

ABSTRACT

HALL, JODI. African American Doctoral Students at For-profit Colleges and Universities: A Critical Race Theory Exploration. (Under the direction of Dr. Tuere Bowles.)

Many people regard the doctorate as the pinnacle of success. Despite the challenges of completing the terminal degree, the dream of earning the doctoral degree remains a goal for many every year. Understanding the phenomenon of African American student enrollment at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) is necessary because many African Americans use these institutions as alternative degree sources. The purpose of this study was to explore how social and environmental factors shape the academic experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. The research questions that guided this study are as follows: (1) What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs? (2) What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs? (3) What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs? (4) What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

Critical race theory provided the conceptual framework for exploring and analyzing narratives about the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. I collected data using a qualitative methodology that consisted of open-ended, semi questions in face-to-face interviews with twelve African American individuals who either completed doctoral degree at FPCUs or were currently enrolled at FPCUs. The findings revealed that the impact of race and racism were minimized by these African American doctoral students. The social context of the learning environment enhanced their potential for success.

Four main conclusions of this study were that students experience fewer microaggressions in the online environment; the flexible admissions process attracts African American students; though African American doctoral students at FPCUs demonstrate perseverance and have high expectations, they face limited career opportunities; and African American doctoral students at FPCUs incur high debt to receive flexible admissions and scheduling.

African American Doctoral Students at For-profit Colleges and Universities:
A Critical Race Theory Exploration

by
Jodi Hall

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Adult and Community College Education

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

APPROVED BY:

Tuere Bowles, PhD
Chair of Advisory Committee

Paul Bitting, PhD

Tina Hancock, PhD

Monica Leach, Ed.D

DEDICATION

This dissertation, and all of the work and sacrifice within, is dedicated to my mother, Emma Hall. The teachings of my mother sustained me through this process. I am thankful to her for teaching me perseverance, patience and that hard times do not last. Further, she taught me to have faith. Through her I came to appreciate and truly understand that, *The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.*

This dissertation is further dedicated to a beautifully spirited woman that left us far too soon. Dr. Colleen Wiessner, who died August 5, 2009, had been a mentor, friend, spiritual guide, gifted professor and member of my dissertation committee. Her loving spirit and words of wisdom filled my soul and brought me through times of tears and self-doubt.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my children Lauren Boehm and Elijah Bader as well as my sister Mary Jordan and her husband Lawrence Jordan. Their patience and support were valuable throughout this process. Their faith in me and their encouragement is why I am able to write this page today. They continue to make me laugh and appreciate every little thing in life. My sister Edna Matthews and my brother Howard Hall passed away within the years that I worked toward completion of this doctorate. They both had great admiration for my academic pursuits. I miss them very much.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my dear friend Laura Oberkircher who died of breast cancer just as I began working on my doctorate. She never doubted that I would make it to this point. She taught me the joy of laughter and the preciousness of time with girlfriends. She also taught me to be a feminist, depend on myself and trust my own instincts. To my friends and family, both on Earth and in heaven, I thank you all for being a part of my life,

my accomplishments, my soul and my journey. As a token of my appreciation I dedicate this work to you.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born in North Carolina to Emma and J.L. Hall. My parents were from Georgia and South Carolina and did not have the luxury of education. My father died when I was very young. My mother, a very strong and kind woman, inspired me to believe in myself. I am the sister of Edna, Mary and Howard. We had tremendous fun growing up in this family even though material resources were very limited.

I was educated in public schools in Apex, North Carolina, both before and after desegregation. My sister Mary taught me to read before I went to first grade. The early start that she gave me provided a firm academic foundation. I graduated from Apex High School and felt very prepared for college. I earned my bachelor's degree in Social Work from North Carolina State University and Master's of Social Work from the University of North Carolina.

I was married for many years to Steve Bader and I we are the proud parents of two wonderful children, Lauren and Elijah. My son Elijah is athletic and academically gifted. My daughter Lauren, a social worker, is married to a brave Army Ranger, Thomas Boehm. They are the proud parents of Madelyn Boehm.

My professional career has been in social work and higher education. My first professional job was at Wake County Human Services as a Child Abuse Investigator. I spent several years with the County before becoming a Department Head and Wake Technical Community College. It was there that I received encouragement to pursue doctoral studies. I have always been committed to social justice and global equality. It is my hope that this earned doctorate will provide me with opportunities to remove barriers and inspire hope.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am fortunate to have friends who supported me through this process. There were so many people that offered a smile, a hand, a pat on the back or when needed, a handkerchief. The times that my academic pressures made it impossible for me to return calls or attend events were very difficult for me. It was hard to convey how all consuming the process of earning a doctorate was. I look forward to capturing time with friends and having fun now that the journey is complete.

First of all, I owe gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Tuere Bowles. Thank you so much for opening doors for me and for being so true to your values. I could not have become a student in the doctoral program at N.C. State without your ability and willingness to remove barriers. I will remember your good will for my whole life. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Paul Bitting, Dr. Tina Hancock and Dr. Monica Leach. I feel so blessed to have worked with such talented scholars. Additionally, I thank Dr. Lloyd Edwards for challenging this qualitative researcher to develop knowledge, understanding and appreciation of statistics.

Thank you to the faculty and staff of the Social Work Department at N.C. State University. You were such great colleagues for me during this process and I could not have worked with better people. Your guidance and encouragement were invaluable. I especially thank my department head, Dr. Tina Hancock, for believing in me and for encouraging my social justice scholarship. Thank you Arqueta Lindsey and MT Fore for your assistance with data coding. I appreciated your enthusiasm for knowledge. Thank you so much Dawn Iglesias for your patience, technical support and willingness to tolerate my interruptions.

Thank you to my dearest friend Greta Martin. You made sure that I did not give up and you made sure that I laughed out loud nearly every day. You not only understood when I could not return calls or participate in social events; you built a protective barrier around me so that I could have the mental and physical space to make it through this academic journey.

Thank you to Robin Burgess for cooking great meals for me. Thank you also for making me take those really long walks at Shelly Lake. Thank you Tyrone Everett for making me laugh when I was sure crying was a better option. When your wife Laura died you unselfishly put your energy into helping the rest of us cope. Thank you Barbara Zelter for your wisdom and spirituality provided nurturance and guidance. Thank you to Marcia Teran for being so funny. Your ability to say something humorous never ceased to amaze me. Thank you Antwan Harris for a wonderful place called Zydeco Downtown. It was definitely the spot where I found much joy and laughter when I needed a break.

Thank you so much Steve Bader for all of the time that you spent reading my papers and giving me feedback. You actually seemed to enjoy reading all of those papers which kept me encouraged. I appreciate that you were so positive, engaging and supportive. I hope that I can return the favor. Thank you Dr. Karen Bullock. You have been a great friend and mentor. You were so unselfish with your knowledge and skills and I sincerely appreciated your time.

Thank you to Lauren Jones. You were a great professional editor. You were so patient and you never panicked when I sent last minute changes. Not only are you a great editor, but a brilliant writer as well. Thank you for writing *Reasonable Joy*. It is still the best book I ever read.

Lastly, thank you to all that have been positive and supportive. I could not mention everyone and there is always the danger failing to mention someone that surely deserved praise and recognition. Thank you to my friends that would never want to be mentioned in print. You know who you are and you know what you did. Your kind deeds are imprinted on my heart. Thank you

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Significance.....	8
Definition of Terms	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
African Americans in Higher Education	11
Enrollment, Retention, and Persistence	20
For-profit Colleges and Universities	39
Returning Adult Learners	44
Critical Race Theory.....	51
Chapter Summary	76
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	77
Design of the Study.....	77
Sample Selection	79
Data Collection.....	81
Data Analysis	85
Validity and Reliability	87
Researcher Bias	92
Chapter Summary	93
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	95
The Participants	95
Participant Profiles.....	97
Academic Experiences of African American Doctoral Students	103
Social Experiences of African American Doctoral Students	123
Success Enhancers for African American Doctoral Students at FPCUs.....	132
Impediments to Success	138
Chapter Summary	141
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	142
Summary of the Study.....	142
Conclusions and Discussions	143
Implications for Practice and Theory.....	168
Recommendations for Future Research	172
Chapter Summary	175
REFERENCES	176

APPENDICES 199

 APPENDIX A: MATERIALS FOR IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS 200

 APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM & LETTER OF INVITATION..... 205

 APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE, PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION,
 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDES & DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE 209

 APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS FORM 214

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: CRT Flow Chart	53
Table 2: CRT Condensed Table of African American Graduate and Doctoral Student Studies.	215
Table 3: Persistence Models Chart	217
Table 4: Data Display.....	218
Table 5: Participant Demographics Table	219
Table 6: Display of Universities Represented	220
Table 7: Student Debt Chart	221

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The commercial on the television screen shows images of well-dressed African American women smiling as they consider the future that lies ahead of them. The voice in the background beckons its viewers to start changing their lives today. “We understand you and we fit your life,” the lively voice suggests. Some heed the call of the advertiser’s beckoning....

Kristen, a forty-year-old African American woman with years of professional experience, decided that the time was now right to pursue her dream of earning a doctorate. Managers and supervisors as well as family and friends strongly encouraged her to move forward. Reassured by her past academic performance, Kristen was absolutely certain that she had the talent to succeed in a doctoral program. She had earned a bachelor’s degree with honors recognition, and she had completed her master’s degree at a prestigious institution. With earnest confidence, Kristen applied to the doctoral program of her choice only to later be dismayed when she received a rejection letter citing her low GRE quantitative score as the primary reason for the denial. Determined to pursue her academic dream, Kristen heard about a new option for doctoral studies. She applied and was quickly accepted to this new school that she read about in a brochure. Soon Kristen was well on her way toward a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at a for-profit university.

The doctorate is considered the pinnacle of academic success. Despite the time commitment, rigor, expense and a less than encouraging completion rate, the dream of earning the doctoral degree remains a goal for thousands every year. According to Orzoff,

Peinovich, and Riedel (2008), graduate degrees are now replacing undergraduate degrees “as the new standard for professional competence” (p. 1). For some disciplines, like education and psychology, the doctorate is the accepted measure of competence.

The most comprehensive data on earned doctorates is compiled annually by the federal government and is reported in the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). The most recent SED figures are for earned doctorates in 2007. According to SED 2007, the top five universities in all fields that produced the most doctorates are University of California at Berkeley; University of Michigan; University of Minnesota; University of Texas; and University of Wisconsin. All of these institutions are public universities. The only private university to make the top 20 was Purdue. Only one for-profit university, Walden University, made the list in a category called “other fields.” Notably, Walden is listed in the top five of this category.

The SED 2007 further reveals that 48,079 individuals earned doctorates in 2007. Of this number 26,166 were males and 21,859 were females. While more males than females earned doctorates overall, more African American and Hispanic females earn doctorates than African American and Hispanic males. Further, African Americans earned 1,821 doctorates in 2007, or seven percent of all doctorates, up from five percent in 1997. Whites earned 79 percent, Asians six percent and Hispanics five percent. These statistics represent a seven percent decrease, down from 86 percent, in the doctorates earned by Whites in 1997.

The overall number of earned doctorates has increased over the past four decades (SED, 2007). The field of education had the most earned doctorates followed by social sciences and life sciences. At the same time, the percentage of African Americans earning

doctorates in education has decreased from 50 percent in 1978 to 38 percent in 2007. In 2006, about 20 percent of those who earned doctorates owed more than \$20,000 in student loans at graduation, up from seven percent in the late 1980s (SED, 2007). The SED 2007 reported that Whites who earn doctorates are more likely to have definite employment plans at graduation than are African Americans, Asians, or Hispanics.

The number of African Americans doctorate earners has increased in the life sciences (SED, 2007). This increase is consistent with the push to recruit African Americans to the math, science, and engineering (Maton, Hrabowski, Ozdemir, & Wimms, 2008). Like the field of education, the percentage of African American doctorate earners in psychology has also decreased in (Maton, Kohout, Wicherski, Leary, & Vinokurov, 2006). Despite the trend, African American doctoral students are still most represented in social sciences and education (King, Chepyator-Thomson, 1996; Schmidt, 2008; Solórzano, 1995). The continuing shortage of African Americans in the academy can only be quelled by increasing the number of African Americans earning bachelor's and master's degrees and then doctorates (Allen, 1991). Research shows that African American doctoral students benefit from the presence and guidance of African American professors (Anderson et al., 1993; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero and Bowles, 2009).

There are several obstacles to admission to doctoral studies for African American applicants. Among them are GRE scores, past academic performance, and finances. GRE scores and entrance GPAs tend to be lower for African Americans than Whites (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Additionally, the often lengthy and complicated application process at many universities may be discouraging to marginalized students (Ruch, 2003).

A newer type of institution, known as for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) is emerging, and is recruiting African American students successfully (Ruch, 2003). Strayer University, University of Phoenix, Capella University, Kaplan University, Walden University, and Argosy University are among the well-known FPCUs in the United States. All of these schools offer doctoral degrees, mostly online. More and more African Americans are choosing FPCUs as the vehicle by which they attain for graduate degrees (Ruch, 2003). The growth and outreach of FPCUs has appealed to African Americans, and they are enrolling in disproportionately high numbers (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007).

FPCUs have the largest proportion of minority students with the exception of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Ruch, 2003). Although some describe FPCUs as “questionable” (Altbach, 2006, p. 67), Ruch (2003) contends that FPCUs are to be commended for their effort to make doctoral studies accessible to marginalized groups. Tierney and Hentschke (2007) emphasize the apparent ability of FPCU to tap into an underserved population of post secondary students. Further, Tierney and Hentschke suggest that FPCUs potentially could change the culture of post secondary education through their ability to attract older adults and students of color to higher education. It is notable that in 2003, Department of Education figures put the graduation rate of several FPCUs below 29 percent (www.ed.gov)

The disproportionately high percentage of African Americans at FPCUs is particularly relevant to this current study given that FPCUs are more expensive than public colleges and universities, resulting in high student loan debt for graduates and non-completers (Ruch, 2003; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Students who attend FPCUs are twice

as likely as traditional college and university (TCU) students to default on student loans (Clark, 2009; Lewis, 2008). Thirty percent of graduates from FPCUs have loan debt amounts above \$40,000, which is in the range considered excessive by federal standards. TCU students have loans of \$20,000 or less (SED, 2007). Only six percent of graduates from TCUs have \$40,000 or more in debt (Clark, 2009). Students at TCUs tend to have a range of funding options including scholarships, grants, and work-study jobs, while FPCU students pay for their educational expenses primarily through high-interest student loans (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). This reality suggests that African American doctoral students at FPCUs are more likely to be impacted negatively by student loan debt than their peers at TCUs. While FPCUs make up a small share of colleges and universities altogether, they represent the ranks of student loan defaulters disproportionately (Clark, 2009).

The average tuition at public four-year university is \$5,730, while the average tuition at FPCUs is \$14,908 (NCES, 2007). Notably, students enrolled at FPCUs are more likely to have lower incomes than those at the other types of institutions (NCES, 2007). FPCUs have the reputation for attracting low-income students in order to gain access to Title IV student loan assistance and Pell Grants (Bailey, Badway & Gumport; 2001). Students in Washington, DC “pay nearly \$9,000 per year to attend Strayer, while annual in-state tuition at the University of the District of Columbia is a mere \$2,070” (Farrell, 2003, p. 35). While discerning the relationship between race and enrollment behavior is not the intent of Farrell’s (2003) study, her works does lend itself to further study on the implication of tuition price and minority enrollment.

Understanding the phenomenon of African American student enrollment at FPCUs is necessary because FPCUs serve as an alternative degree source that has appealed to African Americans. Since the 1980s, FPCU enrollments have increased seven times the rate of the entire post secondary sector, which translates to a rate of 10.4 percent for FPCUs versus 1.4 percent for TCUs” (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007, p. 50). Additionally, 47 percent of all post secondary institutions are organized as FPCUs (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The voices of African American students are absent in the literature that addresses students at FPCUs. Therefore, little is known, beyond enrollment statistics, about the students who populate FPCUs or what leads them to choose FPCUs. The literature tells us even less about the students who pursue doctoral degrees at FPCUs.

The findings from this current study will introduce dialogue to address the gaps in the literature regarding African American doctoral students’ experiences at FPCUs. It provides an understanding of the ways the lives of African American FPCU doctoral students and the communities in which they live shape and influence their decision to enroll in FPCUs and their academic experiences while at FPCUs. Additionally, this current study addresses specific experiences of African American students, which include any examples of isolation, racism, and lack of support systems. Finally, this study sheds light on the expectations that African American FPCU doctoral students have about their degree attainment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how social and environmental factors shape the academic experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
2. What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
3. What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?
4. What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual movement rooted in legal studies that puts race at the center of critical analysis (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT allows researchers to examine the social construction of race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). Furthermore, CRT, as a theory drawing from many disciplines (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2003), will allow me to focus narrowly on race as a factor in African American doctoral student experiences while still exploring their social and environmental experiences.

CRT was used to theorize, examine, and challenge the explicit and implicit ways race and racism impact social structures, practices, and discourses (Bell, 1995). CRT is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows me to examine issues through a lens of strength rather than the traditional deficit models often used to label and describe African

Americans and other students of color (Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999). This study presents an opportunity to explore and analyze counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) that reveal the strengths of the students, their families, support systems, and backgrounds. African American students, through FPCUs, may have found a vehicle to direct them around some of the barriers to graduate degrees that have long been in place in the United States (Guinier, 2003; Hu & St. John, 2001; Roithmayr, 1999).

Significance

This study furthers the research on African American doctoral students. It provides an opportunity to explore how social and environmental experiences reveal themselves in experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. Further, current study will make known the voices of FPCU doctoral students. This study will extend that body of knowledge on emerging FPCU graduate programs. Additionally, this current study builds upon CRT as a theory to better understand African American graduate students' experiences at FPCUs and will contribute to the ongoing process of refining CRT.

This study also has practical significance for professors who serve as mentors and advisors for African American doctoral students, adult educators who plan and implement graduate programs, as well as those who are committed to exploring opportunities to improve the retention rate of African American doctoral students. Further, it will provide information to African American returning adult learners who are exploring their options for doctoral studies. Additionally, the literature warns of the shortage of African Americans in the academy. This study proposes to add to the dialogue to examine ways to increase the number of African American doctoral completers.

Finally, this study will be beneficial to adult education staff and faculty responsible for recruitment and retention efforts. This current study intends to illuminate the experiences of FPCU doctoral students that enhance the likelihood of retention and completion. This exploration benefits both FPCUs and TCUs add to the body of knowledge on African American doctoral students.

Definition of Terms

Various terms and concepts are used within this proposed research study and thus require explanation. These terms are listed below in alphabetical order.

For-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs)

For-profit colleges are educational institutions that are in business to provide education for financial gain. They are run by private, profit-seeking companies or organizations and are often traded in the stock market (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007).

Open enrollment

Open enrollment is when an educational institution has a policy that permits enrollment of students in college or university programs without regard to academic qualifications or background (Chang, 2002).

Survey of Earned Doctorate (SED)

The Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) is an annual census that collects data on the number and characteristics of individuals receiving research doctorates from accredited U.S. institutions (USF.org).

Traditional colleges and universities (TCUs)

Traditional colleges and universities are not-for-profit entities that may be public or private, and are in the business of providing education without a profit motive (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore how social and environmental factors shape the academic experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. The review of this literature is divided into four sections. In the first section, I explore aspects of African graduate students. The section covers history, experiences, enrollment, and persistence. In the second section I explore the returning adult learner and the literature related to the experiences of this type of student. In the third section, I explore for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs). This section will cover history, structure and student population. In the fourth section, I will explore critical race theory (CRT). This section will cover history, major tenets and application to study. I conclude by recounting how this broad body of work applies to the study of African American doctoral students at FPCUs.

African Americans in Higher Education

In order to situate this study on African American doctoral students at FPCUs, it is necessary to explore the status of the (?) population's history and experience in the graduate school arena. It is helpful to include some review of African American graduates students in order to get a more complete understanding of their experiences prior to and during doctoral studies. This section includes history, enrollment, experiences, and persistence.

Background

African Americans were denied access to even basic education for many years; thus, the phenomenon of African Americans receiving doctoral degrees is relatively new. The first African American to earn a doctorate is thought to be Edward Bouchet, from Yale University in 1876 (Manning, 1998). In 1926, Carter G. Woodson earned a doctorate from Harvard,

becoming the second African American male to do so (Manning, 1998). Forty-five years from the time the Edward Bouchet earned a doctorate, the first three African American women earned doctorates in 1921. They were Georgiana Simpson, from the University of Chicago; Sadie Alexander, from the University of Pennsylvania; and Eva Dykes from Radcliffe College. (Schiller, 2000). Over the years, the statistics on African American doctorate earners has experienced highs and lows over the past eighty years.

In the 1970s, African American men outnumbered African American women in earning doctorates, but the trend reversed in the 1980s (Garibaldi, 1997). During the late 1980s, universities began a concerted effort to recruit African Americans into doctoral programs (Maton, & Hrabowski, 2004). From 1990 to 1995, African American women earned 200 more doctorates than African American men annually (Garibaldi, 1997). Garibaldi (1997) found that African American women earned 63 percent of all doctorates earned by African Americans in 1994 and 1995.

African Americans are underrepresented in the seven broad fields, which include physical science; social science; life science; engineering; humanities; education; and professional studies (Solórzano, 1995). Solórzano (1995) goes on to say that this underrepresentation impacts the already dismal number of African Americans in the professoriate. As a group, African Americans are more concentrated in the fields of education and social sciences, while African American males are slightly more represented throughout all seven fields. In order to obtain parity with White students, the amount of African Americans earning doctorates would have to increase up to 1,100 percent (Solórzano, 1995).

Historically black colleges (HBCUs) have figured prominently in the production of doctoral degree earners and represent 15 of the top 20 institutions (Henderson, Clarke, & Reynolds, 1996) or thirty-three of the top fifty (Solórzano, 1995). Additionally, Solórzano (1995) found that the majority of African American students who go on to earn doctorates received their baccalaureate degrees from HBCUs or “less prestigious” institutions (Freeman & Thomas, 2002; Solórzano, 1995 p. 26). Solórzano (1995) that the well established criteria of admitting graduate students from well known institutions can impact the opportunities for African American students pursuing doctoral studies.

The Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) is the primary data source on earned doctorates. It is compiled by the government each year, and details the origins, demographics, and fields of study for doctoral recipients. The latest data is for those who earned doctorates in 2007. The most recent report reveals a slight increase, from five percent to seven percent, in the number of African Americans earning doctorates (SED, 2007). African American female doctorate earners still outpace African American males 66 percent to 34 percent (SED, 2007). Among the seven major fields captured by SED (2007), 38 percent of African American doctorate earners received their degrees in education; 17 percent in the social sciences; four percent in engineering; and six percent in the physical sciences. By comparison, the survey reports 18 percent of white doctorate earners received terminal degrees in education; 18 percent in the social sciences; 13 percent in physical sciences; and eight percent in engineering. SED (2007) further reveals a decrease in the percentage of African Americans earning doctorates from 50 percent in 1978 to 38 percent in 2007.

Each year SED has reported that Whites who earn doctorates are more likely to have plans for post-doctorate or employment at graduation. This remained true in 2007 (SED, 2007). African American graduate students tend to be less certain about their earning potential post-graduate studies than whites (King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996). Ability to pay for college is a significant issue that impacts African American students.

Tuition cost sensitivity

During the 1970s and 1980s, researchers began to look at the relationship between tuition and enrollment. Hoenack (1971) provides early research on enrollment and tuition price in the 1970s. Hoenack (1971) advocates changes in subsidy allocation, suggesting that instead of distributing these subsidies across the board, a greater portion should go to those with the greatest financial need. Hoenack (1971) uses 1967 data from California that shows university enrollment was higher among higher income groups. Hoenack (1971) presents options that could be considered by the Board of Regents for decision making, but his work had limited applicability for finding any correlation between race and enrollment. His work focuses exclusively on enrollment and income. To the extent that there is some connection between terms use of the term disadvantaged and minorities, this early look at data points in a direction for others to follow.

Like much research of the 1970s, Hoenack (1971), Hoenack & Weiler (1975), conclude that students from higher income brackets are overly represented at colleges and universities. Yet, little of the research looks specifically at the enrollment behavior of minorities. Hoenack (1971) states that financial aid incentives would increase the enrollment of disadvantaged groups, but does not make clear reference to the data for the statement.

Early findings conclude that students' responses to tuition rates have "implications" for disadvantaged groups (Hoenack, 1975, p. 333). Hoenack and Weiler (1975) finds that a policy of "cost-related tuition" (p. 333) would probably be advantageous for disadvantaged groups. He does not specify what he considers "disadvantaged."

Jackson (1978), like other researchers of the period (Corazzini, Dugan, & Gambowski, 1972; Hoenack, 1971; Hoenack & Weiler, 1975), concludes that low socio-economic status (SES) students respond more favorably to aid than other SES groups. When reviewing literature from this period one has to assume that both terms, low SES and disadvantaged, refer to minority students. Jackson (1978) states that large proportions of low SES students attend two-year colleges. However, he does not specify whether tuition price is a factor in their decision to attend two-year colleges. Jackson's (1978) findings support Hoenack's argument that to impact enrollment, "aid must be given to highly responsive subgroups that do not already enroll without aid" (p. 570).

The literature from this period does not answer enrollment impact specifically for minorities as subgroups. This fact is notable given that during the decade from 1970 to 1980, minority enrollment in higher education institutions increased by 40 percent (Lang, 1992). The enrollment data for that decade does not point conclusively to a relationship between tuition and minority enrollment. One can infer, given the responsiveness of low SES students to financial aid, that the price of attending college may impact the enrollment behavior of minority students.

Access to higher education institutions for minorities came about as a result of desegregation laws. At the same time the federal government introduced financial aid into the

educational arena. Again though, one must consider that low income minorities had the first real opportunity to make decisions to enroll in higher education institutions in large numbers. It is only after the period of legal access for minorities and the introduction of financial aid that one can begin to examine enrollment behavior of minorities as it relates to tuition.

Heller (1999) examines the effects of tuition and state financial aid on public college enrollment. He uses data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which is a census of all college enrollments in the country. Hispanics and Asians show the greatest drop in enrollment for each additional tuition increase of \$1000 at public two-year institutions (Heller, 1999). This decrease is much higher than the drop for white and African American students. Heller (1999) points out that this statistic could be due to the fact that community colleges have historically served Hispanic students. This logic seems lacking given that community colleges have also traditionally served African American students.

A follow-up review by Heller (1999), also using the IPEDS, found African American students to be more sensitive to tuition increases than White students. (Heller, 1997) noted that IPEDS did not begin collecting information for race every year until 1990. The component that continues to be missing in this data is the impact of enrollment by race when controlling for family income. Enrollment behavior in relationship to race is possibly less cultural and more economic (Freeman, 1997).

Heller (1999) posits the solution to close the race gap in enrollment is to target tuition decreases to those who appear most impacted by tuition increases. Many other researchers recommend this solution (Freeman, 1997; Hoenack, 1971, 1975; Jackson, 1982; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991; Perna, 2000; St. John, 2000). It may be difficult to discern the different

effects of tuition increase and financial aid allocation. McPherson and Schapiro (1991) point out that much of the research that looked specifically at the impact of tuition decrease and enrollment was conducted prior to the introduction of the Pell Grant. Given that this was also just after desegregation, it is less applicable for inferences on minority students' enrollment behavior.

Access to information about tuition price and financial aid may impact enrollment decisions. Lower income and/or less well-educated families may have limited access to information about aid (Freeman, 1997). Family income tends to be much lower for minority families as they are three to four times more likely to depend on financial aid when making college participation decisions than white students (Heller, 1999). A number of researchers (Heller, 1999; McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Olson, 1988) have found access to financial aid information to be influential in the enrollment behavior of African American students. Thus the lack of financial aid information may have the effect of shrinking the pool of African Americans who pursue degrees at higher education institutions.

Financial aid helps to remove or ease the burden of affordability. Additionally, financial aid can help increase students' persistence in completing their degrees (Hu & St. John, 2001). Sixty-six percent of African American parents and 62 percent of Hispanic parents say they do not have enough information to make choices about college financing (Farrell, 2003). If low-income families are not aware of financial aid that is available to them, they may choose lower-priced two-year colleges over higher-priced four-year college (Perna & Titus, 2004). African American and Hispanic families proportionately will have the greatest need to access and understand financial aid information. The 2002 census indicates

that the median income of Whites families is twice that of African American and Hispanic families (Heller, 1991).

By controlling for both race and income, Hu and St. John (2001) sought to find out if factors other than race lead to the disparity in financial aid and persistence. Hu and St. John (2001) clearly define the income groups for the study, unlike the literature of the past few decades, which just define categories as low, middle and high incomes. Such distinctions are important in order to avoid broad generalizations about racial and ethnic groups. Further, Hu and St. John (2001) state, using data from the state of Indiana, which is not as ethnically diverse as many other states, may be a limitation of data interpretation. Their findings suggest that there is a positive “effect of financial aid on student persistence for African Americans” (p. 276) and Hispanics (Hu & St. John, 2001). Financial aid had a positive persistence effect on White students, though not as significant an impact in that area as it had upon African Americans and Hispanics (Hu & St. John, 2001). This finding is consistent with the recommendation of Hoenack (1975) and Jackson (1978), who suggest the need to target financial aid toward those most responsive to it.

One finding of Hu and St. John (2001) is consistent with this reviewers concern about much of the literature on this topic. That is, “No significant differences were found among different racial/ethnic groups after controlling for student background information, college experiences” (Hu & St. John, 2001, p. 282). Hu & St. John (2001) has implications for further research with the finding that students that do not receive aid have lower persistence than those that do receive aid. This finding raises questions about whether high tuition high aid and high tuition models have negative effect on those that do not receive aid (Hu & St.

John, 2001). Hu and St. John (2001) were among the first reviewers to control for variables to allowed research to distinguish information about racial groups.

The type of financial aid is also important in enrollment decisions. Other findings by Perna (2006) include that African Americans are the most likely group to receive loans and African American and Hispanics are more likely than Whites to receive grants. Perna (2006) in contrast to some findings of earlier researchers found grants to be unrelated to enrollment behavior of African Americans, Hispanics and Whites. It is also notable that Perna (2006) found dependence on loans to have a negative effect on the enrollment of African Americans. Among other reasons for this finding, Perna (2006) suggests that African Americans may have a lower expectation in belief that their future earnings will be enough to repay the loans. In reviewing the findings by Perna (2006) though inconsistent with findings of other researchers, one must consider that she controlled for many variables that were not controlled by researchers that reached different conclusions. Perna (2006) did not make generalizations about race by extrapolating from findings about income and social class.

Following other researchers (Hu, 2001; Hu and St. John 2001), Perna used models in which she could disaggregate race, income and other variables. Perna (2000) is one of the early researchers to “explore variations in college enrollment behavior among students of different races” (p. 117). She adds to the work of others (Freeman, 1997; Jackson, 1990) in the use of the econometric model that assumes decisions are made based by “comparing the benefit with the cost of all possible alternatives and then selecting the alternative with the greatest net benefit” (p. 118). Perna (2000) expands on the model by “using measures of

social and cultural capital to reflect differences in expectations....and preferences about higher education investment decisions” (p. 119).

There are many reasons cited for why minorities make decisions about college enrollment. Among those reasons are distance from home, affordability, level of comfort, presence of other minorities, and perception of affordability (Freeman, 1997). Some researchers (Perna & Titus, 2005) have suggested that parental involvement impact of enrollment behavior of minorities. The use of more such variables could yield more conclusive information for determining overall predictors of enrollment behavior.

Regardless of tuition cost and potential debt the landscape of higher education has changed over the years. African Americans are the ethnic group with the greatest percentage increase in graduate school enrollment over the ten year period 1997-2007 (Bell, 2008). Finances and potential financial debt are not the only not the only issues that impact African American doctoral students. These issues will be explored later in this chapter. The enrollment of Africans American at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) is a phenomenon that goes against much of the literature that examines tuition sensitivity.

Enrollment, Retention, and Persistence

Enrollment and retention management have become increasing essential to the ability of higher education institutions to meet the growing demands of a diverse and changing adult student population. Berger and Lyon (2005) define retentions as “the ability of a particular college of university to successfully graduate the students that initially enroll at that institution” (p. 3). The literature uses the terms student departure (Tinto, 1975), program completion (Nettles, 1990) and retention (Braxton, 1999) interchangeably.

According to Golde (2005), only about 40 percent of students that begin the doctoral process ever finish. He goes on to suggest that little is known about the reasons for departure given that much of the literature focuses on a single field of study or a single intuition. Additionally, the majority of retention literature has focused on undergraduates (Braxton, 1999; Golde, 2005). For every one White student who drops out of a post secondary institution, three African Americans dropout (Porter, 1990). It is not uncommon for doctoral students, after two to three years of intense coursework, to fail the written comprehensive exam and thus be removed from the program and conferred a master's degree (Forest & Altbach, 2006). One has to wonder how it is possible that institutions do not prepare and support students through this crucial step in the process. The literature suggests that mentoring and other institutional supports could lesson departures at this juncture (Mullen, 2003). At this point the literature on persistence of returning students at for-profit colleges is absent.

While undergraduate retention literature focuses on the institutional organization, doctoral and other graduate retention literature focuses more on the department of study (Golde, 2005). Given the shortage of African American doctoral students and completers it remains essential to focus on minority undergraduate persistence in order to build the pool of doctoral applicants. Annually, about 5 percent of doctorates are awarded to African Americans (Survey of Earned Doctorates [SED], 2007). The majority of students that complete doctoral programs at TCUs completed their undergraduate studies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Perna, 2001).

Nearly all of the retention research focuses on students attending TCUs. More investigations are needed to examine retention at FPCUs, as they continue to attract students of color at disproportionately high rate. TCUs exist as either non-profit private, such as Duke University or Harvard or as non-profit public such as the University of Georgia or North Carolina State University (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). FPCUs are those that are publically traded on the stock market and have profit making as its primary goal (Ruch, 2003). There are about 9,485 higher education institutions in the United States and about 47 percent of them are organized as for-profit institutions (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007, p. 50). Tierney and Hentschke (2007) clarified that despite the large share that FPCUs have in the education market, their enrollment only represents about five percent of all postsecondary students, “because their campuses tend to be small” (p. 50). The enrollment at degree granting FPCUs increased 91 percent between 1998 and 2003 (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). As important as the numbers is the need to understand how TCUs and FPCUs retain adult learners through degree completion.

Generally, enrollment and retention literature is expressed in one of four categories; 1. Sociological, 2. Economic, 3. Psychological and 4. Organizational. The majority of the retention literature is framed from the seminal work of Tinto (1975) and is more sociologically based. Over the past few decades this work has been expanded and reframed. Notably, scholars have postulated theories of persistence in doctoral programs. For example, (Tinto, 1993) introduced the Doctoral Education Persistence Theory and Nettles (1990) introduced the Model of Minority Student Experiences and outcomes in Doctoral Programs. Even so, there is no action-based theory or model of retention that has been embraced or

implemented by graduate department on a wide scale, though there is much support for such in the literature (Berger & Lyon, 2005). What the literature needs are models of institutional action (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) that moves the retention field beyond theory. After a review of what the literature tells us about retention, the models and conceptual frameworks, the models that lend themselves to institutional action will be outlined and compared.

Most universities, and the related literature, are set up to accommodate and investigate the traditional age students that are under the age of 25. Yet, the older adults represent “more than 50 percent of the potential postsecondary population” (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007, p. 19). In contrast to TCUs, Tierney & Hentschke state that FPCUs are more diverse with half of their student body being students of color, half being women and the range of ages run the gamut. Students at TCU tend to have a range of funding options, while FPCU students primarily finance their education through high interest student loans (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007).

Increasingly accreditation agencies are holding higher education institutions accountable for student retention (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Further, Berger and Lyon add, publications that rank colleges like *US News and World Report* use retention statistics in their annual report. Such published ranking impact prestige and thus the ability of institutions to attract students. During these tough economic times, state legislators may hold public higher education institutions more accountable for retention.

Highly selective higher education institutions are those that attract students with higher GPA and higher standardized test scores (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005) and “are considered more prestigious” and less selective institutions are those that attract

“students who are less likely to be retained” (Berger & Lyon, 2005, p. 3). The dropout rate at highly selective institutions is 8percentpercent while there is a 35 percent to 57 percent dropout rate at less selective institutions (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Further, Berger & Lyon contend that the dropout rate at open enrollment institutions, like FPCUs and community colleges is 50 percent. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and FPCUs have been the most adept at retaining African American students (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Devarics and Roach (2000) found lower higher education retention rates for students of color, first generation students, and students from lower SES. Berger and Lyon (2005) cited similar numbers, but attributed the lower retention numbers to the lack of preparation or willingness to accommodate a diverse student body coupled with historical injustices in K-12 and higher education. This distinction reflects a view that is void of the deficit-based language often found in adult education and higher education literature. Further, Berger and Lyon (2005) stressed the importance of finding a good fit between the student and the institution which require institutions to tailor retention efforts. Early retention studies focused in individual institutions while more recent studies have focused on specific student populations like students of color, women, low income students, full-time students, etc (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

Traditional colleges and universities and FPCUs approach enrollment and retention differently. Retention perspectives emerged in TCUs in the 1970s and have been amended and expanded over the past three decades. While FPCUs take a vastly different approach to enrollment and retention (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007) theoretical perspectives of retention have been developed specific to FPCUs. Unlike the bureaucratic process of enrollment at

TCUs, FPCUs are often touted as being student-centered (Ruch, 2003; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Applicants to TCUs generally wait months to find out if they have been accepted, whereas FPCU applicants get a decision the day they turn in their applications (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Regardless of the type of higher education institution, well developed theoretical perspectives can be instructive in the search for increased retention.

According to Berger and Lyon (2005), models of retention in higher education are based on four categories: 1. Enrollment management committee, 2. Enrollment management coordinator, 3. Enrollment management matrix and 4. Enrollment management division. TCUs enrollment management committees are made up of faculty members which Berger and Lyon consider the weakest category because the committee members lack decision making power. Further, Berger and Lyon add that such “lack of authority and turnover make success difficult” (p. 21). They suggest that having an enrollment management coordinator can be more effective than enrollment committee “if the person appointed is well networked and well regarded” by university leadership (p. 21). They add that neither committee nor coordinator have enough power to enact change.

Both enrollment management committee concept and enrollment management coordinator have limited applicability at FPCUs which are notoriously known for their intentional lack of input from faculty and staff (Tierney & Hentschke, 2005). From the literature we know that faculty and staff have clearly defined roles that do not involve decision making and leadership (Bailey, Badway, & Gumpert, 2001; Ruch, 2001, 2003; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007; Winston, 1999). Models formed around enrollment manger

matrix and enrollment management divisions have more applicability to FPCUs; however, their decisions are mostly market driven.

According to Berger and Lyon (2005) the enrollment manager matrix has greater decision making power and authority to enact change because they involve vice presidents, senior level management and bring together leaders from financial aid admissions and career planning. They cite ongoing dialogue of the members as an advantage of the enrollment management matrix. Mid to large size TCUs tend to use the enrollment management division model which yields the most power and has the greatest ability to enact change in enrollment management (Berger & Lyon, 2005). FPCUs would mostly likely use enrollment management systems that capable of viewing enrollment and retention through capitalistic frame. Additionally to the way higher education model retention efforts, the literature examines enrollment and retention through sociological, organizational, psychological and economic perspectives.

Sociological Perspectives of Retention and Persistence

Spady (1971) published “*Dropouts from higher education; An interdisciplinary Review and Synthesis*” which is considered to be the seminal work in the area of higher education retention (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Braxton, 1999; Braxton & Mundy, 2001; Tinto, 1975). Spady (1971) called for research that investigated the interaction between student attributes and the university environment. Spady’s position was if there were congruence between the student and the higher education environment the likelihood for retention is increased.

Tinto (1975) is considered a key scholar in the development of retention research. It is rare to find retention literature that does not reference Tinto (1975, 1986, 1993). Tinto's development of the Interactionalist Theory of Student Departure is the "best known and most cited theory of student departure (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Tinto's (1975, 1982, 1986) model pays close attention to the role of environment in student persistence. Tinto (1971, 1975) indicated that the entry characteristics of the student contribute to decision to persist. Essentially, Tinto (1975) posits that the student's early engagement in the process will determine future success in the program. Failure to engage leads to departure. He explains further that the more committed a student is to the institution in the beginning and the more committed the student is to the goal of graduation the more likely the student will persist through to graduation. Tinto (1975) further posited that students that are integrated academically and socially when they initially enter the program have greater overall academic engagement and persistence. Moreover, Tinto (1975) connected financial resources, family support and classroom experiences in student departure decisions. Although Tinto (1975) developed thirteen perspectives of retention, most literature focuses on just four of them as follows (Braxton, 1999): 1. Student entry characteristics affect the level of initial commitment to the institution, 2) the initial level of commitment to the institution affects subsequent commitment to the institution, 3) the greater the degree of social integration, the greater the degree of subsequent commitment to the institution, and 4) the greater the degree of subsequent institutional commitment, the greater the likelihood of student persistence in college.

Tierney (1992) argues that Tinto's Interactionalist Model has limited applicability to commuter students. Additionally, Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) found, of Tinto's thirteen perspectives of the model, only showed empirical applicability for commuter students. Like Braxton et al. (1997), Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) used Tinto's theory to investigate retention and departure decisions of commuter students and moved from theory to practice. Braxton et al. (2004) added elements to Tinto's model that consider the lifestyle of adult student that go to school and work. Braxton et al. (2004) contend that "students who strongly believe they are capable of earning a degree are less likely to depart" (p. 74). Further, Braxton et al. (2004) found that commuter students, who tend to have more family responsibility, will depart if they perceive the academic pursuit is presenting a hardship for their families. Braxton et al. (2004) did not offer practical solutions to higher education administrators, but they were conscious to frame information in a way that was of greater use for student affairs and administrators instead of just for scholars.

Tinto (1993) added to the field on retention studies through his development of Doctoral Education Persistence Theory. Tinto (1993) noted two factors that influence persistence: 1) institutional experiences, including program level, which support or inhibit degree attainment, and 2) individuals who provide support to the student throughout the doctoral program. He emphasized the importance of the relationship between the doctoral student and faculty. This is consistent with the findings of Girves and Wemmerus (1988) and Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001).

Tinto (1997) later presented a framework of student persistence that was aimed at the practitioner audience. This work provided a springboard for the development of

comprehensive action based models. Tinto and Pusser (2006) followed the work of Bean and Russell (1986) and are consistent with Braxton et al. (2004) in the call for greater integration of the commuter student. Tinto (1997, 2006) stated that social integration for the commuter student must take place in the classroom as “it is the only place where involvement may arise” (Tinto, 1997, p. 601). Tinto (1997) suggested restructuring classrooms and classroom experiences in order to link student to one another.

Both Nettles (1990) and Tinto (1993) developed model in their attempts to better understand persistence of doctoral students. Nettles’ (1990) Model of Factors Related to Minority Students’ Experiences and Outcomes in Doctoral Programs differed from Tinto (1993) in its emphases on students of color. However, both models are considered valuable to understanding factors that lead to persistence of African American doctoral students. Tinto (1993) looked understand the persistence of doctoral students at three stages; 1. Transition and adjustment, 2. Attaining candidacy and 3. Research completion. Tinto (1993) posits that certain attributes at each stage contribute to persistence. He further indicated that finances determine whether student is full time or part time and additionally, family and work responsibilities contribute to persistence. Additionally, Tinto (1993) stated that the most important factor in doctoral retention in the behavior of one or more members of faculty. Doctoral non-completers often site conflict with or lack of engagement from faculty as a primary reason for departure (Nora, 2001).

Nettles (1990) looked specifically at factors that influence persistence of underrepresented students such as socioeconomic class, gender and race. He presented five domains that related to the background of doctoral students that contribute to persistence; 1.

Preparation from undergraduate studies 2. Transition experience between undergraduate and graduate studies, 3. Graduate school experiences and 4. Experiences during doctoral studies. This model has relevance to my proposed student of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. Nettles (1990) found African Americans to have longer periods between undergraduate and graduate studies, which may contribute to a less smooth transition. We know from the literature that African American students have more difficulty transitioning to graduate school than their white counter parts (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Additionally we know that students of color have negative experiences in graduate school that impact their transition (Solórzano, 1997, 1998). What we do not know whether such experiences impact students that enrolled in FPCUs. The literature does not tell whether doctoral students at FPCUs experience the microaggressions that are reported by African American doctoral students. We also do not know if these kinds of negative experience in undergraduate and graduate school contribute to the decision by an African American student to attend an FPCU for doctoral studies. Further, we know little about how undergraduate and graduate school experiences impact the persistence of students of color at TCUs or FPCUs.

Tinto and Pusser (2006) argued that too much research had been focused on theoretical concepts that “do not translate easily into definable courses of action” (p. 4). Tinto and Pusser (2006) called for a model of retention that focused less on students attributes and more on the role the institution can play in improving retention rates. For example, they stated that information about the student found in much literature may be important, but universities do not have the ability to do much about those entry attributes and external influences. Tinto and Pusser (2006) called for institutions to have higher expectations for all

students as it is a condition of success for all students. Further they add that “students are more likely to succeed when they find themselves in settings that are committed to their success” (p. 8). This is consistent with Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero and Bowles (2009) in their investigation of the success rate of African American graduate students and the importance of mentors. Among several other recommendations, Tinto and Pusser (2006) called on higher education institutions to implement collaborative experiences in the classroom.

Economic Perspectives of Retention

Economic perspective in retention looks at the relationship between college affordability and persistence. Scholars of human capital see higher education retention as fundamental to national and global development (Forest & Altbach, 2006). Becker (1964) introduced economic or human capital theory in relationship to retention to the higher education field. He put forth that: (1) students consider the costs and benefits (both financial and personal) of attending college compared to those of not attending and (2) increasing subsidies to the families with financial need could reduce the costs and induce enrollment. Since Becker (1964) there has been considerable argument over the impact of financial aid on persistence. Kane (1995) presented findings that financial aid does not increase persistence. Others found that financial aid makes a difference in both enrollment and retention (Somers & St. John, 1997). At FPCUs, tuition through financial aid is the primary revenue source (Forest & Altbach, 2006), yet the students from FPCUs have the highest student loan default rate (Perna, 2000). The literature that compares such default rates to persistence at FPCUs is absent.

There is other literature that says that financial aid produces a different response in enrollment decisions than it does in retention of persistence (St. John, 2000). Some scholars, Heller (2001; Paulsen and St. John, 2002) found that financial aid is inadequate for producing enrollment or retention during difficult economic times. St. John, Hu and Weber (2001) found that students who received aid were more likely to persist than those that did not. The findings however, also point to the need to multi-theoretical approaches to enrollment and retention as they also found GPA and type or aid received to factor into persistence (St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2001). Braxton (2006) found that a student will only persist in college if they can see that the benefits of attending outweigh the costs. Additionally, universities need to appreciate the waste of departmental resources that result from doctoral student attrition (Golde, 2005).

Psychological Perspectives of Retention

Psychological perspectives in retention look at the role individual characteristics and attributes play in retention (Tinto, 1993). Characteristics that impact persistence include “academic aptitude and skills, motivational states, personality traits and student development theories” (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Examples of such perspectives in retention include Bean and Eaton (2000) in the Psychological Model of College Student Retention which finds that positive adjustment to the academic and social environments of college lead to greater persistence.

According to Bean and Eaton’s (2001), Theory of Self-efficacy, students that believe in their own ability to perform academically tend to persist in college. Additionally, they find social interaction at all level of the academic community, such as faculty, librarians, student

affairs staff, etc., to be important to retention. According to Bean and Eaton (2001) when students have self efficacy and confidence they gain in self-confidence and develop higher levels of persistence at and achievement of the task and develop higher goals for task achievement” (p. 77). This idea figures into the experiences of discomfort experienced by African American students on TCU campuses (Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The theory of self-efficacy may have limited applicability to students of color. Possibly, students of color enter academic institutions with self-efficacy only to have it diminished in an environment that is hostile.

Another retention model that is aligned with psychological perspectives of retention includes Astin (1984) Theory of Involvement which says that student behaviors in college influence persistence. Over time Astin has used a longitudinal approach to investigate involvement as a factor in retention. According to Astin (1999), “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Astin (1999) found that students that were involved in campus activities, such as part-time campus job, were more likely to persist. In essence, Astin (1999) found that the more time a student spend on campus to the likely the student is to persist. Further, “relying on the college as a source of income can result in greater a sense of attachment to the college” (p. 523). Like most retention models, Astin (1984, 1999) investigated undergraduates, but may be relevant to an examination of retention and doctoral student fellowships and assistantships. Harper and Quaye (2008) argue that there is a difference between engagement and involvement. They say that a student can be “involved in something without being engaged (Harper & Quaye, 2009). They posit that higher education

institutions must do a better job of engaging students in order to improve retention. Harper and Quaye (2009) call for shifting some of the onus from student to administrators. They call for particular need for faculty and administrators to engage African American males who have lower than 32 percent undergraduate graduation rate within six years. This is the “worst college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups” (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 139). Increasing the number of African American males with bachelor’s degrees will begin to close the economic gap that exists between races (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Importantly, they add, those students that are disengaged as undergraduates are not likely to be pursued or to pursue graduate studies.

Organizational Perspectives of Retention

Organizational structure plays a role in the effort to engage and retain students (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Bean (1980) in his adaptation of Mueller’s and Price’s (1990) model of employee turnover in organizations as related to student departure in higher education. Variables used to compare academic persistence to workplace persistence included grades, practical value of the education, develop or rewards of education, course content and membership in campus organizations. Outside of adapting the workplace terms to fit the academic setting, this model has limited applicability to organizational structure or perspective. Further, it does not address sociological or economic aspects that may also influence the variables and thus persistence.

Although there is a plethora of literature that points to attrition of African American graduate students, more needs to be done to encourage institutions to make changes. Although universities recognize that doctoral attrition has both economic and social costs,

little is done to make institutional changes. This may be partly due to the politically charged nature of race specific recruiting. There is little evidence, from the literature, that universities have the political will to make the tough choices that will be required to improve retention rates. In the meantime, they appear content with the use of admission standards with questionable validity, particularly as they relate to the persistence of students of color.

Nettles and Millett (2006) note that most universities rely heavily on GRE scores although such scores are a weak indicator of graduate school performance. Hagedorn and Nora (1996) called for “alternative conceptual frameworks” (p. 38) for success and persistence in graduate school, without necessarily abandoning the traditional methods. They propose fully engaged departmental admissions committees that make informed choices about students based on a variety of factors including writing samples, article critiques and peer conversations that address “concern for improving the profession and motivation for continued learning” (Hagedorn and Nora, 1996, p. 38).

The conceptual framework presented by Hagedorn and Nora (1996) should be tested further to see how it contributes to enrollment and retention. The framework represents an attempt to nudge graduate admissions committees away from GRE scores which have been shown to have limited predictability based the first year and even less predictability for older students and students of color (Hagedorn and Nora, 1996). Even the Educational Testing Service, which develops and administers the GRE, cautions against over reliance on the instrument as a predictor of academic success in graduate school (Hagedorn & Nora, 1996.) Several universities are attempting alternative frameworks for graduate student admission, including some that have eliminated the use of the GRE altogether. Hagedorn and Nora

(1996) caution that while new ideas offer alternatives to traditional methods, they “have not been empirically tested” (p. 41). This statement is puzzling given that the traditional methods that have been tested yield mixed results at best, yet remain the standard bearer for admission despite their overwhelmingly negative impact on African American students. Although the FPCUs have their own problems with legitimacy (Ruch, 2003) they are to at least be commended for their effort to make doctoral studies accessible to marginalized groups.

Clewell (1987) found that eighty-one percent of minority doctoral students that persisted through to dissertation were full-time students. Of those that were not completers, lack of financial support that lack of self-confidence were factors for departure (Clewell, 1987). Institutionally, this points to the financing of higher education to be predictive for persistence as the necessity of a job leads many students to take fewer courses than would be required for full-time status. Additionally, Clewell (1987) found, among minority doctoral completers, self-determination and unwillingness to accept failure were reasons for staying in school.

Three Conceptual Understandings of Enrollment and Retention

The difficulty in addressing both enrollment and retention is that the literature leans heavily toward retention research and less toward enrollment (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Typically, enrollment is seen as the first step in retention and retention is seen as the ability to persist to completion. The literature credits Tinto (1975) as the most significant scholar in retention and student departure studies. Additionally, the literature on retention is outlined as

- a. sociological, which is where most of Tinto’s work is positioned,
- b. psychological, which looks at individual attributes and characteristics,

- c. organizational, which applies workforce application to the student retention process,
or
- d. economic, which looks at retention through frame of human capital and investment.

Within each frame are perspectives which have relevance and shed light on alternatives to graduate student persistence models. However, the problem of retention and attrition in doctoral studies is so grave that it calls for frameworks that move faculty, admissions committees and administrators to action. For many decades scholars have investigated the systemic problems that lead to departure, particularly for students color. There must be an engaged, informed and concerned academy and power broker that have the political will to stop wasting financial and human resources as doctoral student fall away from their academic pursuits. The principle goal of the doctorate is to demonstrate skills and train in research (Isaac, Quinlan, & Walker, 1992). Often the pursuit of the prized doctorate becomes the survival of the fittest (Kerlin, 1995). Those individuals who “have made the greatest gains in the past fifty years (women, minorities, first-generation college graduates, and individuals from working class backgrounds) are most vulnerable...and are most at-risk of not pursuing, or completing, the PhD. (Kerlin, 1995, p. 4). With African Americans making up less than 5 percent of the professoriate (Garcia, 2000) and African American doctoral students having the highest departure rate of any group (Berger & Lyon, 2005), the theoretical perspectives that hold the most promise are those that call for change and call to action. Sadly, those are sparse.

According to Tinto and Pusser (2006) the retention literature represents the “futility of piecemeal, one-size-fits-all approaches that fail to take into account the multiple factors

and contexts that shape students' decisions, behaviors, and chances of success" (p. 2). It will take eclectic models to increase the retention rate of all doctoral students. There are some models that hold promise in ways that help practitioners and provide pathways to action and change (see chart A).

Summary

One of the major problems in understanding doctoral attrition is that "doctoral students tend to leave quietly" (Golde, 2000, p. 199). The literature regarding African American doctoral students is overwhelmingly deficit-based. Further study on characteristics that lead to completion for doctoral students is sorely needed (Clewell, 1987). Golde (2005) suggest "consistently high levels of attrition may signal underlying problems in a department, university, or discipline" (p. 670). Nettles (1990) found institutional discrimination, lack of financial resources to negatively influence students and color and found mentoring to positively impact students of color.

While eliminating institutional discrimination could take years, studies have presented options that are far less costly and easily implementable. For example, Simpson (2003) found that contact with a faculty advisor contributed to sense of community and positively impacted retention. This could be accomplished simply by the will of faculty along with commitment of the department. Lovitts (2001) found that there was no academic difference between students that persist and student that do not complete the doctorate. Therefore, factors other than academic failure are largely responsible for doctoral student failure. Lack of support and guidance from faculty could make the process toward completion appear random and unobtainable.

For-profit Colleges and Universities

Background

In order to situate this current study on the African American doctoral student at FPCUs, it is essential to explore the phenomenon of the emerging FPCU and what it represents to the returning student and the higher education structure. The literature tells us that more and more students of color are opting for the more expensive but less well researched FPCUs (Garten, 2001; Ruch, 2003; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). The rise of the FPCUs and their impact on returning African American graduate students is phenomenon that is under-researched.

According to the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) 1989 to 1999 the number of four-year FPCUs increased by 266 percent (NCPI, 2000). During the same time period, for-profit enrollment grew by 59 percent while enrollment at TCUs only grew by 6 percent (NCPI, 2000). Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) stated that African American students are more likely to drop out of college for financial reasons than their white counterparts. In 1999, forty percent of students at DeVry and Strayer were African American (Berg, 2005). This is significant given that African Americans make up just over twelve percent of the U.S. population (2000 Census Report).

For-profit institutions have the largest proportion of minority students with the exception of institutions specifically founded for minority students, such as HBCUs. Strayer and University of Phoenix are ranked fourth and sixth respectfully, in the awarding of bachelor of business degree to African American students (Farrell, 2003). Strayer and DeVry

are the top two institutions for granting computer science degrees to African Americans (Farrell, 2003).

The top two institutions for granting computer science degrees to African Americans are Strayer and DeVry (Farrell, 2003). In spite of the tuition cost, these institutions have gone from being exclusively technical schools to universities that award graduate and doctoral degrees (Bailey et al., 2001). The University of Phoenix, the largest FPCU, enrolls more than 300,000 students; yet FPCU altogether enroll just 2.5 percent of all college students (Berg, 2005).

FPCU Relationship to Cost

Some literature and data regarding (FPCUs) indicate that tuition sensitivity is not a factor in the enrollment decisions of minority students (Berg, 2005; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007) in contradiction to research in this area (Titus, 2006; Titus & Perna, 2005). Farrell (2003) presents one of the few articles that challenges the assumption that minorities make enrollment decisions largely based on economics. According to Farrell (2003) students in the “Washington metropolitan area pay nearly \$9,000 per year to attend Strayer University while annual in-state tuition at the University of the District of Columbia is a mere \$2,070” (p. 35). While discerning the relationship between race and enrollment behavior is not the intent of Farrell (2003), her works does lend itself to further study on the implication of tuition price and minority enrollment.

FPCUs tend to have higher tuition than TCUs yet have a disproportionate number of minority students. Some students report that they have left less expensive community

colleges in favor of for-profit schools. More than half the students enrolled at DeVry, ITT Tech, and Strayer are minority students (Farrell, 2003).

FPCUs have had a reputation for attracting low income students in order to gain access to Title IV student loan assistance and Pell Grants (Bailey et al., 2001). Students that attend FPCUs are twice as likely as TCU students to default on student loans (Lewis, 2008). Congress strengthened rules in 1992 which enacted stringent accreditation standards (Bailey et al., 2001).

Structure

FPCUs are seen by their students as “convenient, responsive, and customer oriented” (Bailey et al., 2001) compared with TCUs that expect the students to be self-initiated. Another problem for students that enroll at for-profits is the possible lack of knowledge about the importance of regional accreditation. While many criticize FPCUs for lack of serious accreditation, the FPCU administrators say that the accreditation systems is just used to maintain the status quo and are not the best measures of competence (Berg, 2005)

FPCUs are made up almost exclusively of part-time faculty and there is no such thing as tenure (Tierney, 2004). Decisions are made centrally for all aspects of the institutions and there is no faculty senate or expectation of faculty input Berg, 2005; Tierney, 2004). FPCUs are not concerned with the age of the student although they do take care to focus on the busy schedules of working adults (Tierney, 2004). FPCUs have the ability to reach across states and borders. Location is not often a problem as many programs are offered through distance education or students are given a choice (Berg, 2005). The for-profit higher education

movement is not dissimilar to the way education has been delivered in the past (Berg, 2005). As an example he uses the Chautauqua movement, from hundreds of years ago, in which student would attend summer classes and then meet through distance learning community groups the rest of the year. Presumably, the FPCUs are an updated version of such a movement.

There are aspects of for-profit education that seem appealing but Pusser (2002) indicates that it may be too early to tell. He goes on to say that it can take years for consumer to realize that they may have received fraudulently delivered or poor quality education; at which time it is too late and quite expensive for the consumer. This is true whether it is a for-profit education or a not-for-profit education. Pusser (2002) suggests that for-profit higher education may best be evaluated in terms of emerging technology and less so based on prior reputation. Berg (2005) suggests that FPCUs lead the way in some areas where TCUs need work such as collaborating with business, catering to adult learners and creating standardized content.

Berg (2005) further posits that is probably a mistake to look at FPCUs as just in business for the money. He goes on to say that the faculty and staff at FPCUs are dedicated to teaching and serving the student consumers. Further, he adds, FPCUs offer straight forward online education that is not encumbered by complicated electronic media that sometimes becomes the focus at TCUs. FPCUs have been innovative in the use of e-textbooks and TCUs are just getting on board with the innovation (Berg, 2005). FPCUs initially targeted certification programs are moving swiftly into areas that target adults

retuning to higher education for graduate and doctoral degree (Breneman, Pusser, & Turner, 2007; Ruch, 2003),

Accreditation

Accreditation is a complex issue for for-profit higher education institutions. Just ten percent of for-profit colleges and universities hold regional accreditations (Berg, 2005).

Accreditation is an important consideration, particularly as it relates to transfer credits and credibility in academia. Although there are for-profit institutions with good reputations, “many educators believe that the for-profits are less committed to the humanistic educational objectives” (p. 10) and refer to the schools as “McEducation” (Bailey et al., 2001, p. 10).

While most TCUs are regionally accredited, for-profits tend to have less preferred national accreditations (Bailey et al., 2001). 60 percent of those in 4 year for profits are at regionally accredited schools (Bailey et al., 2001). One could be tempted to look at this 60 percent figure for regionally accredited enrollment at 4 year schools and lose sight that 40 percent are enrolled in non-regionally accredited schools. Another concern is that for-profit colleges will readily accept credits from TCUs; however, TCUs will not accept credits from schools that are not regionally accredited (Bailey et al., 2001).

FPCUs are seen by their students as “convenient, responsive, and customer oriented” (Bailey et al., 2001) compared with TCUs that expect the students to be self-initiated. Another problem for students that enroll at for-profits is the possible lack of knowledge about the importance of regional accreditation. Students, after high tuition, may discover their FPCU degree has limited transferability.

Returning Adult Learners

Understanding some of the basic themes of all adult learners is relevant to understanding returning graduate students, a subset of all adult learners. Adults require educational opportunities that are flexible in order for them to meet the demanding needs of family, employment and personal growth. The adaptability of higher education institutions depends upon their ability and willingness to understand the adult learner. According to Orzoff, Peinovich and Riedel (2008), graduate degrees are now replacing undergraduate degrees “as the new standard for professional competence in many disciplines” (p. 1). Emerging literature on issues facing adult learners returning to higher education for graduate degrees flows from literature based on the concept of andragogy (the art of helping adults learn) as presented by Knowles (1973). Much of what we know about adult learners stems from Knowles’ work that brought the andragogical model to adult education.

Malcolm Knowles (1973) referred to the adult learner as the “neglected species.” At the time, he noted that most theories about adult learners were based on theories of learning for children, which in turn were based on theories of animal learning (Knowles, 1973). Quinnan (1997) went further to say that the invisibility and marginalization of returning adults in higher education stems from a capitalist economy that views youth as the focus of the future and considers the workplace to be the proper venue for adults. Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001), based on Cross (1981), called on universities to develop better understanding of andragogy and the barriers “that preclude adults for participating in learning” (p. 17) within higher education. Like Quinnan (1997) they posit that much of higher education is elitist and their ideologies are based a youthful culture unlike the actual

population of adult learners. Language used to describe adult learners, such as reentry, nontraditional and commuter serves to further marginalize them (Kasworm, 1993; Sheared & Sissel, 2001; Sissel, Hansman, & Kasworm, 2001).

While there is no one theory that explains how adults learn, many approaches and theoretical assumptions are born of the assumptions of andragogy (Merriam, 2001). Several education scholars including Brookfield (1986), Merriam (1999, 2001), and Mezirow (1991) have added to the andragogy discourse. Others have used andragogy as a framework for exploring transformative learning (Dirkx, 2001; Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2003) social justice (Brookfield, 1987; Brown, 2006), distance learning (Cercone, 2008; Venter, 2003), and graduate school attendance (Taylor, 2003). This is not an exhaustive list of applications of andragogy; however it does represent a glimpse of the expansive literature that addresses adult learners. To understand issues facing returning adult graduate students specifically, researchers, higher education administrators and university faculty must understand the adult learners in general.

Assumptions about adult learners, which have grown and evolved over time, include:

- 1) The adult's self concept tends toward independent (Knowles, 1973);
- 2) the adult's reservoir of experience is an important resource for learning (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1973);
- 3) adult readiness to learn is oriented toward the developmental tasks of social role (Knowles, 1973; Merriam, 2001; Mezirow, 1991);
- 4) perspective changes from postponed to immediate application of knowledge; and
- 5) internal motivators, like job satisfaction and self esteem, are most important to adult learners (Merriam, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 1991).

Graduate programs cannot afford to ignore the needs and issues faced by returning adult learners. Graduate students make up about 14 percent of students in higher education, but are “virtually ignored in conversations about learning achievement (Orzoff et al., 2008). Orzoff et al., further stated that returning adult students are different from the traditional college students that are under the age of 25. Compared to the traditional age student, the returning adult student does not live on or near campus, has less time, more commitments and usually has a fulltime job (Merriam, 2001; Orzoff et al., 2008).

Classroom Issues

The graduate degree completion rate is important to the success of higher education institutions (Orzoff et al., 2008). The retention rate of African American graduate students is lower compared to that of White and Asian students (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009). Higher education institutions must make structural and philosophic changes in order to meet the needs of returning adult learners. A review of classroom issues and trends may point to ways to alleviate barriers and pressures faced by returning graduate students.

Distance Learning as Classroom Issue

Distance learning opportunities, such as online courses, may assist graduate students in overcoming program completion barriers such as time, distance, scheduling and other matters of flexibility (Harley, Jolivette & McNall, 2004). Distance also provides access to education by removing the barrier of location and transportation (Johnson, 2003). Other studies, Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000) and Swim, Hyers, Fitzgerald and Bylsma (2003) found that African American graduate students experience more stress and barriers than their white counterparts during graduate studies. There is a gap in the literature to explain whether

distance education can relieve negative classroom experiences for graduate students, particularly for students of color.

The classroom itself has changed over the years in order to accommodate busy adult learners. Today's classroom may be a corner of a graduate student's home, equipped simply with a chair and a computer. The traditional classroom today is enhanced by a diverse student body and new multi-media technologies. With all of this technology the adult learner must not only have access to it, but also understand its applications. The majority of degree granting institutions offer distance education courses (Cercone, 2008). Self directed learning is at the cornerstone of distance education and "underlies Knowles' andragogy" (Cercone, 2008, p. 148).

Dreyfus (2001) disputed that significant learning can occur in the on line setting. Dreyfus (2001) expressed concern that the information age will harm the interaction and learning that takes place in the classroom for students and scholars. Blake (2002) scolded Dreyfus for failing to understand the complexities and interactions of a properly taught distance education class. Blake took exception to Dreyfus' referring to distance students as "passive and anonymous" (p. 230). Dreyfus (2001) stated that the goals of the "university are not just jeopardized but are probably invalid in the information age" (p. 166).

Perhaps Dreyfus (2001) did not have the foresight to see how technology would prove useful as a social connection platform; however, scholars since have found that there is reason for concern as it relates to library usage by adult distance education students. Liu and Yang (2004) conducted a study of distance education students and found underutilization of the library. Further, Yang found that when distance education students do use the library

location is the primary consideration. Distance students are more likely to use the public library than traditional classroom students (Kelley & Orr, 2003; Yang, 2004). The articles that address this issue have not explored whether using the public library is a disadvantage for students. Students using a public library can still have interaction with other students, but the environment has a vast assortment of people using the library for various reasons. This leads to less ability to collaborate and exchange ideas on topics of mutual academic interest. Graduate students taking online classes are more likely than other students to use a nearby higher education institution library, whether or not it is the library of their home institution (Cercone, 2008).

Most literature on distance education classes and library usage addresses TCUs. This leaves a gap in the literature regarding the use of libraries and the for-profit college and university (FPCU) students, many of whom are enrolled in institutions that do not have a physical library. Garten (2001) addressed library issues for students enrolled in virtual universities, which tend to be FPCUs. He emphasized that these virtual universities need to invest in virtual and physical library resources for students and faculty. This remains an area for further study.

Whether a course is taught online or face-to-face, the instructor must be able to create a sense of belonging for students and sense of predictability (Bender, 2003). Bloomberg's (2008) qualitative investigation of graduate students in distance education courses bears out this necessity. Bloomberg (2008) found that graduate students in the study reported a sense of being part of a learning community. The graduate students formed a learning community in order to compensate for the aspects of distance (Bloomberg, 2008). Ironically, Bloomberg

(2008) found that faculty did not have a uniform understanding of what it meant to have a learning community. Students therefore have to contend with understanding new learning platforms at the same time that faculty learn and develop understanding of this medium and its place with the adult learner. Bloomberg (2008) further found that the majority of the graduate students in the study reported “benefits in terms of individual learning” (p. 191) with online peer support being a beneficial tool. Lastly, Bloomberg (2008) found that all of the students in the study were able to express specific changes in their “knowledge, skills and beliefs” (p. 191).

Educators and students often fall victim to the notion that the status quo educational setting is best. Many educators are so accustomed to education in the framework of a teacher lecturing in front of students and visually monitoring the progress of their work that such radical change as distance education can be a frightening notion (Tweedell, 2000). Although most adult students were taught in the traditional lecture format, today they require other formats to accommodate the reality of their lives. Regardless of the ideology of the educator, adults want online classes to save time in the midst of busy schedules and for convenience (Cercone, 2008; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Cercone (2008) recommended that adult educators teaching online courses recognize the limitations and strengths of the students in the design of the course as it relates to adult learning styles. Just as in a traditional classroom, distance educators should “ensure that there is no cultural bias” (Cercone, 2008, p. 140).

Accelerated Academic Programs as Classroom Issue

Harley et al. (2004) characterized accelerated programs as “one of the faster growing transformations in higher education and one of the most controversial changes that challenge

fundamental academic structures” (p. 125). Accelerated degree programs, delivered in less time and instructional contact hours than traditional courses are also a recent trend in adult and graduate education (Harley et al., 2004; Penprase & Koczara, 2009). Some have charged that accelerated programs may not produce sufficient academic breadth (Brookfield, 2003; Traub, 1997). Harley et al., (2004) in a review of accelerated programs found that courses can be delivered in less time without leaving out relevant content. A considerable advantage for the graduate student is the ability to complete a degree in a shorter period of time. Adult learners in accelerated programs tend to have positive experiences and tend to experience less procrastination (Wlodkowski, Maudin, & Gahn, 2001). Penprase and Koczara (2009) conducted a study of second-degree nurses and found them to excel in accelerated degree programs. They further found that accelerated programs are enhanced by the use of distance learning. Perhaps even more importantly in difficult economic times, they found that employers were receptive to accelerated programs and they quickly add to the pool of available and prepared talent in the workforce.

More studies are needed to understand the overall advantages of accelerated programs for returning graduate students. Additionally more investigations are needed to determine which accelerated academic models work best (Penprase & Koczara, 2009) as they relate to different adult learner populations. A remaining gap in the literature is the efficacy of accelerated programs on the success and retention rate of students of color as classroom trends are explored and developed for graduate students.

Critical Race Theory

Background

In the previous section I explored the history and aspect of FPCUs. In order to situate the current study on African American doctoral students at FPCUs it is also necessary to understand the theory that frames this current study. My proposed research utilizes aspects of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as “a strategy to examine how race, class and gender” intersect (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11) in the experiences of African American doctoral students at For-profit Colleges and Universities (FPCUs). More than half of the students at FPCUs are people of color women (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). CRT will allow me to examine social and environmental experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1995) as a component of understanding the disproportionate enrollment of African American doctoral students at (FPCUs). Furthermore, CRT, as a theory that draws from many disciplines (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 2003), will allow me to focus narrowly on race as a factor in FPCU enrollment while still exploring issues of gender and social class.

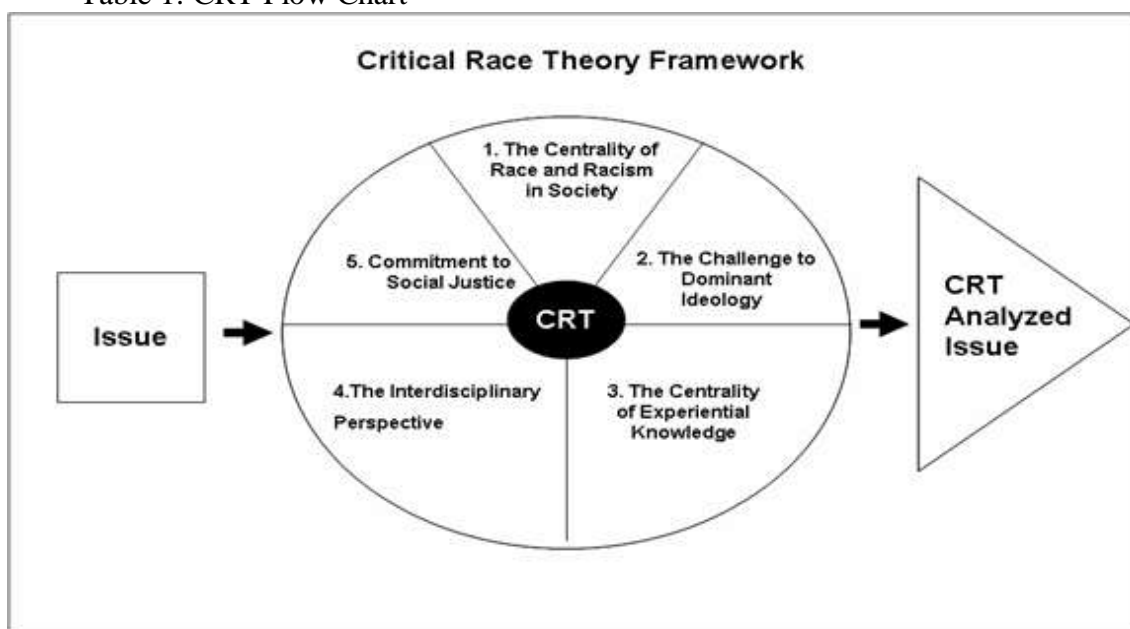
There have long been theories of gender (Alcoff, 1988; hooks, 1989, Sheared, 1994) and social class (Reay, 1997; Weber, 1978, 1997), but the theorizing of race and racism were absent from the literature prior to the development of CRT (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Arguments of color blindness and meritocracy (Roithmayr, 1999) have worked to maintain a system that protects space for privileged groups at selective universities (Guinier, 2003). My proposed research will examine the extent to which these arguments factor into the decisions, experiences and perceptions of opportunities of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. Though the

literature on African American doctoral students is sparse, there have been studies that exposed the negative impact of race and racism on enrollment and retention (Anderson & Hrabowski, 1977; Girves & Wemmerus, 1988) and campus experiences (Chance, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996; Solórzano, 1995).

For this current study, CRT will be a tool to examine how the “ostensibly race-neutral ideals, like merit” (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 1) and standardized measures of intelligence operate to influence or impact African American doctoral students at FPCUs. CRT is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows me to examine the issues through a lens of strength rather than the traditional deficit models used to label African Americans and other students of color (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999). It is also an opportunity to explore and analyze counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) that reveal the strength of the students, their families, support systems and backgrounds. African American students, through FPCUs, may have found a vehicle to direct them around the barriers to graduate degrees (Roithmayr, 1999) that have long been in place in the United States (Guinier, 2003; Hu & St. John, 2001).

Table A (Lee, 2008) illustrates the flow of CRT as a research tool. The major tenets of this framework provide a theoretical lens through which the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs can be better understood. This chart is consistent with Tate and Rousseau (2002) and Dixson and Rousseau (2006) that situated CRT as a problem-centered approach in which the problem drives the method. In my current study, I will explore issues of race and racism experienced by African American doctoral students at FPCUs using some of the tenets of CRT to analyze the findings.

Table 1: CRT Flow Chart



John Michael Lee, Jr., Doctoral Candidate

New York University Presented at the ASHE Annual Conference Louisville, Kentucky
November 9, 2008

The multi disciplinary approach of CRT draws from women's studies, law, education, anthropology, sociology, political science and others (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). The CRT model allows scholars to not just analyze race and racism, but to be part of an organizing force to eliminate racism and its effects on society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1991; Tate, 1997). According to DeCuir and Dixson (2004) CRT has not yet realized its full potential. CRT entered the field of education in the 1990s (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and has been used mostly in qualitative research to challenge subtle and overt forms of racism among students of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano & Lynn, 2004, p. 5). Although CRT is recent to scholarly literature in education, its roots go back much further. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) wrote that as far back as the early 1900s Carter G. Woodson

and W.E.B. Dubois “used race as a theoretical lens for assessing social inequity (p. 50). Scholars further posited that although these African American men were marginalized by the mainstream academic community, current CRT scholars are intellectually indebted to them (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Scholars came together to engage in intellectual discourse which contributed to the growth and expansion of CRT. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) served, perhaps unintentionally, as the meeting place for education researchers to coalesce and build upon the emerging CRT scholarship (Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002). As far back as the 1970s and 1980s (Anderson & Hrabowski, 1977; Girves & Wemmerus, 1988), this theoretical framework has used race and racism as explanatory variables in understanding enrollment behavior and experiences of students of color. Notably, Girves and Wemmerus (1988) specifically sought to develop models for studying students of color that were strength based rather than deficit based. Much of the literature which addresses African American students tends to utilize deficit paradigms, which focus primarily on standardized IQ test (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). The application of CRT as a theoretical model for investigating this topic will help to close a gap in the literature.

The foundation of CRT is the elimination of “racial oppression as part of a larger goal of eradicating all forms of oppression” (Tate, 1997, p. 234). Though it started primarily to address issues of injustice for African Americans, CRT has branched to include other marginalized population such as Latino and Asian groups. Fondly referred to as LatCrit and Asian American Crit (Parker & Lynn, 2002), this body of work has served to further the application of CRT and its relevance to other groups. Though LatCrit and Asian American

Crit pay attention to issues of immigration, language and nationality, various components of CRT are used as a tool to uncover and analyze the pervasiveness of racism and injustice in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Parker & Lynn, 2002).

When used in the field of education, CRT provides “an explanatory structure that accounts for the role of race and racism and works toward identifying and challenging racism ... and other forms of subordination” (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 2). Scholars that draw from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Friere (1970) seek to use CRT in a way that empowers marginalized students (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Yosso et al., 2004). A critique of this literature confirms that there are many perspectives and variation on who constitutes marginalized students. For the purpose of this current study, marginalized students include African American graduate students. Prior research has shown that students of color have negative experiences on higher education campuses that included isolation, marginalization, depression and stereotyping (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero & Bowles, 2009; Solórzano, 1998, 2000; Steele, & Aronson, 1995). Furthermore, this current study seeks to uncover and analyze the stories African American doctoral students at FPCUs from a strengths base rather than through deficit models.

CRT through Historical Lens

Few had heard of CRT before 1993 when former President Bill Clinton nominated Law Professor Lani Guinier to head the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Guinier’s CRT scholarship and publications led her to be branded by the “unschooled” media as “advocating for “un-American ideas”” (Ladson-Billings, 1998 p. 10). Guinier’s writing suggested that race and

oppression were factors that needed to be critiqued and dismantled in elections in the U. S. and South Africa (Guinier, 1991). Her attempt to use race and racism as a theoretical lens led to her undoing as an appointee.

One of the tenets out of which CRT grew was Critical Legal Studies (CLS). This movement was made up of mostly elite White scholars that questioned the usefulness of incremental laws to gain rights for large groups (Tate, 1997). There were two principles components of CLS. First, it illustrates the internal inconsistencies of society and legal arguments; and second, it combines functionalism and far left or radical goals (Unger, 1983). Noteworthy is the fact that critical legal scholars launched attacks on the legal system of the United States, particularly aimed at claims of objectivity and meritocracy (Tate, 1997). These scholars fashioned much of their beliefs behind the scholarship of Antonio Gramsci “Italian neo-Marxist theorist” (p. 207) that “conceptualized the notion of hegemony” (Tate, 1997, p. 238). Gramsci (1971) asserted that values and ideology of the dominant group sustains existing social hierarchy and convinces the marginalized groups that the existing structure is normal. This notion is supported by Nesbit (2006) in his assertion that “educational institutions are generally a middle-class domain” (p.177) and the educational system and structure is weighted in favor of the middle-class.

CRT education scholars believe that education and law are intertwined and much of education law works to the detriment of people of color through false arguments of color blindness and meritocracy (Roithmayr, 1999). African Americans have been impacted by education law at least as far back as *Plessey v. Ferguson 163 US537, 210* (1896), thus making the intersection of education and law a necessary part of the understanding of the

African American education experience (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). These assertions speak to the inconsistencies of society and legal argument in the literature.

While there is no agreed upon date of the exact beginning of CRT, it is agreed that the theory emerged as a post-civil rights response to the inadequacy of CLS to address race (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Tate, 1997; Yosso, 2005) and continues to be expanded upon today. Critical race theorists voiced that CLS lacked the voice of marginalized people and did not go far enough to uncover the impact of race and racism on the law (Delgado, 1987). Critical race scholars viewed positively the work of critical legal scholars but felt compelled to advance an intellectual movement to examine and expose racism (Barnes, 1990). Many scholars of color “noted the limitations of achieving justice using dominant conceptions of race, racism and social equality (Tate, 1997, p. 206). Although CRT is “both an outgrowth of and a separate entity” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 10) from CLS, the two movements officially departed in 1989 when CRT held its first official conference “devoted exclusively to the issue of race” (Vellenas et al., 1999 p. 3).

Even further back, the seeds of CRT were planted in the 1920s, when Mordecia Johnson was named president of Howard University, an HBCU, and was urged by Supreme Court Justice Brandies to “build a law school and train men to get the constitutional rights for [Black] people” (Davis & Clark, 1994, p.47) in order to build a cadre of lawyers that will push the Supreme Court to act. In order to rebuild Howard law school, Johnson hired Charles Hamilton Houston to be the Dean (Davis & Clark, 1992). Houston later became chief counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and later

hired Howard Law graduate Thurgood Marshall who in turn hired Derrick Bell (Bell, 1993). Thurgood Marshall, after winning the historic *Brown v Board of Education* Case (1954) spent many years as the first Black member of the on the U.S. Supreme Court.

After receiving experience as a civil rights litigator for the NAACP, Derrick Bell was hired on to the faculty of Harvard Law School (Tate, 1997). The style of law that Bell experienced at the NAACP was about changing society by changing laws (Bell, 1994). Bell took this practice experience and knowledge into his academic career at Harvard University where he originated and taught a course on race, and stated clearly his intention to use the position to continue civil rights work. His experience in litigation and ability to craft stories from the experiences of Black people in order to change laws was instrumental to the development of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). Bell's "methods of writing about race and law were at the forefront of the new school of scholarly thought" (p. 206) that came to be known as CRT (Tate, 1997).

Some of the literature credits legal scholar, Derrick Bell, for the emergence of CRT as he was concerned over lack of haste in which racial reform was instituted in the legal system (Bell, 1994; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). Perhaps not credited enough for CRT's development was the persistence of then Harvard law student Kimberle Crenshaw and other students who sparked deeper and sustained thinking about race (Tate, 1997). Upset about the departure of their professor Derrick Bell, who developed and taught Harvard's only course about race and law, Crenshaw led a group of students to boycott and develop an alternative course on race and law (Matsuda et al., 1993).

Crenshaw and the other students invited “scholars and activists to lecture on sections of Bells” (p. 228) ground-breaking book on race (Tate, 1997). Crenshaw, along with invited scholars, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda and Charles Lawrence were instrumental in the development and expansion on the CRT scholarship that was started by Derrick Bell (Tate, 1997). To that end, Tate (1997) considers Derrick be “arguable the most influential source of thought critical of traditional civil right discourse and premier example of CRT” (p. 211).

Derrick Bell’s scholarship in CRT contributed to intellectual discourse and discussions on race and to achieve racial justice through political activism (Bell, 1984). His “work provides a model and a standard by which to discuss CRT” (Tate, 1997, p. 212). Bell combined narrative, stories, activism and imagination to make meaning and to move forward the scholarship of CRT (Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1991; Tate, 1997). This body of work (Bell, 1979) includes his idea of the interest-convergence principle which emphasized that Whites do not accept or respond to the interests of African Americans unless it meets the needs of Whites. Lastly, a third component of Bell’s scholarship espouses the notion that Whites will not support policies that threaten their superior status (Bell, 1979). The principle components of Bell’s scholarship were paramount in the development of CRT scholarship in law and education (Tate, 1997).

Major Tenets of CRT

The main tenets of CRT for education were developed over time, mostly by scholars of color including Delgado (1995), Solórzano (1997, 1998), Ladson-Billings (2003), DeCuir and Dixson (2004) and Yosso (2005). Education scholars that use CRT seek to understand “communities of color experience and respond to racism as it intercepts with other forms of

subordination in the U.S. educational system” (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 3). Many scholars agree that Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso et al., 2004). These tenets are iterative and part of an ongoing discourse and understanding that invite input, suggestion and additions for other scholars. The tenets have been expanded over time as more scholars add to the discourse. While CRT was not intended and should not be used to solve all problems of injustice in society (Parker & Lynn, 2006), its basic tenets provide a foundation for which to examine some issues of inequality in education. My proposed research on African American doctoral students in FPCUs seeks to add to this discourse by using CRT to highlight and analyze the experiences of this group. The six tenets outlined below should not be interpreted as being definitive or in any order of importance. Throughout the literature, scholars present these tenets in various ways and usually with no particular order.

Tenet One. Foremost, CRT upholds that racism is “normal, not aberrant in American society” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvi). Racism is a common everyday experience that is part of the fabric of society and as such is more difficult to see (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tyson, 1998). The view of racism, as an experience that may be difficult to see, is instrumental to my current study. To that end, I define racism as a set of ideologies, values, beliefs, policies or rhetoric that consciously or unconsciously lead to the unjust treatment of people of color whether or not individual persons of the marginalized group recognize it as racism (Hall, 2009). It is as possible for a member of a dominant group to unconsciously or unintentionally discriminate against a group as it is for a member of a marginalized group to unconsciously or unintentionally participate or accept racist acts as something other than

racism. Such a concept, discussed in Solórzano and Yosso (2002), depicted examples in which minorities assumed, as valid, the deficit based stories told of minority groups.

CRT provides a framework for scholars to shed light on the racism that is often less visible, yet still damaging, in today's society (Lopez, 2003; Parker et al., 1999;). Further, Lopez (2003) agrees with other CRT scholars (Matsuda et al., 1993; Parker et al., 1999; Yosso, 2005) that notions of color blindness and equal opportunity, which have served to make racism more difficult to detect and dismantle, can be addressed through the application of CRT. Racism that is not blatant can be difficult to detect, and therefore even harder to attack (Lopez, 2005). As a result, people of color are subjected to "daily indignities" (p. 16) that take a toll (Ladson-Billings, 1998) on their overall functional abilities. Tate (1997) calls on education scholars to question how "traditional interests and cultural artifacts serve as vehicles to limit and bind the educational opportunities of students of color" (p. 234). CRT scholars maintain that because racism is so commonplace, it is easier for society to fail to see it and its negative impact (Tyson, 1998). For my current study this tenet provides a lens through which to examine the ways that racism in society limits educational opportunities of African American doctoral students. My current study will explore how African American doctoral students use ingenuity as an opportunity to overcome higher education barriers.

As a tool of analysis for this current study, CRT can be used to identify factors that influence the disproportionate enrollment of African Americans students in doctoral program at FPCUs. CRT can be used to critique the very institutions (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004); both public and for-profit, likely to have been influenced by racism. CRT presumes that racism

has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage (Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006).

Tenet Two. Another tenet of CRT is the concept of interest-convergence (Bell, 1995). This tenet is mostly referenced by CRT legal scholars, but is of interest to this current study. Interest-convergence is the belief that Whites will only tolerate or support justice for African American when it is in the best interest of Whites (Bell, 1995). This is to say that justice is likely to occur when the best interest of Blacks intersects with the best interest of Whites. Bell (1987) posited that *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) was won not because White people believed that Blacks should have equality, but because the U.S. was being criticized abroad for its racial segregation. Dudziak (1988) conducted a historical analysis of Bell's interest-convergence principle and concluded foreign policy concerns, particularly in relations to the Cold War with the Soviet Union, was an impetus in the desegregation decision in *Brown v Board of Education*. This example also serves to illustrate the strong connection between law and education. Moreover, this tenet brings forth the question of whether FPCUs that do not require standardized test scores, reach this decision out of desire to provide opportunity for the under-served or if the decision is driven by the desire to increase revenue for stock holders. If in fact, the students of color benefit from the desire of FPCUs to increase profit, it represents interest-convergence.

Tenet Three. CRT rejects the dominant claims of objectivity, color blindness, equal opportunity and meritocracy (Solórzano, 1997, 1998) and race neutrality and equal opportunity (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). Further, under this tenet, CRT "refutes the claims that

educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity” (p. 73). This is consistent with the arguments of Bell (1987) and Ladson-Billings (2000) who charged that the notion of objective research, privileges dominant groups while silencing or ignoring the voices of people of color. This tenet is related to my current study in that it invites further critique of higher education’s reliance on standardized test scores and GPAs while it fails to consider the impact of institutionalized racism on these “objective” measures. CRT calls for a more historical examination of these issues.

A study by Steele and Aronson (1995) revealed the negative effect of stereotypes on GRE scores. GRE test scores for African American college were lower when they were prompted to indicate their race before taking the test. These researchers found that the impact of lower expectations that African Americans feel can actually depress their test scores. In another study, Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000), using CRT framework, found racial climate on campus impacts the academic performance of African American students. These research findings give pause to claims of objectivity without due consideration of institutionalized racism.

In relation to my proposed research study, this CRT tenet suggests a likelihood that higher education programs will be more accessible to and amenable to African Americans when such access meets the needs of the dominant group or capitalist principles.

Anecdotally, one could argue that FPCUs provide opportunities to African American graduate students that are not always available to them in traditional higher education. However, a deeper analysis may lead an education researcher committed to equity, to

examine other reasons for which a capitalist inspired for-profit industry would have disproportionately high enrollment of African American students. The narratives of African American doctoral students at FPCUs may provide insight.

Tenet Four. A fourth tenet of CRT is commitment to social justice and ending oppression in all forms (Matsuda et al. 1993; Solórzano, 1997, 1998). CRT offers a response that is liberatory or transformative (Matsuda, 1991; Matsuda et al. 1993). CRT looks to reinterpret perspectives “to the advantage of students of color” (Tate, 1997, p. 235). This tenet supports my current study in two ways. One will be to assess the liberatory quality of African American graduate students’ decisions to enter FPCUs. Another is to provide guidance to traditional higher education institutions to plan programs and policies supportive of marginalized and underrepresented groups at the doctoral level.

Matsuda et al. (1993) posit that CRT is a reflective and active process aimed at ending oppression. This is consistent with legal scholarship in CRT that sees the relationship between reflection and action as so central that the absence of one would hinder the process (Lawrence, 1992). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) emphasize that CRT is not just a “theoretical stance” (p. 49) but also a “commitment to change” (p. 49). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) put forth that education scholars and made recommendation to change unjust education policies, but there is little clear indication of actual change implementation. Further, these researchers argued that power and inequality and the “manner in which it is deployed and maintained materially” (p. 49) have not been fully pursued by education scholars” (p. 49).

Tenet Five. CRT recognizes the centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). There is an assertion that the “knowledge of women and people of color is legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education” (Solórzano, 1998, p. 122). CRT draws upon the lived experiences of people of color and uses methodologies such as life stories, narratives, biographies and others to capture these experiences (Solórzano, 1998).

Narrative is potentially transformative by giving voice to the disempowered (Tate, 1997). Education CRT scholars are called look at what role students of color can play in “educational discourse” (Tate, 1997, p. 235). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) added that “the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system (p. 58). Solórzano (1997, 1998) has used narratives to uncover the micro-aggression of graduate students of color. This is significant because through the voices of African American graduates students, microaggressions (Solórzano, 1997, 1998) which have not been previously identified may be revealed through the proposed exploration.

Tenet Six. The final tenet to be considered in the proposed research posits that CRT uses a transdisciplinary perspective and challenges “ahistoricism” (Tate, 1997, p. 235). It recognizes the “experiential knowledge of people of color in analyzing the law and society” (p. 235). Tate (1997) proposed that education scholars should “challenge ahistorical treatment of education, equity, and students of color” (p. 235). This tenet relates to my current study in that the history of racism in this country, specifically in higher education institutions, impacts the enrollment decisions of African American. Solórzano (1997, 1998)

makes a strong statement about the importance of understanding race and racism in historical and contemporary contexts.

Experiences of African American Graduate Students

The literature on African American/Black doctoral student is sparse and even more so as it relates specifically FPCUs and CRT. However, related research, with other student of color populations offers insight into race as a factor in graduate studies. Examples of specific investigations that used CRT understand experiences of students of color include Achor and Morales (1990), Cuandraz (1993), Gandara (1995) and Solórzano (1998). However, these researchers used CRT to study Chicano doctoral students. Solórzano (1998) stated that few researchers had written about Chicana and Chicano doctoral students. Morales (1990) and Gandara (1995) studied Chicana and Chicano doctoral students and found familial support and pride to be important components for these students. Cuandraz (1993) looked at Chicana and Chicano doctoral students, including former students that did not complete their program of study. In that same year Solórzano (1993) studied a similar group and found racism and sexism were barriers for the students and graduates. Solórzano (1998) used CRT to examine the role that race plays in the experiences of Chicana and Chicano doctoral students. He found that the Chicana and Chicano doctoral students that were Ford Fellowship scholars reported experiences of overt and covert racism and sexism; lower expectations from faculty; and a sense of invisibility and not belonging. Solórzano (1998) also found that the students tended to be from lower socio-economic background than their non-Chicano peers, and have parents with less than high school education. The participants reported that they felt that their socio-economic status hindered their academic opportunities. Solórzano (1998) further found

that the median age for these doctoral students was thirty-three for males and thirty-eight for females (p. 133) and that most were from blue collar families (p. 134).

Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000), conducted a study similar to Solórzano (1998) that looked at microaggressions of Chicano students, but instead used African American students as research participants. The findings were similar to the Chicano graduate students, but they only looked at undergraduate African American students (Solórzano et al., 2000). The experiences of Chicano doctoral students are similar to the African American undergraduate experiences as related to microaggressions. There may be few differences between Chicano and African American doctoral students as related to the impact of race in the academic environment. However, more research is needed in this area. Solórzano et al. (2000) did not address characteristics of African American doctoral students in his study.

There is a dearth of empirical literature which focuses on African American doctoral students. What we know about this population has come from few studies. King and Chepyator-Thomson (1996) found that 77 percent of the African American doctoral students earned “\$20,000 or less during doctoral study” (p. 174). Similar to Solórzano et al. (2000), King and Chepyator-Thomson (1996) found that African American doctoral students expressed feelings of being out of place and nearly half reported incidents of “overt acts of racism at their doctoral institutions (King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996, p. 176). While King and Chepyator-Thomson (1996) were most interested in enrollment and persistence factors, their findings addressed several CRT tenets and provided a foundation for further study of African American doctoral students.

Chance, Ginsberg, Davies and Smith (2004) conducted a research study of African American education doctoral students at a Carnegie Research Institution. They found that these students experienced feelings of isolation, considered mentors and support from other African American doctoral students to be important. These studies were similar to the work of Girves and Wemmerus, (1988). The results are similar to later findings by Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2004) and Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero & Bowles (2009).

Daniel (2007) explicitly used CRT to examine experiences of African American graduate students and found quite similar results. The African American graduate students in this study experienced marginalization, lack of resources and feelings of outsiders during their graduate study. Moreover, in Daniel's research (2007), the study participants stated that the lack of cultural sensitivity of White faculty and field instructors interfered with the quality of their education. They found peer support to be a key to their persistence in graduate school. However, this study provided further indication of the lack of research on African American doctoral students as it focused on students pursuing master's degrees only. Although Daniel (2007) used MSW graduate students instead of doctoral students, the findings remained similar to those that use doctoral students, suggesting a lack of difference in experiences with race.

Research on African American doctoral student experiences remains sparse. Of the literature reviewed on doctoral students, only one specifically espoused a CRT framework and it focused on Chicana and Chicano doctoral students. This leaves much room for CRT in the analyses of experiences of African American doctoral students. Allen (1992) stated that attempts to understand and examine African American college students must "consider the

broader context of issues confronting blacks as a discriminated minority” (p. 42) or such efforts are “doomed to fail” (p. 42).

CRT Application to My Current Study

Many of the CRT tenets or principles espoused and amended by various scholars is of significance to this proposed research. As a growing body of literature, CRT invites new perspectives for critical thinking and empirical exploration. The legal aspects of higher education and the historical nature of race in this society ground the tenets for this current study. The iterative nature of qualitative research may lead me to reexamine, add, amend or remove tenets throughout the process. At this pre proposal stage there are some principles of CRT that are more relevant to the study than others, though all are important to the methodology as a whole.

Foremost, the commitment to social justice and ending oppression in all forms (Solórzano, 1997, 1998) is paramount to my current study and my life’s work. Aspects of higher education that impact students of color are worthy of study particularly if the research aims to inform, engage and empower. The rise of for-profit higher education is among those aspects that require further study. The power that comes from the voices of the marginalized population empowers the speaker and when put forth in the literature, opens the door to a reexamination of higher education systems.

Another tenet that guides this proposed research is a combination of two ideas. One is that racism is a common everyday experience that is part of the fabric of society and as such is more difficult to see (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lopez, 2003; Parker et al., 1999). The other tenet is the rejection of dominant claims of objectivity, color blindness, equal

opportunity and meritocracy (Solórzano, 1997, 1998) and race neutrality and equal opportunity (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). The combination of these tenets points to the notion that standardized test and other admissions criteria labeled as objective are de facto discrimination. Higher education administrators and education scholars often do not take account for the role of institutionalized racism in society and its impact on individuals and groups.

In a qualitative approach to this topic, the narratives of the participants are the foundation of this proposed research. Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000) recognized the centrality of experiential knowledge as a tenet of CRT. Often the stories told by dominant groups are told from a deficit perspective. For example, Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2003) conducted a study to determine how colleges manage the social know-how deficiencies of minority or disadvantaged students. From the outset, the researchers posit that these students lack social know how. A qualitative approach ascertaining the social know-how of these students using qualitative methodology may have resulted in a different narrative. When the voices of marginalized groups are silenced in education literature a dominant narrative, put forth as objective truth, fails to recognize the values of strength, overcoming adversities, family pride, perseverance and more. This proposed research recognizes that the voices of African American doctoral students at FPCUs are keys to understanding the enrollment phenomenon.

Yosso et al. (2004, p. 6) posit that there are four questions that scholars of CRT put forth about race and education. 1) How do racism, sexism, classism and other forms of subordination impact institutions of education? 2) How do educational structures, practices

and discourses maintain race, gender and class based discrimination? 3) How do students and faculty of color respond to and resist sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in education? 4) How can education become a tool to help end racism, sexism, classism and other forms of subordination? These questions frame much of the existing CRT literature in education and figure into my current study.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), in their seminal introduction of CRT to education, posited that while race permeated many aspects of life and culture, it was largely untheorized in education literature. They saw that class and gender were discussed and analyzed much more than race in the literature. While this would appear to contradict Nesbit (2006) who found that race and gender were more prevalent in the literature than class, the argument of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) was not about the number of times race is mentioned, but rather the legitimacy of the application of race as a separate theory in education literature. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recognized the importance of gender and class analysis, but believed that racism in education could not be addressed adequately through class and gender theories. Their position is consistent with Crenshaw (1993) who argued that women of color are situated both in a marginalized gender and a marginalized race. Like Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Crenshaw (1993) called for a framework that intersected race, class and gender, but further called for an inclusion of age.

Education and law are linked in the U.S. and if ignored in the context of empirical exploration will continue to undermine African American students (Lopez, 2003). In education, the voices that have been legitimized are the voices of White students (Swartz, 1992). As a result, the African American experiences and stories are left out of education

dialogue. The experiences of African American students are sometimes devalued as just personal stories while the perspectives of White people are considered objective (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Education scholars of color saw the need to move theory beyond race and law (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995, Tate, 1997; Taylor, 1999). They asserted that the “topic of race was untheorized” in education and not adequately addressed by other critical theories (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 47). While the field of law analyzed discrimination through CRT, such framework was absent in education, despite education’s glaring inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Tate (1997) wrote that legal scholars had used CRT to “challenge the dominant discourses on race and racism as they relate to law” (p. 197). CRT legal scholars held that the “experiences of people of color are legitimate, appropriate, and effective bases for analyzing the legal system and racial subordination (p. 197). Tate (1997) proposed that both “the law and educational research have been influenced by a paradigmatic view that characterizes people of color as inferior” (p. 197).

The CRT framework for education differs from other CRT frameworks in that it “simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts...by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color” (Yosso, 2005, p. 63). In the 1990s education scholars began to challenge the “applicability of critical theory to their specific social, political, educational and economic concerns” (Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 131).

To this end, my proposal asserts that the experiences of African American doctoral students provide legitimate data (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) to view and understand the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs and would not be served well by theory that does not directly address the impact of race, racism in education. The quantitative research reveals that African Americans are disproportionately represented in FPCUs (Ruch, 2003; Winston, 1999). The narratives of these experiences of these students may reveal more about any impact of race, class or gender.

CRT is more appropriate for my current study than some other critical theories. These other critical theories include feminist theory, queer theory, social ecology and others that critique and challenge the inequality in society (Ladson-Billings, 1997). McCarthy (1991) wrote that critical theory is a method of investigation that plays a significant role in changing the world, not just recording information. This is true of CRT as well, but CRT goes further to look specifically at race and racism as well as how they intersect with other isms (Bell, 1992; Tate, 1998). CRT in education recognizes that education affects the lives of African-American students through the influence of a racist society (Ladson-Billings, 1997) and puts forth "race as an explanatory tool for the persistence of inequality" (p. 132).

Like critical theory, CRT does not just seek to explain, but also looks for the opportunity to challenge and change the inequities brought on by the status quo (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Raines, 2003). Critical race theory seeks to expose racism in education policy, practice, profession and curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Raines, 2003).

CRT can be used as a tool to expose racism in recruitment, admissions and enrollment choices (Delgado, 1995; Matsuda et al., 1993; Parker et al., 1999, Yosso, 2005). West (1992) emphasized that race matters in society and in research. This research proposes to not just explore the experiences that led a disproportionate number of African Americans to more expensive for-profit universities (Breneman, Pusser, & Turner, 2007; Ruch, 2003), but to begin a dialogue that addresses the impact of these decisions on the lives of African American students. The lens of CRT gives the researcher the framework to question further the disproportionality with the knowledge that in a society where race permeates (West, 1992; Yosso, 2005), it is unlikely that race or racism do not factor into the enrollment decision and higher education experiences. Nesbit (2006) points out that it is far easier to observe the effects of power and privilege than to determine their causes. CRT provides education scholars with tools to uncover injustices and give voice to marginalized groups (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2003). CRT beckons education scholars to look deeper and to question previously held assumptions (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Taylor (1999) proposed that discussions of race in education are over-simplified by a failure to recognize the historical context of segregated education. Taylor (1999) asserted further that “African American access to higher education has never been an assumed right or privilege: the courts have been and continue to be the gatekeepers” (p. 182). A deeper discussion of the Court’s impact on higher education access for African Americans can be explored in (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; *Bakke v. Regents of Univ. California, 1978*; Cokorinos, 2003; Guinier, 2003; Matsuda, 1991). Taylor (1999) gives several examples of the historical aspect of race, law and education. One such example was a 1938 account of

Missouri offering to build an entirely separate law school just for Lloyd Gaines, an African American student, rather than admit him to the state university's law school (Taylor, 1999).

The example of Tennessee State University, an HBCU, shows how CRT helps make sense of a situation that on the surface appears to be absurd. In order to move forward on desegregation, the court put the main burden on the HBCU to integrate and essentially lose its African American identity, while putting minimal requirements on historically White institutions. CRT helps demonstrate that “the assumption of Whiteness as normative is so pervasive that it can hardly be seen. In contrast, blackness is highly visible; and TSU, despite its much smaller size, marginal status, and minimal funding in the state budget, became the high-profile institution targeted for change.” (Parker et al., 1999, p. 193).

Lopez (2003) calls on education researchers to “raise questions about race and racism in society”and “to interrogate systems, organizational frameworks, and leadership theories that privilege certain groups and/or perspectives over others” (p. 70). My current study of race, racism and higher education enrollment is commensurate with questions of motive, opportunity and barriers and thus aims to present this interrogation of systems.

CRT is important to this current study because it involves qualitative data collection. Storytelling and narratives are essential to CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Because CRT employs storytelling to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv), this approach will be particularly insightful and revealing in terms of understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

This section outlined how CRT offers education scholars a lens to view the impact of education policy, economic policy, curriculum and more on the experiences of students of color. This section further discussed how CRT provides a theoretical lens through which to discern the impact of race on the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCU. Additionally, this section discussed CRT's application to this current study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided information about African Americans in higher education including background and tuition cost sensitivity. Additionally this chapter outlined enrollment retention and persistence by covering topics of persistence theories, sociological, economic, psychological and organizational perspectives of retention. Conceptual understandings of enrollment and retention were also covered. This chapter covered For-profit Colleges and Universities by detailing background, relationships to cost structure and accreditation. Further, this chapter covered the returning adult learner including classroom issues, both distance learning and accelerated academic programs. Critical Race Theory was detailed in this chapter. Under this heading background, history, major tenets, experiences of African American graduate students as well as CRT application to current study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This purpose of this study was to explore how social and environmental factors shape the experiences of African American doctoral students at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
2. What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
3. What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?
4. What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed to explore these questions. It is organized into the following sections: study design, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability and researcher bias. Additionally, I discussed my assumptions in this chapter. This chapter concludes with a summary discussion.

Design of the Study

Several researchers, Jaeger (1999), Breneman, Pusser, and Turner (2000), and Chung (2003) have commented on the paucity of research regarding students at FPCUs. Because the data on African American doctoral students is even more limited, I chose to do a qualitative exploration to gather rich data. This qualitative study was an attempt to add to the emerging body of knowledge on this population. This study sought to understand the participants by making sense of and analyzing their words (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Strauss & Corbin,

1990) in order to produce descriptive outcomes (Merriam, 2000). Such descriptive data are necessary to understand the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs and how they interpret and make sense of these experiences. The narratives produced from this study provide detail, context and substance to existing quantitative data (St. Pierre, 2006) and provide information that can assist students of color, graduate faculty and administrators at both FPCUs and traditional universities.

Qualitative methodology, which is robust, emergent, and interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) “tends to employ flexible designs and subjective methods, often with small samples of research participants” (Rubin, 2008, p. 2004). The researcher is the primary data collection instrument and is therefore responsible for setting the stage to engage the participant so that vivid, rich, complex and comprehensive stories emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 2008). Where quantitative data point to the statistics on inequality, enrollment imbalance, and high tuition costs and debt, this qualitative data gives human voice to these issues (Tate, 1997).

One way for the researcher to explore issues of race, discrimination and oppression thoroughly is to frame the study using critical race theory (CRT). Although I cover CRT thoroughly in chapter two, I have included it briefly here to make clear its connection to qualitative research and data analysis. A number of qualitative studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1991; Tate, 1997) have framed studies using CRT to explore the experiences of students of color in higher education. Dixson and Rousseau (2006) posit that CRT is not exclusively used quantitatively or qualitatively, but through whichever method will further the cause of *justice* [emphasis added]. I selected qualitative methodology

for this study because I determined it to be the best way to explore how issues of race may factor into academic and social experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. Further, some scholars contend that quantitative design or deductive reasoning would go against the very philosophy of CRT, which recognizes the centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Furthermore, Padgett (2008) argues that research is worth conducting if it builds on knowledge and formal theory that bring the questions or phenomenon into focus. A sound research design must ensure a clear, logical rationale in support of qualitative methods. The characteristics of such a design include assumptions about the methodological approach, sample selection logic, justification of the design and flexibility of the data collection, consideration of ethical issues, and attention to the trustworthiness of the overall research methodology/approach (Padgett, 2008).

Sample Selection

Purposeful selection (Creswell, 2002; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 1990) was used to select persons “deliberately” to yield information that “cannot be gotten from other sources” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). Qualitative research is exemplified by rich thick data, which is generated by carefully selected, information rich participants that possess specific knowledge and experiences (Patton, 1990). Merriam (1998) described purposive sampling as a tool that anchors the “assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61).

In order to capture the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs the researcher selected a process that yielded participants that could answer the research

questions. Maxwell (2005) argued that “there are few circumstances in which random sampling can be useful in a small-scale qualitative study” (p. 89). Patton (2002) supported purposeful selection to generate rich thick data. Other studies that explored African American graduate students’ experiences (Chance, Ginsberg, Davis, & Smith, 2004; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000) used purposeful selection specifically to capture the experiences of students of color.

Participant selection

Participants were recruited and selected using maximum variation approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990) through which the researcher selected African American doctoral students of various stages in the academic process. The variations were pre-ABD, ABD and graduates of FPCUs. The units of analysis for this study were African American student attendees or graduates of FPCUs. The researcher selected participants that represented the various states of the doctoral process.

A secondary method was snowballing (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Neuman, 1997) which is purposive and non-random, but not “accidental or haphazard” (Neuman, 1997, p. 205). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) posit that a purposive method like snowballing allows the researcher to narrow the scope to the theoretical framework of the research. This process has been proven successful in identifying and recruiting “hard-to-reach” populations (Bullock, Crawford, & Tennstedt, 2003; Bullock & McGraw, 2006). In this current study, each participant was asked to share the names of other African American doctoral students or graduates of FPCUs. The first participant emerged from a posting on Facebook, a social networking site.

All participants in the current study received an email invitation detailing the study. Once the participant and I agreed on the time and location of our face to face interview, I sent a confirmation e-mail to the participant. Prior to each interview, I sent consent forms, demographics forms, and information flyers to the participants (see Appendix B & C).

For this current study, twelve participants were purposefully selected. All participants self identified as African American. There were five females and seven males. Of this group, six were at the pre-ABD stage, three at ABD stage and three were graduates. The ages ranged from 28 years to 52 years old. Eleven of the participants currently live in the southeast while one participant lives in the central northern region of the United States. All but one of the participants has accrued student loan debt. Ten of the participants attended predominately white undergraduate institutions and two attend an HBCU. Eleven of the participants were employed full-time and one was a stay at home parent seeking employment.

Data Collection

For this current study, I used interviews, narrative prompts, field notes, FPCU websites, printed advertisements and literature from FPCUs, and observation as data collection tools. These methods aided me in forming questions and developing a framework for participant experiences. The face-to-face interview was the primary data collection method as is consistent with narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative investigation of participants' lives gathered and understood through the use of story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Diaute & Lightfoot, 2004; Riessman, 2008).

Interviews

For this current study I used open ended semi-structured interview questions which were predetermined, but flexible in nature (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Face-to-face interviews were conducted between September 2009 and December 2009. Riessman (1993, 2008) posits that open-ended questions are more likely to lead to rich data than other types of questions. Open-ended questions are consistent with narrative inquiry. In order to capture the voices of African American doctoral students at FPCUs I provided the participants with opportunities to elaborate and structure their own answers.

This qualitative researcher study uses interviews to discover important student questions, processes, and relationships, not to test them (Givens, 2008). The qualitative interviews were more than asking questions and waiting for answers. They were in-depth conversations for the purpose of gathering data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The qualitative researcher is able to turn the narratives into a research tool (Guðmundsdóttir, 1996; Riessman, 2008). The researcher who uses narratives as a research tool must begin with a very clear understanding of what he or she wants to understand or risk getting lost in the words and stories (Kramp, 2004).

I recorded each interview with the use of two digital tape recorders. One recorder served as back-up in case any technical problems occurred. Once recorded, I was careful also to save the interviews on a secure network server as a further precaution against losing them. Digital voice recording provided greater potential for capturing the participants' words accurately, which is essential for qualitative data analysis (Patton, 2002). I had each face-to-face interview transcribed as soon as feasible following the interview (Riessman, 2008). Both

the participant and I reviewed transcripts for accuracy and to ascertain if further information was needed. I asked probing questions for clarity and depth throughout the interviews. However, I was careful and planful in allowing the participants' stories to emerge freely.

I gathered follow-up data through the use of narrative prompts. Participants received written questions and were instructed to answer the questions in narrative form. They were not told how long or short their responses should be, but were instructed that they could add any information that they wanted to share, even if that information strayed from the structured questions. Once participants returned their responses to me via email I sent them receipt confirmation notices.

As much as it is important for a qualitative researcher to have a plan, it is equally important to have design flexibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The Interview Guide (see Appendix C) and familiarity with the literature allowed for free flow of stories while they still gathered data pertinent to the research purpose (Padgett, 2008a). I developed the interview guide based on the review of the literature on this topic. This interview guide enabled me to keep the interviews focused as well as ask the probing questions necessary to generate rich data (Padgett, 2008a).

The participants helped protect their identities by selecting their own pseudonyms. Each participant signed a Consent Form clearly stating the nature of the study (see Appendix B). Additionally, this form emphasized the voluntary nature of participation in the study.

Documents and artifacts

Researchers use documents and artifacts to add detail and context to data, which can be accessed at flexible times throughout the process (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 1998). I

gathered information from FPCU brochures, flyers, post cards, billboards, promotional recruitment items like key chains, published annual reports, and media advertisements. I requested recruitment literature from FPCUs. I also gathered historical information about the institutions from their official websites as well as information about academic programs, demographics, and updates. I gathered information from government websites that track data of higher education institutions.

The electronic government websites included sites for the Survey of Earned Doctorates, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). These sites provide information about financial aid, student demographics, retention rates, and other information that may be beneficial for triangulation and researcher insight regarding students at FPCUs.

Observation

For this current study, I noted visual details from interviews, television commercials, and billboards. These observations helped me to understand the context of participant narratives. The collection of these observations was part of a reflection in action process of challenging assumptions (Schon, 1983).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) recommend noting observations, thoughts, and feelings in a research journal immediately following interviews. I took field notes during each interview which were used for reflection. My field notes captured meaningful and surprising quotes from the interviews as well as ideas for further exploration. Through field notes, I also captured and categorized my own thoughts and feelings, including a category labeled “ah ha

moments.” The field notes were useful in helping me put the participants’ words into their appropriate context.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis, “may appear to be seductively simple” (Kramp, 2004, p. 113). Because there tends to be minimal, if any, attention to numbers, equations or statistics, one might conclude that qualitative methods are easy and frivolous. To the contrary, narrative analysis is both rigorous and time consuming (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kramp, 2004; Larson, 1997). Qualitative researchers that use narrative inquiry are able to let the story emerge from the participant by encouraging the participant to tell his or her story (Mishler, 1986). Narrative inquiry assumes that the researcher is personally involved, unlike the idea of the objective and removed positivist researcher (Kramp, 2004). The current study generated 26 hours of recorded data, resulting in 309 pages of transcribed data of more than 170,000 words.

Two graduate assistants and I audiotaped, transcribed, and reviewed the interviews. As information emerged from the interviews, audio tapes and transcripts, they were compared across categories by looking for connections and themes (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981). The graduate assistants and I kept field notes and I reviewed those notes immediately after each interview and several times during the process.

Coding

In qualitative inquiry, a code is a short word or phrase, depending on the type of analysis used that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and or evocative attribute for a portion language-based... data (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). The coding of

the data for this current study follows thematic analysis, which Riessman (2008) explains is a way of analyzing data by theorizing from the individual case rather than across cases. The thematic analysis approach is appropriate for “stories that develop in interview conversations” (p. 54). Further, thematic analysis uses extended phrases and sentences rather than shorter codes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Additionally, the research combines thematic analysis with the process of generating a “start list” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) of codes. I decided this combined approach would give the graduate assistants a reference point as they could not have been as familiar with the data or the participants as I was. I developed this primary code list based on the literature, interview reflections and first level coding (Saldana, 2009). All three coders were permitted to add to the code list as new information emerged from the data. In addition to generating a start list as a method of first cycle coding (Saldana, 2009), the coders used in vivo “to fracture the data into individually coded segments” (p. 42).

Each participant’s transcript was examined and coded independently by three coders. Each coder focused on the participants’ experiences and not the structure of speech or language style that the participant chose to use (Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2008). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend the use of coding software to add to the accuracy of the coding process. ATLAS.ti software (Franzosi, 2010) was used to aid in code management. With the assistance of the software, the research used both open and in vivo coding (Franzosi, 2010). The graduate assistant co-coders and I met face-to-face bi-weekly to discuss and compare codes from individual transcripts.

During these data analysis meetings, my co-coders and I went over our coded transcripts line by line to check for consistency. We used second level focused coding (Saldana, 2009) to move from listing and linking codes to categorizing. I led the coding team in discussions to generate greater depth before developing categories and themes. Through engagement and discourse, we three coders reached consensus on codes and categories. These discussions were open ended and designed to develop a broad view of the meaning gathered (or discovered) from the transcripts. We were very consistent in assigning codes throughout the process. We added or deleted codes based on in-depth reflective and respectful discourse among us.

Validity and Reliability

Validity in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness of the inferences made from the data, and is the hallmark of good research (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). The terminology that captures the rigor of qualitative research includes dependability, confirmability, credibility, verification, triangulation, inter-rater reliability, member checking, and audit trail (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie, 2003). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) compile the strategies of several noted qualitative researchers and provide “a comprehensive typology and description of methods for assessing the truth value of qualitative research” (239) that guided this current study. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) offer 24 strategies for assessing trustworthiness and credibility, and I selected nine of them to guide the data analysis of this study.

Prolonged engagement

Particularly in narrative inquiry, participants must be given sufficient time to narrate their stories and the researcher needs sufficient time to obtain an adequate representation of the voice under study. This process is called prolonged engagement (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, p. 239). Other scholars noted for work on prolonged engagement include Glens and Pushkin (1992) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). For this study I allowed sufficient time with each participant. I informed each participant of the estimated amount of time his or her interview might take. However, I did not stop the participants at any time as they wrote their narratives. At the conclusion of their interviews, I gave participants ample time to reflect and debrief the interview process. The interviews ranged from about 65 minutes to 120 minutes. I also allowed for an opened-ended follow-up process in which participants could contact me to add or revise information. I engaged the data through the review of audio, transcripts and field notes. This process was repeated throughout the data analysis phase.

Persistent observation

Persistent observation is the process of gathering relevant information. This process allows a researcher to “separate relevant from irrelevant observations” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, p. 239). Lincoln and Guba (1985), contributed to this understanding of persistent observation. For this study, I spent considerable time with the literature on African American graduate students in order to provide structure, framework, and understanding. It was through the iterative process of engagement with the literature, coding and recoding, and reading and re-reading that I was able to discern meaningful and relevant data as they related to the research questions.

Triangulation

The purpose of triangulation is to develop greater “confidence in any interpretations made” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 240). Triangulation involves a researcher using “multiple methods, investigators, sources, and theories to obtain corroborating evidence...to reduce the possibility of chance associations and systemic bias” (239). According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) this strategy goes back to Denzin (1978). To begin, participants in this study were asked the same open-ended questions consistent with an established interview guide. Rich thick descriptions of experiences were derived from verbatim transcripts. Additionally, I engaged graduate students that had some knowledge of qualitative methodology, to serve as co-coders.

Each coder coded each transcript independently. Codes we compared and discussed amongst coders. Through discourse the coders compared codes for understanding and reached consensus. Complex data emerged from the study. Therefore, I engaged the graduate coders in discourse about their thoughts, reflections and interpretation of the data. This discussion involved cross referencing ideas and conclusion as part of the triangulation of data. I also used my field notes in the discussions.

Each research participant received an electronic copy of his or her own transcripts to review for accuracy. I encouraged the participants to read the transcripts and inform me of any errors, misrepresentations, or inaccuracies. Qualitative literature on African American graduate students also served as an important source of triangulation.

Audit trail

In qualitative research, an audit trail is a verifiable description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings including all pertinent records (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit for the current study includes verbatim transcripts verified by research participants, researcher field notes, demographic forms, written transcripts and audio files. The researcher should leave an audit trail of study documentation. This trail of documents can be used to clarify inconsistencies and is considered a roadmap of the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie, 2003).

Member checking

Member checking was considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985), to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). It is the process of checking out interpretations, assumptions and conclusions with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used member checking in this current study to obtain feedback from the study participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend ongoing member checking throughout the study. I encouraged research participants to contact me if they had new or additional information, or if they wanted something removed from their records. Member checking minimized misinterpretation of participants’ intended meaning (Maxwell, 1996).

Checking outliers

I also checked and verified outliers. For example, only one participant reported not having any student loan debt. Because this was inconsistent with the literature and with what

was reported by all other participants, I contacted the participant via email for verification or clarification. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that a researcher should look for meaning in data that appears to be different. The “temptation is to smooth them over, ignore them, or explain them away” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 269) which would lead to invalid data. For a researcher, “the outlier is your friend” (p. 269) as it protects you against self selecting biases and may help you build a better explanation” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 269). In the case of this research study, outliers served as cause for additional exploration.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest using extreme cases from the data by “searching for disconfirming cases, extreme or deviant or cases and typical cases serves to increase confidence in conclusions” (p. 28). In this study, the responses of research participants were compared to each other as well as to the literature. Cases that were atypical in this study were explored further and used to capture the richness of this difference in the participant’s words.

Following up on surprises

Following up on surprises (Miles & Huberman, 1994) like extreme cases, should not be ignored or dismissed. “Surprises by definition can never be fully anticipated” (p. 170) but follow up on surprises “can help test the conclusion” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 263). In this study surprises arose in how different participants were from what the literature would suggest of African American graduate students. Follow up questions were used to verify or clarify statements from the face-to-face interview.

Peer review

Peer review is used to “provide external evaluation of the research process” (Onwuwgbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 244) and is considered another form of inter-rater

reliability. For this study, I engaged qualitative scholars and colleagues to review and challenge research process. Additionally, I participated in engaged discussion with experienced researchers, which allowed me the opportunity to probe and uncover those researchers' thoughts and conclusions. This process led to deeper thinking and allowed me to generate new perspectives.

Rich thick data

The rich thick description “informs the reader about transferability” (p. 244) and provides detailed verbatim data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The rich thick data from this study are the voices of the African American doctoral students at FPCUs. I selected quotes from participants to paint a vibrant picture of their experiences. Using rich and thick data is essential to this study, particularly given that it uses CRT as the theoretical framework.

Researcher Bias

Narrative inquiry researchers make themselves aware of the layered narratives at in the interview process (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This approach led me to be mindful that each participant in unique and reasons for decisions may be varied and complex. I entered this process mindful that many do not see FPCUs as credible institutions of higher education. I believe this negative perception held by some about the institutions should not be confused with perceptions of the students who populate these institutions.

I entered this study deeply concerned about the impact FPCUs may have on African Americans. However, I took care to allow the participants' own stories to emerge to tell the story. Much of the literature that exists on African American students is deficit based.

Admittedly, I wanted to use a framework that would steer toward participants' strengths in order to provide a counter narrative to the existing literature on African American students.

My knowledge of CRT led me to question whether the negative reputation of FPCUs is due to the vocalized perceptions of the privileged, which see only certain schools as worthy. African American students, because of lower than average GRE scores, are often shut out of TCUs. I entered this research process curious if the FPCUs may be an alternative avenue for more people to achieve their educational goals. The insights that I gained from the narratives left me hopeful about the perseverance and sheer determination of many African American doctoral students. It is my hope and belief that the results of this study will figure prominently in the literature on graduate students of color and FPCUs.

I continue to believe that African American students are often left with fewer academic choices than their white counterparts. To this end, I am motivated to conduct scholarly research that reveals "truths" as told by the African American doctoral student participants. My findings may break down barriers and open more opportunities for African American students in institutions of higher education.

I entered this process seeking information to bring forth voices that are often unheard. Through a process of constant self-reflection, I want to be part of the scholarship that works for justice in higher education. Such research will be an important contribution to the growing body of CRT scholarship.

Chapter Summary

Chapter three outlined how I used qualitative design for this study. This chapter addressed participant selection and data collection methods. I discussed the use of ATLAS.ti

software in this current study. The chapter also addressed validity and reliability, which I established in nine ways. The chapter concluded with a discussion on my assumptions as the researcher. In the next chapter I will present findings that emerged from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This purpose of this study is to explore how social and environmental factors shape the experiences of African American doctoral students at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
2. What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
3. What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?
4. What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

This chapter presents the findings for each guiding research question. It begins with a discussion of participant demographics followed by descriptive profiles summaries. Lastly, the data derived from the study are used to answer the four research questions. The reader will experience the rich detail of each story through the voices of these African American doctoral students at FPCUs.

The Participants

The demographic characteristics of the participants are displayed in Tables 5, 6, and 7. For this research study, twelve participants were interviewed. All participants self identified as African American. Their ages ranged from 28 to 53 years old, with a mean age of 36 years. A slight majority of the participants were male. There were seven males and five females. Only two of the twelve participants had children in the home. The participants were as likely to be married as unmarried. There were seven single participants and seven married

participants. One participant was divorced. I find it important to note, in looking at demographic data about marital status, that participants were not asked about sexual orientation. Given this oversight, there may be participants who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgendered whose relationship status is not identified in this current study.

Only three of the participants attended an HBCU and of those, one had attended as a graduate student only. Four of the twelve participants were first generation college students when they entered undergraduate school. The majority of the participants had parents with college degrees. Eight of the participants reported personal incomes of more than \$50,000 annually, including three with incomes of over \$80,000 annually. Only one participant was unemployed.

All participants, except one with an employer funded tuition benefit, had student loan debt. They were asked to report their anticipated student loan debt at the conclusion of their doctoral studies. For those with student loans, the anticipated loan ranged from \$20,000 to more than \$100,000. Seven participants reported student loan debt above \$80,000. Five reported approximately \$50,000 and only one reported student loan debt under \$20,000. Of those that had graduated, all had accrued student loan debt at or \$50,000.

Profiles of the twelve participants are detailed below. Participants in this study were asked to self select pseudonyms. However, I changed some names in order to align them with proper names instead of possible personality characteristics. Participant profiles are derived from interviews and demographic surveys.

Participant Profiles

Alpha

Alpha is a 34-year-old single female pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education and Adult Learning. She works full-time as a public school teacher. Her mother has a college degree and is a retired school teacher. Alpha grew up in a small town that was predominately white. Alpha's mother was very strict about education and it was always understood that she would go on to pursue higher education unlike many of her peers.

Alpha attended an HBCU on a full academic scholarship to become a teacher. She stated that most of her professors were people of color and very supportive. She attended a predominately white graduate school and there decided that she should pursue a doctorate. She chose the FPCU because the schedule was flexible and she was not required to take the GRE. Alpha plans to teach at a university when she completes her doctorate. She will have more than \$50,000 in student loan debt when she finishes her doctorate.

Andrea

Andrea is a 40-year-old married female and mother of two children. She is pursuing her doctorate in Education Leadership. She works as an adjunct professor at a for-profit college. Her education decisions were influenced greatly by her mother, an educator, who always pushed her towards achievement of excellence in school and a future that included higher education. Her mother died from breast cancer when Andrea was 13 year old.

Her decision to go to attend an FPCU was based in large part on the 33.5 percent employee discount on tuition. Andrea plans to teach at a college. She is willing to teach at an

FPCU but would prefer to teach at a traditional four-year university. She will be more than \$60,000 dollars in debt when she is done.

Cameron

Cameron is a 38-year-old African American male working towards a doctorate in Criminal Justice. He is a married father of four. He works for a public university as a program coordinator. Cameron grew up in a very small town and his parents were both postal workers. His parents were very influential in his desire to pursue a higher education. He states that throughout his childhood it was understood that above all else, he must have good grades and plan his future with college in mind.

He decided to pursue a doctorate because he wanted the highest level of education possible and an opportunity to be a role model in the education field. He chose an FPCU because the flexible schedule allowed him to balance work, family, and school. He states that he does not do well on tests like GRE which also informed his decision to attend an FPCU. He considers the online university to be an expensive endeavor, but sees it as a means to an end. When he completes the program he will be more than \$50,000 in debt.

Connor

Connor is a 50-year-old single male. He is pursuing a doctorate in Education. He received both his bachelor's degree in Accounting and masters' degree in Business from An FPCU. He was raised in single parent household with his mother. His father earned a bachelor's degree and his mother has a high school diploma.

His decision to pursue doctorate was influenced by his desire to be a model for African Americans. When he finishes his doctorate he wants to teach or work in high

education administration. He intentionally chose schools that did not require applicants to take the GRE. Connor expects to be more than \$150,000 in debt when he completes the doctorate.

Frances

Frances is a 33-year-old who completed a doctorate in Public Health in 2009. She is a married mother of three. She does not work outside the home currently, choosing instead to home school her children. Her parents were divorced though she received academic support and encouragement from both parents. Her parents were a united front on the subject of education and stressed the importance of education, stating that being a student was her only job. Neither of her parents had a college degree.

She chose an FPCU for her doctorate after being waitlisted by a large traditional school. She was also influenced by the flexible schedule. Frances plans to start her own non-profit community health organization focusing on adolescent health issues. Upon completion of her degree, Frances had accrued about \$50,000 student loan debt.

Jasper

Jasper is a 52-year-old divorced man living in the central part of the country. At the time of my interview he had already earned one doctorate in Organizational Management from an FPCU and is now working a doctorate in Human Services at an FPCU. He spent time in the military and has taught high school math.

Jasper says the FPCU has given him a chance to acquire knowledge at his own pace. He considers the traditional classroom environment to be a place where professors praise themselves at the expense of real teaching and learning. He chose a FPCU for his doctorate,

in part because he felt he could not see himself sitting in a classroom. When he completes this second doctorate he plans to teach at a higher education institution. Jasper will be more than \$70,000 in student loan debt when he graduates.

Justice

Justice is a 28-year-old single female with no children pursuing a doctorate in Psychology. She grew up in a small town, as an only child. Her parents were very supportive of her education and insisted that education was her only job. Her mother is a principal and her father is a retired marine turned math teacher. Both of her parents have graduate degrees and were very influential in her pursuit of higher education.

She chose to attend the FPCU for her doctorate because she could not afford to quit her job in order to go to school. Convenience and flexibility were also important factors in her decision. Justice considers the FPCU to be an ideal environment for working adults. She estimates that her student loan debt will be more than \$100,000 dollars when she graduates.

Lauryn

Lauryn is a 34-year-old single female pursuing her doctorate in Leadership, Organizational Management. She grew up in a small town and works in the criminal justice field. She and her younger brother were raised with the assistance of both parents, though divorced, and her maternal grandparents. Education was stressed by both parents and grandparents.

Lauryn chose the FPCU largely because she did not have to take the GRE. She also valued the flexibility. Upon graduation, she aims to teach at a university or become a school

principal. Lauryn feels that getting her doctorate is worth the expense although she will be \$80,000 in student loan debt when she graduates.

Peter

Peter is a 34-year-old single male employed full-time as a teacher at an FPCU. He just completed his doctorate in Instructional Leadership. Peter received his undergraduate degree from an HBCU. He stated that the experience of attending an HBCU after growing up in a predominately white environment shaped his whole life. Peter comes from a very educated family. His grandparents were prominent educators. He grew up in a middle class tourist town.

He considered several universities before making a decision. In the end, he chose a university that supported his work life balance. Many of the universities that he considered expected him to quit school and work at a Teaching Assistant. Peter needed an educational experience that would allow him to keep his job. Now that Peter has graduated he plans to continue to work for his current employer in higher education. He is not interested in administration, but wants to continue doing research. Peter's student loan debt is \$20,000

Ricky

Ricky is a 28-year-old single male attending pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education after earning master's degree from another FPCU. He is employed full-time in higher education at a FPCU. He was raised by a single parent. His mom always insisted that her children attend college. His family support has continued to be important throughout his academic pursuits.

He began at a community college and transferred to a predominately white public university. He decided to pursue a doctorate at a FPCU because it did not require him to compromise his career. He has taken the GRE, but does not believe it to be an accurate measure of his academic abilities. Ricky would like to obtain a position in higher education as Dean of Students. He estimates that he will have over \$70,000 dollars in student loan debt when he earns his degree.

Tony

Tony is a 47-year-old male pursuing his doctorate in Organizational Management. He is employed in technology for a major hospital and also a musician. Now deceased, both of his parents attended college and had a major impact on his life and career. He grew up in a middle class family in a predominately white neighborhood. He attended a predominately white engineering university. Tony plans to teach in higher education when he completes his doctorate.

Tony believes that the online environment offers an opportunity to be judged just for your work. He likes that he has the opportunity to work alone and from anywhere, which influenced his decision to enroll at an FPCU. He will have about \$70,000 in student loan debt when he finishes school, but

Tyler

Tyler is a 40-year-old male pursuing doctorate in Organizational Management. He is a full-time executive in the pharmaceutical industry. He grew up in a small town in the south. With the untimely death of his mother at the tender age of 12, Tyler received strong academic support from his aunt who raised him.

Tyler chose an FPCU because he particularly likes the online environment where people are not judged on race or gender. He would like to teach part-time at university when he completes his degree, but does plan to give up his full-time corporate job. Ricky will not have student loan debt when he graduates because his employer pays for his tuition.

Summary of Findings

The findings for this current study are organized by research questions. These findings consist of experiences related to academics and social life. They also include identifiers of academic success and impediments to academic success. These findings are the result of carefully coding and analysis.

Academic Experiences of African American Doctoral Students

The participants in this research study talked openly about their academic experiences and how those experiences were shaped in formative years. Further, they discussed their academic experiences pre-college, during college and finally the doctoral years. All twelve participants indicated that they grew up in homes in which education was very important. Additionally, eleven of the twelve participants described growing up in supportive middle class families. Although the majority of them grew up in homes where parents had divorced, they did not describe the experiences as harmful to their academic experience or performance. They described supportive extended family as is common in African American culture. The participants' revealed the impact that the expectations of their families had in shaping their academic experiences. They spoke of their experiences with school and their early academic potential. Interwoven in their discussions were conversations about how race, racism and social class impacted their academic experiences.

Family structure and support are essential components of academic success

Five of the participants grew up as children of educators. Six of the participants are either currently working as educators or have formerly worked as educators. Alpha, now a teacher herself, spoke of her mother who was a well known educator in the community. “It was just expected that her [mother’s] children were going to be someone and we were not going to drop out and we were going to do something with our lives,” she said. She further stated that her mother’s status in the community had a positive impact on how she was perceived by teachers and others in the community.

Justice had some experiences similar to Alpha. Justice’s mother is a principal and her father, retired from the military, tried his hand at teaching for awhile. Justice stated, “Education was always first. My parents always told me that going to school was my job.” Justice, typical of the participants, had the support of college educated parents. She described both of her parents as “geniuses.” She spoke of her parents, who divorced when she was very young, with pride and admiration. “They both have more than one Master’s degree. They are both at the top of their game and so it made me, of course, want to go further.”

Frances, another child of an educator, described her divorced parents as “pouring all that they had into me.” Frances said, “I always remember them telling me that I had to do my best at all times. I remember my dad always saying your only job is to be a student. That’s your job.” Another participant, Peter, now an educator himself, credits his family of educators with that decision. As he put it, “Just about everybody on my mother’s side of the family was a school teacher. My grandfather had his Masters of Education. Both he and my grandmother were prominent educators in our town for a very long time.” Tony, a computer

engineer, also came from a family of educators. His father had a master's degree in mathematics and worked as a teacher before becoming a principal. His mother was an elementary school teacher. He saw this background as an advantage to his academic development. "By the time I got to first grade, I was already doing all the stuff that the other kids were doing," Tony stated.

Frances spent several years as a public school teacher, although her parents were not educators. She did not have college educated parents, but like the other participants; she too was supported by their high expectations. Frances stated,

I think in middle school I knew that I was going to go to college. I had no idea where I would go. My parents did not go to college so there was not a lot of talk of "okay well we want you to go to this school because that's my alma mater." Her parents' lack of college degrees in no way hampered their insistence that she be a good student and pursue higher education. Frances further stated:

In terms of just education in general, I always remember them making it clear, that I had to do my best at all times. They put all their energy into me. I took what they said very seriously, so I always worked hard in school. They never had to rein me in from being outside of where I needed to be as a student.

Lauryn also did not have college educated parents, but she too received messages of high academic expectations. These messages came from three generations of women. With a look of admiration on her face, she described it this way,

I got it from my great grandmother, my grandmother and my mother. Constantly they would say, "get your" - they called it lessons she said laughingly, "get your lessons

out and you go to school. You act right at school.” They would tell me that making good grades at school was the only thing I had to do. They always said, ‘Get your education first that’s something that no one can take from you.’

Ricky was the only participant to indicate that he did not receive a lot of academic guidance when it came to making choices about college. This is not to say that he did not receive support. His mother encouraged college and set it as an expectation, but did not have the experience of going through the process. She was therefore, according to Ricky, less able to direct him in his higher educational decisions. Ricky successfully managed to find his own way through the higher education hoops. He explains the process this way,

I started out at a community college at first. I wasn’t sure exactly what I wanted to do. The whole process was interesting because no one really gave me a lot of guidance with that, even though college was always a goal after high school. There was really no direction after that, you know, - just that college is good. I just had to figure it out for myself.

Ricky called upon that self directedness and motivation later when he decided to get a four year degree. Ricky recalls,

I was a manager and I had some college students under me, and they would come to [work] everyday with homework. That was probably the only time in my life I wanted homework so bad. I was like why do they have homework? Man I wish I had some books to study, because, you know, they would come do their homework and study during break. So then I started to get that feeling where I *wanted* [emphasis added] to be in school. It wasn’t just that I *had* [emphasis added] to go. I wanted to be

[in school] so I didn't take it for granted. I went back [to the community college] and enrolled in another semester, and then another semester. And after that I transferred to [a large predominately white university].

Tyler's story speaks to the power of expectation over adversity. Tyler lost both parents before he finished high school and was raised by aunts. His mother was killed by someone she knew when she went to the grocery store; and his father later died from addiction to alcohol. Even though he endured tragedies early in his life, Tyler managed to be a very good student, received scholarship offers and went to one of the top science and engineering schools in the southeast. Tyler recalls, "I was accepted to and had a scholarship to go to [a prestigious Southern university], but chose not to go there. I didn't think that [conservative university] would actually fit my personality. But, ultimately I chose to go to [large predominately white engineering university]."

Andrea recalled that the desire of her parents to send their children to college was born out of their own economically difficult upbringing. Andrea, like Tyler, experienced the difficulty of losing a parent during childhood. Her mother died from breast cancer, but had instilled the importance of education in her daughter. In her story she recalled,

My mother was big on education. She was the one who insisted that education was not a choice; it was something you had to do. My mother grew up on a farm with cotton and tobacco. She was determined that her children would have a good education and a better life. So, she was on top of us about school and good grades, I believe that had she lived, I would not have struggled to go to college.

Isolation during pre-college years is common experience

Just as common as the theme of parental support was the theme of academic excellence in middle and high school. The participants in this study talked about their academic excellence in their pre-college years and how, in some ways, it prepared them for feelings of isolation in predominately white environments. Ten of the twelve participants talked of being in honors and or AP courses in middle and high school. However, they also tended to mention the social cost for African American students in these classes. Frances recalls her conflict in the choice she feared she would have to make. She paused for a long time before moving on with the story, as if she has long ago buried the feelings. This is how she recounted the isolation she felt,

I had to take these AP courses. It was a struggle just to get work done because I just felt out of place. I remember clearly thinking twice about taking AP classes because I was thinking; I will not ever see my friends. I won't get to eat lunch with my friends if I take this class. And I probably did not take an honors class or two for that reason.

Alpha, now a 34 year old teacher, remembered that she did not see other African Americans in her honors classes and it bothered her. She stated, "I took mostly AP classes, so in almost all of my classes I was the only African-American and maybe... sometimes it was me and one other, but a lot of times it was just me." She did not recall any incidents of racism, but thought that she may have been shielded by her mother's prominence as an educator in the town.

Justice, who was identified very early as academically gifted, was also one of few African American students in her classes. She stated that she knew she felt different and

somewhat out of place, but as a young child could not really identify the feelings. However, when she got to high school she experienced it as isolation. Justice recalled that some folks would make little comments, such as “oh you seem angry today.” It was as if they were saying “there’s that angry black girl again.” She recalled times in high school where they would watch movies in class that would depict African Americans in stereotypical ways, which was uncomfortable for her. Justice stated that the atmosphere got worse for her when she voiced her opinions. She wondered aloud if those experiences may explain why, later in her doctoral program, she was reluctant to discuss race. Justice commented on an experience from high school this way,

One of my substitute teachers asked a question one day. I think it might have been tenth grade. He asked, “Do you feel like race relations have changed in this country?” He just asked the whole class and I said, “I don’t think so.” Everyone else said, “Oh yeah, I don’t think there are any real racial issues anymore because slavery is over.” I said, well I don’t feel that way. I really felt like because I voiced my opinion, that it isolated me even further.

Interestingly, several participants commented on feeling isolated as African Americans in AP and honors courses. However, they reported feeling perfectly comfortable in their other pre-college experiences. Several participants talked about their segregated communities, yet did not recall any incidents of discrimination when asked specifically. The participant’s age did not impact their tendency to express experiences with racism. It is possible that these participants only viewed overt incidents as racism and divulged less socio-political analysis.

Cameron specifically identified incidents of racism or discrimination from his early academic experiences. Although, when he was initially asked about experiences with racism, he too indicated that he could not recall any such experiences. It was only later in his story that he stated that he felt that “the white teachers did not like the black students” Cameron said, “I mean when you walked past some [white] teachers, you could just see it. It was a look of disdain like ‘God, I wish I were out of this school.’ You could just see the look.” He recalled that there was a lot of tension between black students and white students. Cameron stated that in the small town where he grew up his parents taught tolerance and told him to show respect to all people no matter what. It seems that he carried that sense of understanding and tolerance into his college year when he told of an incident in college in which he and several African American male students went to a predominately white party. He stated that one white male at the party said “Get the niggers out of here.” When pressed more during the interview about his thoughts on that incident, Cameron talked of shrugging it off. “Just an ignorant person...whatever,” he said. He discussed that there were several similar incidents during college, but did not see his campus as a place where there was much racism.

If there were racial issues Alpha, who reported feeling isolated as the only African American in honors courses, says she did not see or experience them growing up. After some reflection she did seem to begin to question the segregated community. Alpha stated,

I felt like people got along, and I didn’t really see racial issues. I know they were there, but I didn’t. I just didn’t because I was just too involved in doing other things.

But, the neighborhood that I lived in was all African-American. So I know, I mean I know it was racial, but I just wasn't around it; so I'm not sure what the issues were.

Tyler's experiences growing up in South Carolina echoed Alpha's experience. Tyler, a scientist turned corporate executive, recalled,

I never really experienced any forms of prejudice, which is probably shocking to quite a few people. All friends, regardless of race, gender, or whatever were always invited to our house. I went to my friend's houses as well. Most of us played together every day.

On a different note Tony recalls a sense that white students had advantages that black students did not have. He found this to be true both in high school and college. This is how Tony recalls the racial divide during college,

I don't have any *real* evidence to show this, but it just seemed like the white students had more resources - financial resources. They could go home on the weekends, [college name omitted] was in a hole-in-the-wall little city and there were not many people there so the white students would typically go home on the weekends while the black students were stuck on campus. And that's a generality, but I remember white students could buy the HP 41 CV calculator, which is Hewlett Packard's *top* [emphasis added] calculator and it's got all this stuff in it. Black students, we had to get the \$21 Sharp [laughs]. And the white students, some of them would put the formulas in the calculator. The black students would have to memorize the formula. [*Imitates attempting to memorize a formula and forgetting it*]. White students just had it right there on their calculators... just another little advantage that the white student

had. I'm sure that some black students came along somewhere that was able to afford it...but I saw more white students doing that. I had never seen a black student with an HD 41 CV. But I did see white students with them. And I was, at the time, I didn't even know that they could do, until this guy told me "yea I just put the formula in the calculator, man, I don't have to learn that." So I said, OK, just another advantage... So there are a lot of little things... I don't know... It slowly might get better as our society moves forward.

Tony further talks exasperatedly about view of how white students get ahead. He seems to emphatically indicate, from his experience, that white students have contact and connections that directly impacts grades. Here is how he details his thoughts and experiences,

Here's one thing about college that I found out - it's hard to [succeed] by yourself. If everybody was doing the homework and tests and everything individually - without help, then it would be cool. I'm an individual, and this guy's an individual...but Joe [generic white student] has a connection of people and friends. Black students, well when they go into that class, they go in there by themselves. White students might have a [copy of an old] test and they work together... I recalled I asked this guy on my floor, 'how did you guys do this homework?' He'd get on the phone and call his buddies, they'd call somebody else, and pretty soon somebody would have the answer. But I studied *more* [emphasis added] than they did. I didn't have anybody to go to. You could try to go to the instructor, and sometimes that works. Some instructors...just...aren't helpful.

The participants' academic experiences unraveled stories of love and support from parents and extended family. Though they are varied experiences around race they each grew up prepared to face academic challenges. In some cases, the foundation of educated parents and the preparation from advanced courses was not enough to overcome all barriers.

Overcoming barriers is part of road to success

Many of the participants felt that standardized exams were a barrier to them as adult learner and not a good tool to gage academic ability. Based on their prior academic performance, the participants had reason to believe in their overall academic potential. However, their stories revealed their belief that standardized exams under-predict their academic ability. The participants in this study strongly disapproved of the use of such exams as admissions criteria, whether or not they scored well on the exams. There was a feeling that something just seemed unfair about the use of such measures. Some participants put off going to graduate school because of anxiety, fear which led to avoidance of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). It is clear that the negative perception of the GRE exam was a powerful influence on the participants' choices, academic progress and perception of higher education institutions,

Even though Frances did well on the GRE, and had successfully completed graduate work at a large public university, she questioned if the GRE is the best way for institutions, geared toward adult learners, to judge academic potential.

Frances put it this way, "Whereas the brick and mortar schools weed out with the GRE score, the online university is going to weed out with those first couple of courses because people are going to know whether or not they can do it." Frances expressed that she felt

angry and disappointed when she did not get into a doctoral program at [large predominately white university] even though she had been a good student. She went on further to describe how she views the FPCUs and their process for doctoral students. Frances stated,

What they're really focused on is cultivating adult learners and developing what they call the Scholar Practitioner, you know. I know that the programs are designed to very quickly weed out those who are not serious about graduate work. So the GRE is almost obsolete in those situations. They're going to be able to tell within the first quarter of taking a course if you're prepared to do this or not. I think that's the difference between online universities and other facilities.

Ricky also questioned the usefulness of the GRE for adult learners. According to Ricky,

The GRE is a tool that's non-essential to your average adult student who's 37 and has kids. You don't have time for that. You need your degree so you can get a better job and make money. A 22 year old has time for that game. That's what they get from being in high school. But a 37 year old does not have time for that.

Ricky, one of two participant to pursue his master's and doctorate at an FPCU, does not think highly of the GRE. He stated clearly that his demonstrated ability to perform academically should be the determining factor for admissions. He stated, "I've seen directly what I can do in college when given the freedom to exercise my ability and display my knowledge. The GRE is very narrow in how they test your knowledge on various topics."

Cameron stated that the things he had read about the GRE confirm his doubts about its legitimacy as a tool for judging ability. He questioned the utility of the exam. He stated, “After reading about Standardized Testing and... not just reading one thing, but reading several articles about it and my own experience with it. I personally don’t see why it’s necessary.”

Jasper, the oldest participant in the study, clearly saw a racial connection to the GRE. As Jasper put it, “Standardized Tests are actually designed for straight white males. I don’t like Standardized Tests. They don’t prove anything. They only prove that you can memorize certain things and to me, that’s not learning.”

While the participant’s experiences of the standardized exam scores varied, none of them felt that it was an appropriate tool to measure the adult learner’s abilities. Some of the participants said that the GRE requirement factored into their decision to turn away from brick and mortar universities and pursue doctoral studies at FPCUs where such testing was not required.

Lauryn stated that she avoided applying to graduate school because of the GRE requirement. When she applied to college for her undergraduate degree, she was not accepted at her top school because of her low SAT score, even though she had a high grade point average (GPA). “Because of that experience, I have been kind of been shy of or afraid of any standardized tests,” Lauryn stated. She explained that she has reason to avoid the GRE. “I will just literally get sick on my stomach. I know I could have taken it and possibly gotten in [to another school], but just my experience from the SAT... I thought, I cannot put myself through this anymore,” she went on to say,

Especially for people of my race [African American], I think that the GRE has hindered some people. It has made them say, 'well I can't pass that or I'm not going to try.' So whenever I was looking at graduate schools, the big universities near me all required the GRE. So I waited another five years, just running from this test. Then I heard about

[FPCU] and I heard the [FPCU] did not require you to take the GRE. I ended up going with [FPCU] because they did not require me to take that exam. I then told myself, this is your opportunity to go get your degree. You can't run anymore.

Lauryn elaborates further that, by removing barriers, FPCUs offer African Americans an opportunity to set new standards. She said,

I believe that for-profit colleges and universities provide students with the encouragement and support they need to take on such an educational challenge as an adult learner. Additionally, I believe that African American students at these institutions are continuing to set the mark for others to come as they succeed in completing doctoral degrees.

Alpha's reason for not wanting to take the GRE were different than other participants.

She stated that she had a timeline in mind and the GRE schedule did not fit with it.

She did not mind taking the GRE, but it would have delayed the start of her doctoral pursuit. In her words,

I had already missed the dates for the GRE that would have given me time to apply to [large research university]. I would have had to wait about four or five months to take the next one and I did not want to wait that long. If I waited that long, I might decide

that I was not going back to school. So that's why I decided on an online college. The GRE was not in the way.

While the participants expressed a lot of self-confidence, their words made it clear that sometimes the traditional standards used to determine academic ability, caused self-doubt. Justice expressed how the perceptions of African Americans and standardized exams made her feel. "I asked myself, am I supposed to be here? I don't know. Maybe I'm just here to make [large predominately white university] look good, to fill the quota." She stated. Justice commented on an experience, all the way back to the SAT. She indicated that self-doubt persisted even though she excelled in high school AP and honors courses and scored well on the SAT exam. This is how Justice retold of the encounter,

I remember the first day, right [undergraduate] classes. This lady was there with another lady and she was talking about her son and she said, you know, "my son made 1350 on the SAT and" you know, "he wasn't granted admittance to Carolina." She asked me, "what did you get on your SAT?" And I told her that I made around 1100 or 1200 or so. She said, "oh huh, that's interesting." And I just kind of said "I didn't know what to say, I was eighteen years old. I didn't know what to say at that time. But um you know, I think I questioned like "okay am I supposed to be here?" Further, "Am I here to fill a quota?" you know. "I know I'm talented. I know I'm smart. But am I supposed to be here?" I really, really struggled with that, just, you know, trying to find my place in a school so large.

Frances offers another such example,

I don't know that that has anything to do with our...our race so much as the fact that we just don't have, you know, whatever qualifications they are looking for. I know that's hard to say. I mean, it's hard to, you know, swallow but um I just feel like that any person whether, you know, whatever your race is, if you have prepared yourself, there's going to be an opportunity out there for you. I mean, that's personally how I...how I feel about it.

The stories that the participants told about standardized exams indicated that such exams had impacted them in several different ways. Even those that had performed well on standardized exams did not view standardized exams as suitable measures of their academic potential.

These participants had mostly attended large universities and did well academically. They expressed difficulty in being able to understand why their academic record could not be seen as more indicative of academic potential.

Participants in this study reported that they found acceptance and opportunity at online universities. One participant, Frances, talked of her relief to find an avenue to her academic dream of earning a doctorate. Frances had a good academic record and good GRE score, but did not get into [large predominately white university]. It led her to wonder if she would ever get to pursue her doctorate. In a voice that sounds dejected, Frances explained how she felt using these words,

I think I was sort of put off by the situation. At a certain point, I thought it may not happen for me... they're not even going to really give me a second look...I do not know that has anything to do with our race as much as the fact that we just do not

have whatever qualifications they are looking for. I know that's hard to say. I mean, it's hard to swallow.

The participants shared thoughts, feelings and experiences about their desire to find the right doctoral program. They expressed yearning for academic schedules that accommodated full-time jobs and family. They wanted an efficient admission process that viewed them as adult learners with adult lives. For those that worked full-time or traveled frequently, traditional higher education institutions posed more barriers. All of the participants that worked full-time shared stories similar to what Ricky had to say. He recounted his story this way,

The schools that I researched that were traditional schools that called for compromise in your career. Either you had to not work or work very little. I asked myself the question, Is there a way I can go to school to pursue my doctorate and still work full-time aggressively like I want? And when I say aggressively I mean putting in extra hours because I figured it may require that for me to make the jump from what my current position, as academic counselor, to where I wanted to be, which was dean of students. So I figured I'm going to have to put in extra hours. So I asked myself that question and that's the answer I came up with—which was going to a non-traditional school built essentially for students who want to do just that.

According to Jasper, 'FPCUs offer more than just a flexible schedule.' He explained why he chose his current FPCU in this artful way,

I applied [top school in the west] when I was considering a second Doctorate and was accepted. But it meant that I was going to have to sit in class and listen to a teacher

singing *How Great Thou Art* and I realized I couldn't take that. That's how I ended up at [FPCU] as opposed to [name omitted].

Connor stated that 'FPCU provided him the opportunity to have a seamless education regardless of where he lived or how often he had to move.' He declared,

I picked this university because it was all online. I'm getting too old to be sitting in classes now. So, I like to be able to keep it moving and still get my education. Because of my job I have moved a lot over the last years. Every time I move from a different area or a different job, I had to transfer to a different school. I kept getting tired of going through that process. I picked this school because no matter where I go or where I live, I can continue my education. It's very convenient.

Justice felt that being an adult who needed to be in school and work full-time the FPCUs offer an alternative for students like her who have to overcome similar obstacles. Justice stated,

Many of us [African Americans] cannot take the time or resources to attend a university full-time and work as research assistants. It's tough to do that particularly when starting from such an unequal point. In my belief we have to work harder and longer than our white counterparts, so having the for-profit schools makes life easier in a sense. I can work full-time and provide for myself and obtain a first class education as well.

Tyler stated that he was looking for flexibility. He admitted that after a while he did get pulled in by the FPCU advertising. This is how he recounted that experience with the advertising,

Every time I would log into AOL, Yahoo or wherever, I'd always see these advertisements for [FPCU]. I was like, God, if I see these people one more time. This is driving me crazy. But...I was like, okay, you know what, they're advertising pretty heavily. Let me research them a little bit more and see what they have to offer. Are they accredited? What's their reputation? I wanted to see if this was something I should pursue.

Tony recalls just not understanding why traditional universities have not caught up to the realities of working adults. He recounts,

I think that the traditional universities just have too many obstacles to overcome for an adult that has been working for a while. It seems like the traditional universities might be stuck in the old ways where the university experience for a graduate student was for the student to be on campus. I think that method is possibly more beneficial, but as I said, it [has] too many obstacles for most adults who have carved out a life. I guess some people are able to stop their lives. For a student who must close down their current life and start a new life; I would think that is difficult to do. Some can do it if they can find major scholarships and grants to fund their lives. Again, very difficult to do considering [having to pay] bills.

Once participants found universities that met their needs they completed, what they described as a simple application, and were soon on their way to a doctoral

degree. All twelve participants stated that they were not required to take any kind of standardized exam. This is no small thing given some of the participants' feelings about and experiences with such exams. Frances cuts right to the chase about an important difference between FPCUs and traditional universities. She says simply, "Yes they are for-profit, but they'll accept students.

The admissions process at most universities can be complicated, time consuming and drawn out, the participants reported. They describe a process in which FPCU counselors guide applicants through the entire application process to make sure they get everything completed. Alpha went to an orientation at an FPCU and really liked what she heard. She got her acceptance letter in about a week. "I was excited because I thought it would be longer. I was really excited. They let me go ahead and start classes instead of waiting for that next semester" Alpha explained. For Justice the fast process was important for another reason. Justice stated that she knew getting back into school would put the student loans in deferment status for a while longer. She stated,

I was going to apply to [large prestigious universities] for Psychology. I had a list of about ten schools and had started saving for application fees, talking to people to try to get recommendations, planning for admissions exams and all. But then the student loan companies started knocking on the door saying, 'it's time to start paying your loan.'

Justice described the admissions process as easy. She said further,

I talked to the Enrollment Advisor, filled out an application, submitted my transcripts and wrote a personal statement. I don't think I even had to do a letter of recommendation, which I found interesting. I got immediate conditional acceptance pending receipt of transcripts. All other participants in this study told nearly identical stories of their admission process. Justice was the only participant to express disappointment that she ended up at a non-traditional university. She said, Though Justice appreciated the efficiency of the process and the structure of the on line university, she stated that she would have preferred a traditional university. Justice stated explained her feelings this way,

You know? I may go and get another Ph.D. from a traditional university at some point but I at least wanted to go ahead while I'm still young - while I don't have kid or a husband. We're doing work, but it is definitely not the experience that I hoped for [had I gone to a] traditional school to work on my Doctoral degree.

Tony also was impressed with the opportunity to start school right away. He stated, I think that many traditional brick and mortar universities just make it more difficult to attend. Back when I started to search for a school for my masters, I was living in [the west]. I investigated several universities [in that state]. They had application deadlines and guidelines for entrance which at the time was going to take maybe a year – GRE or GMAT, waiting list, transcripts etc. When I spoke to the folks at the [FPCU] they told me that I could start that same week.

Social Experiences of African American Doctoral Students

For students in this study, social experiences refer to experiences connecting with others, whether it is other students, faculty, advisors or administrators. Students at FPCUs do

not have the opportunities to connect to other students and faculty as they were accustomed to at traditional universities. Their stories indicate that they find ways to adjust to others venues for communicating and connecting.

Race is invisibility at FPCUs

Participants tended to view the anonymity of being in an online environment as positive. Tyler saw it as a real opportunity to be judged solely by his work. He said it was a chance to present oneself on a doctoral level and not be looked at as Asian, Black, Hispanic or whatever. Here is what Tyler, a corporate executive, had to say,

I've had to justify why I was qualified for a certain position, why I wanted to enter this particular program or why I wanted to go into this particular field. For the program at [FPCU] I didn't feel that was necessary because it was based strictly on what I provided to them in terms of writing and what my accomplishments were. It had absolutely nothing to do with who I was as far as being an African American male. It had absolutely nothing to do with that and I felt like that was one of the major reasons as to why I decided to go with that program. You know, we have to constantly fight this battle and here was an opportunity presented before me where I didn't have to fight that battle. I just had to show them what I was capable of, regardless of my color.

Justice stated that because of experiences she has had around race, the FPCU gave her an opportunity to basically hide her racial identity. While she was clear that she is proud of her heritage she explained it this way,

I have been very hesitant to identify myself as African American. Not that I'm not proud of my heritage, I love it, but I've been hesitant to discuss issues of race in the [online] discussions thus far. I just feel like life is easier - safer sometimes to not discuss race. I don't want to say get my grade and go, but that's honestly how I feel. Just get my grade and go. Not that I feel the professor would hinder me, but some people just don't handle discussions on diversity or race issues very well. Gender stuff we talk about all the time. I definitely don't see too much of an issue there. Nor do I feel like as a woman in the program that I'm having any particular issues. But, people don't deal with discussions of race very well. They revert back to those stereotypes so sometimes I'm just like, you know what. Let me get my grade and move on.

Alpha shared how the online environment gave her a chance to focus on her academic work instead of worrying about being judged by race. She said, "That actually is what keeps me going because I don't have to think about those issues or that drama. I would say that race never really played a role in the experience at all." Although participants discussed their racial invisibility in FPCUs online environment, they appreciated the sense of connection they felt during opportunities to meet face-to-face.

Face-to-face encounters add value to FPCU experience

This theme of face-to-face connection was evoked when participants talked about events that brought them together. It is also where I captured data regarding ways of reducing isolation for African American doctoral students. At FPCUs, doctoral students must participate in annual, face-to-face, week-long educational experiences known as residencies.

[Some FPCUs refer to these experiences as colloquia, but the meaning is the same in both cases.] Each participant who attended a residency considered it to be a phenomenal and positive experience. For some, it gave the FPCU online experience a greater sense of legitimacy. For others, it was their first realization that there were a high percentage of African American students in their doctoral programs. Tyler was surprised to see the large number of African Americans at his first residency. Tyler stated,

I was not thinking that there were as many minorities. I was definitely surprised at the number of African American males that were going through this doctoral program. I mean, they were articulate; they were professional; they were in professional working environments; and they were not in a lower level manufacturing setting. I was surprised because, well, only because of what I had gone through [racism at work] and knowing where I am within my organization. Also, knowing the [low] number of minorities or African Americans that are in positions of leadership in my company, I was surprised.

Ricky, employed full-time in higher education, recounted his residency experience as meaningful and helpful. He felt that it reduced the isolation. “The residencies were extremely helpful,” he said. He went on to say,

When you’re taking courses online you tend to feel a little bit alone. You’re not in a classroom where you have people right there beside you, or next to you asking questions so you can see their reactions to things. So you feel alone. So it’s really good to go to residencies and you see all these other people who are in the same boat as you, and you hear them saying the same things you were saying, like, “man I was

up all night typing a paper,” and I’m like, “yeah me too.” Or, “I had this instructor,” “oh yeah me too.” So it felt good to know I’m not alone.

Frances, a graduate, expressed that by the time she went to a residency, she had already bonded with other online classmates. She explained that the experience was an opportunity for them to come together for the first time and actually see each other. She described it this way,

When you’re in cyberspace, you don’t have any idea who’s black, who’s white, who makes what, but [?] you know who lives where. You have no concept of that. And then when you go to the residencies and everybody’s sort of in it together. We all talked to each other and supported each other. We were all there for the same reason – to get that degree.

Tyler agreed that relationships had already been established prior to the face-to-face encounters. He described the first residency experience as “intense.” He went on to describe the experience this way,

The weird thing is, a lot of people [at residency] would say, “Oh my God, you’re not what I pictured”... [Laughing] But... you had already established this relationship prior to seeing what these people actually looked like and that was a good thing. The relationships were built off of just sheer interactions from email through the university site and online team discussions. I truly felt like that that allowed us to put any personal preferences aside and do what was necessary to achieve that goal. And when we had this face-to-face interaction, anything from that point was just icing on the cake.

Lauryn was surprised to see so many African Americans at the residency, but saw it as an affirmation of the academic commitment of these students when given a chance. “I believe that for-profit colleges and universities provide students with the encouragement and support they need to take on such educational challenges as adult learners,” Lauryn said. “In addition, I believe that African American students at these institutions are continuing to set the mark for others to come as they succeed in completing doctoral degrees.”

All of the participants who had experienced residencies described them as helpful. The participants told stories of how they reached out to other students in the program as they got to know each other. They exchanged phone numbers, and in many instances became very good friends. Cameron referred to residencies as “a way to find other students who have similar interests or those who are within your program area.” He further stated, “I made friends [at residency] and we still keep in touch. You know, when they were all doing their comprehensive exams, I could provide encouragement and vice versa. So that’s been a big help as well.”

Frances said the contact with other students was particularly valuable during the dissertation phase. She metaphorically stated that contact with other students helped her “see the light at the end of the tunnel.” There were more stories of friendship and support. Justice, who was about to attend her first residency shared her excitement this way,

...And that will be my first Residency. I’m looking forward to getting to know some of these professors, seeing what their philosophies are. I’m actually excited. Colin Powell is going to be the keynote speaker. I’m like “oh wow, that’s interesting,” But, I’m looking forward to seeing what their philosophy is and getting to know some of

the students and kind of forming those relationships. Maybe that will happen because right now it's just kind uh, how do I say it? Right now it's just me and the computer, and that's really all it is.

Regarding the cost of the mandatory residencies which is not included in tuition, Justice stated, "I'm asking [my advisor] how students finance the Residency because it's not considered college credit. It's considered just an extra part of your experience that you are required to have." Though she talked about her concern of how to pay for the experience, she came up with this idea that, "students from [home state]... could post to the student center discussion board something like 'Hey, if anyone's going to [residency location], let me know. Let's hook up...'"

Justice further reflects on her thoughts about there being a large proportion of African Americans in FPCU doctoral programs stating,

Many of us cannot take the time or resources to attend a university full time and work as research assistants. It's tough to do that particularly when starting from an unequal point. In my belief we have to work harder and longer than our white counterparts, so having the for-profit schools makes life easier in a sense. I can work full time and provide for myself and obtain a first class education as well.

FPCU faculty and staff help student stay connected

This section on social interactions includes contact and connection to faculty, because participants mentioned it most in terms of their sense of connection. Whereas students at traditional universities may visit professors during office hours, students at FPCUs have a different experience. Instructors at FPCUs tend to be adjuncts and may not have a location

for local students to meet with them. Additionally, they may live many miles away from the students. The participants' stories reveal that FPCU students have varied and mixed experiences with faculty just as those at traditional universities.

Justice stated that "all of her interactions with faculty are via the computer." In her story, she stated that "her professors gave good feedback, but there is a sense of disconnect." As she put it, "My professors give good feedback for the courses that I'm in, but it's just kind of a digital divide. There's not much of a kinship, mentorship, interaction, professor/student interaction." The participants describe their experiences with professors as more like a means to an end goal and less as a mentor or professional colleague.

Frances' story revealed that she has more opportunities and avenues for interaction than what Justice reported. Frances' professors gave students their personal contact information and they had designated office hours in which students could call. She pointed out that as an online student you had to take the initiative to use professor's availability. As she put it, "You had to learn how to take advantage of whatever resources [professors made] available to you." Frances says she sensed that her professors treated their job and contact with students as serious business. She said, "I never felt like faculty members were pushing me through a class or that they didn't read my work."

Alpha's story showed that she was pleased with contact with professors overall. She stated that professors respond to questions within 48 hours. However, for Alpha, this type of on line interaction does not match well with her learning style. "I am a visual and verbal person. I'd rather be in front of them [professors] asking questions or getting responses. I can

understand it better face-to-face,” she said. However, she relayed how valuable it had been to have an engaged advisor. She this of her advisor,

I saw that she was interested in and worried about if everything was okay with me.

She actually emailed me and left me a phone message. And then at the beginning of the program, she always asked me is there anything I needed, if I had any questions or any help I needed She wanted to know how my classes were going. Of course it [the contact] lessened, which is understandable. But it shows me that if I needed it, I knew that there was someone I could just call and they could help me or assist me.

Tony’s story also reveals a sense of appreciation for the support shown to him by faculty. He recounts,

My statistics instructor, I remember, did a good thing for me. I had to turn in my exam and my graphs were not there. So she called me and said “I can accept your exam as it is, and you may do alright, but I don’t see any graphs here. Would you like to resubmit it?” So she gave me another day or two. And that was meaningful to me because it made me think that the instructors were not just trying to be hard cases.

They were, like, just trying to make sure the student to learn new stuff.

On the other hand, Peter found some of the interactions and communication with faculty to be disappointing. He said,

I felt like [this particular professors] was not engaging me the way I wanted, nor was he timely. It was unfortunate because I know that this was an isolated incident but, the other students in my dissertation classroom had those same experiences with him. I feel like it was just that he was stretched too thin.

Peter went further to tell of a specific incident in one of the few face-to-face courses. As he reflected he could not stop laughing at the experiences. He retells it this way,

I had one professor who was...who kind of taught us like we were elementary school students. You know, giving us snacks. (Laughs) It was crazy. We had the little nametags with our names on the desk. She made us go see a play one particular weekend. So it was just...it was the gamut of experiences, both from the positive end of the spectrum all the way to the negative. But if I had to say, altogether, most of it was right in between.

Cameron pleased with his connection to faculty stated, “I get a lot of feedback, a lot of constructive criticism, positive feedback, and encouragement as well.”

Success Enhances for African American Doctoral Students at FPCUs

In this section, participants shared stories of attributes, tools and resources that enhance their success. It further captures their references their ability to overcome the negative comments that they are subjected to regarding their choice to attend an FPCU.

Ability to manage workload in face of negative public perception enhances success

All of the participants reported that being successful at a FPCU was much the same as being successful at a traditional university. The only difference was that these participants believed that it takes much more discipline to succeed in the online environment because you are so isolated. “You have to be disciplined, dedicated and willing to defend your school from comments that you hear from others in the community” said Lauryn. As Justice stated, “I’m stretching myself as a thinker and a researcher so that this doesn’t become what people

like to think of it as, as a degree mill. I want to make sure that I can say I have grown as a writer and a researcher.”

Justice stated that she get frustrated with the jokes and comments about online universities. She told of it this way,

That’s always been the joke. Some people say, ‘oh you’re working on your degree online,’ and not to me personally, but just in conversations on TV shows... It’s like they are saying, “oh you’re paying for your higher level degree from an online institution and they are just going to print out your degree and send it to you in the mail?’ You know, that kind of the standing joke that ‘oh basically you’re just paying for them to give you a degree. You don’t really have to do much work,’ ...

But Justice exclaims, that is not the case.

It’s quite the opposite. I have a lot of work that has to be done every week. So it’s not easy but people do think of it like that. They say, ‘Oh you know, it’s not like you’re going to a real university.’

All 12 of the participants described themselves as good students with a lot of discipline. For Tyler, success is internally motivated and borne some out of tragedy. Tyler shared,

I am putting myself out there so that I am a direct reflection on my family. I want my family to be proud of me, who I am, what I’ve accomplished, where I’m going, what I can do for other people, so that they can say, ‘you know what? Despite all that he has encountered, losing the parents, the issues at the undergraduate school, what’s going

on at his job, what he's experienced in the past, that it has not changed who he is as a person and that he continues to do whatever he can to make the world a better place'. All of the participants in this study concur that the negative perception of FPCUs is unfounded. They insist emphatically that FPCUs offer quality education and the rigor one would expect in a doctoral program. They used words like "strenuous" and "intense" to describe their experiences. Frances states, "They're going to be able to tell within the first quarter of taking a course if you're prepared to do this or not." Andrea declares that it is a mistake to go into FPCUs expecting the work to be easy. She foretells problems for those that expect an easy program,

It's not hard to get *into* [emphasis added] these schools, but it *is* [emphasis added] hard to stay in. I think all the students, not just African Americans, are anxious to finish school, and they think online classes will be easy. As an online instructor, I see the number of students who struggle to keep up with the coursework. As a doctoral student I see the amount of time and commitment it takes to do well. If the research is true, I'd like to see the statistics of the number of African Americans that actually graduate from these schools. I think the number will drop significantly.

Alpha was one of those that were caught off guard at first. She explains,

I didn't know that there would be so many assignments due in one week, [laughing] in one class. I knew that a doctorate meant DOCTORATE [capitalized for emphasis], but I did not think it would be this hard. For instance, this past weekend I did four assignments Sunday. Our assignments are due each Sunday and usually its discussion questions, a quiz, journal paper assignment, and another assignment. That's four

assignments a week. Sometimes they stretch it out for two weeks. But even though it sounds like a long time, you have to think about the rest of your life.

On the other hand, Peter thought he had it pretty easy for a while. He vividly recounted this story,

When I hear people who are working on their PhD saying, “oh this class is kicking my butt,” and I’m like, “well what class were you in?” [Laughing] You know, all I had to do was make a presentation on a chapter or write a paper about something, you now like “what’s going on in your program?” You get a false sense of security at first. But, when you get to the dissertation... the expectations are way up versus what you had in classes. You begin to doubt, okay “am I really prepared for this? Can I do this?”

Access to resources provided by FPCU aids success

According to participants, the resources offered by FPCUs are similar to the resources of traditional universities except they are electronic. All of the participants revealed that they really like the online library, but they also take advantage of local libraries. According to Frances, her “[FPCU] has a fully functioning virtual library. They have librarians on staff during regular daytime hours. You can email them questions about finding resources and they’ll send it back to you immediately.”

The writing center was a resource that participants found helpful. Their stories revealed that the writing center is adequately staffed and responsive. They reported that they can send a paper electronically and get feedback right away. This was consistent across

participants regardless of school attended. Participants also consistently reported that they were able to log on the webinars. They also have workshops where they learn about APA format. Some participants reported that the APA workshop were the most valuable resource offered by their institutions. Students at traditional universities would probably appreciate electronic writing centers and workshops specially geared toward APA formatting.

The participants also revealed that having a responsive advisor enhanced their success. Alpha recalls that her advisor was very engaged. She stated,

That week that I didn't sign on my advisor called me and asked me if everything was okay. She said, 'I see that you haven't signed on in seven days'. I saw that she was interested in knowing if everything was okay with me. She actually emailed me and left me a phone message. At the beginning of the program, she always asked me if there was anything I needed.

Justice was the only participant to report a negative advisor experience. She felt that he [advisor] was not engaged and not open to answering her questions. Justice requesting a new advisor because she was so displeased. After she made the request for a new advisor, he improved. She saw this as another instance in which it would have been better to have had face-to-face contact.

Overall, the participants for this study had positive experiences and felt supported within the FPCU structure. The support from other students and the responsiveness and availability of university resources enhanced their success. This was consistent across participants' stories. The support enhanced their ability to stay focused academically.

Using support systems helps FPCU students succeed

Most doctoral students will tell you the value of having support to get through difficult times. FPCU students are even more isolated so having support may be even more important. The participants relied heavily on family support and were less inclined to report reliance on support within the academic setting. Ricky was pleased with his support system and felt it was valuable in helping him through the process. In his story he said,

Well, my mom definitely supports me. She does it by bragging to everybody. My sister supports me as well. I also have my co-worker who is also in the doctoral program. We support each other. He supports me and makes sure I'm staying on task, because he knows what I'm going through since he's doing it to. So he holds me accountable.

Frances really believes that she could not have made it without the support of her husband and her parents. Because of all of their support, now that she is done, she tries to make their lives easier. This is what Frances revealed in her story,

My mom had a keen way of kind of knowing when I needed a break and would come by help with the kids. My dad was always very positive throughout the entire process and I would say he was probably he was probably the architect of that whole "going to get your Ph.D." thing 'cause he's very adamant about it. He would say, "You go through the entire process. Don't just stop." And my husband was so supportive and understanding. I could not have made it without him.

The participants in this study shared stories of abundant support from family as a source of strength. Often it was their own ability to persevere that provided the foundation for their

success. They spoke of various resources provided by FPCUs as helpful in the academic process.

Impediments to Success

Impediments to Success for African American Doctoral Students at FPCUs

This section captures data that speak to the impediments of success. When participants used terms like “degree mill” to describe public perception of FPCUs the words were captured to tell the story of their fear of the potential devaluation of their FPCU degree. Most of the participants stated there would not be deterred by negative perception.

Potential devaluation of FPCU degrees concerns FPCU students

Frances stated that when she contacted a community agency to interview for her dissertation the agency was at first excited to assist her. However, she said, when the agency found out she was from [FPCU] they were no longer interested and questioned the validity of the degree. Andrea is worried about how others perceive her degree. However, she is hopeful. In her written narrative she expressed her concerns this way,

My greatest concern (I won't say it is a fear) is that my degree will not be as respected as a degree earned through the traditional route. Although most online programs are housed in traditional colleges and universities, some people don't believe a degree from an online program is valid. I don't know if the fact that I spent over 100 hours in a classroom will matter. I don't know if the fact that I worked hard for my degree will matter. I know those skeptics are out there, but my prayer is that God will open doors for me. He has

blessed me thus far, so I will continue to work hard and rely on His guidance to get where I want to go.

Justice elaborates on statements she made earlier regarding African American taking a chance on FPCUs. Here are some of her comments,

I believe that for-profit institutions are more good than evil. They are providing students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to have access to higher education. The expense is troublesome, but necessary. If African Americans are taking advantage of these institutions in larger numbers it's because they want access to the same education that their white counterparts have received for years before it was open to them. Peter is hopeful that the FPCUs will gain respect as he explains the role that they play for many African Americans He comments that, "These institutions offer attractive programs for students who have to work in order to pay for school. Most traditional institutions do not offer the same type of flexibility that for-profit colleges can."

While Jasper is hopeful about the FPCUs, his bigger concern has to do with how the economy will might shape the utility of his doctorate. He shared, "My greatest fear or concern is entry into the academic realm. Not because my degree is non-traditional, but rather because it is a venture into a new field and during economic uncertainty. Transitioning to a new career has its challenges."

Incurring debt raises concerns about future

All participants in this study, except one, have incurred student loan debt as a result of pursuing doctorate. Though for a lot of people the debt would be a looming worry, these

participants see the loan debt as an important investment. While loan debt is listed in this section as a barrier to success, it is placed there more so because of what is suggested in literature. At this point, few are concerned about the debt.

Justice is one of those that are concerned. Justice believes that the loan debt is an issue, but a necessary expense. Justice states,

I believe that for-profit institutions are more good than evil. They are providing students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to have access to higher education. The expense is troublesome, but necessary. If African Americans are taking advantage of these institutions in larger numbers it's because they want access to the same education that their white counterparts have received for years before it was open to them.

Cameron reflects concern that he may be denied that opportunity. He is not so concerned about the debt, but wants the money to be well spent. He expresses his concerns this way,

My greatest fear is that my degree will be looked down upon due to it being from an online institution. Also, those [traditional] universities will not be interested in providing me with an opportunity to use what I have learned due to my degree being from an online institution. I have received conflicting information that leads me to worry about how my degree will be accepted.

Jasper is not concerned at all about the debt. He considers himself a lifelong learner and is working on his second doctorate. Jasper stated, "I do not think much about the student loan debt as a lifelong learner. I will probably die with student loan debt, but I am a better

person because of my education and I do not regret one penny of the expense.” Tony is more concerned about the debt if he does not finish than he is about the reputation of the university. He said,

“My greatest fear is that I won’t complete the program. It is too big of a commitment of time and money to not finish. – it will be something that will hang over me until I die if I don’t complete this.”

He elaborates more by saying that the debt is not the faulty of the FPCUs. He said,

Well when I started I calculated that my student loans would be less than 50K; however, those loans are going to be closer to 70K when I’m done. This is not a miscalculation or any deception by the university. It is just taking longer as I’ve chosen to take extra courses... I’m single and in general have lived modestly so in the end I think that I should be able to afford the expense. It’s a big deal but at least I do not have children also attending college.

Peter, in his comments, reflects more hope than fear by saying, “I see the debt as an investment in my future. Hopefully, I will be able to see a tremendous return on my investment throughout my professional career.”

Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a summary of the research findings. The findings were organized according to research questions. The participants’ stories provided rich thick data to paint a picture of the experiences of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. The next chapter will contain discussions, conclusions, implications and summary.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, framed by critical race theory, sought to explore how social and environmental factors shape the experiences of African American doctoral students at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
2. What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?
3. What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?
4. What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

This chapter provides a summary of the study; a discussion of the conclusions; implications for practice; and recommendations for further research related to African American doctoral students at FPCUs.

Summary of the Study

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) ensures the gathering of information rich cases. Twelve African American FPCU doctoral students and graduates shared their stories of success, reward, struggle, and challenge in pursuit of their dream of earning a doctorate. These participants were representatives from FPCUs around the country. Distance education was the primary route through which their learning occurred in their doctoral programs. Data were captured through semi-structured interviews, written prompts, observations, field notes and institutional websites. The coding of the data followed a thematic analysis approach,

which Riessman (2008) explains is a way of analyzing data by theorizing from the individual case rather than across cases. The thematic analysis approach is appropriate for “stories that develop in interview conversations” (p. 54). Each participant’s transcript was examined and coded individually by three independent coders. Each coder focused on the participants’ experiences and not the structure of speech or language style that the participant chose to use (Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2008). The study results led to conclusions about the social and academic experiences as well as the enhancers and impediments of success for African American doctoral students at FPCUs. The experiences of these participants lead to conclusions that are multifaceted and complex.

Conclusions and Discussions

There were four main conclusions drawn from this study of African American doctoral students at FPCUs. Based on the experiences of participants in this study and my analysis therein, the conclusions are as follows: 1) Students experience fewer microaggressions in the online environment; 2) Flexible admissions process attracts African American students; 3) Though African American doctoral students at FPCUs demonstrate perseverance and have high expectations, they face limited career opportunities; and 4) African American doctoral students at FPCUs incur high debt to receive flexible admissions and scheduling.

Conclusion One: Students experience fewer microaggressions in the online environment

This first conclusion describes how microaggressions are lessened for African American doctoral students due to FPCUs’ online environment. It also provides insight into the question of whether the online experience or FPCUs themselves aid the invisibility of

race. Critical race theory (CRT) offers an approach to challenge and critique distortions about people of color and to honor their voices (Yosso, 2005). It has been used mostly in qualitative research to challenge subtle and overt forms of racism against students of color in higher education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). Racism in the online FPCU environment is so subtle that it is expressed by the participants of this current study as invisible or non-existent.

Critical race theory calls on scholars to critique institutions and structures that may benefit the dominate group at the expense the less privileged groups. To that end, this current study uses narratives from African American doctoral students at FPCUs to provide insight into their academic experiences by examining both individual and structural inequality. The participants in this study adamantly report that neither race nor racism factors into their online academic experiences at FPCUs. Primarily, they credit this to their FPCU ability to be invisible in the online environment. Essentially though, they are saying that there is no racism because nobody can see their physical characteristics.

According to the sentiments expressed by participants in this study, suggest that FPCUs have found a way to produce an academic environment free of racism. Were it so, it would be a monumental finding and accomplishment indeed. CRT asserts that race and racism are central and prevalent in US society (Yosso, 2005). As racism is endemic in this society (Solórzano, 2000) any assertions of an environment free from racism calls for further critical analysis. When racism results in overt acts, like lynching or dragging an individual behind a pickup truck, it is much easier to identify and critique. However, failure to identify an act or institution as racist does not mean that racism is not present or influential (Delgado

& Stefancic, 2001). Regardless of how covert, racism must always be critiqued and dismantled.

Microaggressions are “subtle and often unconscious racist acts that cumulatively add stress to the experiences of people of color” (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007, p. 511). These acts manifest as daily grinding insults that chip away at the emotional and psychological well-being of African Americans and result from stereotyped expectations (Guinier, 2003; Solórzano (1997). Critical race scholars have examined microaggressions and their influence in the collegiate racial environment (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2000). Additionally, scholars have examined how stereotypes and racism negatively impact the academic experiences of people of color in higher education (Chance, Ginsberg, Davies & Smith, 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2007; King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996; Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2000).

These subtle forms of racism, as well as discrimination and isolation, have often been reported by African American graduate students at traditional universities, which rely much more than FPCUs on a face to face academic environment (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cevero, & Bowles, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Such experiences adversely impact the academic experience. Steele and Aronson (1995) found that these microaggressions and stereotypes induce stress and anxiety and can actually depress exam scores. Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) found that “stereotype threats” (p. 518) can be internalized and create self-doubt even when the student is determined not to be impacted by stereotypes. A stereotype threat is a disruptive concern that negative stereotypes will lead to negative evaluations (Steele & Aronson, 1997; Walton & Spencer,

2009). Likewise, the participants in the current study identified stereotype threats in their admission that they intentionally withheld their racial identity in order to avoid unfair academic evaluation and inaccurate expectations.

Johnson-Bailey et al. (2009) examined the social experiences of Black graduate alumni. Their study used five factors related to race that negatively impacted the participants' academic experiences. Among their findings were that black graduates felt isolated from the university community and they "experienced discrimination, isolation and loneliness" (p. 192). Furthermore, their survey data revealed that black graduate students also experienced the negative effects of stereotyping as well as both overt and covert discrimination. Similarly, Daniel (2007) found that African American graduate students at traditional universities reported they felt like outsiders within their institutions. In addressing attrition and race, Golde (2005) concluded that less than 40 percent of African American doctoral students finish the process. Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000) found that African American students experienced more difficulties in graduate school than their white counterparts. They further suggested that negative experiences around race shape those experiences. Specifically, they found that African American graduate students reported overt acts of racism and experienced feelings of being out of place. These findings were consistent with King and Chepyator-Thomas, (1996). The participants in this current study did not report feelings of isolation or overt racism. However, participants in this current study strategically avoided situations that could lead to such negative experiences. Their experiences can be more accurately be compared to African American students in traditional distance learning programs as more literature emerges in this area.

A Carnegie Research Institute study found that African American doctoral students at traditional universities expressed feelings of racism and isolation (Chance, Ginsberg, Davies & Smith, 2004). Likewise, participants in this current study, as evidenced through their narratives, experienced racism and microaggressions in their previous academic experiences at predominately white institutions. They reported that such experiences were one of the reasons they delayed application to doctoral programs. The literature, fraught with such stories, makes clear that microaggressions are commonly experienced by students of color on university campuses. This current study found that the online FPCU environment may offer a place of relative safety for promising African American scholars to escape these heavy burdens in order to concentrate more fully on academics. However, this refuge is not without costs and is likely related to the online nature of FPCUs and not to the institutions themselves.

Most participants in my study had been high achievers academically since pre-college years. They had taken advanced placement (AP) and honors courses in high school and attended large predominately white higher education institutions. Their narratives were evidence that they excelled academically throughout their lives. However, Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) found microaggressions to be particularly common and troublesome for high achievers which may explain why the participants in this current study were particularly averse to identifying as African American in online course. Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) add that high achievers, whether in a high school or university setting, often must spend time proving that they actually earned admissions or that they deserved to enroll in certain courses. In this current study, participants articulated incidents of racism in previous high

school and university programs. However their consistent references to race invisibility, through a preponderance of online classes in FPCUs, stood out clearly. The online environment of the FPCU allowed them to be judged by their academic performance. The participants in this current study described it as the first time in their lives in which they were able to be judged solely by their academic ability.

In a previous study, Daniels (2007) found a lack of cultural sensitivity of white faculty to be a hindrance to successful student outcomes for African American students. The current study's participants did not openly reveal their racial identity in the FPCU online environment, which by definition produces race invisibility. In this context, it is not surprising that participants consistently report no racist acts by FPCU faculty. Participants' option to conceal their race could be instituted as easily in online courses at traditional institutions as at FPCUs. In addition, there is little from the literature to suggest that for-profit institutions have developed specific strategies to address racism or discrimination. The fact participants in this current study report no overt faculty racism at FPCUs must also be examined in this light. Current literature regarding FPCU faculty does not provides further insight on this issue. This current literature focuses on FPCUs' faculty part-time adjunct status and lack of opportunity for tenure (Berg, 2005; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007), and does not address race or cultural issues. Though a few participants complained that some FPCU faculty members are not responsive, they emphasized that such experiences were isolated and not different from what they experienced at traditional universities.

Participants in the current study were able to see pictures of faculty online, but expressed no differences in treatment from professors based on either their own race or the

race of the professor, none of whom knew the participants' race. At traditional universities, some African American doctoral students report that they believe racism contributes to bias in grading (Engberg, 2004; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Gullen, 2003). In contrast, the participants in this current study expressed belief that their grades at the FPCU were simply a reflection of their performance and not related to race. It is difficult to make determinations about the presence of or absence of racism in an environment in which physical attributes are hidden. The literature is quite clear that racism is a burden for African American students at traditional universities. My study suggests a need to address the online environment as an avenue for academic study in which microaggressions are reduced. The current study's participants were keenly aware, based on their past academic experiences, that revealing racial identity in an academic setting can have negative consequences.

Though not discussed heavily in the literature, the fear of identifying oneself by race can be a form of racism. Participants in the current study made the premeditated decision to withhold their racial identity, despite their expressed pride in their racial heritage. They believed it to be unsafe to reveal their race in the FPCU online setting. The course websites offer students the option of posting pictures and other identifying information. Despite being at an FPCU, the participants in the current study felt a lack of safety to openly identify as African American. At the same time is worth noting that FPCU doctoral students attend colloquia, also referred to as residencies, in which they gather at various locations around the country for week long face-to-face educational and social experiences. They report that race does not factor into these experiences, even though the shield of invisibility is removed.

Perhaps because the relationships were established online prior to face-to-face encounters, racism may be less prevalent, but more study is needed. As more traditional institutions gravitate toward online degree programs, it will be interesting to observe if similar scenarios emerge when profit is not the institution's primary motive.

The participants of this study had little knowledge or appreciation for the economic importance of retention at for-profit institutions. Though all higher education institutions prefer to retain students, FPCUs have a greater financial incentive to do so. Faculty can ill afford to display any behaviors that lead students to dropout. The population of African Americans at FPCUs is disproportionately high (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Study participants were asked to react to the statistics about the disproportionality of African Americans at FPCUs. Study participants viewed this statistic as evidence of FPCUs showing responsiveness to African American students. Though they expressed surprise that so many African Americans were pursuing doctorates at FPCUs, they credited it to FPCUs' ability to understand the needs of African American students, as evidenced by the online course focus, contributing to a reduction in microaggressions and flexible scheduling. Further, they saw it as indicative of the institutions' willingness to accept students that may have been denied by traditional institutions.

In sum, the experiences of these participants' point to the importance of the scholarship of race in the examination of the role of race for African American graduate students in academic settings. Even when prompted and offered possible examples, the participants insisted that neither race nor racism have figured into their FPCU experience. However this study seriously questions the degree to which this reduction of

microaggressions is due to any particular attribute indicative of FPCUs, given the racial invisibility offered and chosen by African American doctoral students through the preponderance of online academic experiences at FPCUs. This study's findings raise the disturbing notion that African Americans must be invisible in order to receive favorable treatment equal to that of their White peers. As will be discussed in a later conclusion, FPCU doctoral students pay a very high price financially for this race invisibility. The experiences of the current study participants provide voice for improved future understanding of the presence or absence of racism within the context for online courses at FPCUs, as well as traditional non-profit institutions.

Conclusion Two: Flexible admissions process attracts African American students

The second conclusion provides insight into why these African American doctoral students chose FPCUs over traditional non-profit higher education institutions. Several participants in this current study reported that they were accepted in doctoral programs at traditional universities. Others reported that they either did not get accepted or were reluctant to apply to traditional universities. As one participant put it, the biggest difference between an FPCU and a traditional university is that the FPCU will accept students. Flexible admissions process and no standardized exam requirement are important factors that do appear to attract a higher percentage of African American doctoral students to apply to FPCUs.

The lack of GRE requirement was an important consideration for participants in the current study. The majority of participants in the current study indicated that the GRE hindered them from applying to doctoral programs. The findings from participants in this

study were consistent with the literature on African American students and standardized exams. Several participants reported that they put off pursuing doctoral study because of the standardized exam requirement. In this context, it is important to note that the participants in this study had experienced academic and professional success in the past. For these participants, the FPCUs' lack of standardized exam requirement represented another escape from barriers imposed by what they deem racism and lack of awareness at traditional institutions.

As discussed in chapter two of this document, the GRE has not been found to be a good predictor of academic success for African American graduate students. Medina (2002) found that the GRE was not a good predictor of graduate school success beyond the first year and that the GRE does not “adequately assess a test taker’s full potential for achievement in scholastic, professional, or personal endeavors” (p. 1). He argued that this is most concerning because it limits access to graduate school for people of color who tend to have lower GRE scores. Medina (2002) pointed to a study by Yale University that also showed the GRE was not predictive beyond the first year and was only about one percent predictive when factors other than GPA were considered. Studies questioning the predictability of the GRE as a measurement of academic success are not new to the literature (Hackman, Wiggins & Bass, 1970; Hirshberg & Itken, 1978), yet traditional higher education institutions remain largely reluctant to reconsider its usage (Bair & Haworth, 2004).

Critical race scholars, Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), opposed the use of standardized exams in admissions decisions. They argue that such exams can only demonstrate one’s ability to perform on a particular set of question on a particular day and do

not predict one's ability to learn. Along this same line Yosso (2005) posits that people of color have limited access to the training classes needed to acquire test taking strategy useful for taking standardized measures. Bourdieu and Passeron (1997), assert that the dominant groups, because of this access to cultural and economic capital, are less impeded by standardized tests and thus score higher than people of color. Participants in the current study report an awareness that White peers appeared to have more access to preparatory courses and well as better defined academic networks

Participants in this current study complain that these standardized exams can add months or years to the time an applicant can meet application requirements. These participants indicated that they could not afford to invest a long time in exam preparation. Of course, this note leads to the pressing question of whether or not African Americans can afford the price tag of FPCUs which is discussed in conclusion four. Participants also reported that the lack of standardized exam requirement reduce application expenses. Given that FPCU tuition can be double and triple that of traditional institutions, costs for other expenses related to academics pale in comparison and attempts to limits expenses simply by avoiding exams should be closely scrutinized.

There is more to the reluctance and avoidance of standardized exams than simply financial cost. Traditional universities see standardized exams as race neutral tools that help them admit the best students (Roithmayr, 1999). Yet, this current study found that high achieving African Americans, both academically and professionally, had not performed well on standardized exams. Because of this, many feared the door to doctoral studies would be closed to them. The participants provided a counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) that

called to question the usefulness of the GRE as a measurement tool. Despite prior academic and professional success, the GRE hindered African Americans that sought doctoral studies. For some, the GRE requirement caused them to considered abandoning their dream of entering a doctoral program altogether. Participants in this current study also report that their time was better spent actually earning a degree instead of preparing for what nearly all considered a useless tool. Whether or not the tool is useless continues to be debated in the literature. However, this study clearly indicates that it is a tool that serves as a barrier and limits options for African Americans.

Participants, through their stories, told of experiences with standardized exams that led them to question their academic ability and even whether or not they belonged at a university. Although they consistently mentioned how the exams appear to be more problematic for African Americans, they were reluctant to label it racism. This is consistent with CRT scholars' suggestion that racism that is not blatant is more difficult to see and thus harder to attack (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tyson, 1998). Traditional higher education institutions use the GRE and other standardized exams as unbiased measured of academic potential. Even ETS, the corporation that administers the GRE, cautions institutions against using the exam to predict academic success (www.ETS.com). The way that the study participants grappled with their inability to do well on these exams, despite their overall academic success, suggests that they internalized the message of meritocracy and color blindness as equal opportunity.

Because one may not be able to point to blatant racism in standardized exams, it is easier to conclude that failure to do well is simply the result of individual deficiency. Lopez

(2005) emphasized that the fact that is harder to detect or understand does not mean that it is not in fact racist. When these standardized measures are used and reflect poorly on student of color, often institutional racism is overlooked and the blame is placed on the individual (Solórzano, 1998). Race is a social construct (Lopez, 2005) and differences in performance, based on race, must be viewed in light of how race is operationalized in society. Consistent with findings of CRT scholars, participants in this study did not see of the use of standardized exam scores as an objective measure of their actual potential.

We know that studies have shown that expectation plays a role in performance outcomes (Mayo & Christenfeld, 1999; Wojtkiewicz, 2005), thus more consideration should be given to the low expectations that are placed in African Americans regarding standardized exams. Racism and the effect of stereotyping have also been shown to depress exam scores (Steele & Aronson, 1995). These, and other findings, suggest that not only is race socially constructed, but likely the standardized exam performance results for African Americans are socially constructed and influenced by negative perception. As such, they are not only questionable as predictive tools, but also questionable as fair measurements for something as important as higher education access.

In addition to the lack of the GRE requirement, participants also appreciated the FPCU admissions process which was described by study participants and the literature as quick, simple and guided step-by-step by an enrollment counselor (Berg, 2005; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002; Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). Study participants also found important a quick, efficient admissions process that allowed them to begin the program much sooner than would a traditional institution. Although technology has evolved, the admissions process at

traditional universities remains slow and arduous. Few things in life are more nerve racking than awaiting an acceptance letter from a university. For traditional institutions, the time between submitting an application and getting a decision can be months. This drawn-out process has been part of the admissions ritual for decades at traditional universities. Those that pursue

doctoral studies at an FPCU can expect to receive an answer in a few days or few weeks. Adults, with busy lives that are forced to wait a long period of time for an admissions decision may change their minds or get pulled by other demands. Perhaps traditional universities can attract more African American students to doctoral programs by instituting a more efficient admissions process that allows applicants to get decision sooner and thus plan better around demanding schedules. This current study further finds that the lengthy and sometimes confusing admissions process of traditional universities discourages some African American doctoral applicants. The near immediate admission decisions provided by FPCUs (Berg, 2005) may reduce the likelihood that applicants will be distracted by other things and thus further put off their doctoral studies. The FPCUs appear to recognize that adults not only lead busy lives, but seek immediate doors of opportunity.

While flexibility in admissions is an attraction to FPCUs, these institutions spend considerable amounts of money to recruit these students. The largest FPCU, the University of Phoenix, paid \$78 million in 2009 to settle a claim of improperly compensating its recruiters. Were it not for the profit, it would be difficult to see reasons for the FPCUs to cater to or target African American applicants. FPCUs are driven to

make profits for shareholders and their money comes from tuition fees paid by students. Apparently, they see in African Americans, an untapped market for admissions. At any given time, one can click on websites of FPCUs or turn on a television and see that they use many African American faces in their advertisements. FPCUs have been heavily criticized for their recruiting tactics which have included paying enrollment counselors for each student enrolled (Wilson, 2010). In just a three month time period in 2009, the Apollo Group, which owns the University of Phoenix, spent \$275 million on promotion and recruitment (Wilson, 2010). The FPCUs' click commercial, often with testimonies from African Americans, also indicates a particular recruitment focus on African Americans. Although the participants in this study report that admissions flexibility was an important part of their attraction to FPCUs, the amount of money used as a magnet in the pursuit of these students cannot be overlooked. The participants from this current study report that they could see themselves in the advertisements used by FPCUs. One participant in this current study reports that she attempted to reach the FPCU so that she could be featured in advertisements. The findings of this study suggest that the message is getting across to the intended audience.

While Knowles (1973) referred to the adult learner as the neglected species, this study showed that they may be more misunderstood than neglected. This study revealed that African American applicants to doctoral programs carry the damage from past negative experiences in higher education. Even with good past academic performance, the admissions processes at traditional non-profit institutions that overly rely on GREs cause them to doubt themselves, rather than the process. All of the participants in this study indicate that the

uncomplicated approach to education attracted them to the FPCU. While many traditional universities complain about not having adequate numbers of African Americans in doctoral programs, it appears that a guided user-friendly process, with academic programs flexible enough for full-time workers, could strengthen the number of African American doctoral students.

Conclusion three: African American doctoral students at FPCUs demonstrate perseverance and have high expectations, but face limited career opportunities

Conclusion three provides insight into the challenge FPCU students and graduates face. The participants in this current study represent African Americans doctoral students that are focused and insist on a quality education. The participants talk often about the rigor of their academic program. FPCUs continue to have detractors who criticize the quality of their academic programs, but Seiden (2009) argues that there are many aspects of these institutions that demonstrate academic rigor. This is consistent with the reports by participants in the current study. Among the items that plague the reputations of many FPCUs are their dearth of tenured professors, use of adjuncts, accelerated schedules, and relaxed admissions requirements which when combined, project the image of FPCUs as “degree mills.” This label implies that FPCUs are not providing a rigorous academic experience for their students. The experience of the students in this study rejects this claim. They make it clear that they would not be interested in a program that handed out degrees without strong expectations.

FPCUs are often viewed in the literature as less selective institutions that accept students that are less likely to succeed (Berger & Lyon, 2005, p. 3; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh

& Whitt, 2005). The participants in this study defy that characterization. The current study participants, after working a full-time day job, were up into the late night completing papers and assignments. They state that the full academic schedules left little time for friends or family. They describe an academic system of turning in scholarly papers almost weekly. They further describe a process of engaging scholarly literature and scholarly discussions. Current study participants described their FPCU academic experience as similar to their traditional university experience in terms of the level of difficulty and amount of work.

Artino and Stephens (2009) found that the motivation of the student in an online environment has the most influence on student success. The highly motivated participants in the current study describe their academic process as rigorous. While several participants indicated that they enrolled thinking it would be less academically challenging than a traditional university, they quickly discovered that to be untrue yet persisted in their programs. In an earlier study that compared the students' perception of rigor in both online and traditional universities, Wyatt (2005) found that students at online universities reported their academic program to be more rigorous than what was reported by students at traditional universities. Wyatt (2005) defined rigor as a quality academic experience that is academically demanding. Interestingly, Wyatt (2005) found no difference between the levels of relevant interaction between student and faculty whether online or in traditional classroom. Participants in this current study report that FPCU professors set high expectations for academic work, require consistent engagement and preparation, were prepared themselves and treat students with respect and professionalism.

Their description of the doctoral process was similar to that at traditional institutions. During their face-to-face residency, FPCU doctoral students prepared for the doctorate in a structured step-by-step process. Similar to the student at a traditional university, the FPCU doctoral students select a committee and chair. They work closely with this team throughout the process. Just one participant reports being unhappy with his committee and characterizes the changing of committee chair during the process as disorganized. Such, of course, could also happen at a traditional university. The current participants describe a process of submitting several iterations of the written dissertation to their committee members. Participants in the current study want to make clear that they undergo a process of research and writing that is scholarly and rigorous.

One area of difference from most traditional institutions is physical environment of the final oral dissertation defense. As participants describe it, after their written dissertation has been received by all members, they electronically submit a PowerPoint presentation to the committee prior to the defense date. At an agreed upon time, the committee and the student commence a phone conference. The student then goes thorough each slide followed by a series of questions from the committee. The chair brings the conference call to an end. The student later receives a call from the chair with the committee's decision. While some traditionalists might find disfavor in this process, it essentially accomplishes the same rigorous academic process as a face-to-face oral dissertation defense, using technology again to enhance the possibilities and convenience of the defense.

Blumenstyk (2008) declared that FPCUs will be received more warmly as more well-respected [traditional] universities increase their distance learning offerings, though currently only 27 percent of adults polled believe that online universities offer the same quality of education as brick and mortar institutions. Blumenstyk (2008) also found that most people believe that employers perceive those from traditional universities more highly than those from online institutions and are thus less likely to hire graduates of online universities. In spite of these findings, the FPCUs are steadily increasing their revenues (Wilson, 2010). It is the graduates of these institutions that may be left holding a diploma worth much less than they had anticipated while shareholders cash in on the students' years of hard work and sacrifice.

None of this would come as a surprise to the participants in this current study who were keenly aware of the public's negative perception of doctorates from FPCUs. The participants have had successful careers and do not doubt their abilities. However, they are mindful of public perception and fear what it can mean for them. They have been confronted by insults and questions of the FPCUs' legitimacy. These participants, mostly graduates from traditional institutions, express confidence that the education that they receive from FPCUs is as good as or better than their experiences at traditional universities. This confidence will be of little consequence if the public is not convinced of the legitimacy of FPCUs degrees.

Predominately, participants in this study plan to use their doctorates to teach in higher education institutions upon graduation. Although the participants in this current study were undeterred by negative perception, an unwillingness of traditional higher education institutions to hire them may derail their post graduation career plans.

Unfortunately, for graduates of FPCU doctoral programs, DePriest (2009) found that 89 percent of university administrators would select a candidate from a traditional institution over an applicant from an online university. His study further found that significant stigma exists when it comes to hiring faculty with degrees from online universities. On a positive note, he found that universities that have a distance learning component are somewhat more favorable toward candidates with online degrees. It would be important to explore the acceptability of FPUC doctorate as entrees to teaching at online institutions.

Literature on FPCUs has tended to focus on qualitative methodologies, thus leaving out the critical component of the experiences of people of color that populate FPCU institutions. The literature has emphasized concerns regarding FPCUs such as high student loan default rates and questionable accreditation standards. However the literature falls short of recognizing the sheer determination of African American doctoral students to persist regardless of perceived obstacles. Braxton (2006) found that students will only persist if they see that the benefit outweighs the cost. Surprisingly, the current study's participants are aware that they are spending more for tuition than if they were at a traditional university. They are also aware of the perception of the FPCU doctorate. Yet, these students persist and express no intention of quitting. Perhaps the empowerment of being groundbreakers in this pursuit, along with the chance to show FPCUs as a viable option for African Americans, is more powerful than the risk. More likely they feel they have no other choice given traditional universities are perceived by them to set up barriers.

Although participants in the current study report that they spent considerable time researching the FPCU before enrolling, the literature suggests that it may have been wise for them to have researched traditional higher education institutions for similar online programs. FPCUs do tout their accreditations to students that inquire a little more investigating would reveal that most FPCU lack the more prestigious and accepted regional accreditation required of most institutions (Berg, 2005). FPCU student that decide to transfer to a traditional university may find that credits from universities that lack regional accreditation are not accepted.

Critical race theorists refer to aspirational capital, or the “ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The participants in this current study showed resilience in the face of negative circumstances. Though the benefit of such resilience and determination is not measured, it may be an essential component of one’s ability to persist through the doctoral process. Auerbach (2001), Solórzano 1992, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) attribute this cultural wealth (Gandara, 1995) or familial capital (Delgado-Bernal, 2002) to hopes and dreams instilled by parents’ desires to see their children break barriers. The participants of the current study, all from families that had high expectations and provided strong support attest to the importance of cultural wealth in the face of adversity. Further research can give an indication as to the results of these participants’ strengths demonstrated by their persistence. Because most participants in the current study had not graduated, more study is needed to look at persistence to graduation. The persistence and academic fortitude of the current study

participants should make them target of recruitment efforts of traditional higher education institutions.

The results of the current study reveal that some FPCU doctoral programs attract successful professionals that value academic rigor. It further shows these participants to be focused and prepare themselves everyday to meet not only academic challenges, but the tension between work, friends and family, while fending off negative criticism about FPCUs. They are what Guinier (2003), might refer to as the miner's canary. These study participants recognize that they are taking a risk, but persist in their doctoral studies hopeful and committed to bring about improvements in their lives. In addition, they hope prove that they are adequately prepared as teachers and researchers. Though the canary can provide valuable information for those that wait on the outside of the mine, the venture is not always good for the canary.

In the end, and unfortunately for students that chose FPCUs for doctoral studies, the outcomes may have less to do with rigor and more to do with acceptability of an online doctorate. Having a rigorous academic experience and resulting degree is of little meaning if it does not lead to greater economic and professional opportunities. Participants in the current study express concern, and in some cases doubt, that their degree from an online institution will be greeted with acceptance by traditional universities. The negative perception of FPCUs by traditional higher education institutions and other employers may fail to take account for the academic determination of applicants like those in this current study. The current study demonstrates that because of standardized exam requirement and rigid schedules, traditional higher education institutions are missing the opportunity to recruit and enroll talented African

Americans doctoral students. At the same time, these bright students, by turning away from traditional educational institutions are missing out on an opportunity to get an affordable education.

Conclusion Four: Students attending FPCUs chose high debt in exchange for flexibility.

This last conclusion addresses the high debt that FPCU student incur in pursuit of academic studies. There has been praise for FPCUs approach to scheduling that allows students to maintain their jobs and take care of their families (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). The current study shows that some of the FPCUs deliver on the promise of flexibility to the benefit of students. Overwhelmingly, the current study's participants were employed full-time while pursuing doctoral studies. More than any other response, flexibility was cited by participants as the primary reason that they selected an FPCU. This current study revealed that for many, having to give up employment for the pursuit of academic achievement would have been impossible.

More than their white counterparts, African American doctoral students are less likely to be able to leave their fulltime job to pursue doctoral studies (Berger & Lyon, 2005). The working adults in this study are able to manage their busy lives because the online structure allowed them to log in when it was convenient for them, even at two o'clock in the morning. Unlike the traditional university that is structured for students under 25, the FPCU is set up to accommodate the busy working adult (Tierney & Hentschke, 2007). The participants in the current study stated that they could not have managed getting a doctorate if they had to sit in classes at pre-arranged times. One size fit all models contribute to the dropout rate of AA

doctoral students (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) thus a flexible model may positively impact the likelihood of graduation.

The need for flexibility, according to participants in this study, was born out of necessity to maintain consistent employment. While these bright students could have gone to other universities, several stated that the structure of the brick and mortar institutions required them to quite their job in favor of research assistantships. These participants felt that, even though they would have completed the doctorate at any institution, the requirement of quitting work was unacceptable. The ability to maintain consistent employment while pursuing doctoral studies was cited by participants as their justification for choosing higher tuition cost. Most of them had annual salaries above fifty thousand dollars. They indicated their perception that even with substantial student loan debt, they will still fair better financially than if they had quit working. Consistent with Tinto (2006), participants in this current study cited the importance of financial stability in academic persistence. Financial concerns are among the primary reasons for academic attrition (Tinto, 2006).

The average student at a FPCU pays more than \$14,174 per year in tuition while the average traditional institution charges about \$7,000 per year for full-time status (Wilson, 2010). According to the report by the 2008 Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) 66.4% of doctorate recipients had zero debt, but only 37.3% African Americans had zero debt. More African Americans had debt above \$70 thousand than any other group. Of top 25 institutions granting doctorates to African Americans, two were FPCUs representing 320 graduates of doctoral programs. No other ethnic group had for-profit institutions in top twenty-five. Notably, only two institutions reported to the SED (2008). The largest FPCU was not among

those that reported, so the number of African Americans getting doctorates from FPCUs is likely much higher. Additionally, if more FPUCs had reported to SED in 2008, there may have been more than two for-profit institutions listed in the top twenty-five for African Americans. These debt numbers are consistent with the findings of the current study in which only one participant had zero student loan debt as result of employer sponsored tuition benefit. One participant, with partial employee sponsored tuition had loan debt under twenty thousand dollars. The majority of the participants in this current study had student loan debt above \$50 thousand dollars, including three with debt above \$80 thousand dollars.

According to Loonin (2010) graduates of FPCUs borrow more money than traditional students and are more likely to default on student loans. She goes on to report that FPCUs are just seven percent of total student enrollment, but make up 44 percent of student loan defaulters. Further, 88 percent of FPCU students borrow money for school compared to 42 percent of students at traditional universities. One of the concerns expressed by Loonin (2010) was that 42 percent of FPCU student have private student loans which are always considerably more expensive than government student loans and do not have government protections. Another concern is that the FPCUs, fat with tuition dollars, are starting to make their own private loans to students. However, when the government makes available assistance for student loan debt, those with private student loans are not eligible. This has a further negative impact on those that borrow from private lenders, but cannot afford to repay. Loonin (2010) reports other concerns such as the fact that those in default on federal student loans cannot get additional loans or grants to attend school. Further, she reports that those in default of student loans can have their wages and tax refunds seized. There is no time limit

on federal student loan collections, even if they have to seize social security checks.

Obviously, high student loan debt can have long term negative consequences. This current study did not investigate whether participants had private or federal student loans, but such information is important for future research.

While debt can be a burden for graduates of any higher education institution, it may be a greater burden to FPCU graduates when employers do not look upon FPCU diplomas favorably. This could hurt their ability to repay student loans and thus have long term credit rating implications. For this current study most participants were unconcerned about the debt, as they reasoned it was better economically than leaving employment during their course of study. It would seem that they were ill informed of the reduced career potential of FPCU doctorates or had not fully taken account of the burden of repaying large student loans. If they are unable to repay the student loans it can impede they career opportunities even further. Many employers use credit ratings as part of their hiring decision. More research is needed to examine the true economic impact and cost of the flexibility and convenience offered by FPCUs, but one can expect that the practice of paying two to three times more for an FPCU degree, which may not result in a job, will not bode well for African Americans.

Implications for Practice and Theory

There are implications for practice and theory that can be drawn from the findings of this research study. These findings should help traditional higher education administrators, adult educators and course developers, education policy makers and potential African American doctoral students and FPCUs. Additionally, it is anticipated that this study will add to the critical race theory body of knowledge.

The current study pointed to several replicable conditions at FPCUs that African American doctoral students found attractive. Perhaps the most critical is the preponderance of online courses that allow for race invisibility that resulted in reduced microaggressions. Other conditions included admissions standards based on academic achievement and potential, flexible schedules and welcoming atmosphere. The study demonstrated that traditional institutions could attract African American doctoral students by making some changes in their structure and admissions requirements. There are traditional institutions, including HBCUs that offer flexibility and convenience. There are also programs at traditional universities that do not require standardized exam scores. FPCUs have been successful in part by spending vast sums on advertising to attract African American students and to convince them that on FPCUs could meet their needs.

Among the implications for higher education administrators is the finding that flexibility in scheduling was a very important consideration in institution selection for African American doctoral student. As Berger and Lyon (2005) pointed out, African Americans are less likely than white students to be able to leave full-time jobs to pursue a doctorate. This current study was consistent with those findings. This study points to the needs of adult learners to provide for themselves and their families during the educational process without giving up on furthering their education. This study indicates that adding additional online classes would make programs more attractive. Participants in the current study appreciate that they could log on to their classes whenever it was convenient for them, given their many responsibilities.

This current study further demonstrated that some African Americans were reluctant to even apply for doctoral programs that used standardized exams as admissions standards. The issue of standardized exams is particularly in need of re-examination by administrators as this study revealed African Americans that had successfully completed master's degree programs were locked out of doctoral program because of low GRE scores. If traditional higher education administrators are serious about increasing the enrollment of African Americans in doctoral programs, their use of standardized exams needs to be seriously reconsidered.

Additionally, this study revealed the need for traditional university administrators to implement a system of support and encouragement. The FPCUs assign advisors to students, referred by the University of Phoenix as an "early alert system" (Wilson, 2010, p. 6) in which professors contact counselors if a student is struggling. These counselors are part of the FPCUs system of helping keep students enrolled. Because the dropout rate of doctoral programs is above forty percent (Golde, 2005), traditional higher education administrators might consider a similar support system for students. Traditional higher education administrators should further note that the guided and supportive process begins when potential students first inquire about the program and continues through completion. The current study further indicates that African American doctoral students have not closed the door to traditional universities. However, it does demonstrate that many are willing to spend a considerable amount of money for an alternative doctoral program that offers online courses and flexibility in admissions.

The findings in this study show support for online education, but there was still interest in traditional seated courses. However, given that even adults have become accustomed to advancements in technology, it is important for adult educators, regardless of resistance, to embrace technology based classroom. The study's finding regarding the diminished importance of race through online classes has implications for adult educators and students of color.

Critical race theory (CRT) was introduced to the field of education initially by Ladson-Billings (1995). The current study was framed by CRT, in part, to provide a less deficit based look at African American doctoral students. Indeed, the study finds that successful, persistent and bright African American are persisting in doctoral studies despite demands of work, life and family. Traditional institutions would be wise to find ways to attract such student without further adding to the anxiety that is produced by racism and microaggressions. The findings in this study about the invisibility of race were stark. The participants in this study express sentiments that show that they are starved for opportunities to be judged solely by their academic potential without the lowered expectations and baggage that come with being identified as African American. This study has implication for critical race theory and its commitment to further the voices of people of color in education literature.

While this study is specifically focused on race, CRT scholars cautions against ranking oppressions. This current study paves the way for further examination of experiences of FPCU students as it relates to class, gender and other aspects of culture. CRT scholars might examine the extent to which supposed race neutral ideas like standardized exams and

other admissions policy work to limit options for African Americans pursuing doctoral studies and thus serves as primary cause for African Americans to seek alternatives. To that end is the possible exploration of whether degrees from FPCUs work to further oppress African Americans or whether it offers degrees that will provide upward career mobility. This study did question open the pressing need to answer such questions.

To be truly consistent with critical race theory researchers must produce research that brings about positive social and economic changes. An extension of this current research is the need to understand the real impact of FPCU tuition prices that are sometimes double the cost of attending traditional universities. What is the long term impact of such spending and debt? Is the GRE a barrier to education that relegates African Americans to universities with less respected reputations at twice the cost? These questions are not meant to speak negatively of FPCUs, as the current study was not an exploration of FPCUs' effectiveness or worth. It was instead an exploration of the experiences of students that populates these institutions. These experiences point to a rigorous doctoral experience in the face of literature that indicates that finding career opportunities at traditional universities will be limited. Is this the result of the privileged traditional institutions or are there legitimate reasons for alarm? Further study to answer these questions is not only fascinating, but necessary.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for further research are related both directly and indirectly to the implications that race and racism have on the politics of academic opportunity for African American students. While it is important that FPCUs are providing an avenue for African Americans to pursue doctoral studies, it is both unfortunate and unfair that many have

concluded that as their only avenue. One analogy that has some relevance: check cashing businesses tend to be more convenient, have fewer requirements and provide a service to people in immediate need, particularly working class people of color. The fact that the percentage of people of color using cash checking is higher than their proportion of the overall population does not mean that they are positive for the long term well-being of the people using them. In the same way, the ability of non-profit credit unions should be supported to provide these services instead of check cashing storefronts, thus should not-for-profit universities be supported and encouraged to provide better access to doctoral studies for African Americans. Ultimately, the deeper justice issue is the injustice of a society in which African Americans, so desperate to achieve their educational goals, feel that they have to turn to high priced for-profit universities that relegate them to years of student loan debt and limited opportunities. Yet the reality is that traditional institutions too often express desire for more students of color without doing anything to remove barriers that would bring in those very students. This study showed that, with a few changes, traditional institutions could attract more African American doctoral students. People that have been marginalized, oppressed and shut out deserve educational opportunities that are accessible, affordable and that reward their investment of time, effort, talent and money in a reasonable way.

A logical next step for this study is to examine the extent to which African American graduates of FPCU doctoral programs have benefited from the years of hard work and money expended at FPCUS. As the current study revealed, most of these FPCU doctoral students are interested in teaching at higher education institutions. To what extent have FPCU doctorates

made this possible? This research would be important both to current FPCUs students, those considering such routes, and FPCUs and traditional universities themselves.

This study clearly identified standardized exams as a major barrier to African Americans' pursuit of doctoral studies at traditional universities. Studies framed by critical race theory should go further than just reporting. Further research should sound an alarm that bright, competent and accomplished African Americans are being told that their only option may be a doctorate from an institution that is disrespected by some in the public and most in traditional higher education and where students must pay two to three times as much as at a traditional university. Further research could look at traditional universities that do not use standardized exams as admissions criteria for doctoral programs as well as programs that have a preponderance of online courses. Through this research, one could ascertain in greater depth why some institutions do not adopt these conditions despite indication that they would make the institutions more hospitable to African Americans.

Another step would be to examine the long-term economic consequences of the debt that African American doctoral students incur to attend FPCUs. This research must examine how this debt impacts personal credit and economic stability. The current study, while revealing the existence of debt and the confidence that students had in the likely relative benefit their degree balanced against this debt, it did not address questions of long-term benefit or harm. More research is also needed to explore how debt is encouraged or discouraged by advisors at FPCUs.

This current study pointed to the benefit of a racially invisible academic space through online courses. It would be essential to determine if this same benefit is evident in

distance education programs at traditional universities. Further, what does this invisibility of race say about the importance of race, gender, class and culture in online academic environments?

While graduate degrees from FPCUs are an emerging trend, it is difficult at this point to know the full impact that it may have in the lives of African Americans pursuing doctorates. These the participants in this study have shown themselves willing to be the risk takers in a system that needs, and is worthy of further study. Future studies may decide determinately if the FPCU is a wise risk for African Americans seeking doctoral studies. Though the literature does not suggest a positive outlook for FPCU graduates, African Americans are known for their resilience and perseverance. Much of the risk can be reduced simply by traditional universities being willing to adopt the flexibility, support and reduced barriers that attract African Americans to FPCUs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained summary, discussions, implications and recommendations. There were four findings discussed were: African American doctoral students experience fewer microaggressions in the online environment; flexible admissions process attracts African American students; African American doctoral students at FPCUs demonstrate perseverance and have high expectations, but face limited career opportunities; and students incur high FPCU debt to receive flexibility.

REFERENCES

- Achor, S., & Morales, A. (1990). Chicanos holding doctoral degrees: Social reproduction and cultural ecological approaches. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 21, 268-287.
- Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory. *Signs*, 13(3), 405-436.
- Allen, H. L. (1991). The mobility of black collegiate faculty revisited: Whatever happened to the "brain drain"? *The Journal of Negro Education*, 60(1), 97-109.
- Allen, W. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominately white and historically black colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26-44.
- Altbach, P. (2006). Doctoral education present realities and future trends. In P. Altbach, & J. F. Forest (Eds.), (pp. 65-82) Springer.
- Anderson, E., & Hrabowski, F. (1977). Graduate school success of black students from white colleges and black colleges. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 48(3), 294-303.
- Anderson, M., Astin, A. W., Bell, D. A., Jr., Cole, J. B., Etzioni, A., Gellhorn, W., et al. (1993). Why the shortage of black professors? *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Autumn 1993(1), 25-34.
- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1989). Participatory action research and action science compared: A commentary. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 32, 612-623.
- Artino, A. R., Jr., & Stephens, J. M. (2009). Beyond grades in online learning: Adaptive profiles of academic self-regulation among Naval Academy undergraduates. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 20, 568-601.
- Astin, A. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 287-300.
- Astin, A. (1999). Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 518-529.

- Auerbach, S. (2001) *Under co-construction: parent roles in promoting college access for students of color*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Bailey, T., Badway, N., & Gumport, P. (2001). *For-profit higher education and community colleges*. Paper prepared for National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (Deliverable #0400). Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Barnes, R. (1990). Race consciousness: The thematic content of racial distinctiveness in critical race scholarship. *Harvard Law Review*, 103, 1864-1871.
- Bean, J. (1980). Dropout and turnover: The synthesis and test of a causal model of attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, 12, 155-87.
- Bean, J. P., & Bradley, R. K. (1986). Untangling the satisfaction-performance relationship for college students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 57(4), 393-412.
- Bean, J. P., & Eaton, S. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the departure puzzle: New theory and research on college student retention*. Nashville: University of Vanderbilt Press.
- Bean, J., & Eaton, S. (2001). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 3 (1), 73.
- Becker, G. (1964). *Human capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bell, B. A. (1992). Racial preference licensing act-A fable about the politics of hate, the. *ABA Journal*, 78, 50-78.
- Bell, D. (1979). *Bakke*, minority admissions, and the usual price of racial remedies. *California Law Review*, 76, 3-19.
- Bell, D. (1987). *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bell, D. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory? *University of Illinois Law Review*, 1995, 893-910.
- Bell, D. A. (1993). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism* Basic Books.
- Bell, N. E. (2008). *Graduate enrollment and degrees: 1997 to 2007 (revised November 2008)* Council of Graduate Schools.

- Bender, T. (2003). *Distance education: Applications and practices for educators, administrators and learners*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Berg, G. A. (2005). Reform higher education with capitalism? *Change*, 37(3), 28-34.
- Berger, J. B., & Lyon, S. C. (2005). Past to present: A historical look at retention. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention* (pp. 1-30) Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Berger, J. B., & Lyon, S.C. (2005). Past to present: A historical look at retention. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (1-29). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Blake, R. (2002). Relays of educational embodiment. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 34(4), 379.
- Bloomberg, L., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Blumenstyk, G. (2008). U. of phoenix says test scores vindicate its academic model. (cover story). *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(40), A1-A21
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Pearson Education International.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. (1977) *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (London, Sage).
- Braxton, . (2006). Cataloging institutional efforts to understand and reduce college student departure. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2006(130), 25.
- Braxton, J. M, Hirschy, A. S., & McClendon, S. (2004). Understanding and reducing college departure. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 30(3). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Braxton, J. M., Sullivan, A., & Johnson, R. M. (1997). Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Vol. 12, 107-164). New York: Agathon Press.
- Braxton, M. (1999). Theory elaboration and research development: Toward a fuller understanding of college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 1(2), 93.
- Braxton, M., & Mundy, M. E. (2001). Powerful institutional levers to reduce college student departure. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 3(1), 91.

- Breneman, D., Pusser, B., & Turner, S. (2000). The Contemporary Provision of For-profit Higher Education: Mapping the Competitive Market. In D. Breneman (Ed.), *Earnings from Learning: The Rise of For-Profit Universities*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Breneman, D., Pusser, B., & Turner, S. (2007). Earnings from learning: The rise of for-profit. *Review of Higher Education, 31*, 115.
- Brookfield, S. (1986) *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Learning Democracy: Eduard Lindeman on Adult Education and Social Change*. Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2003). A critical theory perspective on accelerated learning. In R. J. Wlodkowski, & C. E. Kassworm (Eds.), *Accelerated learning for adults: The promise and practice of intensive educational formats* (pp. 78-82). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, K. M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(5), 700.
- Bullock, K., Crawford, S. L., & Tennstedt, S. L. (2003). Employment and caregiving: An exploration of African American caregivers. *Social Work, 48*(2), 150-162.
- Bullock, K., & McGraw, S. A. (2006). A community capacity. *Health and Social Work, 31*(1), 16-25.
- Cercone, K. (2008). Characteristics of adult learners with implications for online learning design, *AACE Journal, 16*(2), 137-159.
- Chance, L., Ginsberg, R., Davis, T., & Smith, K. (2004). The experiences of African American ph. D. students at a predominately white Carnegie I-research institution. *College Student Journal, 38*(2), 231.
- Chang, M. (2002). Perception or transformation: Where's the real educational discourse on diversity? *Review of Higher Education, 25*(2), 125-140.
- Chung, C. (2003). *Simulation modeling handbook: A practical approach*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clandinin, D., & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clark, M. L. (2009). Why teach? One dental student's views from both sides of the lectern. *Journal of Dental Education*, 73(1), 36-37.
- Clewell, B. C. (1987). *Retention of black and Hispanic doctoral students*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Conner, R. F. (1989). Is diversity an inherent part of good evaluation? *American Journal of Evaluation*, 10, 56-58.
- Corazzini, J., Dugan, D. J., & Grabowski, H. G. (1972). Determinants and distributional aspects of enrollment in U.S. higher education. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 7(1), 39-59.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. (1992). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crenshaw, K. (1988). Race, reform and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimation in antidiscrimination law. *Harvard Law Review*, 101, 1331-1387.
- Crenshaw, K. (1993). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and the violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241-1299.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cross, K. P. (1981). *Adults as Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Daniel, C. A. (2007). Outsiders-within: Critical race theory, graduate education and barriers to professionalization. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 34(1), 25-42.
- Davidson, M. N., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2001). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate researchers of color. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), 549-574.

- Davis, M. D., & Clark, G. R. (1994). *Thurgood marshal: Warrior at the bar, rebel on the bench*. New York: Citadel Press Book.
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(5), 26.
- Deil-Amen, R., & Rosenbaum, J. (2003). The social prerequisites of success: Can college structure reduce the need for social know-how? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 586(120), 120-143.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68, 555-582.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105-126.
- Delgado, R. (1991). Shadowboxing: An essay on power. *Cornell Law Review*, 77, 813.
- Delgado, R. (1993). Critical race theory: An annotated bibliography. *Virginia Law Review*, 79, 461.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2000). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Denzin, N. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage Publications handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- DePriest, T. (2009). *Perceptions of academic administrators regarding the acceptability of online doctoral degrees for faculty members*. Unpublished Doctor of Education, Union University, Jackson, TN. (3376916)

- Devarics, C., & Roach, R. (2000). Fortifying the federal presence in retention. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 17(3), 20-26.
- Dirkx, J. M. (2001). The power of feelings: Emotion, imagination, and the construction of meaning in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2001(89), 63.
- Dirkx, J. M. (2006). Engaging emotions in adult learning: A Jungian perspective on emotion and transformative learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2006(109), 15-26.
- Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and reflections on the meaning, context, and process of transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 4(2), 123-139.
- Dixon, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*. New York: Routledge.
- Dixson, A. D. & Rousseau, C. K. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 8(1), 7-27.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2006). *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's children got a song*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Dreyfus, H. (2001). How far is distance learning from education? *Bulletin of Science, Technology Society*, 21(3), 165.
- Engberg, M.E. (2004). Improving intergroup relations in higher education: A critical examination of the influence of educational interventions on racial bias. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(4), 473-525.
- Farrell, E. F. (2003). Public college tuition rise is largest in three decades. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50, 1A.
- Feuer, M. J. (2006). *Moderating the debate: Rationality and the promise of American education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- Field, K. (2008). For-profit colleges fight proposal on default rates. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(22), A18-A18.
- Fielding, N. G., & Fielding, J. L. (1986) *Linking data: The articulation of qualitative and quantitative methods in social research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

- Firestone, W. A. (1993). Alternative arguments for generalizing from data as applied to qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(4), 16-23.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications
- Freeman, K. (1997). Increasing African Americans' participation in higher education: African American high school students' perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(5), 523-550.
- Freeman, K. (2002). Black colleges and college choice: Characteristics of students who choose HBCUs. *Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 349.
- Freeman, M., DeMarrais, K., Preissle, J., & Roulston, K., St. Pierre, E. A. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse. *Educational Researcher*, 36(1), 25-32.
- Friere, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary edition ed.). New York: Continuum.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Griffin, K. (2007). How high-achieving blacks resist stereotypes about black americans. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(5), 509-524.
- Gandara, P. (1995). *Over the ivy walls: The educational mobility of low-income Chicanos*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Garcia, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Succeeding in an academic career: A guide for faculty of color*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Garibaldi, A. (1997). Four decades of progress...and decline: An assessment of African American educational attainment. *Journal of Negro Education*, 66(2), 105-120.
- Garten, E. D. (2001). Online and for-profit graduate education: A challenge of understanding and accommodation for academic librarianship. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 19(3), 1.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *Thick description: Towards an interpretive theory of culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Girves, J. E., & Wemmerus, V. (1988). Developing models of graduate student degree progress. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 59(2), 163-189.

- Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Glasser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, P. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Student descriptions of the doctoral attrition process. *Review of Higher Education*, 23(2), 199-227.
- Golde, C. M. (2005). The role of the department and discipline in doctoral student attrition: Lessons from four departments. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(6), 669-700.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). In Hoare Q., Smith G. N. (Eds.), *Selections from the prison notebooks*. New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Guðmundsdóttir, S. (1996). The teller, the tale, and the one being told: The narrative nature of the research interview. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 26(3), 293-306.
- Guinier, L. (2003). Admissions rituals as political acts: Guardians at the gates of our democratic ideals. *Harvard Law Review*, 117, 113.
- Guinier, L. & Torres G. (2003). *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hackman, J. R., Wiggins, N., & Bass, A. R. Prediction of long-term success in doctoral work in psychology. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1970, 30, 365-374.
- Hagedorn, L., & Nora, A. (1996). Rethinking admissions criteria in graduate and professional programs. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, winter (92), 31-44.
- Hall, J. (2009). *Unpublished graduate essay*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.
- Harley, D. A., Jolivet, K., & McNall, R. (2004). Speeding up learning: Accelerated distance learning in rehabilitation education. *Assistive Technology*, 16(2), 124-134.

- Harper, S., & Quaye, J. (2008). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge.
- Haworth, J.G. & Bair, C. (2004). Research on doctoral student attrition and retention: A meta synthesis. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), Higher education: Handbook of theory and research (Vol. XIX). New York: Agathon Press.
- Heller, D. (1991). The effects of tuition and state financial aid on public college enrollment. *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(1), 65-89.
- Heller, D. (2001). *The states and public higher education policy: Affordability, access, and accountability*. Baltimore, MD: JHU Press.
- Heller, D. E. (1997). Student price response in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, 68(6), 624-659.
- Heller, D. E. (1999). The effect of tuition and state financial aid on public college enrollment. *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(1), 65-89.
- Henderson, P. H., Clarke, J. E., & Reynolds, M. A. (1996). *Summary report 1995: Doctorate recipients from United States universities*. Washington, NC: National Academy Press.
- Hirschberg, N., & Itkin, S. Graduate student success in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 1978, 33, 1083-1093.
- Hoенack, S. A. (1971). The efficient allocation of subsidies to college students. *The American Economic Review*, 61(3, Part 1), 302-311.
- Hoенack, S. A., & Weiler, W. C. (1975). Cost-related tuition policies and university enrollments. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 10(3), 332-360.
- Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black south end press, 1989*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Hu, S., & St. John, E. P. (2001). Student persistence in a public higher education system: Understanding racial and ethnic differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(3), 265-286.
- Isaac, P. D., Quinlan, S. V., & Walker, M. (1992). Faculty perceptions of the doctoral dissertation. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 63(3), 241-268.
- Jackson, G. A. (1978). Financial aid and student enrollment. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 49(6), 548-574.

- Jackson, G. A. (1982). Public efficiency and private choice in higher education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 4(2), 237-247.
- Jackson, G. A. (1990). Financial aid, college entry, and affirmative Action. *American Journal of Education*, 98, 523-550.
- Jaeger, D. A. (1999). Proprietary higher education and the labor market: What would we like to know? In *Seminar on For-Profit Education*, University of Virginia.
- Johnson, J. L. (2003). *Distance Education: The Complete Guide to Design, Delivery and Improvement*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., & Cevero, R. (2004). Mentoring in black and white: The intricacies of cross-cultural mentoring. *Mentoring and Tutoring for Partnership in Learning*, 12(1), 7-21.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T., Cevero, R., & Bowles, T. (2009). Project MUSE journals the journal of higher education volume 80, number 2, March/April 2009 rooted in the soil: The social experiences of black graduate students at a southern research university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(2), 178.
- Kane, T. J. (1995). *Rising public college tuition and college entry: How well do public subsidies promote access to college?* Working Paper Series No. 5164. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Kasworm, C. (1993). An alternative Perspective on Empowerment of Adult Undergraduates. *Contemporary Education*, 64, 162-165.
- Kelley, K. B., & Orr, G. J. (2003). Trends in distant student use of electronic resources: A survey. *College and Research Libraries*, 64(3), 176-191.
- Kerlin, S. P. (1995). Pursuit of the Ph.D.: "Survival of the fittest," or is it time for a new approach. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 3(16), 1.
- KewelRamani, A., Gilbertson, L., Fox, M. A., & Provasnik, S. (2007). *NCES: Status and trends in education of racial and ethnic minorities*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education - NCES.
- King, S. E., & Chepyator-Thomson, J. (1996). Factors affecting the enrollment and persistence of African American doctoral students. *Physical Educator*, 53(4), 170.
- Knowles, M. (1973). *The adult learner: The neglected species*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

- Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kramp, M. K. (2004) "Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry." In Kathleen de Marrais & Stephen D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods in education and the social sciences* (pp.103-121). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kuh, G.D. (2005). Never let it rest lessons about student success from high-performing colleges and universities. *Change*, 37(4), 44.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! the case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3, Culturally Relevant Teaching), 159-165.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1997). Meeting the standards: Social studies readings for K-6 educators. In M. E. Haas, & M. A. Laughlin (Eds.), *I Don't see color, I just see children: Dealing with stereotyping and prejudice in young children* (pp. 15-18). Washington, DC: NCSS.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 46-69.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). Lies my teacher still tells: Developing a critical race perspective toward the social studies. In G. Ladson-Billings (Ed.), *Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies* (). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W.F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (2006). Toward a critical race theory in education. In A. Dixson, & C. Rousseau (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education* (pp. 11-30). Boca Raton, FL.: CRC Press.
- Lang, M. (1992). Barriers to black's educational achievement in higher education. *Journal of Black Studies*, 22(4), 510.

- Larson, C. L. (1997). Re-presenting the subject: Problems in personal narrative inquiry. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(4), 455-470.
- Lawrence, C. (1992). The word and the river: Pedagogy as scholarship as struggle. *Southern California Law Review*, 65(2231-2298)
- Lewis, A. C. (2008). Student loan defaults and career colleges. *Tech Directions*, 67(8), 6.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Liu, Z., & Lang, Z. Y. (2004). Factors influencing distance-education graduate students' use of information sources: A user study. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 30(1), 24.
- Lopez, G. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 68-94.
- López, I. H. (2005). Race on the 2010 census: Hispanics & the shrinking white majority. *Daedalus*, 134(1), 42-52.
- Lovitts, B. E. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Lynn, M. (1999). Toward a critical race pedagogy: A research note. *Urban Education*, 33(5), 606-626.
- Lynn, P., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research. *Urban Education*, 38, 257-280.
- Manning, K. R. (1998). Science and opportunity. *Science*, 282(5391), 1037-1038.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Design qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maton, K. I., Hrabowski, F. A., Ozdemir, M., Wimms, H. (2008). Enhancing representation, retention, and achievement of minority students in higher education: A social transformation theory of change. In M. Shinn & H. Yoshikawa (Eds.), *Toward positive youth development: Transforming schools and community programs* (pp. 114-132). Oxford University Press US.

- Maton, K., & Hrabowski, F. A. (2004). Increasing the number of African American PhDs in the sciences and engineering: A strength-based approach. *American Psychologist*, 59(6), 547-556.
- Maton, K., Kohout, J., Wichurski, M., Leary, G., & Vinokurov, A. (2006). Minority students of color and the psychology graduate pipeline: Disquieting and encouraging trends, 1989-2003. *American Psychologist*, 61(2), 117-131.
- Matsuda, M. (1991). Voices of America : Accent, anti-discrimination law, and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100, 1329-1340.
- Matsuda, M. (1991). Voices of America: accent, antidiscrimination law and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100, 1329-1407.
- Matsuda, M., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. (1993). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the first amendment*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Mayo, M. W., & Christenfeld, N. (1999). Gender, race, and performance expectations of college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 27(2), 93.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 279-300.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McDonough, . (2006). The meaning of money: Perceptual differences between college counselors and low-income families about college costs and financial aid. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(12), 1703.
- McPherson, M. S., & Schapiro, M. O. (1991). Does student aid affect college enrollment? new evidence on a persistent controversy. *The American Economic Review*, 81(1), 309-318.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2001(89), 3-13.
- Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). *Learning in Adulthood* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Merton, R. K. (1998). Unanticipated consequences and kindred sociological ideas: A personal gloss. In C. Mongardini & S. Tabboni (Eds.), *Robert K. Merton and contemporary sociology* (pp. 295–318). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mishler, E. (1999). *Storylines: Craftartists' narratives of identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morfin, O., Perez, V., Parker, L., Lynn, M., & Arrona, J. (2006). Hiding the politically obvious: Critical race theory preview of diversity as race neutrality in higher education. *Education Policy*, 20(1), 240-270.
- Morgan, G., & Smircich, L. (1980). The case for qualitative research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 5(4), 491-500.
- Mueller, . (1990). Economic, psychological, and sociological determinants of voluntary turnover. *The Journal of Behavioral Economics*, 19(3), 321.
- Mullen, . (2003). The WIT cohort: A case study of informal doctoral mentoring. *Journal of further and Higher Education*, 27(4), 411.
- National center for postsecondary improvement (NCPI)*(2000). Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Nesbit, T. (2006). What's the matter with social class? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 56(3), 171-187.
- Nettles, M. T. (1990). Success in doctoral programs: Experiences of minority and white students. *American Journal of Education*, 98(4), 494-522.

- Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches, 3rd edition.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nora, A. (2001). The depiction of significant others in tinto's "rites of passage": A reconceptualization of the influence of family and community in the persistence process. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*(1), 41.
- Olson, C. (1988). Recruiting and retaining minority graduate students: A systems perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education, 57*(1), 31-42.
- Olson, L., & Rosenfeld, R. A. (1984). Parents and the process of gaining access to student financial aid. *The Journal of Higher Education, 55*(4), 455-480.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2003). Effect sizes in qualitative research: A prolegomenon. *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology, 37*, 393-409.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality and Quantity: International Journal of Methodology, 41*(2), 233-249.
- Orzoff, J., Peinovich, P., & Riedel, E. (2008). Graduate programs: The wild west of outcomes assessment. *Assessment Update, 20*(3), 1.
- Padgett, D. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Padgett, D. K., Hawkins, R. L., Abrams, C., & Davis, A. (2006). In their own words. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 76*(1), 461-467.
- Parker, L., Deyhle, D., & Villenas, S. (Eds.). (1999). *Race is...race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Parker, L. & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflict with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 7-22.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Paton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work, 1*, 261-283.

- Paulsen, M. B., & John, E. P. S. (2002). Social class and college costs: Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(2), 189-236.
- Pekow, C. (2007). For-profit schools popular destination for minorities. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, 23*(26), 19-19.
- Penprase, B., & Koczara, S. (2009). Understanding the experiences of accelerated second-degree nursing students and graduates: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 40*(2), 74-78.
- Perna, . (2001). The contribution of historically black colleges and universities to the preparation of african americans for faculty careers. *Research in Higher Education, 42*(3), 267.
- Perna, L. W. (2000). Differences in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(2), 117-141.
- Perna, L. W. (2006). Understanding the relationship between information about college prices and financial aid and students' college-related behaviors. *American Behavioral Scientist, 49*(12), 1620-1635.
- Perna, L., & Titus, M. (2004). The effects of tuition and state financial aid on public college enrollment. *The Review of Higher Education, 27*(4), 501-525.
- Perna, L., & Titus, M. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment; an examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education, 76*(5), 485-518.
- Porter, M. E. (1990). *The competitive advantage of nations* Free Press.
- Quinnan, T. W. (1997). *Adult students "at risk": Culture bias in higher education*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Reay, D. (1997). Feminist theory, habitus, and social class: Disrupting notions of classlessness. *Women's Studies International Forum, 20*(2), 225-233.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative Ananlysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler (2008). *Narrative methods in the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage.

- Roithmayr, D. (1999). Introduction to critical race theory in education research and praxis. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is...race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 1-6). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Rubin, A., (2008). *Practitioner's Guide to Using Research for Evidenced -Based Practice*. New Jersey: Wiley & Sons
- Ruch, R. S. (2001). *Walking a tightrope*. *University Business*, 4(3), 69.
- Ruch, R. S. (2003). *Higher ed inc: The rise of the for-profit university* JHU Press.
- Ruch, R. S. (2003). *Higher Ed, Inc: The rise of the for-profit university*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work*, 41, 295-305.
- Schiller, N. (2000). A short history of black feminist scholars. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (29), 119-125.
- Schmidt, P. (2008). Longer road to ph.D.'s for women and minority members. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 55(4), A10.
- Seiden, M. J. (2009). For-profit colleges deserve some respect. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 55(41), A80-A80.
- Sheared, V., & Sissel, P. A. (2001). What does research, resistance, and inclusion mean for adult education practice?: A reflective response. In V. Sheared and P. Sissel (eds.), *Making Space: Merging Theory and Practice in Adult Education* (pp. 327-336). New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Shulman, L. (1984). *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups*, (2nd ed.). Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock, Publishers.
- Simpson, O. (2003). *Student retention in online, open, and distance learning*. New York: Routledge.
- Sissel, P. A., Hansman, C. A., & Kasworm, C. E. (2001). The politics of neglect: Adult learners in higher education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2001(91), 17-28.
- Solórzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24, 5-19.

- Solorzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experiences of chicana and chicano scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 121-136.
- Solórzano, D. G. (1995). The doctorate production and baccalaureate origins of african americans in the sciences and engineering. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64(1), 15-32.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of african american college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2, Knocking at Freedom's Door: Race, Equity, and Affirmative Action in U.S. Higher Education), 60-73.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 14(4), 471-495.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 22-43.
- Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions and campus racial climate: The experiences of african-american college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60-73.
- Somers, P., & St. John, E. P. (1997). Interpreting price response in enrollment decisions: A comparative institutional study. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 27(3), 15-36.
- Sowell, T. (1981). *Ethnic America: A history*. New York: Basic Books.
- Spady, W. G. (1971). Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. *Interchange*, 2(3), 38-62.
- St John, E. P. (2000). The impact of student aid on recruitment and retention: What the research indicates. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2000(89), 61.
- St. John, E. P., Hu, S., & Weber, J. (2001). State policy and the affordability of public higher education: The influence of state grants on persistence in Indiana. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(4), 401-428.

- St. Pierre, E. A. (2006). Scientifically based research in education: Epistemology and ethics. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 56(4), 239-266.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Steele, C., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 797-881.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Orellana-Damacela, L., Portillo, N., & Andrews-Guillen, C. (2003). Experiences of differential treatment among college students of color. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74(4), 428-444.
- Survey of earned doctorates*(2007). . Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.
- Swim, J. K., Hyers, L. L., Cohen, L. L., & Fitzgerald, D. C., Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *The Journal of Black Psychology*, 29(1), 38-67.
- Tate, W. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 195-247.
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 195-247.
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory and implications. In M. Apple (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (22nd ed., pp. 195-250). Washington, DC: AERA.
- Taylor, E. (1999). Critical race theory and interest convergence in the desegregation of higher education. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is...race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 181-204). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Taylor, E. (1999). Critical race theory and interest convergence in the desegregation of higher education. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is...race isn't" critical race theory and qualitative studies in educatio* (pp. 181-204). Boulder:CO: Westview Press.

- Taylor, E. W. (2003). *Research needs in transformational learning*. Paper presented at the Fourth International Transformational Learning Conference, Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York.
- The ethereal scholar: Does critical legal studies have what minorities want?.(1987). *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 22, 301-322.
- Tierney, W. G. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 63, 603-618.
- Tierney, W. G., & Hentschke, G. C. (2007). *New players, different game: Understanding the rise of for-profit colleges and universities*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tinto, V. (1971). The effect of college accessibility upon the rates and selectivity of college attendance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125.
- Tinto, V. (1986). Theories of college student departure revisited. In John C. Smart (Ed), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 2; pp. 359-384). New York: Agathon.
- Tinto, V. (1993). Building community. *Liberal Education*, 79(4), 16-21.
- Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68(6), 599-623.
- Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, 8(1), 1-19.
- Tinto, V., & Pusser, B. (2006, November). Moving from theory to action: Building a model for institution action for student success. Paper presented at the annual meeting for the 2006 National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success, Washington, DC.
- Titus, M. (2006). Understanding the influence of the financial context of institutions on student persistence at four-year colleges and universities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(2), 353-375.
- Traub, J. (1997, Drive-thru U.: Higher education for people who mean business. *New Yorker*, Oct. 20-27, 114-123.

- Tweedell, C. B. (2000). *A theory of adult learning and implications for practice*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Midwest Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. Chicago, IL.
- Tyson, C. (1998). Coloring epistemologies: A response. *Educational Researcher*, 27(9), 21-22.
- Unger, R. M. (1983). The critical legal studies movement. *Harvard Law Review*, 96, 561-675.
- Venter, K. (2003). Coping with isolation: The role of culture in adult distance learners. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open and Distance Learning*, 18(3), 271-287.
- Villenas, S., Deyhle, D., & Parker, L. (1999). Critical race theory and praxis: Chicano(a)/Latino(a) and Navajo struggles for dignity, educational equity and social justice. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is . . . Race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 31-52). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Walton G., Spencer S. (2009). *Latent ability: Grades and test scores systematically underestimate the intellectual ability of negatively stereotyped students*. Manuscript under review.
- Weber, M. (1997). *The theory of social and economic organization* (T. Parsons Trans.). New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Wills, E. (2005). 2 states investigate for-profit colleges. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(49), A29-A29.
- Wilson, R. (2010, February 7). For profit colleges change higher education's landscape. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Winston, G. C. (1999). Subsidies, hierarchies, and peers: The awkward economics of higher education. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13(1), 13-36.
- Winter, R. (1989). *Learning from experience: principles and practice in action-research*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Wlodkowski, R., Mauldin, J., & Gahnn, S. (2001). Learning in the fast lane: Adult learners' persistence and success in accelerated college programs. *New Agenda for Education Series*. Indianapolis IN: Lumina Foundation.
- Wojtkiewicz, Roger. "Effects of Educational Expectations and Performance on College Graduation for Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities" *Paper presented at the annual*

meeting of the American Sociological Association, Marriott Hotel, Loews Philadelphia Hotel, Philadelphia, PA, Aug 12, 2005

- Wolf-Wendel, L. E. (1998). Models of excellence: The baccalaureate origins of successful European American women, African American Women, and Latinas. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 69(2), 141-186.
- Wyatt, G. (2005). Satisfaction, academic rigor and interaction: Perceptions of online instruction. *Education*, 125(3), 460-468.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.
- Yosso, T. J., Parker, L., Solorzano, D. G., & Lynn, M. (2004). From Jim Crow to affirmative action and back again: A critical race discussion of racialized rationales and access to higher education. *Review of Research in Education*, 28, 1-26.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MATERIALS FOR IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

In this appendix, I include examples of materials used to identify participants for this research study. The materials include the following: an informational letter to organizations and a corresponding nomination response form; a flyer for wide distribution; and, an announcement for LISTSERV and social networking sites.

LETTER REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANT NOMINATIONS

Date

Organization

Attn: First Name, Last Name

Street Address

City, State Zip Code

RE: Nominations for African American doctoral students from For-profit Colleges and Universities (FPCU) to Participate in a Research Study on Academic and Social Experiences.

Examples of FPCUs (Strayer, University of Phoenix, Capella, Kaplan, Walden, Argosy)

Dear Sir/Madam:

Greetings! As a doctoral student at North Carolina State University, I am embarking on a research study to explore and understand the academic and social experiences of African American doctoral students at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs). Thus, I am seeking your help in identifying students and graduates of these institutions who would possibly be interested in participating in in-depth interviews (in person, by phone, via Internet as determined by the researcher for 1 ½ - 2 hours). Specifically, I am looking for African American men and women who meet the following criteria:

- Enrolled as doctoral student at FPCU **OR**
- Graduate of doctoral program at FPCU
- African American men or African American women

Thus, I need your assistance in identifying and nominating African American Doctoral Students at FPCUs who may be interested in participating in this research study. Based on your nominations, I will send a formal letter providing more detail about the study and follow-up with a phone call to all possible participants.

Please submit your nominations via telephone or by e-mail at jkhall@ncsu.edu Thank you so much for your assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Jodi Hall, Doctoral Student

RESPONSE FORM FOR NOMINATIONS

I / We, _____ nominate the following persons to be considered for the research study on African American doctoral students at For-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs)

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return form to:

Jodi Hall

E-mail: jkhall@ncsu.edu

Mail: 3939 Glenwood Avenue #301 Raleigh, NC 27612

African American Doctoral Students at For-profit Colleges and Universities (FPCUs)

Participate in research that will bring forth the voices of a population of students that is scarcely mentioned in scholarly literature. You will also be helping a fellow doctoral student.

Criteria for Participation

- Enrolled as doctoral student at FPCU OR
- Graduate of doctoral program at FPCU
- African American men or African American women

Time Commitment(s)

One in-depth interview (approximately 1 ½ hours) in person, telephone or electronic media as determined by researcher and/or follow-up via telephone or electronic media.

Note: Research participants will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

About the Research Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that the lives of African American doctoral students and the communities in which they live, shape and influence their decision to enroll in a for-profit college or university (FPCU).

About the Researcher

Jodi Hall is a doctoral student at North Carolina State University. My research interests include:

- § African American graduate student retention
- § Relationships between graduate faculty and students

For More Information, Please Contact:
Jodi Hall jkhall@ncsu.edu
919 749-0907

TEXT OF LISTSERV and SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Subject: African American Doctoral Students At For-profit Colleges and Universities Needed!

African American Doctoral Students at For-profit Colleges and Universities (FPCU) are needed to share their experiences and knowledge. Jodi Hall, a doctoral student at North Carolina State University, is conducting a study to explore the academic and social experiences of FPCU students.

Examples of For-profit Colleges and Universities include (but limited to): University of Phoenix, Strayer, Capella University, Stratford University, Walden University, DeVry, Argosy, Kaplan University, ECPI, ITT Technical Institute, American College of Education, North Central University, etc. Take time out of your busy academic schedule to be a part of this emerging body of knowledge.

Participants must African American doctoral student or doctoral graduate of a for-profit college or university. The time commitment will consist of the following: one in-depth interview (approximately 1 ½ hours). Face-to-face, online or telephone interviews will be required as determined by the researcher. Additionally, there may be follow up interviews.

For more information, please contact Jodi Hall email: jkhall@ncsu.edu.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM & LETTER OF INVITATION

In this appendix, I include the research study informational sheet and consent form for potential study participants.

Revised 04/2009

**North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board For The Use of Human Subjects in Research**

INFORMATIONAL SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

**PLEASE READ ALL OF THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY
PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE CONSENT FORM**

An **Informed Consent Statement** has two purposes: (1) to provide adequate information to potential research subjects to make an informed choice as to their participation in a study, and (2) to document their decision to participate. In order to make an informed choice, potential subjects must understand the study, how they are involved in the study, what sort of risks it poses to them and who they can contact if a problem arises (see informed consent checklist for a full listing of required elements of consent). Please note that **the language used to describe these factors must be understandable to all potential subjects, which typically means an eighth grade reading level**. The informed consent form is to be read and signed by each subject who participates in the study **before** they begin participation in the study. A duplicate copy is to be provided to each subject.

If subjects are **minors (i.e. any subject under the age of 18)** use the following guidelines for obtaining consent:

- 0-5 years old** – requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative
- 6 – 10 years old** - requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative and verbal assent from the minor. In this case a minor assent script should be prepared and submitted along with a parental consent form.
- 11 - 17 years old** - requires signature of both minor and parent/guardian/legal representative

If the subject or legal representative is *unable to read and/or understand the written consent form*, it must be verbally presented in an understandable manner and witnessed (with signature of witness). If there is a good chance that your intended subjects will not be able to read and/or understand a written consent form, please contact the IRB office 919-515-4514 for further instructions.

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: African American Doctoral Student: A Critical Race Theory Exploration

Principal Investigator : Jodi Hall

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable) Tuere Bowles, PhD

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to explore how social and environmental factors shape the academic experiences of African American doctoral students at For-profit Colleges and Universities (FPCUs).

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to

1. Participate in one in-depth interview (approximately 1 ½ hours) in person, telephone or electronic media as determined by researcher and
2. Participate in follow-up interview via face-to-face, telephone or electronic media as determined by researcher for up to 30 minutes
3. This study is expected to conclude within two years or less from the date of the interview
4. Interviews will take place in quiet area with minimal interruption such as conference room, library study room, coffee house or similar location
5. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed

Risks

I understand that any discomfort or stress that I may experience while being interviewed will not exceed that which I experience in everyday life. There will be minimal discomfort or stress due to participation.

No risks are expected due to participation in this project.

Benefits

I understand that I will not benefit directly from this research; however, I understand that my voluntary participation will give me an opportunity to tell my story (reflective practice); will benefit other doctoral students and potential doctoral students; and will help in general to add to the literature base whereby African American doctoral students have traditionally been silenced.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely in locked filing cabinet. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT

be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will receive a \$20 twenty dollar gift card. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will receive half the amount, but only if the interview has been completed. There will be no compensation for participants that withdraw prior to complete the in-depth interview. There will be no compensation if the participant fails to provide updated contact information and cannot be reached.

What if you are a NCSU employee?-

Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at NCSU, and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Jodi Hall, at 3939 Glenwood Ave.#301 Raleigh, NC 27612, or [919 749-0907].

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____
Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE, PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION, DOCUMENT
ANALYSIS GUIDES & DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant's Pseudonym: _____ Place: _____
 Researcher/Interviewer: Jodi Hall Scheduled Time: _____
 Date: _____ Start time ____ End time ____

Researcher: *Throughout the interview I may ask you to elaborate or clarify answers or statements. Please feel free to ask me for clarification at any point during the interview if questions are unclear. To begin the inquiry phase of the interview I will ask questions that will help me understand your academic choices, decisions and experiences.*

Opening Background Questions:

1. Tell me about your life growing up.
 - a. Family background
 - b. Early school experiences
2. Tell me about your academic choices since high school.
3. Why did you want to pursue a doctorate?
4. How did you decide upon a FPCU?
5. What did you do to prepare for admissions?
 - a. Describe the application process.
 - b. What was your experience with standardized tests, such as the GRE?

RQ 1: What are the academic experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?

6. Walk me through what a typical day is like for you while attending school?
7. Prior to be admitted to the FPCU, what did you envision your academic experiences would be like?
8. Once enrolled, how would you describe your academic experiences?
 - a. Tell me about your interactions with faculty.
 - b. Tell me about your interactions with administrators.
 - c. Tell me about your interactions with other students.
9. As a doctoral student, how would you describe yourself?
10. What has been the most meaningful academic experience you have had as a doctoral student?

We will now move to a new topic. The next questions will help me understand more about your life and your social environment.

RQ 2: What are the social experiences of African American doctoral students enrolled at FPCUs?

11. Tell me about the people who support you the most during your doctoral studies.
12. Tell me about people who support you the least during your doctoral studies.
13. How have your doctoral studies affected your personal relationships?
 - a. Family
 - b. Friends
14. As an African American doctoral student, how have issues of difference such as race, gender, or class affected your doctoral studies?
15. What has been the most meaningful social experience you have had as a doctoral student?

The next category of questions will help me understand your experiences and influences during your current doctoral studies.

RQ 3: What enhances the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

16. In your opinion, what are the rules to be successful at FPCUs?
17. In your opinion, what are the unofficial ways to be successful that may not always be apparent?

The final topic moves us to questions that help me understand challenges that you may have faced during your doctoral studies. Additionally, it will provide me with insight into how you managed these challenges.

RQ 4: What impedes the success of African American doctoral students at FPCUs?

18. What has interfered with your success at FPCUs?
 - a. People
 - b. Events
 - c. Other things
19. How did you navigate those obstacles?

Closing Questions

20. If you were asked to explain your doctoral experiences at an FPCU by comparing them to something else, what phrases would you use?
21. What advice would you give other African American students considering a doctorate at an FPCU?
22. What else would you like to mention that has not been covered?

Thank you for sharing your story and participating in this interview!

The following are probes that will be employed as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| What do you mean? | What were you thinking at the time? |
| I'm not sure that I am following you. | Give me an example. |
| Would you explain that? | Tell me about it. |
| What did you say then? | Take me through the experience. |

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Observer: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Purpose of Observation: _____

Actors (participants present and how many): _____

Activities: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck me in my observations at this setting?
2. What questions could be asked concerning the place I observed?
3. What questions could be asked concerning the actors I observed?
4. What questions could be asked concerning the activities I observed?
5. For each of the elements of the social situation (i.e., place, actors, activities) I observed, identify the main information I acquired (or failed to acquire) for the questions above.
6. Was there anything else that struck me as salient, interesting, illuminating or important?
7. If I were to undertake another observation in this setting, what new questions would I consider?

Adapted from:

Miles, M. B. & Huberman (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (p. 53).

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

Document Title: _____

Document Author

Who created the document?

- Why was the document created?
- What was the creator trying to be accomplished?
- How might that affect the document content?

Timeframe

- When was the document created?
- Does it contain time-specific language?
- Is the document typical for the time during which it was produced or is the format/style unusual?
- Was the document created immediately after the event?
- If time elapsed before the event was recorded, how much time had elapsed – did that affect the recording?

Content & Background

- How did the creator procure the information?
- Was the creator a witness to or a participant in the event?

Motivation

- Why is the creator developing or writing the document?
- Does he/she have something to gain or lose by relaying the information?

Audience

- Who is the target audience?
- For whom was the document intended?
- Was the document for public or private use?

Reliability and Cross Referencing:

- Are there other sources that deal with this topic?
- How do they compare to this record?
- Do they corroborate or contradict things in this record?

Availability

- What enabled the document to survive?
- Who has handled/owned it?
- Has it been modified?

Adapted from a History Worksheet:

(see <http://www.ebrpss.k12.la.us/lessons/tahil/analyze/documents/document.htm>)

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Adapted from Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, and Bowles' (2005) *The social experiences of Black graduate students at The University of Georgia* survey.

Directions: Please provide the following background information. All analyses will focus on groups, and no attempt will be made to identify individuals.

Pseudonym: _____

What degrees have you earned?

.. Bachelor of Arts Year: _____ School _____
 .. Bachelor of Science Year: _____ School _____
 .. Master's Year: _____ School _____
 .. Other Year: _____ School _____
 .. Other (specify and write year) _____

What is your major as doctoral student? _____

What year were you born? _____

What is your gender? _____

What is your marital status? _____

Do you have children in the home? _____

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

.. Employed full-time .. Employed part-time
 .. Unemployed, seeking work .. Retired
 .. Full-time homemaker .. Other (please specify) _____

If you are working, what is your approximate annual salary?

.. Less than \$20,000 .. \$40,000-49,999 .. \$70,000-79,999
 .. \$20,000-29,999 .. \$50,000-59,999 .. \$80,000-89,999
 .. \$30,000-39,999 .. \$60,000-69,999 .. \$90,000 or more

How much student loan debt do you expect to incur while earning doctorate?

.. Less than \$20,000 .. \$40,000-49,999
 .. \$20,000-29,999 .. \$50,000-59,999
 .. \$30,000-39,999 .. more than \$60,000

Please describe your parents' highest educational level.

Mother or other guardian (check one)	Father or other guardian (check one)
.. No diploma .. High school diploma/ GED Some college Associates' degree Bachelors degree Graduate degree I don't know	.. No diploma .. High school diploma/ GED Some college Associates' degree Bachelors degree Graduate degree I don't know

Table 2: CRT Condensed Table of African American Graduate and Doctoral Student Studies

Author(s)/Year	Participants	Design	Findings
Anderson & Hrabowski (1977)	Black students who attended HBCU and Black students who attended Predominantly White Institution (PWI)	Descriptive comparison	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Black students that attended HBCU more likely to pursue doctorate 2) No difference in academic performance between HBCU and PWI graduates 3) Graduation and retention rates were about the same for both groups 4) Both groups heavily concentrated in education and applied science at doctoral level 5) High undergraduate GPA predictive of high GPA for master's and doctorate 6) Low undergraduate GPA predictive for GPA in graduate school
Girves & Wemmerus, (1988)	African American students enrolled in graduate or professional academic programs in Midwest and east coast	Quantitative model based on surveys Questionnaire by mail Use several models for comparison	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participants had higher level of educational attainment than parents 2) Teaching/Research assistants more likely to complete doctorate 3) Encouragement from mentors has positive impact on post-baccalaureate students 4) Lack of financial aid lengthens time to degree completion 5) African Americans reported coming from relatively low SES background
Solórzano (1995)		Qualitative design the used data for The Survey of Earned Doctorates in U.S.	<p>Between 1980-1990</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Out of 106,592 female doctorates only 5.5 percent were African American 2) Out of 172,313 male doctorates only 3.1 percent were African American 3) African Americans are under-represented in seven broad fields 4) Blacks are below parity in each field 5) African Americans are concentrated in education and social sciences 6) Black males are slightly more dispersed than black females in the seven broad fields 7) Doctoral production declined for both black males and black females between 1980-1990 8) Doctoral production in engineering would have to increase 500 percent to 1,100 percent in order to reach parity in sciences and engineering and would have to increase 30 percent to 1,100 percent in the seven board fields in order to reach parity with cohort.

Table 2: continued

Author(s)/Year	Participants	Design	Findings
King & Chepyator-Thomson (1996)	African American doctoral students in sports and exercise science 73 percent male, 27 percent female age range 26-55	Mixed methods Surveys and in-depth interviews	1) 77 percent of the African American doctoral students earned "\$20,000 or less during doctoral study 2) 56 percent earned baccalaureate degrees at HBCUs 3) expressed feelings of being out of place and 4) nearly half reported incidents of "overt acts of racism at their doctoral institutions 4) 88 percent work full or part time 5) 46 percent had experienced overt racism at their doctoral institution 6) 78 percent reported there were no black professors in their department 7) 56 percent reported that African American mentor is important
Chance, Ginsberg, Davies and Smith (2004)	African American PhD Education students at Carnegie Research I Institution in the mid-west region of U.S.	Qualitative retrospective open ended interviews of the lived experiences of African American PhD students	1) experienced feelings of isolation 2) experienced feeling of "standing out" 3) Considered mentors and support from other African American doctoral students to be important. 4) High level of perseverance
Daniel (2007)	African American and Latino graduate social work students ranging in age from 22-40.	Qualitative - homogenous sampling strategy - and in-depth semi structured question	Students in this study experienced: 6) marginalization 7) isolation 8) lack of resources 9) feelings of outsiders status during 10) -lack of cultural sensitivity of White faculty and field instructors -peer support to be key to their persistence in graduate school

Table 3: Doctoral Student Persistence Models

Model	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Tinto and Pusser (2006)</i> Model of Institutional Action for Student Success	Aligning elementary and secondary school standards with postsecondary requirements to improve higher education retention; (a) Creating databases that can track students through all levels of the education system; (b) Enhancing teacher professional development in the K–12 system; (c) Creating outreach programs for traditionally underrepresented students; (d) Providing stronger and more versatile support for academically struggling students; (e) Improving course articulation between 2- and 4-year institutions; (f) Assessing students' preparation for college early and continuously; and (g) Developing innovative finance policies to increase both overall support and direct aid to the students with greatest financial need.	*Contributes to understanding of complexity of persistence *focuses on institutional changes instead of student characteristics *Connects research, policy & practice *Coordinates action at different levels *Similar model can be developed using the literature to address doctoral students specifically	* Based on undergraduate admissions issues * Though problems there are some similarities between issues faced by undergraduate students of color and graduate students of color, some part may not be applicable to all college students
<i>Hagedorn and Nora (1996)</i> Alternative Model to Enrollment and Persistence	Alternatives to weight of GRE and GPA (a) Use personal interviews, professional experience and peer group discussions as part of admissions criteria. (b) Factor career marketability and scholarly concern for improving the profession and motivation for continued learning as part of admissions decision. (c) Demonstrated professional aptitude	*Greater likelihood of increasing population of students of color. *Looks at applicant holistically. *Less reliance of GRE which negatively impact students of color as admission criterion. *Broader discussion by committee. *Better opportunity to select students that are best fit for the department. *Recognizes that older adult have made considerable changes and enhanced knowledge since undergraduate and graduate school.	*Likely faculty resistance because it is time consuming. *Committees are accustomed to the ease of cut-off scores. *There is greater likelihood committee disagreement. *Students with significant professional experience may underestimate the demands of doctoral studies.
<i>Nyquist and Woodford, (2008)</i> Eight ways to implement systematic changes to doctoral student programs, that may influence a decline in the student attrition rate	(a) Provide explicit expectation for doctoral students. (b) Provide adequate mentoring from faculty to student. (c) Provide exposure to wide variety of career options. (d) Prepare students to teach in a variety of settings using a range of pedagogies based on research in teaching and learning. (e) Recruit women and students of color to diversify the American intellect. (f) Produce scholar-citizens connected more closely to the needs of society and global economy. (g) Balance the deep learning of the disciplinary doctorate with the variety of interdisciplinary challenges. (h) Create partnerships with all involved in doctoral education. This includes doctoral students and stakeholders, universities, government agencies, foundations, business and industry, professional and educational associations, governance boards and accrediting agencies.	*Literature shows that mentoring increases persistence *Students are more engaged in academic community *Actively seeking students of color will increase the number *Preparing scholars to have a positive impact on the world not just the classroom *Prepares student to think past the academic process	*Requires time and commitment from faculty that may already feel overwhelmed *Requires greater time and commitment from students that may already feel overwhelmed.

Table 4: Display of Data

 Academic experiences:

- *Family structure and support are essential components of academic success*
- *Isolation during pre-college years is common experience*
- *Overcoming barriers is part of road to success*

Social experiences:

- *Race is invisible at FPCUs*
- *Face-to-face encounters add value to FPCU experience*
- *FPCU faculty and staff help student stay connected*

Enhancing success:

- *Ability to manage workload in face of negative public perception enhances success*
- *Access to resources provided by FPCU aids success*
- *Using support systems help FPCU students succeed*

Impeding success:

- *Potential devaluation of FPCU degree concerns FPCU students*
 - *Incurring debt raises concerns about future*
-

Table 5: Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Marital status	Children in home?	Doctoral status	Loans	Loan debt amount	HBCU	Current Occupation
Alpha	F	S	N	Pre ABD	Y	50K	Y	Public school teacher
Andrea	F	M	Y	Pre ABD	Y	80K	N	Instructor FPCU
Cameron	M	M	Y	ABD	Y	50k	N	Program coordinator higher education
Connor	M	S	N	Pre ABD	Y	60K	N	Public school teacher
Frances	F	M	Y	graduate	Y	50K	N	Stay at home mother and former public school teacher
Jasper	M	M	N	graduate	Y	70K	N	Public school teacher
Justice	F	S	N	Pre ABD	Y	100K	N/Y Only for grad school	Victim's advocate
Lauryn	F	S	N	Pre ABD	Y	80K	Y	Criminal Justice program coordinator
Peter	M	S	N	graduate		20K	Y	Instructor FPCU
Ricky	M	S	N	ABD	Y	50K	N	Administrator FPCU
Tony	M	S	N	ABD	Y	70K	N	Information systems engineer
Tyler	M	S	N	Pre ABD	N	0	N	Pharmaceutical executive

Table 6: FPCUs Attended By Participants

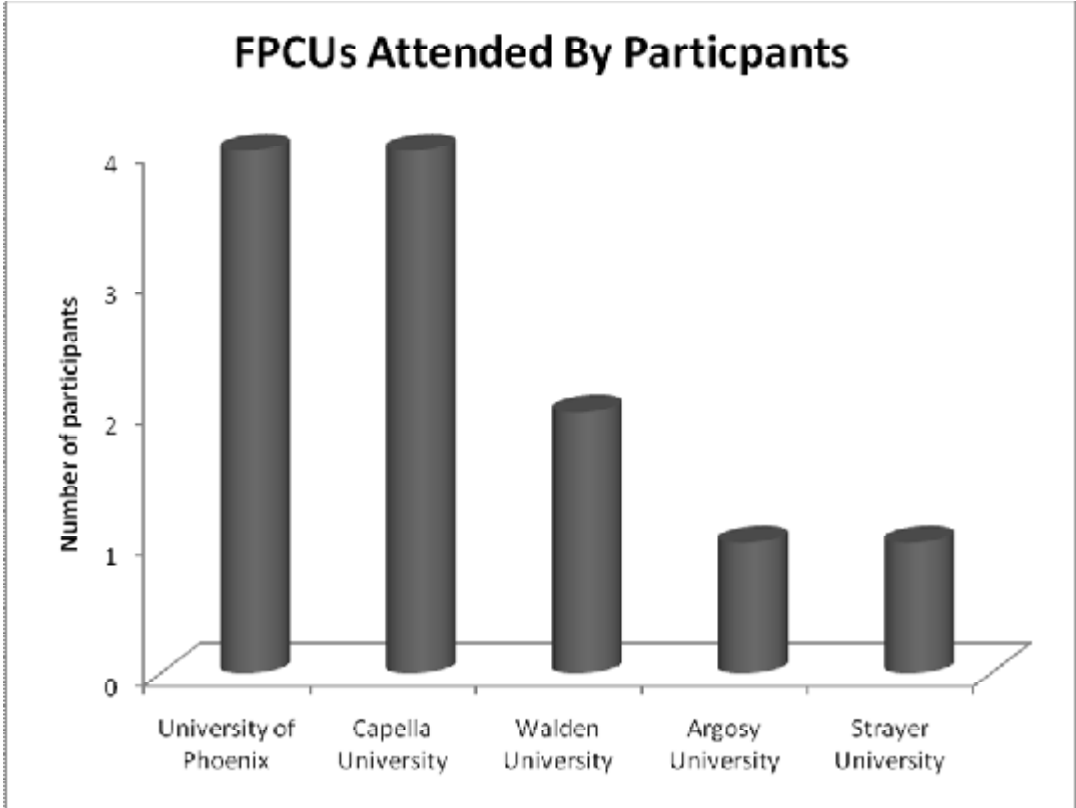


Table 7: Amount of Student Loan Debt Incurred by Participants

