rationalize their educational disadvantage in academia. Consequently, the inherent qualities of mind and character of White students – White norms – are rewarded in educational settings, which include, but are not limited to patterns of speech, dress, and cultural practices (Harris, 1993; Hurtado, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso et al., 2004). The value placed on White norms, or rights of disposition create a school setting where White students are validated and nurtured, and students of color are institutionally excluded and marginalized for their inability to assimilate. Further, schools and programs that embody White ideals earn increased reputation and status, while nonwhite programs, such as bilingual education, or schools, such as those situated in urban, high minority areas are perceived as less than and inferior by reputation and status (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60).

More explicit than rights of disposition and rights of reputation and status are rights to access and use, and the absolute right to exclude. “Whiteness allows for specific social, cultural, and economic privileges” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 59) that take the form of material differences in educational settings. Kozol (1991) articulates these disparities in rights to use and enjoyment in describing the difference in materials, funding, curriculum, and enrichment available to students in majority White schools compared to students in majority Black schools. Examples include access to a variety of electives, Advanced Placement courses, technology, new facilities, and quality instruction afforded to White students in White schools and simultaneously denied to Black students in Black schools. The vast disparities between Black and White schools are exacerbated by White privilege to exclude others. The idea of Whiteness is defined as the

absence of Blackness, and the race boundaries identify “one-drop of Black blood” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60) as a contamination of Whiteness. White communities have exercised their right to exclude historically through denying Blacks access to education, the creation and maintenance of segregated schools, and through White flight and use of racial covenants, and choice programs in education (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Contemporary forms of exclusion include tracking, residential segregation, gifted and honors programs, and advanced placement course.

The underlying assumptions of CRT in education provide a lens for understanding the experiences of marginalized individuals and groups in educational settings. The framework seeks to articulate the racialized systems and experiences that are both visible and invisible, formal and informal, that marginalized or oppressed people experience. It is a critical analysis of how the institution of education has subordinated specific racial and ethnic groups and created an educational debt. CRT assists in understanding the historical and contemporary educational challenges African Americans, and other communities of color, have experienced in terms of educational access and outcomes. There are five elements that comprise the CRT framework for education: “the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; the challenge to dominant ideology; the commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge; and the transdisciplinary perspective” (Solorzano, 1997, pp. 6-7). The five elements of CRT challenge traditional paradigms, give voice to marginalized people, and examine the context of historical and contemporary racism and racist injuries in exploring and comprehending the educational experiences and outcomes of students of color.

Historical Educational Access and Equity for African American Students

American history provides evidence of intentional and systematic efforts to deny educational access to people of color. Centuries of legal and informal forms of racism and discrimination, dating back to American slavery, have resulted in the ongoing oppression and subordination of people of color, especially African Americans. The African American historical and contemporary struggle for educational equality has focused on the issue of segregation versus integration (Perkins, 2009). Proponents of segregation have argued that African American students would be subject to the racial aggression of teachers and students, as well as institutional racism, and perpetuation of White superiority in integrated settings, while proponents of integration argued that segregation perpetuated social and economic inequality through the funneling of resources to predominantly White institutions and communities (Perkins, 2009). This debate continues to divide the African American community as contemporary Black students are currently experiencing a period of re-segregation as a result of educational policies, school funding, historical housing policies and discrimination, White flight and re-gentrification of low-income neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2014). A review of the historical context of African Americans and education reveals America's long history of racial ethnic segregation in education and the perpetuation of Black subordination.

Denied access. For over 200 hundred years African Americans were legally denied access to education, and other rights and privileges afforded to Whites in America. Enslaved African Americans were not permitted to receive an education, except that which included religious and moral lessons taught by White slave owners for the purpose of producing civilized, obedient, and loyal slaves (Perkins, 2009). The education of the Black community was seen as a “threat to White superiority and dominance” (Perkins, 2009, p. 105). The limited numbers of free

African Americans were prohibited from attending public schools, and either obtained an education through private schools, which were under the close watch of Whites, or through informal learning in church or family and friends (Span, 2015). Any education received by African Americans was meant to reinforce their subordinate status in society and preserve their second-class citizenship in relationship to Whites. In every part of the country dual educational systems were created for Whites and Blacks, either by law or cultural practice, which eventually became to be legally established as “separate but equal” (Span, 2015, p. 58). The separation of Blacks and Whites fed the ideological belief in White supremacy through the advantages and privileges afforded to Whites at the persistent disadvantage of Blacks. The ideology and belief in White supremacy created systematic forms of control and subjugation of Black communities that persisted with equal, if not greater, force after the Civil War and emancipation.

Emancipation. Following emancipation in 1863 southern Whites fought to maintain a caste-like system to replace slavery. Through “Black codes, the debt peonage system of sharecropping, mass incarceration of African Americans for petty offenses, and unrestrained violence” (Span, 2015, p. 61) free African Americans experienced a rapid erosion of their civil rights. Separate but equal was formally legalized following emancipation in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which effectively “legalized racism and sanctioned segregation by law” (Span, 2015, p. 59) as a means of continued oppression over freed African Americans. Racial separation replaced the bondages of slavery by denying Blacks access to the full rights of their citizenship and preserved the status quo of formalized White privilege.

Prior to the Civil War there were few public school options for Whites and Blacks in many of the southern states. It was through the demands of the freed slaves for access to education that state-supported public schools were created across the south, which

overwhelmingly benefitted southern Whites, despite their opposition to any publicly funded education that might benefit African Americans (Span, 2015). Five years post emancipation there were 1.2 million White children in public schools, compared to 250,000 a decade earlier, and 123,000 African Americans students, with those totals climbing to 3.3 million Whites and 1.2 million African Americans by 1890 (Span, 2015). While there was a massive increase in educational access, educational equity persisted through the highly segregated dual system of schools, which systematically disadvantaged Black children.

Despite equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, Blacks were prohibited from attending White schools and forced to establish and maintain their segregated schools if a state-sponsored school was not available. This denial to local publicly funded schools resulted in double taxation for the Black community as their taxes supported publicly funded White schools, but they often utilized community funds and resources to provide education within their community (Perkins, 2009). During this time, there was a massive movement by the American Missionary Association (AMA) to develop a public school system for Blacks residing in the Southern and nearby border-states (Perkins, 2009). Their efforts resembled a contemporary version of religious and moral education that White slave owners provided to enslaved African Americans. They routinely denied hiring of qualified African American teachers for former White homemakers without appropriate training, only taught the primary subjects, focused on industrial and manual training, and demonstrated on-going racism towards the Black community, in an effort to control and sabotage Black educational efforts in the South (Perkins, 2009). These schools were designed to prepare Blacks for life as submissive and subordinate citizens through training for menial jobs in agriculture and labor (Perkins, 2009). This occurred during a time where a proliferation of pseudoscience was emerging that called into question the intelligence

and moral capacity of African Americans to justify their social and economic position and need for White control (Allen, 1992). This period in history, following emancipation, was a time of an increasingly corporate and foundation presence aimed at controlling Black education, especially in the South, where Blacks represented the majority share of cheap labor (Perkins, 2009).

When African Americans began migrating in massive numbers to the North and West, due to limited opportunities in the South, anti-Black sentiment expanded across the country. This period witnessed an increase in housing policies and laws designed to redline African Americans into “racially segregated areas” (Span, 2015, p. 63). Restrictive covenants combined with racial gerrymandering in school districts were intentionally utilized to appease White families who refused to live and attend school with Blacks (Perkins, 2009; Span, 2015). Eventually, Northern and Western states saw major cities, once White, become majority African American while neighboring suburbs became virtually all White (Rothstein, 2014). The continued racial segregation in educational settings maintained legally separate but very unequal dual systems, where White schools monopolized public monies, resources, and facilities at the expense of African American children and communities (Perkins, 2009; Span, 2015). The effects of residential racism and discrimination are still seen today in education through the proliferation of inferior inner-city schools with a lack of, or limited, facilities, resources, and funding that serve a majority minority, and highly funded, high achieving schools in majority White suburbs (Kozol, 1991). These contemporary dual school systems, separate and unequal, are a direct result of intentional efforts in housing and education to protect the rights and privileges of Whites through the oppression of communities of color.

Access to higher education was no different as traditionally White institutions followed in the ideology that Whites and Blacks should be educated separately. While a token number of

Black students were able to access institutions of higher education beginning in 1833 through Oberlin College – the first college to open admit Black students – increased access to higher education was not provided until the 1850s when Black colleges and universities began to be established outside of the Southern States (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Perkins, 2009). Before 1850 most of the Black colleges were established by the AMA in the south offered high school courses, with a handful of college-level offerings (Perkins, 2009). Given the long history of White educational control, there was constant conflict between African Americans who wanted to control the institutions that served their communities and the White missionaries. Areas of conflict included the lack of Black faculty, limited college-level course offerings, and a curricular emphasis on “European history, culture, and values” (Perkins, 2009, p. 136).

Very few African Americans accessed predominantly White institutions after the Civil War due to the informal, yet systematically maintained, practice of racial segregation. The few who attended PWIs during this time were met with continuous instances of racism on those campuses at the institutional level (i.e. policies prohibiting African Americans from living on campus) and at the individual level (i.e. informal exclusion from academic and social student clubs). Unfortunately, many of the Black colleges that had been established due to the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1862 lacked the funding and structure to provide an equitable education for African Americans, especially those seeking graduate and/or professional degrees (Harper et al., 2009). This grant focused on providing public education for Black students that was geared towards agricultural and mechanical arts education and essentially legalized educational segregation by race through the creation of Black institutions to prevent Black students from attending White colleges (Harper et al., 2009). These colleges were not designed to provide educational equity; instead they acted as an instrument to ensure racial separation and to

maintain control of Black access and equity in higher education. Thus, many of these institutions failed to assist the Black community in realizing educational or economic equity. The African American community believed that integration was the only way to gain equal access to educational opportunities, as segregation continuously resulted in educational inequality.

Attempts at integration. At first glance, *Brown v. Board of Education* represented a major victory for educational equality for African Americans. The historic court case made separate but equal illegal, and found that separate facilities are inherently unequal, to the disadvantage of African Americans (Bell, 1980; Perkins, 2009; Span, 2015). Unfortunately, resistance to integration was so widespread and pervasive that segregation remained virtually intact for three generations (Span, 2015). Many states openly defied and resisted integration, and went so far as to “penalize persons who attempted to implement integration laws” in various Southern states (Perkins, 2009, p. 146). Informal systems of discrimination and racism remained salient in the lives of African Americans. In education, these racist systems took the form of “freedom of choice” (Span, 2015, p. 63) for school placement and private schools to avoid desegregation, which is still utilized today through school choice and voucher movements, all of which are funded through public school monies and perpetuate legalized racial segregation in education. These school options provided an avenue for White families to avoid racial integration in school settings through publicly funded choices. Long-standing school segregation policies, formally intact until as late as the 1940s in some areas, and complete housing segregation across the country, resulted in educational segregation both formally and informally. It was not until President Kennedy threatened to withhold federal funds for public schools that refused to integrate in the wake of the assassination Martin Luther King, Jr. that massive

integration efforts took shape in the southern states and at institutions of higher education (Perkins, 2009; Span, 2015).

Higher education. Attempts at integration on college campuses mirrored the larger societal barriers for integrating previously dual educational systems. Prior to the multiple policy initiatives designed to assist in educational integration in the 1960s African American college students were largely educated at Black serving institutions (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Harper et al., 2009; Perkins, 2009). However, the African American community recognized the apparent inequality between Black and White institutions of higher education and pursued racial integration as a means to racial equality. The historic *Brown v. Board of Education* case did not have an immediate impact on institutions of higher education. Mandated segregation in higher education did not come until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 amid growing Black militancy and organized protests (Bell, 1992; Harper et al., 2009). It restricted federal funds to segregated schools under the provision that “no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Harper et al., 2009, p. 396). A year later the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided additional subsidies to Black colleges to assist in their survival as an increasing number of Black students accessed PWIs, and to potentially offset a history of neglect and under-funding (Perkins, 2009). Even with the additional allocation to HBI, the typical per-student disbursement of state funds in 2000 at HBIs was still significantly lower than the average per-student allocation at PWIs, which was \$6,064 and \$10,266 respectively (Harper et al., 2009). Despite formal policies that caused a temporary increase in college access, educational equity was not realized for African Americans who were forced to choose from under-funded HBIs, or PWIs where they experienced tokenism,

racism, and discrimination, and systematic marginalization and exclusion, both academically and socially (Feagin et al., 1996). History has provided evidence that despite efforts at integration in higher education, and other educational systems, that there has been an absence of concentrated efforts, resources, and policies to assist in true racial integration. America's best efforts at integration in higher education occurred with the short-lived affirmative action agenda that began in the 1960s.

Affirmative action. Efforts to remedy past discrimination and racism resulted in President Kennedy's formal introduction of affirmative action in 1965 (Harper et al., 2009). Affirmative action was first introduced as a means of confronting discrimination in employment and housing. Affirmative action programs were created as policies to assist the Black community in overcoming the disadvantages of centuries of "slavery and second-class citizenship" (Weiss, 1987, p. 41). Beginning with the Ives-Quinn Act of 1945, various American Presidents have issued Executive Orders, instead of a national anti-discrimination law, to prohibit racial discrimination in the workplace (Weiss, 1987). Unfortunately, these anti-discrimination policies, which never clearly defined what affirmative action was, merely represented a moral obligation to provide equality in housing, employment, and government, by relying on voluntary compliance and good faith efforts, with oversight provided by varying governmental committees without the power of enforcement or consequence (Weiss, 1987). The anti-discrimination reforms from 1945 to John F. Kennedy's presidency failed to make an impact on structures, policies, and cultural practices that had continued to disadvantage African Americans.

Institutions of higher education heeded the demands of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and multiple civil rights organization for proactive policies aimed at serving African Americans to increase access and support for under-served students of color. Initially, PWIs used affirmative

action programs, in admissions, support, and financial aid, to provide targeted support and services to African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and women, and later to low-income students and students with disabilities (Lehmuller & Gregory, 2005). These efforts resulted in a massive increase of Black students at PWIs. In 1950 over 90% of all Black college students were enrolled at HBIs; however, affirmative action policies resulted in a sharp increase in access to PWIs with a Black enrollment growing to 18.4% in 1976, up to 88.1% at PWIs in 2004 (Harper et al., 2009). These “race-based college admission policies led to striking gains in the representation of minorities in the most lucrative and influential occupations” (Harper et al., 2009, p. 400). Colleges specifically relied on the government’s loose implementation of affirmative action which focused on numerical representation and hiring goals in employment to create targeted interventions and strategies to increase minority enrollment on college campuses (Weiss, 1987).

Colleges utilized a number of strategies to increase diversity enrollment, such as reserving or setting aside spots for minority applicants, minority exclusive scholarships based on race, race-based programs specifically targeting underrepresented minority students. Many of these programs were administered due to increasing pressure from various civil rights organizations, and on-going Black student protests on PWIs across the country (Patton, 2012). Black students demanded that PWIs provide safe spaces on campuses that would assist them in dealing with overt racial hostility and discrimination (Hord, 2005; Patton, 2012). As a result, the 1960s saw the creation of the first Black Culture Centers on various PWIs (Hord, 2005; Patton, 2012). These counter-spaces were created out of a need for academic and social survival on White campuses where Black students were marginalized and excluded, and faced institutional and individual discrimination and racism (Hord, 2005; Hurtado, 1992; Patton, 2012). These

spaces represented the failure of integration efforts, which promised racial integration as a means to racial equity. Integration efforts required a one-way assimilation for Black students, as PWIs were unwilling or unable to confront the ideology of White supremacy. Very few, if any, reconstruct institutional structures and challenged attitudinal perceptions to create campuses that were truly inclusive and provided an equitable chance at success for Black students.

Unfortunately, the gains achieved through affirmative action were short-lived, and the idea of creating space for historically excluded groups was soon challenged when the U.S. experienced an economic downturn in the 1970s (Weiss, 1987). Affirmative action policies that gave ‘preferential treatment’ became a target during a time of increasing job competition (Weiss, 1987). The first attack on affirmative action in education occurred in 1973 with the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case, in which Allan Bakke, a White male, sued the University of California, Davis (UCD) for “reverse discrimination” (Harper et al., 2009). His argument was that affirmative action programs admitted under-qualified minority applicants to the disadvantage of White applicants, and he had, therefore, been discriminated against based on race. The UCD medical school set aside 10% of admission spots for minorities who were evaluated on a different set of criteria (Harper et al., 2009). This affirmative action program was meant to remedy a past history of denial to medical school for African Americans, and other racial/ethnic minorities, as well as historical educational disadvantages that prohibited those communities of color from being competitive. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment to render the affirmative action program illegal, effectively, using the amendment to harm the very people it was designed to protect (Bell, 1992). The Supreme Court decided in favor of Bakke by prohibiting racial quotas, but maintained that race could be considered as a means to achieve diversity on college campuses (Harper et al., 2009; Span,

2015). Bakke's victory led the University of California Regents to declare race would no longer be used for admission in any of the system's campuses, and eventually to California's Prop 209, which eliminated the use of affirmative action policies in employment and educational practices (Harper et al., 2009; Lehmuller & Gregory, 2005).

The result was devastating for African Americans, especially in regard to access to the University of California (UC) system, the state's premier four-year research institute. African American college students witnessed a 17% decrease in access as a result of Prop 209, continuing the precedent that Black students would experience the lowest admission rate of any racial group (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). African Americans represent less than 3% of all undergraduate students at UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles (where the largest proportion of African Americans live in the state), and 4% of total enrollment in the system, all of which is in a state with one of the nation's largest Black populations (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Bakke's case became a turning point for campuses across the country that had similar affirmative action programs designed to recruit, admit, and support students of color. Case law since Bakke has demonstrated that while attempts to address past discrimination based on race are permissible under the Fourteenth Amendment, any such programs must be "narrowly tailored" [and] "withstand strict scrutiny" (Lehmuller & Gregory, 2005, p. 443), making such efforts extremely unattractive for PWIs interested in racial equity. Institutions of higher education were forced to "decenter race and racism while minimizing past and current racism... through color-blind or race neutral admissions policies" (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 11) as a result of anti-affirmative action sentiment. This has resulted in an on-going attack on programs specifically designed for members of specific racial/ethnic groups, hence this period of time also saw the lack of institutional redirected away from Black Culture Centers,

some of which were not able to survive due to a lack of Black faculty and staff at PWIs who traditionally have volunteered their time and effort to support BCCs, and a lack of financial resources and physical space on campus (Patton, 2012). Many institutions moved to multicultural centers which forced historically oppressed racial/ethnic groups to compete over extremely limited resources, and by attempting to serve all, serve none effectively (Patton, 2006). Institutions were not reconstructed to benefit all students through affirmative action programs. Instead the numerical representation of student of color on college campuses became ‘evidence’ of a post-racial society for some, despite the continued inequality in access and outcomes for students of color (Yosso et al., 2004). This belief has resulted in a current re-segregation in education and a persistent equity gap for students of color at all levels of education.

Re-segregation. The attack on affirmative action that began in the 1970s has resulted in an era of restricted access to communities of color and re-segregation in education. Failed policies have created increasing segregation by race in education and housing (Span, 2015). American schools are just as segregated by race today, as they were 14 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* case (Span, 2015). Black students increasingly attend inner-city schools that have a 90% minority population, more than half of which is low-income, while White students typically attend majority White schools in middle-class neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2014). Poor Black students are increasingly isolated in poor communities with inferior schools as a result of historical de facto and de jure discrimination in housing and educational policies (Rothstein, 2014). The racial isolation of poor Black students is a direct result of “twentieth century federal, state, and local policies designed to separate the races and whose effects endure today” (Rothstein, 2014, p. 3). Examples of de facto policies include, but are not limited to, the 1949 Housing Act, which permitted states to design separate public housing projects for Whites and

Blacks, the creation of the ghetto through denial of adequate public services (i.e. delayed garbage collection, and zoning Black communities for industrial or toxic use), maintenance of “separate and lower salary schedules for Black public employees through the 1960s” by the federal government, and urban renewals programs which force minority residents away from universities, hospitals, and business districts into overcrowded ghettos (Rothstein, 2014, p. ii). Kozol (1991) discusses these savage inequalities across our nation, where evidence of dual educational systems, separate and unequal continue to deny educational equity and economic mobility to communities of color. Evidence of inequity is seen in the disproportionately low access to four-year colleges, overrepresentation at community colleges, and low graduation rate for Black college students across all higher education systems (NCES, 2011). These separate and unequal systems continue to operate as a tool that oppresses communities of color similar to, but more insidious, than historical forms of de facto segregation, because race-neutral policies create an illusion of equal opportunity that has yet to be achieved.

Higher Education in California

California’s institutions of higher education have created a system of tracking that continues to disadvantage students of color in terms of access and equity. The 1900’s witnessed the beginning of a large-scale public system of higher education in California (Callan, 2009). The state experienced a massive growth in higher education institutions following World War II as Veterans returned from war with their GI Bill, Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, to obtain a college education (Callan, 2009). The growth in higher education resulted in a multitude of college institutions with “overlapping functions, waste, and inefficiency; lack of unified policy; and inequitable distribution of state funds” (Callan, 2009, p. 2). State concerns regarding higher education resulted in the 1960 California Master Plan, which defined a three-tiered system and

the role of the institutions within the system (Callan, 2009). At this time, the state was experiencing a massive influx of minorities, creating a fast growing majority minority population in a state that had previously been over 90% White. (Callan, 2009). The Master Plan sought to create separate educational systems to ‘better serve’ diverse communities. The junior colleges, which later became community colleges, were given a large mandate to expand and functioned as an open-access college, which focused on transfer and vocational skills, while the California State University system was granted degree-granting authority through the masters level, and the University of California maintained its right to exclusively offer state-funded advanced graduate/professional programs and research (Callan, 2009). This system funneled the highest achieving students to the UC system, which was the most expensive option, the middle 25% of students to the CSU, and the majority of students to the community colleges, while previously tuition-free, continues to represent the most affordable option for higher education (Callan, 2009). California’s higher education pipeline effectively directs White, Chinese and Japanese Americans students to the most selective campuses, while barriers of poverty, inferior public schools, and language disproportionately direct African American and Latino students to open-access community colleges, where they often depart before obtaining their certificate or degree or transfer (Callan, 2009). These separate systems of higher education in California are reminiscent of historical patterns in education, which provide greater access and equity to Whites at the disadvantage of African Americans through separate and unequal institutions.

California community colleges. The California Community College (CCC) system represents the largest system of higher education in the U.S. (California Community College Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO], 2016). The first junior college in California was Fresno City College in 1910. Since that time, the system has grown to 112 colleges within 72 districts serving

over 2.3 million students annually, which is 24% of all community college students in the nation (CCCCO, 2016). These colleges offer associates degrees and vocational certificates as part of their dual mission in assisting students to transfer and in providing job training and skills.

Initially, CCCs were designed as two-year programs, taking the place of the first two-years at a four-year institution. Unfortunately, due to its increasing classification of students directed into remedial or developmental courses, the average student completes their program of study in six years. The certificate, degree and transfer rate over a six-year period is 47.1% across the entire system (CCCCO, 2016). In comparison, the completion rate for African Americans students, who overwhelmingly matriculate to the CCC system, is 35.2% (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). The CCC system has become the major access point to education for communities of color, while simultaneously perpetuating a dual system of inequity through its inability to assist historically oppressed students in either obtaining a degree, certificate, or transfer. As a result, fewer young Blacks today have a degree compared to African Americans one generation ago in California (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013).

These colleges, like many other PWIs, have experienced a drastic racial demographic shift since the 1960s yet have failed to create educational environments conducive to equitable outcomes for all students. There is a lack of diversity among tenured faculty, a curriculum which seldom reflects the experiences, knowledge, or voices of communities of color, mission statements that prioritize diversity in mission only, and a limited number boutique programs that serve a handful of under-served students (Hurtado et al., 1998). Despite the vastly different student population at California community colleges today compared to 1950, very little has changed institutionally in order to accommodate and better serve those students. Instead, race-neutral policies hide systematic forms of oppression and have caused a resurgence of

pseudoscience in academia, which renders the oppression of students of color as a result of their own racial, ethnic, and/or cultural inferiority (Allen, 1992; Bell, 1992; Hurtado, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Rothstein, 2014; Span, 2015). This pseudoscience has more recently been challenged in academic via critical race theory and through a focus on creating visibility on structural racism that continues to define the educational system.

Institutional Context and Black Achievement

In utilizing a critical race theory framework, scholars have identified educational institutions as one of the largest entities responsible for the creation and maintenance of inequality. The institutional context of predominantly White institutions acts as a tool for maintaining the status quo through “embedded ideologies that work to preserve inequality” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 280), which include race-neutral policies that disproportionately impact students of color, the academic and social marginalization of students of color, race-based hostility, and campus cultures that cater to and value the knowledge, experiences, and cultural practices of White students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010; Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). The institutional context directly impacts the academic and social experiences of students, student persistence, adjustment, and completion, and the degree to which they engage with the college (Allen, 1992; Berger & Milem, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Davis, 1994; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Tierney, 1999). Unfortunately, for students of color at PWIs, these racialized campus environments often serve the interests of the dominant group and inhibit the full participation and engagement of minority students through institutional and individual barriers (Hurtado, 1992; Tierney, 1999).

Campus racial climate. Hurtado (1992) first conceptualized the idea of the campus racial climate to understand how the institutional context is perceived by students of color, and how it influences the educational outcomes of those students. The campus racial climate framework recognizes that students are “educated in distinct racial contexts” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 280) and experience racially coded spaces on college campuses (Mitchell et al., 2010). The campus racial climate assists in identifying how the institution, intentionally or unintentionally, creates distinct experiences for students based on race/ethnicity as a result of historical legacies of exclusion. There are four elements that compromise the campus racial climate; “ (a) the numerical representation of persons of color, (b) culturally relevant curriculum, (c) support for students of color, and (d) the college’s commitment to pluralism” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 280). These four elements have a direct impact on the experiences and perceptions of students of color. The campus racial climate perpetuates and reinforces the social and historical context in which it is situated. Given the long legacy of systematic discrimination and racism in American history, many students of color experience the extension of those oppressive systems and structures on college campuses institutionally and individually (Bell, 1992; Hurtado, 1992).

College diversity initiatives have attempted to address racial/ethnic educational oppression through structural adjustments, such as increased access and support of students of color, and reinvented mission statements, which prioritize pluralism (Hurtado et al., 1998). Unfortunately, postsecondary institutions have failed to comprehensively address barriers to inequity experienced by students of color at the institutional (i.e. policies) or individual (i.e. attitudinal) level (Hurtado, 1992; Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2004). As a result, African American students at PWIs continue to experience a lack of “students, faculty, or administrators of color, a curriculum devoid of the historical or contemporary experiences of people of color, an

absence of programs to support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color, and an institutional mission that does not reinforce a commitment to pluralism” (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 62). These climates are perceived as unwelcoming or even hostile for African American students, and other students of color, by perpetuating feelings of increased marginality and rejection through covert and subtle forms of racism and discrimination that students experience interacting with the institution and its agents (Hurtado, 1992; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Solorzano et al., 2000; Solorzano, 1997; Tierney, 1999; Villalpondo, 2003; Yosso et al., 2009). Cerezo and Chang (2013) argue that these climates impose and maintain normalized whiteness via “prevailing norms, values, and practices that cater to White students” (p. 74); thereby, reinforcing White superiority or dominance and Black inferiority or subjugation. Therefore, integration efforts take on the form of Black assimilation to White views, norms, and practices. Examining the campus racial climate, therefore, becomes an important variable for understanding the role the institution plays in contributing to the equity gap at postsecondary institutions by giving voice to students of color who have been historically silenced and whose knowledge and experiences have been invalidated.

The literature on campus racial climates has largely focused on two areas. The first area of focus found in the literature is the differential perceptions of campus racial climate by race. Multiple studies have examined student perceptions of campus racial conflict and found that minority status and race influence the perceptions of racial tension at PWIs (Allen, 1992; Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Davis, 1994; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). The second area of focus is on the impact of campus racial climate on the educational outcomes – academic and social – of racial/ethnic minority students. Specifically, the reviewed literature examined the educational outcomes for Black students at PWIs compared

to those in Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) as an evaluative tool for examining the impact of institutional context via campus racial climate. The literature provides evidence that perceptions of campus racial climate do impact the academic and social engagement of Black college students, and subsequently their educational achievement and attainment (Allen, 1985; Allen, 1992; Allen et al., 1991; Berger & Milem, 2000; Chang, 2001; Davis, 1994; Denson & Chang, 2008; Feagin et al., 1996; Hord, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Von Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder, 2005; Woldoff, Wiggins, & Washington, 2011).

Differential perceptions of campus racial climate. Students of color, especially African American students, perceive very different campus racial climates than their White counterparts at PWIs. The diverging opinions of campus racial climate by race has been found in several studies that have explored racial experiences and racial conflict on college campuses and its relationship to race and ethnicity (Ancis et al., 2000; Davis, 1994; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Hurtado, 1992; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Solorzano et al., 2000). The reviewed literature showed evidence of consensus regarding the differential beliefs regarding campus racial climate by race/ethnicity, with the largest differences in perceptions between Black and White students. Black students have generally reported the most negative beliefs regarding campus racial climate, while White students report the most positive beliefs regarding the campus racial climate (Ancis et al., 2000; Davis, 1994; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Hurtado, 1992; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Solorzano et al., 2000). These findings speak to the racialized experiences Black students contend with on White campuses. They are constantly bombarded by interactions, experiences, and spaces that reinforce their marginality, both overtly and covertly. Reid and Radhakrishnan (2003) found that impressions of the campus racial climate were predicted by student's personal experiences with racism and

interactions with other peers and faculty. African American students come to the conclusion that the campus racial climate is hostile through institutional and individual experiences. Many of these academic and social interactions convey “unconscious and subtle forms of racism” [that] “stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 60). These racially charged experiences are articulated in the literature as racial microaggressions.

Campus racial climate and racial microaggressions. The examination of subtle and pervasive forms of racism, known as racial microaggressions, was first conceptualized in 1974 by psychiatrist Chester Pierce. Pierce (1974) maintains that these pervasive, yet subtle forms of racism have a negative impact on the psychological and physical health of African Americans, specifically producing “feelings of degradation and erosion of self confidence and self-image” (p. 27). These racial microaggressions take the form of stereotypical assumptions, lowered expectations, and acts of dismissal. In educational contexts, these subtle forms of discrimination occur in both academic and social spaces. Two studies (Solorzano, et al, 2000; Yosso, et al, 2009) highlight examples of racial microaggressions experienced by students of color in PWIs, which include statements such as “I don’t think of you as Mexican, you speak such good English”, “You’re not like the rest of them (Blacks), you’re different” (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 661). These examples point to what Feagin (2010) refers to as a “White Racial Lens,” (pp. 10-11) which includes the racial stereotypes, narratives, images, and emotions through which Whites view African Americans.

The threat of being viewed “through the lens of a negative stereotype” (Steele, 1999, p. 46) or confirming a stereotype negatively impacts the academic performance of African American students. Black students, therefore, contend with stereotype threat anxiety that their

academic performance will confirm long held beliefs in the intellectual inferiority of African Americans, which results in depressed academic performance and achievement. Several researchers have found that African American students experiencing stereotype threat exhibit lowered test scores, academic disengagement, an unwillingness to seek academic assistance, or utilize peer academic support (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Smith & Hopkins, 2004; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999). The combined effects of subtle and pervasive experiences of racism via racial microaggressions and stereotype threat works to impede the academic success of African American students in higher education settings. Ultimately, racial microaggressions are the manifestations of conscious and unconscious stereotypes and affirm the intellectual inferiority of Black students while confirming the intellectual superiority of White students within academic settings.

Black students on White campuses experience continued isolation and rejection as a result of constant exposure to racial microaggressions in academic and social settings (Allen, 1985; Allen, 1992; Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Cokley, 2002; Davis, 1994; Edman & Brazil, 2009; Feagin et al., 1996; Mitchell et al., 2010; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solorzano et al., 2000; Solorzano, 1997; Villalpondo, 2003; Von Robertson et al., 2005; Yosso et al., 2009). These subtle and pervasive experiences of racism on college campuses and stereotype threat impact the perceptions of the campus racial climate and help explain the differential impressions of the campus racial climate between Black and White students on White campuses.

The academic and social impact of campus racial climates. The differences in academic and social outcomes for Black students attending Black campuses compared to Black students attending White campuses speaks to the impact of institutional context in facilitating or

prohibiting academic achievement for Black students at postsecondary institutions. Black students who attend historically Black institutions (HBIs) tend to outperform their counterparts who attend PWIs despite the fact that they matriculate to HBIs with greater academic and socioeconomic disadvantage compared to their counterparts at PWIs (Allen et al., 1991). While Black students attending Black colleges tend to have higher rates of single parent households, parents with lower status jobs and educational attainment, weaker high school academic backgrounds, including lower scores on standardized tests, these students display “more positive psychosocial adjustments, significant academic gains, and greater cultural awareness and commitment” than their peers on White campuses (Allen et al., 1991, p. 6). A review of the literature finds that Black students attending HBI’s report increased academic self-concept and achievement (Allen, 1992; Berger & Milem, 2000; Davis, 1994; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003), higher ratings of psychosocial wellness (Berger & Milem, 2000; Davis, 1994; Gurin & Epps, 1975) increased ambitiousness (Allen et al., 1991; Hord, 2005), increased positive interactions with faculty and greater campus involvement (Allen et al., 1991) and more positive self-image and racial identity (Feagin et al., 1996; Patton, 2012; Solorzano et al., 2000). Thus, the institution type, PWI versus HBI, is an important instrument for examining the vast disparities in educational outcomes for Black students at postsecondary institutions.

Trends in access and outcomes provide further evidence that the institutional context of HBIs not only provide significant benefits to severely disadvantaged Black students but also serve to close the equity gap in degree attainment for African Americans. HBIs are responsible for over forty percent of all bachelor degrees awarded to African Americans and account for over sixty percent of all African Americans who receive their doctorate (Hord, 2005). Black undergraduate students who attend HBI’s represent a disproportionate amount of Black Ph.D.

holders, Black judges, and Black attorney's in the United States (Hord, 2005). These trends point to the significance of the institutional context in facilitating the success of African American students, especially those whose backgrounds provide evidence of extreme disadvantage.

Further research provides evidence that persistence and educational outcomes are a function of a "student's fit with the institutional environment" (Patton, 2012, p. 5). Researchers, such as Astin (1999), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), Tierney (1999), and Tinto (1993), have examined student fit through the student's interactions with the institutions' academic and social structures and found it be positively related to persistence and educational attainment. As a result, the institutional environment and how the student perceives and responds to that environment has become an important tool for examining postsecondary persistence. For African American students on PWIs, their experiences interacting with the academic and social spheres is quite different than their White counterparts at the same institution and very different than their Black counterparts at HBIs. The experiences of Black students on White campuses are often hostile and unwelcoming, replete with institutional and individual experiences of racial microaggressions, within a White-normed culture that assumes the inferiority of students of color (Feagin et al., 1996; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Solorzano, 1997; Solorzano et al., 2000; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Yosso et al., 2009). Feagin et al. (1996) cites that racial discrimination acts as the primary agent for the high dropout rate at PWIs as a result of campus hostility and caste-like campus systems at PWIs. The campus racial climate, and larger institutional context, therefore, serves as an important vehicle to be reconstructed to better serve the educational needs of students of color, especially those at PWIs.

Ethnic Communities

Students of color have been able to resist hostile and unwelcoming campus racial climates through the formation of ethnic communities or “counter-spaces” – places of resistance – on White campuses. These spaces often take the form of ethnic cultural centers or minority student organizations that assist students of color in making sense of their experiences, connects them to culturally similar peers, and provides an avenue for cultural advocacy and ethnic identity development (Patton, 2012). These sub-cultures were originally created out of Black student demand, assist marginalized students in bridging the divide between their cultural background and knowledge, and that of an institution that has normalized the White student experience and knowledge. These spaces allow students of color to draw upon their cultural resources and assets through affirmation and validation, while simultaneously offering protection from the “psychoemotional harms of racial microaggressions” (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 14).

Historical background. The first cultural centers were created during the civil rights movement in the 1960s during a time of increased efforts to desegregate American schools (Patton, 2012). Black students demanded, through sit-ins, protests, and formal letters, that PWIs create both academic and social space specifically for Black students on White campuses (Patton, 2012). Black students were increasingly met with hostility as PWIs made efforts to integrate their campuses. Unfortunately, those efforts did little to reconstruct historical legacies of exclusion, which had previously denied access to students of color, or the attitudinal and interpersonal aspects of race relations (Hurtado, 1992). An unwillingness or inability to address institutional and individual barriers resulted in the perpetuation of pervasive Whiteness in space, curriculum, and activities (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Black Culture Centers, and other types of

ethnic communities, therefore, became places of defiance and resistance to White campus culture and its marginalization of students of color.

The role of ethnic communities. Black Culture Centers, and other types of ethnic enclaves continue to serve a purpose for African American students attending PWI's. A review of the limited literature in this area provides evidence that ethnic enclaves or ethnic communities offer protection from institutional and individual rejection and hostility for students of color on White campuses, in addition to facilitating persistence and educational attainment. Self-segregation becomes a vehicle for self-preservation in a hostile environment for students of color (Villalpondo, 2003). These enclaves may be able to assist in the academic success of African American students through positive messages of racial pride and knowledge of one's cultural background and racial status, referred to in the literature as racial socialization (Brown, 2008). Racial socialization is typically thought of as the "set of behaviors, communications, and interactions between parents and children that address how African Americans ought to feel about their cultural heritage and how they should respond to racial hostility or confusion" (Brown, 2008, p. 33). It becomes an important phenomenon for understanding which students are likely to engage in self-segregation within ethnic communities that focus on racial pride and cultural knowledge. African American students who have received messages focused on racial pride and preparation for bias, either through their families or community, develop healthy racial identities, maintain their self-esteem in the face of perceived racism and discrimination, and maintain high academic expectations and confidence through increased adjustment and resiliency (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Brown, 2008; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007; Sanders, 1997; Scott, 2003; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009; Traske-Tate, Cunningham, & Francois, 2014).

Ethnic communities are instrumental in providing a safe place, emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, and physically, that students of color do not experience interacting and engaging with the larger institution on White campuses while facilitating continued racial socialization (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hord, 2005; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Villalpondo, 2003). Ethnic enclaves can bridge the cultural divide for marginalized students and facilitate their educational success through identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2006; Villalpondo, 2003), increased social engagement (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Patton, 2006), fostering of cultural validation (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012), and nurturing academic confidence (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012).

Black identity development. Black Culture Centers (BCC), and other types of ethnic communities, aid in the identity development of its minority participants. BCCs are traditionally places that demonstrate a commitment to the development of Black students through a focus on cultural consciousness through the critical examination of Black positionality (Hord, 2005). Through the development of a cultural identity that is empowered by the awareness of historical systems of oppression, and racist ideologies of contemporary social structures, students of color are provided a space to engage in critical examination of their community (Villalpondo, 2003). These counter-spaces allow students of color to speak about “their” perceptions and realities within a community of peers experiencing similar circumstances. Through self-knowledge and dialogue participating students of color experience an increased sense of historical pride and ethnic identity through positive racial socialization (Patton, 2006). Students of color are able to learn about themselves and their culture through participation in ethnic communities.

Identity development was a reoccurring theme in the reviewed literature regarding cultural centers, ethnic student organizations, and school-based ethnic communities. Identity development through participation in an ethnic student organization, communities, or cultural centers was the most common theme in the literature examining the experiences of students of color who have self-segregated and those who have experienced racial socialization. Several authors have qualitatively examined the role of ethnic communities for students of color on White campuses. Villalondo (2003) found that maintaining a strong cultural consciousness was critical in the success of Chicana/os who participated in an ethnic peer community, while Patton (2006), and Harper and Quayle (2007) found that Black students articulated an increased sense of Black pride, identity, and a commitment to social justice through their participation in BCCs, while Museus (2008) found that African American and Asian American students who participated in ethnic student organizations exhibited increased cultural identity and expression through cultural education and advocacy. Ethnic communities can facilitate cultural knowledge and identity development through self-learning, and as a result empower students of color on White campuses. Participating in ethnic communities provides the conditions for empowerment as defined by William Tierney (1991):

Empowerment is a process whereby individuals come to self-understanding of their place in society. Empowered individuals are able to see how their larger society has formed, shaped, and mangled their own lives and interpreted realities. These same individuals are then able to re-form and reshape their lives, and those of their families and friends. It is a multivariate phenomenon that takes place within specific cultural, racial, and gender and class related borders. (p. 8)

Cultural centers; therefore, act as sites that provide a space for ethnic identity development and empowerment through self-discovery, cultural expression, and increased knowledge of historical and systematic oppression.

Cultural validation. Ethnic communities provide minority students of color with a sense of belonging on White campuses (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012). African American students and other students of color, experience an academic and social disconnect at PWIs through racialized institutional and individual interactions, which create feelings of isolation and rejection (Hurtado, 1992; Tierney, 1991). Ethnic communities can assist students of color in fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance through cultural validation. Students of color are culturally validated through their participation in campus based ethnic communities that represent their racial/ethnic backgrounds (Museus, 2008). The reviewed literature provides evidence that these communities assist in buffering negative racial experiences and feelings of marginalization through the creation of a home away from home, where students feel safe, comfortable, supported and included (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Museus, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012). Patton (2006) specifically found that BCCs act as safe haven for Black students and assist in their academic and social adjustment by creating a sense of belongingness on campus that they do not experience outside of the BCC.

Academic confidence. Ethnic communities can nurture the academic confidence of students of color on PWIs (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012). In Patton's (2006) qualitative study examining the impact of BCCs one of the emerging themes was the positive impact of the center on the transition of first-year African American/Black students on campus. Through facilitating the academic and social transition of first-year students through faculty connections and peer support, Black students experienced a greater sense of academic

confidence (Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012). Cerezo and Chang (2013) examined the relationship between cultural fit and achievement among Latina/os at multiple PWIs. The results of their study found that participation in ethnic communities and cultural congruity were significant predictors of college grade point average (Cerezo & Chang, 2013). The authors suggest that connection with minority peers assists in the emotional and psychological engagement of students of color, which allows them to direct greater energy and mental resources towards achievement (Cerezo & Chang, 2013). Their findings built on the work of Gloria et al. (2009) whose work identified a positive relationship between cultural congruity, or fit, and college achievement. Lastly, Sanders (1997) and Stevenson and Arrington (2009) found that racial socialization, or messages of racial pride and preparation for bias, assisted in the development of a healthy racial identity. The limited studies in this area have been able to make a case for the relationship between ethnic community engagement and academic engagement for students of color at PWIs. Ethnic communities may act to increase the academic confidence of minority students on White campuses by facilitating cultural congruity, which is the “cultural fit between student’s personal and cultural values and the prevailing values of the college” (Gloria et al., 2016, p. 80). Ethnic communities can connect students of color with faculty of color, provide minority peer support, and facilitate a sense of belonging and inclusion, all of which promote the academic engagement of students of color within a safe and welcoming place.

Campus involvement and leadership development. Ethnic communities facilitate increased campus involvement and leadership development for African American students on White campuses (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Patton, 2006). In Patton’s (2006) qualitative study on the impact of Black Culture Centers, she found that participation in BCC’s fostered involvement and leadership among African American participants at PWIs. Participants in her study indicated

that they learned valuable skills, such as “public speaking, planning and promoting events and teamwork” (Patton, 2006, p. 6) that assisted them in navigating mainstream campus involvement and facilitated their leadership development. Their participation effectively assisted in confronting the isolation and marginalization these African American students first experienced outside of the BCC in transitioning to a PWI. Harper and Quaye (2007) examined the relationship between participation in ethnic student organizations, identity expression and development for Black males at PWIs. Their qualitative study found that African American males who participated in ethnic student organizations exhibited increased campus involvement, cross-cultural communication skills, and an increased orientation towards social justice (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The ethnic student organization facilitated increased intergroup and intragroup knowledge that promoted greater involvement in mainstream activities, as well as leadership development through enhanced communication skills and the desire to advocate for the needs of underserved groups on campus (Harper & Quaye, 2007). One African American male student involved in an ethnic student organization was quoted,

I took an African American Studies class my first year here ... it brought to light the statistics in our community and how the African American community is hurting right now. I felt that I needed to do something, starting here on campus as a student leader, to help my brothers and sisters, just like the people who had come before me had done things that got me introduced to certain opportunities. I committed myself to helping other African Americans gain access to more of those opportunities. (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 135)

His experience is an example of how participation in an ethnic student organization fosters greater campus involvement and leadership development for students of color.

Cultural Congruity

Cultural congruity, as defined by Gloria et al. (2016), is the “match of one’s cultural or personal values with those of the college” (p. 427). Cultural congruity may be an important phenomenon for students of color on White campuses who must contend with “feelings of exclusion, isolation, and marginalization that prohibits their ability to engage both academically and socially with the institution” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 9). Tierney (1999) refers to the cultural mismatch students of color experience as a cultural divide, and asserts that institutions can facilitate student engagement and student success through the affirmation and honoring of the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minorities, essentially by bridging the cultural divide between the institution and underserved students. Utilizing a critical race framework for education, the predominantly White institution acts both systematically and individually to maintain a White-normed value system and culture, which in turn, inhibits cultural congruity for students of color.

A review of the literature found that cultural congruity appears to have a positive relationship with the educational outcomes of students of color. It has been positively associated with persistence (Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009; Padilla, 2007; Tierney, 1999), academic achievement (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Edman & Brazil, 2009), college and life satisfaction (Castellanos, Gloria, Besson, & Clark Harvey, 2016), and psychological well-being (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Miville & Constantine, 2006). The limited research in this area has been directed towards the cultural congruity of Latina/o students in university settings, with the exception of Edman and Brazil (2008) and Castellanos et al. (2016), whose studies included African American college students. Given the limited research in this area specific to Black students on White campuses, cultural congruity may be an important phenomenon in

understanding their perceptions and experiences and may provide researchers and educators with a greater understanding of Black achievement in higher education.

Academic Self-Concept

Academic self-concept describes the beliefs in one's abilities to perform in an academic setting or on an academic task. It consists of the "attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions held by students about their academic skill sets and performance" (Lent et al., 1997, p. 308). Academic self-concept assists researchers in predicting academic achievement across racial ethnic groups, as it is the "most powerful psychological correlate of academic outcomes" (Cokley & Chapman, 2008, p. 354). There is a growing body of research that has studied the academic self-concept of African American students and found that it is the best predictor of academic performance via GPA (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Williams & Chung, 2013). The research makes a strong case that academic self-concept is an important phenomenon for understanding the academic performance of African American college students. Additionally, review of the growing literature on academic self-concept for African American students found strong evidence that racial/ethnic identity is positively associated with academic self-concept regardless of institution type – historically Black colleges versus historically White colleges (Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Cokley & Moore, 2007; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Okech & Harrington, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Williams & Chung, 2013). However, the literature revealed differences in academic self-concept for Black students attending HBIs compared to their counterparts at PWIs, both in degree of academic self-concept and source (Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Black students attending HBI's tended to have higher academic self-concepts, and their primary source of academic self-concept

were faculty interactions, compared to Black students on White campuses, where GPA mainly predicted academic self-concept.

Racial ethnic identity. There are a number of definitions of racial ethnic identity in the literature; however, for the purposes of this paper, the researcher will use the definition of racial ethnic identity proposed by Williams and Chung (2013), which states, it is the “progression through stages of awareness whereby one moves from non-awareness of one’s racial self to awareness and integration of one’s racial identity along with other identities” (p. 231). Racial ethnic identity essentially describes the process of self-knowledge and awareness regarding one’s racial ethnic history and culture and its relation to other racial ethnic groups. The research that has examined racial ethnic identity and academic self-concept, or academic performance, provides evidence that a developed and stable racial ethnic awareness is positively related to academic confidence and performance among African American students in various institutional settings. Cokley and Chapman (2008) and Sellers et al. (1998) found that Black students with more positive racial ethnic identities demonstrated increased academic self-concept, Cokley and Moore (2007) found the same to be true for Black females in their study, while Williams and Chung (2013) found that the exhibition of ethnic cultural identity and associated cultural values, referred to as Africentric cultural orientation, was positively correlated with academic self-concept for Black students. In Reid and Radhakrishnan’s (2003) study, Black males who exhibited a stable racial identity had high-quality interactions with faculty and peers, and as a result demonstrated increased levels of academic self-concept and performance. There was one study found in the literature review by Awad (2007), which was not able to find a relationship between racial ethnic identity and academic self-concept, while another study, Cokley and Moore (2007) only found a positive relationship for Black female students, and no relationship

for Black male students. Overall, the reviewed literature provided evidence of a possible relationship between racial ethnic identity and academic self-concept for African American college students. Black students with an awareness of their racial ethnic history and culture and the context for the historical and contemporary conditions of their racial ethnic group were more confident in academic settings, regardless of institution type, and demonstrated their academic confidence through increased institutional integration and exhibition of their cultural orientation.

Black campuses versus white campuses. While academic self-concept consists of an individual's beliefs about their academic abilities, it can be shaped and influenced by institutional context. Several researchers have found the academic self-concept of Black college students to be higher at HBIs versus similar Black students attending PWIs (Allen, 1992; Cokley, 2000; Davis, 1994; Sellers et al., 1998). Not only did Black students attending HBIs exhibit increased an academic self-concept compared to their counterparts at White institutions, but their sources of academic self-concept were dissimilar. Academic self-concept for Black students at a HBI was predicted by positive faculty interactions, while academic self-concept for Black students attending a PWI was predicted by GPA (Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). These differences in source of academic self-concept may speak to the differences in institutional context between Black campuses and White campuses as experienced by Black students. For Black students attending PWIs the GPA may be much more significant in predicting academic self-concept as it provides a measure of their relative academic standing in relationship to their White peers, where they may be contending with feelings of inferiority or academic inadequacy. Relationships with faculty on Black campuses nurtured the academic confidence of Black students, which may prove to be an effective tool for increasing the academic performance of Black students on White campuses via academic self-concept. Thus, an

examination of academic self-concept and the sources that contribute to it may assist educators and researchers in creating institutional support that effectively nurtures and increases the academic self-concept of Black students on White campuses.

Summary

This chapter addressed the history of African American access and equity in American educational systems, with a focus on postsecondary institutions. Additionally, a review of the literature on the relationship between institutional context and African American achievement was provided, including the role of ethnic communities, cultural congruity, and academic self-concept as they impact Black achievement on White campuses. The critical race theory framework for education was utilized as a lens to critically examine the aforementioned variables through the recognition that race and racism is deeply embedded through all facets of educational institutions.

Persistent and ongoing inequity in access and outcomes for Black students contributes to the educational debt that African Americans began accumulating at the onset of American slavery. Historical periods of legal racial segregation have created a history of exclusion for African Americans, and other communities of color, as separate, always and most consistently, resulted in unequal. The apparent inequality in racial separation forced African Americans to pursue integration as a means of racial equality. Unfortunately, efforts at integration were met with covert and subtle forms of resistance that continue to persist today via race-neutral policies that disproportionately impact communities of color. In pursuit of equality African Americans began matriculating to White campuses in the 1960's to gain access to graduate/professional education and industries that had previously been denied to them based on their race.

Predominantly White institutions appeared to open their arms to the increasing number of Black

studies, and other minorities, through affirmative action policies. However, short-lived these policies were, they did little to change the academic and social landscape of White campuses that had systematically created campus cultures, practices, and structures that perpetuated White supremacy and the inferiority of all others.

Despite contending with on-going and systematic academic and social rejection and marginalization on White campuses, Black students, and other students of color, continue to matriculate to White institutions in hopes of gaining access to an education long denied to their ancestors. Now, more than ever, Black students overwhelmingly attend White institutions in pursuit of education and training, yet many experience great difficulty in navigating institutional climates that require cultural suicide in order to be successful. Historically, Black students have resisted and challenged these notions through counter-spaces, or ethnic communities, which assist them in navigating hostile racial climates through cultural affirmation and validation, ethnic identity development, and nurturing of their academic self-concept. The literature provides some evidence that there is a positive relationship between participation in ethnic communities and academic achievement via academic self-concept and cultural fit or congruity. This study seeks to extend that literature by quantitatively examining the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center at a two-year, predominantly White institution.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participated in a Black culture center at a two-year historically White institution. This study intended to answer the following research questions: What relationship, if any, exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black culture center at a two-year, predominantly White institution? Does perceived cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black culture center while attending a predominantly White, two-year public institution? This chapter provides the methodology utilized in this study, including the research design; setting; population, sample, and sampling procedures; human subject considerations; instrumentation; data collection procedures, management, and analysis; and summary.

Research Design

This study utilized a non-experimental quantitative research approach, a correlational methodology, and two scales as the means of data collection to examine the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept. Quantitative studies assume a postpositivist worldview, in which “causes (probably) determine effects or outcomes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 7). This worldview seeks to objectively measure reality by collecting and analyzing data in an attempt to confirm or refute hypotheses (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research requires variables that can be quantified, or numbered, usually through instruments, in order to explore what relationships, if any, exists between those variables. Researchers are then able to “test

objective theories” to develop knowledge based on “numeric measures of observations” (Creswell, 2014, p. 7). Knowledge is, therefore, shaped by the researcher’s ability to support or refute theory. Examining the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept through two scales will assist the researcher in answering the proposed research questions and hypotheses and generate increased understanding of how the study’s variables influence one another.

Correlational research designs are useful in exploring the relationships among measurable variables and the direction of those relationships to draw conclusions about observable phenomenon (Hancock & Mueller, 2010; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The researcher measured the strength of the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept through a Pearson product-moment correlation, or Pearson correlation coefficient, as well the degree to which academic self-concept was predicted by perceived cultural congruity through a multiple regression analysis. The reviewed literature provided evidence that academic self-concept (Reynolds, 1988) and cultural congruity (Gloria et al., 2016) are measurable constructs; therefore, providing a rationale for a quantitative research design focused on examining the correlation between two variables.

The limits of a correlational research design include the inability to determine causation between two variables and threats to internal validity due to potential confounds. Correlational analysis will not allow the researcher to infer if one variable causes another variable; it very simply examines the relationship between the variables. A strong positive association between cultural congruity and academic self-concept will not reveal if increased cultural congruity causes increased academic self-concept, the PPMC will examine the strength of association between the aforementioned variables. Furthermore, potential confounds, or threats to internal

validity in a correlational design examining academic self-concept include the impact of racial/ethnic identity, racial socialization, and stereotype threat for African American/Black college students. Racial/ethnic identity, racial socialization (Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Cokley & Moore, 2007; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Okech & Harrington, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Sellers et al., 1998; Williams & Chung, 2013) and stereotype threat (Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004; Davis et al., 2006; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2010) have a positive relationship with academic self-concept among Black students according to the literature reviewed, and therefore, poses a threat to internal validity given the targeted sample – Black students who have chosen to participate in a Black Culture Center.

This study utilized two scales to examine the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of Black students participating in a Black Culture Center. Survey research “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). The purpose of a survey design is to study a sample of the population in order to generalize to that population. A survey design was most appropriate for this study as both variables – cultural congruity and academic self-concept – have been quantified through valid and reliable instruments. Through cross-sectional data collection, the survey captured perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept of a sample of Black students participating in a Black Culture Center.

Setting

The study site was a two-year public community college located in a suburban setting in Southern California. In the 2014 2015 academic-year over 26,000 students were enrolled in courses at the institution, with 2,289 self-identifying as African American, which represents 8.6% of the student population (CCCCO, 2016). The two largest student racial ethnic groups

were those who identify as Hispanic (56.1%) and those who identify as White (22%)(CCCCO, 2016). The racial composition of the community, according to the U.S. Census, reports an African American/Black population of 7%, a White population of 57%, and a Hispanic/Latino population of 49%, with median home values at \$242,000 and median household income at \$56,000 annually. The most recently published employee data shows that 62% of all employees are tenured, tenure-track faculty or adjunct faculty, 251 and 171 respectively. Of the 251 tenured, tenure-track faculty, two faculty members, or less than 1%, identify as African American/Black, while 144, or 57%, identify as White, non-Hispanic among tenured/tenure-track faculty positions. Most recent success indicators show evidence of a 40% six-year certificate/degree completion rate, with a 36.4 rate for African American students, a 33.6% rate for Hispanic/Latino students, and a 45.7% rate for White students.

The Black Cultural Center at the study site was established in 2003 by two African American tenured faculty members. The physical location is a student engagement center for African American students on campus focused on promoting the academic success and excellence of Black students through several functions. Those components include a year-long learning community where students take paired courses in African American History and English; a Black oriented student club focused on developing student leaders, campus-wide involvement and the creation and implementation of culturally inclusive activities; and ongoing academic support through connecting students to Black faculty and counselors, all within a space that facilitates the inclusion of student's cultural backgrounds and knowledge with an emphasis on Black/African American culture. The physical location is located in the center of campus and provides students access to computers and printers, workspace, faculty mentors, culturally relevant texts, and faculty mentors/instructors. There were 304 Black/African American students

who participated or engaged with the BCC in the 2014 2015 academic-year, 87 were in the learning community and 217 utilized the physical space. While the majority of students who utilize the BCC are Black, it should be noted that the BCC is not limited to serving Black students. Of those who utilized the BCC physical space, 35% (185) identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 10% (54) identified as White. Hispanic/Latino students were enrolled in the BCC learning community at a rate of 36.2% (67), while White students were enrolled at a rate of 5% (9). Additionally, students with disabilities make up 25% (131) of the center's participation and 8% (14) of the BCC learning community.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

The population for this study consisted of African American students, currently enrolled in at least one course at the study site, participating in the Black Culture Center (BCC) learning community, engaged as a member in the BCC student club, and those utilizing the BCC physical space. The expected age range is 18 to 39 years, with a high school diploma or GED. The demographics of this population can be expected to vary in regards to socioeconomic status, marital status, program of study, dependency, class status, and religion. There were a total of 304 African American students who were enrolled at the study site, who also participated in the BCC learning community, study club, or utilized the physical location in the 2014-2015 academic year. These Black students represented 13.3% of the total Black/African American student population at the institution. Of those 304 Black/African American students, 87 were in the BCC learning community and 217 utilized the BCC physical space. Due to the size of the population, the study invited all eligible Black/African American students participating in the BCC to participate in the study. At the time of the study, there were 172 students enrolled in a BCC learning community course and 70 students who were not enrolled, but were student club

members or had utilized the BCC space. All 242 students with an affiliation to the BCC who identified as African American were invited to participate. The response rate for the current study was 72 (29.8%) participants out of a population of 242 African American students with an affiliation to the BCC.

Participants were recruited electronically and in-person. The researcher utilized an identified list of African American student e-mails participating in the BCC, provided by the study site, to send an e-mail invitation to the entire population. The e-mail contained the purpose of the study and details for students interested in participating. Additionally, the researcher recruited eligible students in-person by physically visiting the BCC learning community classrooms and the BCC physical space to disburse flyers regarding the study and explain the purpose of the study to possible participants in-person. Lastly, the researcher collaborated with with faculty and advisors who have extensive contact with BCC African American participants to recruit study participants. The researcher utilized convenience sampling in this study to obtain study participants. Convenience sampling utilizes volunteers, or whoever is available from the population to include in the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Human Subject Considerations

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study through Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix H). There was minimal risk for participants in the study; therefore, the study met the criteria for an Exempt IRB Review category 2. Minimal risk is defined as “the probability and magnitude of physical or psychological harm that is normally encountered in the daily lives . . . of healthy persons” by federal regulations (GPS IRB, 2015, p. 4). The researcher obtained the approval of the Office of Institutional Research at the study site through filing a formal request to conduct research.

Participants were provided a paper handout explaining the purpose of the study, description of procedures, potential risks for participating, option for withdrawing, and efforts to secure confidentiality as a means of providing informed consent. The researcher provided the description of the procedures that will provide the data necessary to answer the study's research questions. The description included the instructions to participants for completing the paper-based survey. Participants were informed there are minimal risks for participating, and their participation was voluntary. The handout contained a statement indicating participants can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason without consequence. Lastly, the handout articulated the steps the researcher engaged in to maintain participant confidentiality. Those steps included a cross-sectional survey design that did not obtain identifiable participant information, such as name or e-mail address, reporting study data in aggregate, and securing study data electronically on a password protected document. Additionally, participants were notified they could obtain access to the findings through a request to the researcher. Informed consent documents and raw data will be maintained for three years following the completion of the study in a locked file cabinet.

Instrumentation

Two scales were utilized to measure perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black culture center. The surveys consisted of 13 questions from the Cultural Congruity Scale (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) and 40 questions from the Academic Self-Concept Scale (Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina, & Allen, 1980). Demographic questions included gender, college GPA, number of completed college units, type of BCC participation, and student-faculty interactions. Demographic responses for gender, college GPA, number of completed units, BCC participation, and student-faculty interactions

will be self-reported by participants. Participants had the option of self-reporting their gender, based on the following options: male, female, or transgender. Participants were asked to provide their cumulative college GPA, representative of all college coursework in which grades were earned, which a value range of 0.00 to 4.00. Additionally, participants were asked to provide the total number of completed college units as of the date of participation in the study. Completed college units represent the number of courses a participant has successfully completed, with each course ranging from one to six units. Next, participants were asked to indicate their involvement with the BCC by selecting the applicable options: enrolled in learning BCC learning community; utilizes the BCC physical space; and BCC student club member. Lastly, perceptions of faculty interactions were recorded on a Likert scale. The student-faculty interaction question was developed by the researcher based on measures of general student-faculty interactions found in the literature. Participants were asked to rate the frequency of positive interactions with faculty in and out of the classroom on a four-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree (I have frequent and positive interactions with instructors/faculty in and out of the classroom).

Cultural congruity scale. The CCS (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) was designed to measure a student's sense of cultural fit or match in a college or university setting. It consists of 13 items and responses recorded on a seven-point Likert scale. The scale range is from (1) not at all to (7) a great deal. The scale was developed from the six-item Perceived Threat Scale (Ethier & Deaux, 1990), which examined racial/ethnic minority perceptions of threat at highly selective research institutions. Gloria and Kurpius (1996) added an additional eight items to the Perceived Threat Scale based on a review of the relevant literature, and their professional and personal experiences. Out of the total 14 items, eight are reverse scored questions. Once the 14-item scale

was tested on Latino/a undergraduate students, the authors deleted one item as it decreased the internal consistency of the scale. The scales range of scores is 13 to 91, with higher scores indicating increased cultural match.

The CCS has been found to be reliable and valid (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996). The authors piloted the instrument at two California universities and established reliability through a Cronbach's alpha of .89. Validity was established using a regression equation to predict academic persistence, which accounted for 11% of the variance. The scale had a consistency reliability range of .80 to .82. Coefficient alphas for African American students were .81 with scale validity providing positive association with cultural congruity. The scale was negatively correlated with academic persistence, indicating students were more likely to persist if they perceived the environment as culturally reflective.

Academic self-concept scale. The ASCS (Reynolds et al., 1980) was developed to measure the "academic facet of general self-concept in college students" (p. 1014). The scale consists of 40-items, where each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The scale range includes (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The initial scale included 59 items; however, only 40 items had a total score correlation of .30, which was selected as the minimum for inclusion. Scores range from 40 to 160, with higher scores indicating higher academic self-concept.

The ASCS has been found to be a reliable and valid instrument for measuring academic self-concept (Reynolds et al., 1980). The instrument was piloted with 427 college students of diverse backgrounds and demonstrated internal consistency with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .92. Among the sample of African American college students, the instrument resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .91 and construct validity was supported through positive correlations with

GPA and self-esteem (Cokley & Chapman, 2008). The authors established construct validity through a multiple regression analysis of academic self-concept with GPA and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Their analysis yielded a multiple correlation of .64 with a diverse sample of college students. The ASCS demonstrated a correlation of .40 with GPA and .45 with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Table 2 presents the 40-item ASCS.

Data Collection Procedures

This study sampled 72 African American students at a two-year, predominantly White institution who participate in the Black Culture Center (BCC). The participants were recruited by e-mail (see Appendix A), posted flyers in the BCC (see Appendix B), advisor recruiting in the BCC, and through brief, in-class presentations (see Appendix A). The sample was selected utilizing the convenience sampling method to increase participation of participants who were readily available and accessible. This method may have decreased generalization to the population. Every African American student who was currently enrolled at the institution, and enrolled in one of the BCC learning community courses, or had signed into the BCC location to utilize the space in the current academic year was invited to participate in the study. Participants were informed that the study was examining the relationship between their participation in the BCC and academic success. Participants must identify as African American/Black and have participated in the BCC learning community or the physical center in order to participate. Participants who completed and returned the packet were provided a \$5 and entered into a cash drawing of \$100. The data were collected cross-sectionally during the academic year, when participants were most accessible and will be kept in a locked file cabinet within the researcher's office.

The data collection began once the researcher received approval by the Pepperdine GPS Institutional Review Board (see Appendix H) and the study site to conduct research. First, the researcher sent an e-mail invitation to the population. The e-mail list was obtained from the study site and included Black students currently enrolled in one of the BCC learning community courses and students who had signed into the BCC at least once during the academic year. The e-mail invitation described the purpose of the study, instructions for participating, and an attached informed consent. Secondly, the researcher followed up within a week of the e-mail invitation by distributing study packets in BCC learning community courses and through the BCC physical space. Packets were distributed in the BCC through the BCC Advisor. Participating students were provided a packet that included the informed consent document (see Appendix C), a demographic survey (see Appendix D), the Cultural Congruity Scale (see Appendix E), the Academic Self-Concept Scale (see Appendix F), and the process for receiving a \$5 and option for entering into a \$100 cash drawing (see Appendix G). Participants were instructed to return completed packets, whether received in class or through the BCC, to the researcher's reception desk, which is located in the building adjacent to the BCC. The classified staff member at the reception desk stored the completed packets in a locked filing cabinet and provided a separate envelope for students who wish to return the \$100 cash drawing form, which was stored in locked desk drawer. The researcher did not have a sight line to the reception area from their office, which provided greater confidentiality and anonymity to participants. Participants who returned a completed packet received \$5 directly from the receptionist. The researcher picked up completed packets at the end of each business day and transported them to a locked filing cabinet located in the researcher's office.

Data Management

The researcher ensured the collected data were stored and protected to maintain participant confidentiality. Once raw data had been manually entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the researcher, the completed surveys, and informed consent documents will be stored and secured for three years in separate locked file cabinets in the researcher's office. The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the data is password protected and stored on the researcher's hard drive. The separate form participants complete to enter into the cash drawing of \$100 was destroyed upon confirmation of drawing acceptance to ensure that the raw data would not be able to be re-identified or matched to participants. The researcher had the receptionist randomly select the name of the cash drawing recipient, contact and distribute the award, and then proceed to destroy the cash drawing envelope and its contents. Access to the raw data, minus any identifying information, was provided to a consultant providing statistical analysis on behalf of the researcher. The researcher provided the Excel spreadsheet electronically to the statistician via a password-protected document. The researcher was the sole individual with access to raw data, and the receptionist had exclusive access to identifying information.

Data Analysis

The researcher measured the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept utilizing a Pearson product-moment correlation, or PPMC, and hierarchical regression analysis. The PPMC is an appropriate statistical method of analysis for answering the study's first research question, what relationship exists, if any, between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept. The PPMC specifically measures the strength of the relationship between two variables. The researcher employed a hierarchical regression analysis to determine the direction of the relationship between cultural

congruity and academic self-concept. A hierarchical regression analysis determines if cultural congruity was a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept, after controlling for gender, GPA, college units, participation, and faculty interactions, among a group of African American students participating in a Black Culture Center. The researcher controlled for gender, GPA, college units completed, and age by examining the degree that all predictors explain academic self-concept, as well as examining how the individual predictors explain academic self-concept. A hierarchical regression analysis answers the second research question posed in this study, is academic self-concept significantly and independently predicted by perceived cultural congruity. All collected data were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and imported into the SPSS software. The statistician utilized the SPSS software to conduct all statistical analysis for the study, including descriptive statistics to determine if the data satisfies the major assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance, and statistical independence.

The quantification of both constructs – cultural congruity and academic self-concept – lends itself to a quantitative research design. The literature provides evidence that the CCS (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) and ASCS (Reynolds et al., 1980) instruments are both valid, in that it measures what it purports to measure, and reliable, it consistently measures each construct (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Given the study's research questions, which seek to examine the strength and relationship between two variables, a PPMC and hierarchical regression analysis were the most appropriate statistical research methods to answer the proposed research questions.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students participating in a Black Culture Center (BCC) in a historically White two-year public institution of higher education. This study intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What relationship, if any, exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a BCC?
2. Does perceived cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among a group of African American students participating in a BCC?

In order to achieve this purpose, a demographic questionnaire and two surveys were administered to 72 African American students participating in a BCC at the study site. This chapter will present the findings of this study, organized by participant demographics, research question one, research question two, and conclude with a summary of the key findings.

Findings

Participant demographics. Table 1 displays the frequency counts for selected variables. A total of 72 African American students with an affiliation to the BCC participated in this study. There were 39 (54.2%) male participants and 33 (45.8%) female participants. Total college units ranged from 0 to 76 ($M = 20.88$, $SD = 20.48$). Grade point averages ranged from 0.00 to 4.00 ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.74$). Approximately two-thirds (68.1%) of participants indicated they were enrolled in the Learning Community. Forty-two students (58.3%) utilized the Homeroom space, and 29 (40.3%) were student club members. When the prior three variables were reconfigured to represent the student's level of participation, there were twelve students (16.7%) who only

utilized the Homeroom space, which represents the lowest level of involvement, while 18 students (25%) were enrolled in the Learning Community as well as being student club members, which was the highest level of involvement. All but two students either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they experienced frequent and positive interactions with faculty. Specifically, 29 students (41.4%) “strongly agreed”, while the majority (58.9%) “agreed” they experienced frequent and positive interaction with faculty.

Table 1

Frequency Counts for Selected Variables (N = 72)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Race	African American	72	100.0
Gender	Male	39	54.2
	Female	33	45.8
Units Completed	None	9	12.5
	2-9	16	22.2
	10-19	20	27.8
	20-39	13	18.1
	40-76	14	19.4
Grade Point Average	0.00-1.90	11	15.3
	2.00-2.65	31	43.1
	2.70-3.20	22	30.6
	3.30-4.00	8	11.1
Learning Community	No	23	31.9
	Yes	49	68.1
Utilizes Homeroom Space	No	30	41.7
	Yes	42	58.3

(continued)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Student Club Member	No	43	59.7
	Yes	29	40.3
Involvement Level	Homeroom Only	12	16.7
	Student Club	11	15.3
	Learning Community	31	43.1
	LC & Student Club	18	25.0
Positive Faculty Interaction (<i>n</i> = 70)	Agree	41	58.9
	Strongly Agree	29	41.4

Note: LC = Learning Community

Table 2 displays the psychometric characteristics for the two summated scale scores. Both scales demonstrated acceptable levels of internal reliability, with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient $\alpha = .82$ and $\alpha = .89$ for the Cultural Congruity Scale and Academic Self-Concept Scale, respectively (Hancock & Mueller, 2010).

Table 2

Psychometric Characteristics for the Summated Scale Scores (N = 72)

Scale	Number					
	of items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	α
Cultural Congruity Scale	13	5.23	1.13	2.69	7.00	.82
Academic Self-Concept Scale	40	2.79	0.34	2.08	3.58	.89

Table 3 provides a comparison of the current sample non-aggregated scale scores to the normative scores for the Cultural Congruity Scale (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996). The categories of low, moderate, and high were based on plus or minus one standard deviation from the respective normative samples. The current sample was lower at $M = 68.04$ than the normative sample mean ($M = 71.88$).

Table 3

Cultural Congruity: Comparison of Current Sample Scale Scores with Normative Sample Scores

Scale	Category	<i>n</i>	%	Current Sample	
				<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cultural Congruity				68.04	14.74
	Under 60 (Low)	20	27.8		
	60 to 84 (Moderate)	40	55.6		
	85 to 91 (High)	12	16.7		

Note. ^a Categories of “Low (bottom 16%),” “Moderate (middle 68%),” and “High (top 16%)” were based on the plus or minus one standard deviation from the respective normative samples. ^b Norms were from (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) weighted means from two samples ($N = 158$ and $N = 285$): $M = 71.88$, $SD = 12.27$.

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for responses on the Cultural Congruity Scale. Responses for the CCS are ranked by the highest mean score, and items which were reverse scored are noted. The scale range is from (1) not at all to (7) a great deal. The mean for the reverse scored items received higher average scores than the traditional scored items. The top five responses with the highest mean score provide evidence of a cultural mismatch between family and ethnic values versus school values.

Table 4

Cultural Congruity Scale Descriptive Statistics (N = 72)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
6r. I feel that I am leaving my family values behind by going to college.	1.00	7.00	5.63	2.11
2r. I try not to show the parts of me that are ethnically based.	2.00	7.00	5.60	1.57
7r. My ethnic values are in conflict with what is expected at school.	1.00	7.00	5.56	2.04
4r. I feel that my ethnicity is incompatible with other students.	1.00	7.00	5.54	2.07
10r. My family and school values often conflict.	1.00	7.00	5.39	2.03
3r. I often feel like a chameleon, having to change myself depending on the ethnicity of the person I am with at school.	1.00	7.00	5.39	1.88
1r. I feel that I have to change myself to fit in at school.	1.00	7.00	5.24	1.90
9r. I feel that my language and/or appearance make it hard for me to fit in with other students.	1.00	7.00	5.08	2.15
8. I can talk to my family about my friends at school.	1.00	7.00	5.07	2.24
12. As an ethnic minority, I feel as if I belong on this campus.	1.00	7.00	4.97	1.82
13. I can talk to my family about my struggles and concerns at school.	1.00	7.00	4.96	2.24
11. I feel accepted at school as an ethnic minority.	1.00	7.00	4.92	1.95
5. I can talk to my friends at school about my family and culture.	1.00	7.00	4.71	2.00

Note. r = reverse scored item

Table 5 provides a comparison of the current sample non-aggregated scale scores to the normative scores for the Academic Self-Concept Scale (Reynolds, 1988). The categories of low, moderate, and high were based on plus or minus one standard deviation from the respective normative samples. The current sample score was higher ($M = 114.44$) compared to the normative sample mean ($M = 105.82$).

Table 5

Academic Self-Concept: Comparison of Current Sample Scale Scores with Normative Sample Scores

Scale	Category	<i>n</i>	%	Current Sample	
				<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Self-Concept				111.44	13.57
	Under 92 (Low)	5	6.9		
	92 to 120 (Moderate)	47	65.3		
	121 to 143 (High)	20	27.8		

Note. ^a Categories of “Low (bottom 16%),” “Moderate (middle 68%),” and “High (top 16%)” were based on the plus or minus one standard deviation from the respective normative samples. ^b Norms were from (Reynolds, 1988) were based on a sample of $N = 427$: $M = 105.82$, $SD = 13.41$.

Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics for responses on the Academic Self-Concept Scale. Responses are provided in rank order from highest mean response to lowest. The ASCS had a scale range of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The mean ranged from a high of 3.71 to a minimum of 1.39. Of the 18 items which were reverse scored, the majority were in the bottom 14 lowest mean scores. Items with the highest mean scores include positive academic beliefs.

Table 6

Academic Self-Concept Scale Descriptive Statistics (N = 72)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
2. If I try hard enough, I will be able to get good grades.	2.00	4.00	3.71	0.54
6. All in all, I feel am a capable student.	2.00	4.00	3.57	0.55
1. Being a student is a very rewarding experience.	1.00	4.00	3.49	0.63
25. For me, studying hard pays off.	1.00	4.00	3.39	0.68
7. I do well in my courses given the amount of time I dedicate to studying.	2.00	4.00	3.39	0.64
9. Others view me as intelligent.	2.00	4.00	3.35	0.59
28. I have a fairly clear sense of my academic goals.	1.00	4.00	3.31	0.76
13. Most of my instructors think that I am a good student.	2.00	4.00	3.25	0.55
4r. No matter how hard I try I do not do well in school.	2.00	4.00	3.25	0.65
36. Others consider me a good student.	1.00	4.00	3.21	0.65
5r. I often expect to do poorly on exams.	1.00	4.00	3.13	0.87
33. I usually get the grades I deserve courses.	1.00	4.00	3.10	0.63
17. I feel capable of helping others with their class work.	1.00	4.00	3.06	0.77
18r. I feel teachers' standards are too high for me.	2.00	4.00	2.99	0.57
32. I consider myself a very good student.	1.00	4.00	2.99	0.80
20. I am satisfied with the class assignments I turn in.	1.00	4.00	2.92	0.75
8r. My parents are not satisfied with my grades in college.	1.00	4.00	2.83	0.92
24r. I have doubts that I will do well in my major.	1.00	4.00	2.75	0.92
35. I usually feel on top of my work by finals week.	1.00	4.00	2.72	0.78

(continued)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
15. All in all, I am proud of my grades in college.	1.00	4.00	2.67	0.87
16. Most of the time while taking a test I feel confident.	1.00	4.00	2.64	0.79
10. Most courses are very easy for me.	1.00	4.00	2.58	0.83
39r. I feel I do not have the necessary abilities for certain courses in my major.	1.00	4.00	2.58	0.83
27. I am good at scheduling my time.	1.00	4.00	2.57	0.80
26r. I have a hard time getting through school.	1.00	4.00	2.56	0.71
37. I feel that I am better than the average student.	1.00	4.00	2.56	0.77
31. I enjoy doing homework.	1.00	4.00	2.54	0.99
12r. Most of my classmates do better in school than I do.	1.00	4.00	2.53	0.75
19r. It is hard for me to keep up with my class work.	1.00	4.00	2.49	0.79
30r. I often get discouraged about school.	1.00	4.00	2.39	0.78
14r. At times I feel college is too difficult for me.	1.00	4.00	2.38	0.80
21r. At times I feel like a failure.	1.00	4.00	2.38	0.90
38r. In most of the courses, I feel that my classmates are better prepared than I am.	1.00	4.00	2.31	0.82
23. Most exams are easy for me.	1.00	4.00	2.27	0.84
40r. I have poor study habits.	1.00	4.00	2.25	0.95
22r. I feel I do not study enough before a test.	1.00	4.00	2.19	0.88
32r. I do not study as much as I should.	1.00	4.00	2.04	0.85
29r. I'd like to be a much better student than I am now.	1.00	4.00	1.39	0.66

Note. r = reverse scored item

Table 7 displays the Pearson Correlation for Cultural Congruity and Academic Self-Concept with selected variables. Cultural Congruity was found to be significantly related to one

of the nine variables, specifically, it had a significant positive correlation with Academic Self-Concept, $r = .25, p = .03$. In addition, Academic Self-Concept was correlated with eight variables, with four demonstrating significant correlations. Specifically, Academic Self-Concept was higher when participants were male ($r = -.31, p = .007$), had a higher number of units completed ($r = .24, p = .04$), had a higher GPA ($r = .30, p = .01$), and for students who had frequent and positive faculty interactions ($r = .25, p = .04$).

Table 7

Pearson Correlations for Selected Variables with Scale Scores (N = 72)

Variable	1	2
1. Cultural Congruity Scale	1.00	
2. Academic Self-Concept Scale	.25 *	1.00
Involvement Level	-.03	-.01
Gender ^a	.12	-.31 **
Units Completed	.01	.24 *
Grade Point Average	-.03	.30 **
Enrolled in Learning Community ^b	.04	-.03
Utilizes Homeroom Space ^b	-.08	.16
Student Club Member ^b	-.14	.03
Frequent Positive Faculty Interactions ($n = 70$) ^b	.16	.25 *

*Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. ;^a Gender: 0 = Male 1 = Female.;^b Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes. A point-biserial correlation was used for correlations that included the respondent's gender or other yes/no response variables.*

Research question one. The first research question for this study was, “What relationship, if any, exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black culture center at a two-year, historically White public institution?” There was one related hypotheses: It is hypothesized that

a positive linear relationship exists between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black culture center while attending a historically White, two-year public institution. The first hypothesis was addressed using a Pearson correlation (see Table 7). Inspection of the table found a significant positive correlation between the cultural congruity scale score and the academic self-concept scale score, $r = .25, p = .03$. This finding provided support for this hypothesis.

Research question two. The second research question for this study was, “Does perceived cultural congruity influence academic support among African American students who participate in a Black Culture Center at a historically White, two-year public institution after controlling for gender, college GPA, college units completed, participation type, and student-faculty interactions.” The related hypotheses was, “It is hypothesized that cultural congruity is a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black Culture Center at a historically White, two-year public institution after controlling for gender, college GPA, college units completed, participation type, and student-faculty interactions.” The second hypothesis was addressed using a two-step hierarchical regression model. The first step of the model included the five demographic variables and the second step added in the student’s cultural congruity score. Inspection of Table 8 found the first step of the model to be significant ($p = .001$) and accounted for 29.1% of the variance in academic self-concept. The addition of cultural congruity was a significant predictor ($p = .008$) and accounted for an additional 7.5% of the variance in academic self-concept. Inspection of Table 8 found that academic self-concept was higher when the student: (a) was male ($\beta = -.40, p = .001$); (b) had completed more units ($\beta = .21, p = .05$); (c) had a higher overall GPA ($\beta = .29, p$

= .007); and (d) had a higher cultural congruity score ($\beta = .28, p = .008$) (see Table 7). This combination of findings provided support for this hypothesis.

Table 8

Prediction of Academic Self-Concept Based on Cultural Congruity Controlling for Student Demographic Characteristics. Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	2.22	.25		.001
Gender ^a	-0.27	.07	-.40	.001
Total College Units Completed	0.00	.00	.21	.05
Overall GPA	0.13	.05	.29	.007
Frequent and Positive Interactions with Faculty	0.09	.07	.13	.21
Involvement Level	0.02	.03	.06	.53
Cultural Congruity Scale	0.09	.03	.28	.008

Note. First Model of Demographics Only: $F(5, 64) = 5.25, p = .001, R^2 = .291$

Note. Second Model Adding in Cultural Congruity Scale: $F(6, 63) = 6.06, p = .001,$

$R^2 = .366, \Delta R^2 = .075 (p = .008).$; ^a Gender: 1 = Male 2 = Female.

Summary

In summary, this study used data from 72 students to examine the relationship between perceived cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students participating in a Black Culture Center in a two-year HWI setting. While all participants identified as African American and having an affiliation with the Black Culture Center, participants were diverse in number of college units completed, GPA, and the type of affiliation they had to the BCC. However, there was near consensus among respondents regarding positive faculty interactions. Overall, the majority of participants exhibited moderate

levels of cultural congruity, and academic self-concept based on the defined categories of low, moderate, and high derived from the respective normative samples (see Table 3).

There was support for the first hypothesis (see Table 7), indicating there is a positive linear relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept. Additionally, academic self-concept demonstrated a positive correlation with four demographic variables, which included being male, increased number of units completed, higher GPA, and frequent and positive faculty interactions (see Table 7). Hypothesis two was also supported, providing evidence that cultural congruity is a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept when controlling for demographic variables (see Table 8). While demographic variables accounted for nearly a third of the variance in academic self-concept, the addition of cultural congruity into the hierarchal regression model accounted for significantly more variance, making it a significant predictor of academic self-concept (see Table 8). In the final chapter, these findings will be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications will be drawn, and a series of recommendations will be suggested.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Inequity in educational outcomes for African American students in higher education continues to pose a challenge to educators and institutions of higher education. This is most evident at open-access two-year community colleges where a majority of Black students matriculate too. Systematic racism and discrimination, historical and deeply embedded in cultural ideologies, norms, values, and policies, continue to prohibit Black students from achieving equity in educational outcomes at historically White institutions. Ethnic communities, created out of Black student demand, were designed to combat individual and institutional racism, in an effort to facilitate the success of Black students on White campuses by providing a safe haven on racially hostile universities and colleges through cultural validation, academic support, and engagement. The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among a group of African American students participating in a Black Culture Center in a two-year historically White college setting. This study investigated the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept through the following two research questions:

1. What relationship, if any, exists between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center at a two-year HWI?
2. Does cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center at a HWI?

Seventy-two African American students from a large two-year, open access community college in Southern California participated in this study. Participants completed a six question demographic questionnaire, the 13-item Cultural Congruity Scale, and the 40-item Academic

Self-Concept Scale. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive linear relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept, and that cultural congruity would be a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept after controlling for gender, college GPA, participation in culture center, and student-faculty interactions. This chapter will discuss the key findings and conclusions of the study, provide implications for policy and practice, articulate recommendations for further study, and conclude with a summary.

Discussion of Key Findings

Participant demographics. There were 72 African American students with an affiliation to the Black Culture Center at the study site that participated in this quantitative study.

Participants represented vast diversity in terms of gender, GPA, units completed, and involvement type. There were a greater number of male participants in the study at 54.2%, while females represented 45.8% of participants. The majority of participants were in good academic standing with a GPA of 2.00 or higher, while nearly half had a GPA of 2.70 or higher.

Participants had completed a wide range of college units and represented students at the beginning of their academic endeavors, and those who were nearing the conclusion of their program of study. Two-thirds of the participants were enrolled in the learning community, and 25% of learning community students were also student club members. Seventy of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they experienced frequent and positive faculty interactions.

Research question one. The first research question guiding this study was, what relationship, if any, exists between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center at a two-year HWI. The researcher hypothesized that a positive linear relationship exists between cultural congruity and academic

self-concept. The results of this study provided support for this hypothesis. The data provided evidence of a significant positive correlation between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center at the study site. Additionally, the researcher found a significant positive relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance (completed units and GPA), as well as positive and frequent faculty interactions.

These findings speak to the importance of the institutional context in impacting the academic and social experiences of students of color. Students of color experience a White-normed culture that oftentimes requires a one-way assimilation or cultural suicide in order to successfully interact with the academic and social spheres (Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Tierney, 1999). Legacies of racial exclusion, racial microaggressions, Eurocentric curriculum, homogenous faculty, and policies and practices that disproportionately impact students of color through racism and discrimination create academic and social barriers for students of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Patton, 2012; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solorzano et al., 2000; Villalondo, 2003; Yosso et al., 2004). These students experience a cultural mismatch between their values, practices and backgrounds on historically White or predominately White campuses where their cultural knowledge is disregarded, silenced, and often viewed as a deficit. Evidence of a cultural mismatch was found in responses to CCS reverse scored items regarding family and ethnic values compared to school values, and ethnic compatibility at school. Responses to these items, which asks participants to think of their current school climate and interactions, is evidence of a campus culture that does not reflect the values and voices of students of color. The CCS is meant to capture the institutional experiences of students, not their specific experiences engaging in smaller communities, such as the Black Culture Center on campus. Tierney (1999)

refers to this cultural mismatch as a cultural divide, and asserts that institutions of higher education can bridge the cultural divide and promote increased cultural congruity by affirming and honoring the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minorities, thereby, facilitating increased student engagement and student success.

Institutions of higher education that are able to provide opportunities for students of color to experience academic and social contexts that affirm their cultural backgrounds and values will facilitate the academic success of those students, who often feel marginalized and isolated in historically White settings. Ethnic communities are designed to assist these students on campuses that are racially hostile through cultural validation and self-preservation (Patton, 2012). Not only do ethnic communities, such as Black Culture Centers, provide students with a safe space on campus, they promote student success through positive ethnic identity development, cultural validation, academic confidence nurturing, and leadership development, all of which are positively associated with academic self-concept and performance (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008, Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Villalpando, 2003). These communities are able to provide these benefits through articulating positive messages of racial pride and racial socialization, which assists in healthy ethnic identity development, association with minority peers which creates a sense of belonging, increased opportunities to engage with minority faculty, and opportunities to take on leadership roles within ethnic enclaves and in within the larger campus community. Understanding that students of color experience a different campus racial climate than their White peers is important in deconstructing White-normed culture and creating opportunities that affirm the cultural backgrounds of all students promotes the success of historically oppressed communities of color. The cultural mismatch captured on the CCS item responses may provide evidence that African American students who are affiliated

with the Black Culture Center, perceive the campus as a racially hostile place that creates feelings of marginalization and isolation. In turn, these students have engaged with the BCC as a means of facilitating their academic and social inclusion and belonging.

Research question two. The second research question in this study was, does cultural congruity influence academic self-concept among a group of African American students who participate in a Black Culture Center? It was hypothesized that cultural congruity would be a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept after controlling for gender, college GPA, college units completed, participation type, and student-faculty interactions. The hierarchical regression model revealed that unit completion, increased GPA, being male, and increased cultural congruity scores were the strongest predictors of academic self-concept. After controlling for all demographic factors, cultural congruity was a significant independent predictor of academic self-concept. This combination of findings provided support for this hypothesis and current research in academic self-concept and cultural congruity.

Cultural congruity, or match, is an important phenomenon related to student success based on the findings in this study. While academic performance explains and predicts academic confidence and future academic performance, cultural congruity, was significant after controlling for past academic performance. Grade point average is a strong predictor of academic self-concept for Black students on White campuses in various studies, including the current study; however, GPA alone did not explain the academic self-concept for participants in this study. Promoting the academic success of students of color through academic support is strengthened when facilitated within an academic and social environment that is culturally responsive. A one size fits all approach, devoid of intentional and targeted efforts to engage students of color, is likely to perpetuate the status quo of privilege and disadvantage. Ethnic communities are a

means of creating space on campus for students of color where they experience a sense of belonging. Research has provided evidence that a student's fit with the environment is found to be positively related to persistence and educational attainment (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tierney, 1999; Tinto, 1993). Students who experience a sense of belonging or fit, are more likely to interact with academic and social structures at the institution, and are less likely to drop out. Promoting persistence through cultural affirmation, combined with targeted academic support, promotes the success of minority students on White campuses and may assist institutions of higher education in closing the equity gap.

Conclusions

There are two conclusions that are supported by the findings from the study.

Cultural congruity and academic self-concept. Given the linear and positive relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept of 72 African American students in this study who participated in a Black Culture Center at a community college, it is concluded that increasing the cultural congruity of African American students is likely to result in an increase in academic self-concept. Cultural congruity is the "match of one's cultural or personal values with those of the college" (Gloria et al., 2016, p. 427). It is developed through interactions and experiences, both individual and institutional, that promote cultural validation. Cultural validation occurs through opportunities for interactions with minority peers, engaging with faculty of color, cultural expression and advocacy, and through knowledge and development of cultural knowledge and ethnic identity. The students in this study scored moderately overall on the Cultural Congruity Scale; however, nearly a third scored low on the scale, while slightly over half scored moderately. Responses on the CCS with the highest mean score were reverse scored items (6) I feel that I am leaving my family values behind by going to

college, (2) I try not to show parts of me that are ethnically based, (3) My ethnic values are in conflict with what is expected at school, and (4) I feel that my ethnicity is incompatible with other students. While participants articulated an affiliation with the Black Culture Center on campus, they do experience minority status within the larger institution, which is evident in responses to items on the CCS. Research on ethnic communities and campus climate provide evidence that students engage with ethnic communities in response to “feelings of exclusion, isolation and marginalization” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 9) on campuses they perceive as racially hostile (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hord, 2005; Museum, 2008; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2012; Villalpondo, 2003). Black Culture Centers, and other ethnic communities, may therefore play an important role in facilitating the success of African American students on White campuses through increasing the cultural congruity of those students through opportunities for students to engage in cultural expression and advocacy, and identity and leadership development.

Academic support and academic self-concept. Based on the findings in this study that academic self-concept was higher for African American students who had completed more units, had higher GPAs, and who had positive and frequent interactions with faculty in and out of the classroom, it is concluded that providing stronger academic support and promoting more opportunities for positive faculty interactions is likely to increase the academic self-concept of African American students. Various studies have provided evidence that GPA and faculty interactions are predictors for academic self-concept for Black students on HW and HB campuses respectively (Cokley, 2000; Cokley, 2002; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Meaningful interactions with faculty that occur both in and out of the classroom have been positively related to increased academic achievement for African American students. This study’s findings provide

additional support that African American students benefit academically from faculty interactions. Those faculty interactions increase the academic self-concept of African American students participating in a BCC in a community college setting via increased GPAs. African American students in this study, who were largely enrolled in the BCC learning community courses had an abundance of opportunities to engage with BCC learning community faculty in class, at BCC sponsored activities and events, and through office hours which are held in the BCC. These positive faculty interactions may also assist in increasing the persistence of participating students through the opportunities for academic and social engagement. Ethnic communities provide an avenue for positive and frequent faculty interactions, which do not reinforce stereotypes or Black inferiority, and also act as a vehicle for academic and social engagement that is seamlessly embedded in to the ethnic community classes and activities. Targeted academic support and intervention are therefore facilitated by BCC faculty who have access to the resources provided the ethnic community center.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between cultural congruity and academic self-concept among African American students participating in a Black Culture Center in a two-year historically White college setting. The findings may have implications for policy and practices aimed at supporting the equitable educational outcomes of African American students in two-year institutions of higher education. There are two implications for policy and practice based on the findings and conclusions of this study.

It is recommended that institutions of higher education invest dedicated resources towards the creation and maintenance of formal ethnic communities for African American students on HW or PW campuses in order to provide increased opportunities for cultural

congruity. Ethnic communities, such as Black Culture Centers, facilitate the engagement of students of color both academically and socially, nurture the academic confidence of minority students through minority peer and faculty interactions, and promote the healthy development of a stable and positive ethnic identity. Through engagement with spaces that provide cultural validation, African American students may experience increased cultural congruity with the institution, which effectively promotes the increased academic performance of those students.

It is recommended that institutions of higher education that serve a minority of African American students provide targeted academic intervention and support for first year African American students. These efforts may assist African American students in transitioning and successfully completing a year of college to effectively increase the academic self-concept of these students through unit completion and successful academic performance. Given the literature on academic self-concept and the findings of this study, nurturing the academic confidence of African American students through academic support will facilitate improved educational outcomes. Ideally, targeted academic support and intervention are facilitated through faculty of color who can assist students of color in bridging the academic cultural divide on college campuses. Learning communities that are connected to ethnic communities provide a foundation for academic support and intervention to be embedded within a culturally responsive community.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study intended to extend the existing research on African American students' educational outcomes and the role of ethnic communities within historically White institutions of higher education. However, there are several methodological limitations of this study that could be potentially addressed through future research studies. Those limitations include the inability

to generalize the experiences of African American student participants in a BCC at the site to Black students affiliated with BCC's at other community college. The experiences and perceptions of cultural congruity are unique to the interactions and campus climate of the study site. Additionally, academic data were self-reported and potentially poses as a limitation to this particular study. Self-reported data can be subject to selective memory, attribution and exaggeration, any of which may have impacted the findings of this study. Lastly, the researcher defined involvement in the BCC for participants, as opposed to allowing participants to define their participation in the BCC. The singular perceived definitions for involvement (learning community course enrollment, student club member, and BCC space) may not have accurately captured or represented the quality or intensity of involvement experienced by participants. Given these limitations there are two recommendations for future study.

A research study aimed at comparing the cultural congruity and academic self-concept of African American students who participate in a Black Culture Center to those who choose not to participate may be meaningful in providing greater understanding of the current impact of Black Culture Centers on open access, two-year campuses. A study of this nature may also reveal demographic differences between African American students engaged with Black Culture Centers compared to African American students not engaged with such centers. Additionally, broadening this same study to multiple campuses, in different settings, would provide greater generalization of those findings.

A qualitative study to explore the experiences of students and faculty engaged with the Black Culture Center at the study site may prove to add additional depth to the current study. A greater understanding of the reasons students choose to participate in the Black Culture Center, further exploration regarding the different types of involvement, the components students view

as meaningful, and faculty perceptions regarding the program and student participants.

Research designed to explore the experiences of students and faculty engaged with Black Culture Centers can assist such counter-spaces in designing and promoting programmatic components that attract and support the educational outcomes of African American participants.

Summary

The persistent equity gap throughout the educational pipeline for students of color is continued evidence of the educational debt that continues to burden communities of color. As institutions of higher education continue to improve efforts to recruit students and faculty of color, implement curriculum that is reflective of the diverse experiences of communities of color, and implement a culture that is appreciative of diversity in practice and in policy, ethnic enclaves, such as Black Culture Centers, can provide immediate support and psychoemotional protection, both academically and socially, to students of color who experience hostile racial campus climates, racial microaggressions, and isolation in academic and social spheres. Institutions of higher education must be willing to come to terms with their long history of racism and discrimination, and the continued impact it has on current communities of color. Educational institutions are not equipped to confront institutional and individual racism through race-blind approaches that deny the historical and systematic oppression of people of color. Providing safe-spaces on HW or PW campuses are essential in protecting and supporting students of color. Ethnic communities provide a safe space that promotes positive ethnic identity development, fosters cultural validation, and nurtures the academic confidence of participating students. Through peer support, self-knowledge, and positive interactions with faculty, students of color are able to resist stereotype threat and mitigate the damaging effects of racial microaggressions. Institutional investment in formal ethnic communities assists students of color

in bridging the cultural divide and offers opportunities for cultural validation and increased cultural congruity. These counter-spaces are able to provide targeted academic support within a culturally relevant context, which promotes the academic self-concept of participating students, which effectively facilitates improved academic performance. Institutions of higher education committed to equity for historically oppressed students of color must demonstrate their commitment by investing in formal ethnic communities that bridge the cultural divide for marginalized students of color, while continuing to critically examine and dismantle policies and practices that disproportionately impede the success of students of color.

Students and teachers move daily from university to home, to work, to club and councils, carrying with them skills and knowledge developed and refined in all of those milieu. We need to ensure therefore that we do not make our offices, tutorial rooms, and lecture halls places in which practices of injustice are played and perpetuated. They must instead be models of intellectual and social emancipation. (Patton, 2012, p. 110)

It is only then that institutions of higher education can become what they espouse to represent; sites of empowerment for all students.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Script (E-mail & In-Class)

Hello, my name is Tenisha James. I am a graduate student at Pepperdine University in the educational leadership program. I am conducting research on the experiences of Black students who participate in the Ujima learning community, student club, or homeroom. I am inviting you to participate because you may be eligible based on your participation in Ujima.

Participation in this research study includes a brief demographic questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes, a survey about your perceptions of cultural fit, which will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes, and a survey about your beliefs regarding your academic abilities, which will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. If you agree to participate your total time commitment will be between 35 - 50 minutes.

Participating students will receive \$5 in cash, and the option to enter into a drawing to win \$100 cash.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (951) xxx-xxxx or at tenisha.james@pepperdine.edu.

Thank you,
Tenisha James

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Flyer

A recruitment flyer for the Ujima Project. The flyer features a stylized map of Africa in the background, colored in red, black, and green. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical manner. At the top left, a black circle contains the text 'CHANCE TO WIN \$100'. The title 'Ujima Project' is prominently displayed in white and orange. Below this, the text 'PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN student experiences in college' is presented in various fonts and colors. A black box contains the heading 'PARTICIPANTS MUST BE:', followed by a list of requirements in green text. At the bottom, contact information for Tenisha James is provided in black text. The entire flyer is framed by a thick black border with a thin green inner border.

CHANCE TO WIN \$100

Ujima Project

PARTICIPATE IN A
STUDY ABOUT
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
student experiences
in college

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE:

- 18 YEARS OR OLDER**
- AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK**
- PARTICIPANT IN UJIMA**
(LEARNING COMMUNITY, CLUB,
OR HOMEROOM)

CONTACT TENISHA JAMES TO PARTICIPATE AT
(951) 222-8227 OR TENISHA.JAMES@RCC.EDU

APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in Research Study

General Information

I authorize Tenisha James, a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Linda Purrington in educational leadership at Pepperdine University, to include me in the research project entitled “African American Students in a California Community College: Perceptions of Cultural Congruity and Academic Self-Concept within a Black Culture Center”. I understand my participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Study Procedures

I have been asked to participate in a research project which is designed to study the role, if any, that participation in the Ujima Program (learning community, student club, or homeroom) has on the perceptions and educational outcomes of African American/Black students at Riverside City College. The study will require completion of a demographic questionnaire and two surveys lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

I have been asked to participate in this study because I identify as an African American/Black student enrolled at Riverside City College (RCC) participating in the Ujima learning community, student club, or homeroom.

I will be asked to complete a paper-based demographic questionnaire, the Cultural Congruity Scale and the Academic Self-Concept Scale. These surveys will provide information about how I feel as an African American/Black student at RCC and my beliefs regarding my academic abilities.

The demographic questionnaire and surveys will be provided to me to complete and return within one week to the 2nd floor reception desk for TRIO located in the Charles A. Kane Student Services & Administration Building. I will place the completed questionnaire and surveys into the large envelope provided to me and seal it prior to returning.

I have the option of entering into a drawing for \$100 cash by participating in this study. If I choose to enter into the drawing I will submit the lottery drawing form to the TRIO receptionist desk at the time I deliver my completed documents in the provided envelope. I will NOT place my lottery drawing form in the envelope to ensure my participation remains confidential.

Risks

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal, but may include the possibility that I may feel uncomfortable reflecting on my experiences as an African American/Black student at RCC or my beliefs about my ability to perform in an academic setting or on an academic task. If I experience any discomfort I may choose to stop participating without consequence. I understand I may utilize the services of Health and Psychological Services at no cost if needed.

Benefits

I understand the possible benefits from my participation in this study include a \$5 cash award and the option to enter a lottery to win a \$100 cash award. I may also benefit from knowing that I may be contributing to the research on African American/Black student success.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without prejudice to my academic endeavors or status in the Ujima Program. My decision will not change any present or future relationships with RCC. I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer. I also understand that there might be times that the investigator may find it necessary to end my study participation. If I chose to withdraw my data will be destroyed.

Confidentiality

All information collected about me during this study will be kept confidential. I understand that no identifiable information will be collected during my participation in this study, nor will my personal information be accessed or released without my permission. Only the Principal Investigator (PI) and her research team will have access to the information you provide. The data obtained from this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the PI and will remain confidential for 3 years, after which it will be destroyed. All of the lottery drawing forms will be destroyed once the winner has been awarded. If I decide to withdraw from the study before completion, my information will be destroyed. If the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released.

Questions

I understand if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact:

Tenisha James
(951) xxx-xxxx

I can also contact the following individual should I have further questions:

Dr. Linda Purrington
(949) xxx-xxxx
linda.purrington@pepperdine.edu

If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact:

Kevin Collins
(310) 568-2305
kevin.collins@pepperdine.edu

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research

I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

By completing the questionnaires I am 1) voluntarily giving my consent to participate in this study, 2) 18 years of age, 3) understand the risks and benefits and 4) have had all my questions answered. If I choose to take part in this study, I may withdraw at any time. I am not giving up any of my legal rights by participating in this study.

APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Do you identify as African American/Black? Yes _____ No _____
2. Please select your gender: Male _____ Female _____ Transgender _____
3. Total number of completed college units earned prior to this term? _____
4. What is your overall grade point average (range 0.00 to 4.00)? _____
5. Please indicate your involvement with the Ujima Program (mark all that apply):
Enrolled in the Learning Community _____
Utilizes Ujima Homeroom space _____
Ujima Project Student Club Member _____
6. Please use the following scale to rate the statement below (circle one):

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have frequent and positive interactions with instructors/faculty in and out of the classroom.

APPENDIX F

Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS)

Listed below are a number of statements concerning school-related attitudes. Rate each item as it pertains to you personally.

Indicate your response by circling the appropriate letter(s). Be sure to answer all items. Please respond to each item independently, do not be influenced by your previous choices. Base your ratings on how you feel most of the time.

Use the following scale to rate each statement.

- 1) SD. Strongly Disagree
- 2) D. Disagree
- 3) A. Agree
- 4) SA. Strongly Agree

- | | | | | |
|---|-------|------|------|-------|
| 1. Being a student is a very rewarding experience. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 2. If I try hard enough, I will be able to get good grades | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 3. Most of the time my efforts in school are rewarded. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 4. No matter how hard I try I do not do well in school. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 5. I often expect to do poorly on exams. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 6. All in all, I feel I am a capable student. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 7. I do well in my courses given the amount of time I dedicate to studying. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 8. My parents are not satisfied with my grades in college. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 9. Others view me as intelligent. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 10. Most courses are very easy for me. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 11. I sometimes feel like dropping out of school. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 12. Most of my classmates do better in school than I do. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |
| 13. Most of my instructors think that I am a good student. | 1) SD | 2) D | 3) A | 4) SA |

14. At times I feel college is too difficult for me. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
15. All in all, I am proud of my grades in college. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
16. Most of the time while taking a test I feel confident. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
17. I feel capable of helping others with their class work. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
18. I feel teachers' standards are too high for me. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
19. It is hard for me to keep up with my class work. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
20. I am satisfied with the class assignments that I turn in. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
21. At times I feel like a failure. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
22. I feel I do not study enough before a test. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
23. Most exams are easy for me. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
24. I have doubts that I do well in my major. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
25. For me, studying hard pays off. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
26. I have a hard time getting through school. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
27. I am good at scheduling my study time. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
28. I have a fairly clear sense of my academic goals. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
29. I'd like to be a much better student than I am now. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
30. I often get discouraged about school. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
31. I enjoy doing my homework. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
32. I consider myself a very good student. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
33. I usually get the grades I deserve in my courses. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
34. I do not study as much as I should. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
35. I usually feel on top of my work by finals week. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
36. Others consider me a good student. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA

37. I feel that I am better than the average college student. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
38. In most of the courses, I feel that my classmates are better prepared than I am. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
39. I feel I do not have the necessary abilities for certain courses in my major. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA
40. I have poor study habits. 1) SD 2) D 3) A 4) SA

APPENDIX G

Lottery Drawing Form

Lottery Drawing Form
One award of \$100

Name: _____

Preferred Contact: _____

If via phone, best time to reach you _____

NOTE: The information requested is to ensure that the researcher is able to contact the winner of the drawing. The drawing will be held at the end of all data collection, which is anticipated to be no later than the end of March 2017. This form will be kept separate from all questionnaires so that your responses will not be connected to your name. Please do not return this form inside of the sealed envelope.

APPENDIX H

Institutional Review Board Approval Notice



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 31, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Tenisha James

Protocol #: 16-12-463

Project Title: African American Students in a California Community College: Perceptions of Cultural Congruity and Academic Self-Concept within a Black Culture Center

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Tenisha James:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair